

Ashy Storm-Petrel

3 May 2007, Curry, Coos, and Douglas County

Birding off the Promenade Deck (one deck above Promenade Deck) on the bow of the Golden Princess (see illustration, attached), on a cruise from San Francisco to Vancouver BC, we had seen hundreds of Leach's Storm-Petrels and a few Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels along Curry and Coos County. In southern Curry County we had seen a Black Storm-Petrel (see separate report). In Coos County, at the coordinates shown in the photo (about 45 miles offshore), we saw a loose group of 6 dark-rumped petrels in front of the ship, and, remarkably, they stayed ahead of the ship for perhaps 5 minutes.

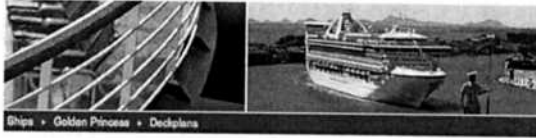
We soon identified them as Ashy Storm-Petrels. None of us had remembered that Ashy Storm-Petrels have pale gray edges on the upper tail coverts, but we all noticed and commented on that aspect as we looked at the birds. The birds had a fluttery flight style with wingbeats more shallow than the Leach's or Black. They flew more deliberately than the Leach's, gliding infrequently. Their over-all color was grayer and paler than Leach's, but of course much darker than Fork-taileds.

On this cruise we also saw Leach's and Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels, and some of us saw a Hornsby's Storm-Petrel — 5 species of storm-petrel — for additional comparisons. Getting a positive identification on this group of 6 storm-petrels, I could finally put a name on a "different" storm-petrel I alone had seen in Curry County at a greater distance, and saw again in Douglas County. A total of 8 Ashy Storm-Petrels in 3 counties.

We were on the bow of the Golden Princess, Promenade Deck (see deck plan illustration), which is roughly 30-40 feet above the water. The ship proceeded generally in a north-northwest to north direction at about a steady 25 mph, according to our GPS information. Jeff Gilligan, Sheran Wright, Rich and Nanette Armstrong (from Corvallis), and I were birding on this trip. Conditions were good visibility, overcast, but very windy. I was using image-stabilized 20x binoculars mounted on a tripod, plus 10x binoculars. No photos were obtained. GPS information was recorded on videotape. I am confident of this identification.



SHIPS



Golden Princess Deck Plans

Promenade Deck



View Another Deck: [Promenade](#)

DECK PLAN KEYS

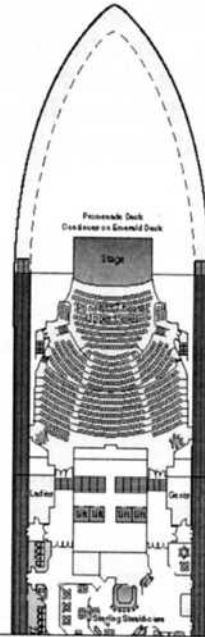
Not applicable

PUBLIC ROOMS LOCATED ON THIS DECK

1. Atrium
2. Explorer's Lounge
3. Hearts and Minds Wedding Chapel
4. Princess Theatre
5. Sabatin's
6. Wheelhouse Bar

DECK ICON KEY

Not applicable



Reporting observer
Owen Schmidt
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108-07-02 B

ASHY-STORM-PETREL (*Oceanodroma homochroa*)

Date: May 3, 2007

Location: N: 43.30, W: 125.13 (of Coos County, Oregon).
Sea Conditions: 1 to 4 foot swells. Light overcast skies.

Observers: Rich and Nanette Armstrong, Owen Schmidt, Sheran Wright, Jeff Gilligan (reporting observer).

We observed the species from the bow of a cruise ship about 35 feet above the water line. In the front of the bow we saw a loose flock of six dark-rumped storm-petrels that we soon concluded were Ashy Storm-Petrels. In contrast to the very large numbers of other storm-petrels that we saw on the cruise, these birds stayed in front of the ship for up to five minutes. While distance is difficult to be certain of from a ship, these birds were rather close and provided good views even using ten X binoculars. (I was using 10X Zeiss binoculars, and occasionally a 30X Swarovski scope on tripod.

Description: They were dark-rumped and ashy gray in coloration, about the size of the many Leach's Storm-Petrels that we had been seeing. They were paler than the Leach's Storm-Petrels, but clearly darker and less varied in color than the Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels that we saw.

