

**RARE BIRD REPORT**

Submitted by [REDACTED]

Species: **Great-winged Petrel**Date of Sighting: 8/26/2007      Time Found: about 10 AMLength of Time Observed: about 2 minutesDistance to Bird: As close as 100 feetNumber, Age, Sex: 1Observer: [REDACTED]Other Observers: [REDACTED] Also, there were a couple other birders with enough pelagic experience to know that this was a *Pterodroma*. I did not catch their names.Location: Approximately 13-15 miles west of Coos Bay. Capt. [REDACTED] told me 13 miles although I heard she told someone else 15 miles?Conditions: It was sunny, with practically no wind where we decided to chum. I had brought a gallon of corn oil to which we added 16 ounces of cod liver oil. We threw out popcorn and cat food with the oil. This was smelly enough to "gross out" one sensitive passenger on our boat and actually worked to attract a fair number of albatross, fulmars, and shearwaters which otherwise were pretty much just sitting on the water in scattered groups due to lack of much wind. When the *Pterodroma* flew it flew back and forth directly behind the boat over the chum a few times before landing, giving us some great looks.Description: [REDACTED] spotted the bird first and called out. He immediately recognized it as a *Pterodroma* although it took me a few seconds to realize it was something besides a shearwater or fulmar (I initially thought dark fulmar until I got a better look). It flew right into the middle of our chum spot. When it flew in it was low over the water and its flight was more shearwater like (less flapping much gliding) than fulmar like (more flapping). It was next to a few Pink-footed Shearwaters during this time and was a bit smaller (both body and wing length). The bird appeared all dark- a very dark chocolate color, the same color of a Flesh-footed Shearwater, one of which we had just seen several minutes earlier. It seemed fairly stocky bodied or barrel-chested, had a white ring of feathers completely around the all dark-colored bill (probably a couple inches in width- it was very prominent), dark feet, and wings that seemed (to me) broader and a bit shorter than a fulmars. After it flew in and banked we had great views after which it landed on the water in the chum close to the back of the boat. It immediately spread open its wings in an upside down V-shape upon alighting on the water and peered down into the water. It held this posture for half-a-

minute or so and then flew off again and landed in a large group of shearwaters/fulmars/albatross a far enough distance from the boat that we did not relocate it (we actually had to head back in about this time unfortunately). Each time it flew it was low over the windless seas and flew with very little flapping- more shearwater-like than fulmar-like. I have heard that *Pterodroma* fly in large arcing U-shaped flights. However, given that there was little to no wind, and that all the other birds were flying low above the water, just enough to check out our chum and then go back and sit down elsewhere on the water nearby, I don't think the bird would have had enough wind to get off the water into the high arcs the *Pterodroma* are famous for. As we excitedly discussed the bird afterwards, one observer (whose name I do not know but who was certain it was a *Pterodroma* and seemed to be a somewhat experienced pelagic birder) noted a faint wing flash on the outer primaries of the underwing. I did not notice this.

Vocalization/Behavior: I have never seen a tubenose sit on the water with wings spread behavior before. The bird did this from the time it landed to the time it took off, maybe a half-minute or longer. The entire time it was peering down into the water, probably looking for something besides our chum at the site.

Similar Species:

Flesh-footed Shearwater: About 5-10 minutes before the *Pterodroma* flew in we had great looks at a Flesh-footed Shearwater. The Flesh-footed was about the same color as the *Pterodroma* we saw; however, Flesh-footed Shearwaters have a pale colored bill and feet, and no white area around encircling the mandible.

Short-tailed Shearwater: Short-taileds have only a bit of white in the chin area, if any white is visible at all. Also, Short-taileds have a light colored center panel on the underwing. This bird was decidedly all dark on the underwing (as I mentioned, one observer saw a slight amount of white on the underwing on the outer primaries, I did not see this at all).

Northern Fulmar: We considered an aberrant N. Fulmar, but the dark bill, white circle of feathers completely encircling the mandible, broader looking wings (at least I thought this), and uncharacteristic fulmar-like flight completely ruled this out as far as I was concerned. There were many fulmars in the area also, both light and dark phase and all colors

between. This bird was way darker colored than any fulmar I've ever seen.

Other dark *Pterodroma* species: There are other dark *Pterodroma* species, but none that have the large, obvious white area completely circling the mandible so the chin and even a portion of the face are white, lack gray tones, and appear completely dark brown colored. We initially considered Murphy's Petrel, being the only "likely" all-dark *Pterodroma* regular in our area; however, Murphys are a grayish-brown color and have an "M" pattern on the upper wing, the bird we saw was all very dark brown colored with no grayish tones and no "M" pattern to the upper wings.

