Oregon Rare Bird Report Form

Your name

Your email

Bird Identification: Write in the name of the species you have identified and information on numbers of birds you saw, sex, plumage, and age, etc.
Black Storm-Petrel, 1 bird in adult plumage.

Date(s): Month, day, and year. If there are multiple observations, list each date.
July 10, 2020.

Time of Day
Approximately 9:30.

Location: Be specific. Describe habitat.
Siltcoos Dunes Overlook at Siltcoos River Parking Area.

Lighting and Weather Conditions
Slightly overcast, about 65 degrees. Very good lighting for observing birds to the west.

Details: Include what was actually observed. Stress field marks: bill, eye, wings, tail, lets, shape, proportions, etc. Include behavior: feeding, resting, flying, interactions with other species, etc. Describe voice: song, call, or notes, if heard.

The most obvious fieldmark on this bird was the completely dark rump and back. The carpal bar was not prominent as it would be on a Leach's or Wilson's Storm-Petrel. I didn't see it close enough to discern any color difference that would determine between Ashy and Black. Most notable was the lack of pale coloring that stood out on the back and the dorsal side of the wings. This bird had a methodical, consistent wingbeat that resulted in a smooth and direct flight, unlike the shallow erratic flight of Ashy or springy Nighthawk-like flight of Leach's. It dropped down in the water for no more than several seconds about three times as it flew along. At this point it had flown too far to observe it down in the water. When it was approximately a quarter mile offshore, it briefly flew among a flock of Red-necked Phalarope, which provided a good point of reference. This Storm-Petrel had noticeably longer wings than the Phalarope (which have a wingspan of 15 inches, ASSP wingspan of 18 inches, LESP 20 and BLSP 22).

Similar Species: Also, explain how you ruled out these similar species.

Ashy Storm-Petrel- Consistent methodical wingbeats that resulted in a smooth flight unlike the erratic flight of ASSP. Though neither [other reporter] nor I initially thought that the wing beats were particularly deep, they could not be described as shallow. The flight of this bird somewhat reminded me of the flight of a Black Tern in that it had long and slow wingbeats, maybe more frequent than those a Black Tern. Furthermore, its long wings compared to adjacent Red-necked Phalaropes eliminated ASSP.

Leach’s Storm-Petrel- Lack of light rump and prominent carpal bar that is present on Leach’s. Also, this bird did not exhibit the Nighthawk-like flight that a Leach’s would. It should be noted

that a large percentage of Leach's Storm-Petrel that breed on Isla Coronado, Isla de San Benito and Isla Guadalupe off the coast of Baja California exhibit predominantly dark rumps compared to the light rumped population in the Northern Pacific and Atlantic Oceans (Ainley, 1980). It would seem an even rarer occurrence to see a dark rumped Leach's Storm-Petrel off the Oregon coast than it would a Black Storm-Petrel. However, I imagine that the distribution of dark rumped Leach's Storm-Petrels is likely not something that has been extensively researched and is, needless to say, not a top priority in the ornithological community. This being said, I eliminated this species based off of the smooth flight pattern of BLSP and the obvious carpal bar present in LESP that was lacking in this bird.

Wilson's Storm-Petrel- This bird lacked the distinctive white rump present in WISP.

Anything else you want to add?

Do you have photos or videos? If so, attach them to your email.
I was unable to get any photos of this bird.

Thank you!

Oregon Rare Bird Report

Species: Black Storm-Petrel *Oceanodroma melania*

Date: July 10, 2020

Time: approximately 9:30AM

Location: Lane County Coast. Seawatch at the Mouth of the Siltcoos River Dunes overlooking the Ocean.

Weather / viewing conditions: Estimated 60 degrees. Very little wind, well under 5 mph. Ocean was mostly glassy. Mostly cloudy, air was clear and light was good with very little atmospheric distortion. There were 4-5 small breakers off the beach, all well under 2' height. Beyond the breakers were a few more sets of very low waves, transitioning to low swells on glassy seas. The Sky was completely cloudy from the Eastern horizon to nearly the western horizon. Blue sky was showing for a narrow strip along the western horizon. Viewing conditions were very good, but perhaps could have been slightly improved if the blue sky was on the eastern horizon instead of looking directly at it to the west.

Observation Details: [Reporter 1, Reporter 2] and I had been Sea Watching for over an hour when [Reporter 1] called out that he had a near-shore Storm-Petrel. I looked in the direction he was looking with his scope and found the bird with my binoculars, just beyond the breakers. I quickly switched to my scope and got on the bird. It was all-dark, long-winged, flying steadily away from shore. It is unfortunate that during the first 10-20 seconds of observation, while the bird was at it's closest, it was flying directly away. I could not make out any field marks, no carpal bar or rump patch, just all dark. I stayed on the bird as it flew directly away from shore with steady wingbeats and short glides for several hundred yards before turning north. The bird flew North, stopping a few times and landing very briefly, a few seconds or less each time, along a line of Red-necked Phalaropes that we had been watching. Red-necked Phalaropes were flying near the Storm-Petrel and I feel that I got a good size comparison. The Storm-Petrel was larger and much longer winged than the Phalaropes. The viewing conditions were good enough that color on the Phalarope necks could be seen even at this distance. Details in Marbled Murrelet, Common Murre, Rhinocerous Auklet and Loon plumages could be seen well at this distance. I'm very confident the Storm Petrel was overall black, unlike Fork-tailed or even Ashy. I continued to stay on the bird for a couple more minutes as it made its way north, eventually becoming too distant to follow.

Similar Species: I have very limited experience with Storm-Petrels, only having seen Fork-tailed a handful of times. Fork-tailed was ruled out at the time of the sighting due to the very dark plumage. Consulting the field guides we had at the time, we determined that the possibilities were Black, Ashy and dark-rumped Leach's Storm-Petrels.

Ashy (17" WS) by using the direct comparison with Red-necked Phalarope (15" WS) is ruled out by wingspan. I believe the bird had much more than 2" longer wingspan than Red-necked Phalarope. No visible carpal bar or any gray tones in the plumage was detected. I would not describe the wingbeats as quick and shallow or indirect flight pattern as Ashy is described.

Dark-rumped Leach's (18" WS) is closer in size and color but again the flight style does not fit well. I would not say the bird we saw had deep and springy wingbeats with bounding, arching flight like a nighthawk as Leach's is described.

Black Storm-Petrel (19" WS) fits very well with the wing length of the Storm-Petrel seen in direct comparison to nearby Red-necked Phalaropes. Flight style described as deep languid wingbeats with frequent glides and fairly smooth progress, also describes what was seen very well.

Tristram's Strom-Petrel (20.5" - 22.5" WS) was also found as an extremely remote possibility, but the light carpal bar and flight pattern description do not fit well for the bird we saw.