The under-wings were paler than their bodies. The most prominent aspect on them that we saw were the paler (at times silvery) elongated patches on the upper flanks and sides of the upper rumps in front of the tail. This aspect varied a lot depending on how we saw the birds. While these patches were often prominent, they were not white. None of us had been familiar with this aspect of an Ashy Storm-Petrel before, but it was visible to all of us, and we discussed it as we looked at the birds. They had indistinct pale carpal bars and fork tails.

Flight Pattern: Shallow wing beats, a bit fluttery, interspersed with short glides. Nothing like the zig-zag rapid flight of the Leach's Storm-Petrels. Very different from the deep wing beats of the Black-type storm-petrel that we seen earlier.

Prior Experience: I have seen the species off California before. The flight and coloration were consistent with these being Ashy Storm-Petrels. I had not seen the pale sides to the rump previously.

Similar Species: Intermediate color examples of dark-rumped Leach's Storm-Petrels fly like Leach's Storm-Petrels and wouldn't be the ashy gray generally of these birds. Black Storm-Petrels are larger and darker, and fly differently. Least Storm-Petrels are very small with wedge-shaped tails and pointed wings. They would also lack the pale sides to the rumps that were sometimes visible on these birds.

I am certain of our conclusion that these were Ashy Storm-Petrels.

ASHY-STORM-PETREL (*Oceanodroma homochroa*)

Date: May 3, 2007

Location: N: 43.30, W: 125.13 (of Coos County, Oregon).

Sea Conditions: 1 to 4 foot swells. Light overcast skies.

Observers: Rich (reporting observer) and Nanette Armstrong, Owen Schmidt, Sheran Wright, Jeff Gilligan

We observed the species from the bow of a cruise ship about 35 feet above the water line.

I copied all of the above from Jeff Gilligan's report.

I am not experienced at all with storm-petrels and have only limited seabird experience. In the front of the ship I saw a dark-rumped storm-petrel that was clearly different from the Leach's we had been seeing. I saw about 5-7 of them very close to the ship with 10/50 binoculars including following 1 with a Swarovski scope on tripod.

Description: There was no white on the rump and they seemed lighter brown than the Leach's. They also seemed a little smaller than the many Leach's Storm-Petrels. They were brown, not the light and gray of the Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels that we saw.

The under-wings were not the uniform brown of the body. They had fork tails just like the others.

Flight Pattern: The flight was not like the rapid flight of the Leach's Storm-Petrels. I can only use Jeff's word "fluttery" or weaker flight compared to Leach's and compared to the Black Storm-Petrel that we seen earlier.

Prior Experience: zero with all storm-petrels except Fork-tailed.

Similar Species: No white on rumps and different flight should eliminate Leach's Storm-Petrels. Brown color should eliminate Fork-tailed Storm Petrel. The flight was certainly different and the birds seemed smaller compared with what Jeff & Owen & Nanette & I saw earlier that Jeff & Owen called Black Storm-Petrel.

I can only conclude that these were Ashy Storm-Petrels because nothing else fits.

108-07-020

ASHY-STORM-PETREL (*Oceanodroma homochroa*)

Date: May 3, 2007

Location: N: 43.30, W: 125.13 (of Coos County, Oregon).

Sea Conditions: calm. Sunny, light overcast skies.

Observers: Rich and *Nanette Armstrong* (reporting observer), Owen Schmidt, Sheran Wright, Jeff Gilligan

Binoculars: Swift Audubon's 8.5 X 44

We were on the Golden Princess cruise ship heading north in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of Oregon. We were birding from near the bow, on the Promenade deck (8th floor), about 35 feet above the water. We'd been seeing large numbers of Leach's Storm-Petrels and smaller numbers of Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels.

I have little pelagic birding experience. In the front of the ship I saw a dark-colored storm-petrel with a dark rump that was clearly different from the Leach's we had been seeing. There were about 5 or more of them close to the ship.

Description: Brown overall in color. There was no white on the rump. They seemed lighter brown than the nearby Leach's. They also seemed a little smaller than the Leach's Storm-Petrels. The under-wings were a bit mottled, not solid brown like the body. Forked tail, pointed wings.

Flight Pattern: butterfly-like as it flew in the swells.

Similar Species: The lack of white on the rump and the flight difference helps me rule out a Leach's Storm-Petrel. These birds are brown which makes it not a gray-colored Fork-tailed Storm Petrel.