

From: Birds Queensland Rarities Appraisal Committee (BQ RAC)

Date: 28 June 2015

Submission No 186: Antarctic Prion *Pachyptila desolata*, Submitted by Paul Walbridge

This submission related to 47 Antarctic Prions, *Pachyptila desolata*, seen during an organised trip off Southport, southeastern Queensland. These prions were observed on the slope waters, between approximately 16.5 and 22.5 nautical miles east off Southport 27° 52.93'S; 153° 44.74'E and 27° 54.16'S; 153° 51.63'E. All observers on-board the boat agreed with the identification. The submission was supported by several quality photographs and a detailed description of some of these Antarctic Prions.

The author described medium sized robustly prions, with stout neck and steepish foreheads. The prions were uniform pale bluish grey above a blackish area in the central tail tips but this blackish area was variable with some birds showing a broader tail bands. This species was separated from other similar species, including the Fairy, *P. turtur*, or Fulmar Prions, *P. crassirostris*, by the less robust nature of the bill, the more obvious head patterning and the narrower band of black on the uppertail tip. The bill was clearly too broad and deep for these birds to have been Slender-billed Prions, *P. belcheri*. Furthermore, Broad-billed Prion, *P. vittata*, was eliminated on the basis that the bill was blue-grey, not blackish, and not nearly bulbous enough for that species. Separating this species from the very similar Salvin's Prion, *P. salvini*, is considerably more difficult. (Marchant and Higgins 1990, Pizzey and Knight 1997, Slater *et. al.* 2009). The author correctly pointed out the main difference between these two species lies in the bill structure, which they could occasionally see when watching these prions in the field. Salvin's Prion has a longer, flatter bill both laterally and dorsally than Antarctic Prion, with a less obvious slope along the upper edge of the culmen from bill base to bill tip and the maxillary unguis is flatter, less bulbous. Dorsally the bill is generally broader, more rounded basally, than in Antarctic Prion.

Although Antarctic Prions are occasionally found as derelict specimens on beaches in southeastern Queensland, especially Fraser and North Stradbroke Island, this is the 1st record of Antarctic Prion assessed by the Birds Queensland Rarities Appraisal Committee.

Unanimously accepted

References

- Enticott J. and Tipling D. 1997.** *Photographic Handbook of the Seabirds of the World*. New Holland, London.
- Harrison, P. 1987.** *Seabirds of the World. A Photographic Guide*. Christopher Helm, London.
- Marchant, S. and Higgins, P.J. (Eds) 1990.** *Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Volume 1: Ratites to Ducks*. Oxford University Press, Melbourne.
- Pizzey, G. and Knight, F. 1997.** *The Field Guide to the Birds of Australia*. HarperCollinsPublishers, Sydney.
- Slater, P., Slater, P. and Slater, R. 2009.** *The Slater Field Guide to Australian Birds*. Second edition. Reed New Holland, Sydney.