References: We wrote-up our observations before even attempting to ID the bird which we only did once back in Port. I, being only familiar with Murphy's Petrel as a likely candidate for an all-dark petrel, mentioned this and we checked out some photos in the Harrison Seabird Guide and decided it was definitely not that species due to the size and lack of gray pattering we should have noticed on the upper wings. [redacted] then left with his bird tour and we parted not sure on what we saw. After we both studied some internet photos and field guides over the next few days, we both decided it was definitely not a Murphy's Petrel and [redacted] suggested maybe it was an aberrant fulmar. I did NOT think it was a fulmar and this nagged me a couple days until I described the bird to [redacted]. [redacted] did a little background check, which I should have done myself, and a day later he suggested Great-winged Petrel to me in an e-mail. I then checked out some photos on-line and looked up the description in a couple guides. This is when I realized that this was the most likely bird we saw. In fact, I was pretty certain it was neither an aberrant fulmar nor a shearwater, but was in *Pterodroma*-denial as I have been on so many pelagics off Oregon in the past 10 years and never seen one.

Experience: I have never seen a *Pterodroma* species before although I have intensively studied several field guides, at least for the more common occurring North Pacific species. I have been on 2-4 pelagic trips off Oregon per year since 1998, so I am getting pretty good at ID'ing all the usual and some of the unusual Oregon pelagic species.

Light/Weather: Sunny with a little or no wind, fairly good size swells on the trip out but pretty calm at our chum spot- to nice weather-wise for any of the tubenoses to want to fly. We had the sun at our backs while observing the *Pterodroma*.

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**Subject: Great-winged Petrel****Date: Wednesday, December 12, 2007 6:32 PM****From:** [REDACTED]**To:** <hnehls@teleport.com>**Conversation:** Great-winged Petrel

Dear Harry,

I am submitting the following observation of a bird that I believe was a Great-winged Petrel. With great regret, I lack photos. I am not sure how the OBRC classifies reports of birds not yet on the state list if the report lacks a photo or specimen, but I am submitting the report anyway. Perhaps with future observations that get a photo, this record may be of use.

On the 26 August 07 pelagic trip from Charleston that I organized as part of a Nature Conservancy trip to Bandon, we did see a Pterodroma petrel that looked just like all the images of the Gouldi race of Great-winged Petrel in the various references. Thanks to Greg Gillson for emailing the links to photos from Australia. I am now convinced that we saw the first Oregon record of Great-winged Petrel.

When the bird appeared, we were 13 miles from shore. We had been feeding the fulmars and black-footed albatrosses, and had a nice slick on the water: vegetable oil, cod liver oil, cat food, popcorn. We had the skipper of the Betty Kay drift us through this slick several times, and some cool birds were coming by--Pom jaeger, fork-tailed storm petrel, and shearwaters: sooty, pink-footed, bullers, and flesh-footed (1). It was pretty calm, not much wind, and we were wallowing in the seas. The sun was in the east and the slick was to the west, so we had perfect light. And then an odd bird showed up. It came by twice. On the first pass, I just watched it wondering what it was. It didnt go far, and was coming back, and I called to [REDACTED] --hey [REDACTED], take a look at this bird. So then everyone was watching it come by, and it was nicely matched in flight next to a pink-footed shearwater. It was smaller than the pink-footed shearwater, but only marginally smaller. It flew like a pelagic seabird--clearly it was a tubenose and not some sort of gull. The striking thing was the white all around the bill contrasting to all dark chocolate colored plumage on the wings and body. It landed briefly on the water with the fulmars, and didnt fold its wings, but kept them outstretched and peeked under the water surface. None of the fulmars were acting that way. They were all pecking popcorn on the surface. When the petrel was on the water, it was about the same size as the fulmars, although it wasnt right beside them. It had a dark bill, unlike the yellow bills of the fulmars. It lacked the gray tones of the fulmars--it was all dark chocolate with contrasting white face, white throat, white forehead in a circle pattern around the bill. Then the petrel flew up and circled away and was gone.

It has taken awhile to find time to study the references thoroughly--I was away camping with the family, etc. Sorry that I didnt put out a RBA, but these rare seabirds dont often get chased with the Betty Kay costing \$750. I typically like to look over the books before I make such an extraordinary claim as this. Hence the delay. The most available reference with an illustration is the 5th edition National Geographic guide--the other North American bird books dont have it illustrated. Another good illustration is Pizzey & Knight, Birds of Australia.

--[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Optics: Bausch & Lomb Elite 10x42 binos, with great looks at the bird fairly close to the back of the boat and on the water.

