

Rare Bird Report Form

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

Date: 28 July 2014.

Number: One. Light morph.

Age: Unknown.

Observer(s): Michael Force.

Location: Northwest Atlantic Ocean, southeast side of Georges Bank, about 13 nautical miles south of Gilbert Canyon, or about 120 nautical miles south-southeast of Nantucket; 40° 03.6' North, 67° 52.4' West.

Habitat: Offshore pelagic zone, beyond the shelf break at the mouth of the canyon in about 1000 metres of water; sea surface temperature around 28°C.

Time and duration of sighting: Seen at 1025 hours EDT and observed for about 10-15 seconds.

Distance and environmental conditions: The bird flew across our cruise track about 200 to 300 metres ahead of the ship. Sky was covered in a thick overcast with thunderstorms visible on the horizon; the light was good with no glare. There was a strong breeze, 24 knot at 150°; the ship was heading 160° at nine knots, putting the wind almost directly on the bow. I was on the flying bridge of the NOAA ship *Henry B. Bigelow*, about 15 metres above sea level.

Optics used: 10x42 Swarovski binoculars.

Description: A medium sized, slim-bodied *Pterodroma* with relatively long wings and fairly long tail, imparting a rather slender rangy look. Extreme pale morph is striking with pale head and creamy-white underparts (extreme pale morph in this context refers to birds whose heads appear to be mostly white in the field, lacking a grey hood). General impression was of a pale *Pterodroma*, pale mottled brown above, creamy white below with a striking underwing pattern. Signs of moult were evident on the upperwing coverts, looking blotchy and “disorderly”. Underparts creamy-white; undertail coverts and sides of breast blackish-brown. The head was creamy-white with a barely discernible pale grey wash that extended down to the upper breast; there was no breast band. A dark blotch surrounded the eye and the bill was dark. Underwings arrestingly marked with pale leading and lesser under secondary coverts, white greater under secondary coverts, mostly white secondaries and primaries. Median under secondary coverts and greater under primary coverts black forming a conspicuous black carpal bar from blackish axillaries to black outer wing on a mostly white underwing. Outer primaries blackish below. There was a blackish trailing edge on the underwing. Upperwing coverts dark brown flecked irregularly

with buffy-white (feather bases?). Back medium-brown, slightly paler than the upperwings and contrasting strongly with the pale head. Tail dark brown and slightly wedge-shaped.

Vocalisations: None.

Behaviour: Rapidly flying westerly essentially perpendicular to the wind. Wingbeats were strong as it progressed in quick wide shallow arcs and brief glides.

Consideration of similar species: The bold underwing pattern reminded me of Black-winged Petrel. Such a pattern recalls many *Pterodroma* petrels, but the combination of pale head and dark undertail coverts quickly reduces the choices. The most likely candidate is Kermadec Petrel. I've seen pale-headed Kermadec Petrels on a number of occasions. Seeing these equally pale-headed Trindade Petrels certainly reminded me of that species. Kermadec Petrel is stockier, however, with broader wings and prominent white primary shafts, and lacks such a bold underwing pattern. Light morph Herald Petrel can also be extremely pale-headed, but has a more subdued underwing pattern, is smaller, and has a snappier more bounding flight. Underwing pattern similar to Zino's Petrel, but that species has white undertail coverts and a dark crown and nape.

Previous experience with this and similar species: I've seen hundreds of the various Pacific *Pterodromas*, including many pale morph Kermadec and Herald Petrels, during 25 years of research cruises in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean. This is the sixteenth Trindade Petrel (second extreme pale morph) that I've seen. I've never seen a Zino's Petrel.

Were notes taken at the time of the sighting? A few notes were made after the bird was gone.

Photographs or audio obtained? None.

Did all observers agree with the identification? If not, why? N/A

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: 15 January 2015.

Address(es) of observer(s): Michael Force
10692 Cheryl Road
Lake Country, BC
Canada, V4V 1W3