

Rare Bird Report Form

Species: Trindade (Trinidad) Petrel (*Pterodroma arminjoniana*).

Date: 26 July 2014.

Number: One. Intermediate morph.

Age: Unknown.

Observer(s): Michael Force, Jessica Aschettino, Todd Pusser, Peter Duley, et al.

Location: Northwest Atlantic Ocean, southeast side of Georges Bank, about 30 nautical miles south-southeast of Lydonia Canyon, or about 133 nautical miles southeast of Sankaty Head, Nantucket; 39° 57.1' North, 67° 36.1' West.

Habitat: Offshore pelagic zone (just beyond the shelf break), depth (from chart) between 100-500 metres; sea surface temperature around 26°C.

Time and duration of sighting: Seen at 0935 hours EDT and observed for about 10 seconds.

Distance and environmental conditions: The bird came within 100 metres of the port bow, albeit briefly, showing well dorsal and ventral surfaces. Lighting conditions were good with the sun behind us. The sky was mostly clear with scattered high cloud and the wind was light, around eight knots from the south. We were on the flying bridge of the NOAA ship *Henry B. Bigelow*, about 15 metres above sea level, making nine knots on a course of 163°.

Optics used: 10x42 Swarovski binoculars (MF), others unknown.

Description: A medium sized, slim-bodied *Pterodroma* with relatively long wings and fairly long tail, imparting a rather slender rangy look. General impression was of a brownish *Pterodroma* with a pale belly, a pattern highly suggestive of a darker intermediate colour morph. A rather featureless bird, mostly just brown all over, other than the pale belly and flashes of white visible under the wing. The centre of the lower breast and belly were dirty white; sides of the lower breast, flanks, undertail coverts, chin throat and upperbreast were dark brown, the demarcation between light and dark blurred. The head was dark blackish brown. Underwings dark brown with a broken ragged line of whitish feathers on the greater under secondary coverts and a conspicuous pale flash at the base of the primaries. Upperwings brown, perhaps slightly darker than the back. Back appeared to be lightly mottled or flecked with buffy brown (body moult?). The slightly wedge-shaped tail was dark brown; bill was medium length, rather thick and black. We didn't notice any wing or tail moult.

Vocalisations: None.

Behaviour: It flew quickly towards the ship on a reverse bearing to ours, suggesting it could have been attracted to the ship. It arrived as if out of nowhere, and quickly passed down the port side, opposite to the side I was surveying. Flight was fairly fast and effortless.

Consideration of similar species: The lack of white primary shafts eliminates dark morph Kermadec Petrel. Bill too stout and underwing pattern inconsistent for Sooty Shearwater. Trindade Petrel can recall a dark morph jaeger. Compared to Trindade Petrel, jaegers are smaller-headed, slimmer-billed and have relatively shorter, broader wings. Immature jaegers tend to have barring of varying age-related extent and intensity on the flanks, underwing coverts and upper and undertail coverts. Dark morph Soft-plumaged Petrel lacks white primary shafts and is smaller and more compactly built. Dark morph Herald Petrel (and Henderson Petrel) are smaller with smaller bills and shorter tails. Dark morph Northern Fulmar has a stout yellowish bill.

Previous experience with this and similar species: I've seen hundreds of the various Pacific *Pterodromas* during 25 years of research cruises in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean, and tens of thousands of Sooty Shearwaters. This is the fifteenth Trindade Petrel that I've seen, not many, but enough to acquire an appreciation of how much larger this species is, particularly the bill, compared to Herald Petrels I've seen in the Pacific Ocean.

Were notes taken at the time of the sighting? No. It wasn't considered unusual, being far offshore in warm Gulf Stream water.

Photographs or audio obtained? Somehow, Jessica Aschettino was quick enough to get a couple of photos (included at the end of this document). The soft focus renders finer detail essentially invisible, but critical characters can be discerned. The greyish-white secondaries on the left wing is reflection.

Did all observers agree with the identification? If not, why? Yes, several of the marine mammal observers (Pusser, Duley) have seen this species on previous cruises.

Additional relevant comments: The bird was seen during a NOAA-sponsored marine mammal, seabird and ecosystem assessment survey of the northwest Atlantic Ocean, Dr. Debra Palka Chief Scientist, Northeast Fisheries Science Centre, 166 Water Street, Woods Hole, Massachusetts, USA, 02543.

Date report was written: 14 January 2015.

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