RECORDS OF MAGELLANIC PENGUINS *SPHENISCUS MAGELLANICUS* IN PERU

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The Magellanic Penguin *Spheniscus magellanicus* breeds along the southern coasts of South America and the Falkland Islands. Its breeding distribution extends from the northern Patagonian coast in the Atlantic (42°S) southwards to Cape Horn (Williams 1995), and then northwards to Pajaro Niño Island (33°S) on the Pacific coast (Simeone *et al.* 2003). Magellanic Penguins in the Atlantic disperse northward after breeding to follow fish schools, usually reaching the southern coast of Brazil [up to 23°S (Harrison 1985)]. Sightings of vagrants have been reported in Australia (Marchant & Higgins 1990), New Zealand (Robertson *et al.* 1972), sub-Antarctic islands (Rootes 1998) and the Antarctic Peninsula (Barbosa *et al.* 2007). On the eastern Pacific coast, Magellanic Penguins seem to be highly migratory, with many individuals moving north of breeding sites during the austral winter (Jaramillo 2003). However, the extent of this northward movement is still unknown.

Fig. 1. Adult Magellanic Penguin *Spheniscus magellanicus* captured at Punta San Juan, Peru, on 9 July 1993. After capture, the bird was banded with an aluminum flipper band and released on the beach where it was captured.

We sighted, captured, measured and photographed an adult Magellanic Penguin at Punta San Juan, Peru (15°45′S, 75°42′W) on 9 July 1993, *c.* 2000 km north of the nearest breeding colony on Pájaro Niño Island. Punta San Juan holds the largest colony of Humboldt Penguins *Spheniscus humboldti* in Peru, with approximately 1800 breeding pairs in 1995–1996 (Paredes *et al.* 2003). At the time of the sighting, most of the Humboldt Penguins were attending chicks. The Magellanic Penguin was preening on a beach (S5) together with a group of 20–30 Humboldt Penguins. It walked some meters inland and remained isolated from the other penguins. Unfortunately, we did not have a camera at the time of the sighting, but approximately 30 minutes later, we captured the bird on the beach. It appeared externally healthy, with no visible signs of injury, and displayed a worn brownish plumage (Fig. 1). We took these morphometric measurements: body mass, 3.5 kg; exposed culmen length, 5.31 cm; bill depth (at the height of the nostrils), 2.04 cm; extended flipper length (from the humerus–radius joint to the tip of the flipper), 15.8 cm; and foot length (from the bend in the tarsus to the end of the middle toe nail), 12.1 cm. After being photographed, the penguin was banded with an aluminum metal flipper band (Fig. 1) and released on the beach. The bird was not seen again.

Plumage coloration and pattern and body size are similar between Magellanic and Humboldt Penguins at a distance. Compared with

Fig. 2. Recently molted Magellanic Penguin *Spheniscus magellanicus* captured on 19 March 1998 at Punta Coles, Peru.

Humboldt Penguins, Magellanic Penguins exhibit

- an additional black band across the neck,
- a thinner bill, and
- a smaller bare skin area in the forehead.

We have seen double-black-banded birds with bills and forehead patterns of adult Humboldt Penguins at Punta San Juan on three occasions in the course of seven years of fieldwork, but the extra band across the neck was usually incomplete or thinner than that of a Magellanic Penguin. We could not discriminate whether these birds were Humboldt Penguins with aberrant plumage or Humboldt×Magellanic hybrids. Nevertheless, the bird captured showed all the characters described for a Magellanic Penguin and the external measurements fall within the range of Magellanic Penguins (Scolaro *et al.* 1983, Williams 1995) rather than of Humboldt Penguins (Zavalaga & Paredes 1997). Likewise, based on the measurement of bill depth, the individual was apparently a female (Scolaro *et al.* 1983).

Another two sightings of adult Magellanic Penguins were recorded by CBZ on beach S5 at Punta San Juan on 1 October 1996 and 21 June 2000, but those birds were neither captured nor photographed. In addition, we sighted, captured and photographed a molting Magellanic Penguin (Fig. 2) within the guano headland of Punta Coles, Peru (17°42′S, 71°22′W) on 19 March 1998. That bird was seen standing by itself among boulders at a beach near a South American Fur Seal *Arctocephalus australis* rockery. The bird was released after being photographed, and it was not seen a month later when we again visited the headland.

Another sighting and capture of an adult Magellanic Penguin occurred at the Reserva Nacional de Paracas, Peru, on 10 May 2007 (INRENA 2007). The bird was apparently caught by a local fisher from the fishing village of Lagunillas (13°53′S, 76°19′W) and brought to the biologists of the Reserve, who confirmed it as a molting Magellanic Penguin (INRENA 2007).

These records all suggest that Magellanic Penguins are rare, but perhaps regular, non-breeding visitors to the coast of southern Peru.

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