

# Ashy Storm-Petrel

## Record #108-16-10

<b>Your name:</b>	David S. Irons
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<b>Bird identification:</b>	Ashy Storm-Petrel -- Two, age and sex undetermined
<b>Date(s):</b>	10/18/2016
<b>Time of Day:</b>	7:45-8:15AM
<b>Location:</b>	Boiler Bay State Wayside, Lincoln County, Oregon -- Open nearshore ocean just off the rocky promontory.
<b>Lighting and Weather Conditions:</b>	High dense clouds, with occasional brief showers, winds SSW 10-15 mph. Early morning sun at our backs, combined with the gray overcast made for somewhat neutral and near-perfect lighting conditions.
<b>Details:</b>	<p>Amid a rather steady feeding procession of Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels that were just beyond the breakers maybe 300-400 yards offshore, I saw two distinctly different all-dark storm-petrels that I spotted with my Nikon EDG 82mm field scope as I scanned through the hordes of Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels (150-200 of those seen). In size and structure, the two birds were approximately the same size as the Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels, but in direct side-by-side comparisons they presented themselves as straighter-winged, proportionally longer-tailed and they had slightly less bulky torsos. At times they looked ever so slightly smaller overall. Their longer tails showed a deep fork when folded and a slightly deeper notch than the notch in a Fork-tailed's tail when spread.</p> <p>One of the keys to identifying storm-petrels is flight style. These birds held their wings generally straighter (less bend at the wrist) and flew with shallower and more rigid wingbeats in a style that I would describe as a stiff-winged flutter. They seemed to move along a more direct linear path with less arcing, banking and circling than the many Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels present. The first bird I saw moved along very slowly often fluttering over a small patch of water, barely changing position for extended periods, landing occasionally and briefly on the water surface and then taking flight again and fluttering up and then back down to the water surface to grab prey. The Fork-taileds rarely stayed in the same place for long, often arcing and looping back upwind and cutting back through a particularly productive feeding patch.</p> <p>The exact color of the birds was hard to assess, looking at times dusky grayish and at other times looking more brownish. They were not as dark or blackish in appearance as a Black Storm-Petrel or a Leach's Storm-Petrel and of course</p>

showed no white on the rump or upper tail. The closest approximation I can come up with is the back color of a male American Robin, albeit maybe a bit darker and sootier, or a bit lighter than the overall color of a Sooty Shearwater. The upperwing of the first bird appeared to be solidly dark with barely any light in the coverts, while the second bird that I saw showed a more conspicuous pale bar on the upperwing coverts. The underwings were mostly dark below, usually showing only minimal contrast between the dark wing linings and the slightly lighter undersides of the flight feathers. When the birds banked just right there was a paler area (a broad diffuse bar of sorts) on the underside of the wing right behind the darker underwing coverts. There was none of the paler gray coloration one sees on Fork-tailed Petrel and these birds lacked the typical upper and underwing contrast shown by a Fork-tailed, which normally shows a dark leading edge on the upper wing and dark on the upper wing coverts that contrasts noticeably with the otherwise paler and grayer mantle, head, wingtips, tail and trailing edge to the inner wings. The fairly under parts (throat, breast, belly, underwing and undertail) were also quite different than the more contrasty underparts of a Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel, which generally shows a paler medium to silvery gray throat, breast, belly and undertail and pale gray underside to the flight feathers that contrast noticeably with the much darker underwing coverts. There were some worn and more darkish individuals among the swarm of Fork-taileds that did not show as much dark to light contrast above and showed reduced contrast between underwing coverts and the undersides of the flight feathers. That said, they did not approach the overall darkness of the two Ashy Storm-Petrels being reported here. I attempted no photos, as I was never close enough to get anything useful with my camera setup. Owen Schmidt took a number photos of the birds present that day and his images are representative of the field marks that I noted visually.

**Anything else you want to add?:**

I have extensive experience with the expected storm-petrels that occur in Oregon waters (Fork-tailed and Leach's), having seen many hundreds of each species. I have also seen Ashy Storm-Petrel previously, having encountered a flock of many thousands off the central California coast in September of 2007. I have always paid close attention to flight style when identifying seabirds both from shore and from boats at sea, thus I made sure to note the flight style of these birds. Their flight style was much more fluttery and stiff-winged than either Fork-tailed or Leach's. These birds were not large enough or dark enough to be Black Storm-Petrels (which has made it to Oregon) and the wingbeats were not deep enough for that species. While I noted an unexpected amount of variation in the overall darkness to lightness in the assembled Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels on this day, none approached the uniform darkness and general lack of light to dark contrast that the reported birds showed. I have no doubt that these birds were correctly identified to species. A number of other experienced birders were present and to my knowledge all eventually saw and independently identified these or other individuals as Ashy Storm-Petrels. Among the birders present were Jeff Gilligan, Owen Schmidt, Steve Nord, Stefan Schlick, Wayne Hoffman, Paul Sullivan and Bill Proebsting.

**Submitted On:** 2016-10-23 23:10:42

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# Ashy Storm Petrel Record # 108-16-10

Submitted by Owen Schmidt  
October 20, 2016

Ashy Storm-Petrel, Boiler Bay, October 18, 2016

Just south of Boiler Bay State Scenic Viewpoint, Lincoln County, Oregon, from the balcony of a second-floor condo at The Village at North Pointe, following reports on October 16th and 17th of Ashy Storm-Petrels at Boiler Bay, one of up to 16 seen that day from that location. Other observers: Jeff Gilligan and Bob Stites plus many other observers at Boiler Bay including Dave Irons and Stefan Schlick. First reported by Phil Pickering. All photos/Owen Schmidt, with Canon EOS 1Dx II and Canon EF 600L II

Six JPEG photos attached in ZIP format. Please acknowledge!

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Thursday, October 20, 2016











