

### NSW ORAC CASES DECIDED IN 2013

568	Little Curlew	Ballina	April 6, 2012	Accepted
569	Cotton Pygmy-Goose	Menindee	November 19, 2012	Not Accepted
570	Cook's Petrel	off Port Stephens	November 19, 2012	Accepted
571	Oriental Plover	Shoalhaven Heads	January 26, 2013	Accepted
572	Red-footed Booby	Swansea	January 29, 2013	Accepted
573	Red-footed Booby	South West Rocks	January 29, 2013	Accepted
574	Pink Robin	Macquarie NP	February 14, 2014	Not Accepted
575	Cook's Petrel	off Sydney	October 13, 2012	Accepted
576	Bridled Tern	Newcastle	January 30, 2013	Accepted
577	Raja Shelduck	Corindi	April 14, 2013	Accepted
578	Raja Shelduck	Yamba	April 1, 2013	Accepted
579	Pink Robin	Morton NP	April 24, 2013	Not Accepted
580	Great Frigatebird	S Broulee Beach	January 31, 2013	Not Accepted
581	Soft-plumaged Petrel	off Sydney	May 11, 2013	Accepted
582	Blue Petrel	off Wollongong	June 22, 2013	Accepted
583	Soft-plumaged Petrel	off Sydney	October 26, 2012	Accepted
594	Cotton Pygmy Goose	near Kyogle	August 27, 2013	Accepted
595	Oriental Plover	Wilberforce	September 27, 2013	Accepted
596	Oriental Plover	Long Reef	October 8, 2013	Accepted
597	Oriental Plover	Sydney Airport	October 15, 2013	Accepted
598	Little Shearwater	Boodooree NP	June 28, 2013	Accepted
599	Oriental Plover	Moruya Beach	October 11, 2013	Accepted
600	Oriental Plover	Tuggerah	September 27, 2013	Accepted
603	Asian Dowitcher	Comerong Island	November 16, 2013	Accepted

## OVERVIEW

NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee (ORAC) reviewed 24 submissions in calendar year 2013 of which 20 were accepted and 4 were not accepted. Of the four records not accepted, only one was a case of mistaken identity and the other three could well have been the species claimed but were not supported with sufficient evidence to rule out other possibilities.

There were two notable events in 2013, with one being the unprecedented influx of Oriental Plovers into NSW in September and October – the highest count was six individuals near the third runway at Sydney Airport. The other big event was the severe weather conditions along the NSW coast in late January from ex-Cyclone Oswald which brought a huge influx of northern seabirds. In addition to non-reviewable species such as Sooty Terns, Common Noddys, Black Noddy, Lesser Frigatebirds, Streaked and Buller's Shearwaters, submissions were received for two Red-footed Boobies, a Bridled Tern and a Great Frigatebird. Perhaps the most notable bird of the year was the Blue Petrel seen off Wollongong on June 22, 2013 becoming the first confirmed record in NSW since 1998.

## CASE SUMMARIES

Case 568: A Little Curlew *Numenius minutus* was seen and well photographed at Kingsford Smith Park, Ballina from April 6, 2012 until approximately April 19, 2012. The committee voted unanimously to accept this record and it becomes the 48<sup>th</sup> confirmed record for NSW. Steven McBride

Case 569: A small group of water birds initially thought to be Cotton Pygmy-Geese *Nettapus coromandelianus* were seen on an overflow billabong of the Darling River about 15km north of Menindee. It became quickly apparent from the photographs that these birds did not have the structure and plumage characteristics of Cotton Pygmy-Geese and that they were, in fact, very young Australian Shelducks. The committee voted unanimously not to accept this record.

Case 570: A Cook's Petrel *Pterodroma cookii* was seen and photographed at the shelf break on a pelagic trip off Port Stephens on November 18, 2012. The committee voted to accept this record and it becomes the 10<sup>th</sup> confirmed record for NSW. Allan Richardson

Case 571: An Oriental Plover *Charadrius veredus* was seen and well photographed at Shoalhaven Heads on January 26, 2013 and had been reported at the site on the previous day. The committee voted unanimously to accept this record and it becomes the 29<sup>th</sup> confirmed record for NSW. Greg McLachlan

Case 572: An adult pale/intermediate morph Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* was seen perched on a tower above the Lake Macquarie Marine Rescue Station at the entrance to Swansea Channel for a period of two hours during the aftermath of Cyclone Oswald on January 28, 2013. The committee voted unanimously to accept this record and it becomes the 11<sup>th</sup> confirmed record for NSW. Allan Richardson

Case 573: An adult pale morph Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* was found beach cast at Front Beach, South West Rocks on January 29, 2013 during the aftermath of Cyclone Oswald. The photographs

clearly confirmed the identity and the committee voted unanimously to accept this record – the 12<sup>th</sup> confirmed record for NSW. Ken Shingleton

Case 574: A bird thought to be a female Pink Robin *Petroica rodinogaster* was seen at Clover Hill Road in Macquarie National Park on February 14, 2013. There has only been one accepted NSW record of Pink Robin north of the Southern Highlands and that was on September 4, 1987. Female Pink Robins are notoriously difficult to identify with certainty unless all key structural and plumage features are noted. In this case there was some doubt as to the estimate of size of the bird and whether or not there was any white in the outer tail feathers and, also, the observer was only 90% sure of the identification. The committee voted by majority not to accept this record.

Case 575: A Cook's Petrel *Pterodroma cookii* was well seen and photographed at the shelf break on a pelagic trip out of Sydney on October 13, 2013. The photographs and thorough description clearly eliminated all potential confusion species and the committee voted unanimously to accept the record – the 12<sup>th</sup> confirmed record for NSW. David James

Case 576: A Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* was seen and photographed from Noddy's Breakwall, Newcastle on January 30 and 31, 2013. The photographs and description of the bird clearly showed it to be a Bridled Tern and the committee voted unanimously to accept the record – only the 4<sup>th</sup> confirmed record for NSW. Liz Crawford and Mick Roderick

Case 577: A Raja Shelduck *Tadorna radjah* was well seen and photo graphed on a small farm dam at Corindi Park Drive, Corindi near Moonee Beach on April 14, 2013. The committee voted unanimously to accept this record and it becomes the 7<sup>th</sup> confirmed record in NSW, in addition to a number of unconfirmed reports. Jenny Freeman

Case 578: A Raja Shelduck *Tadorna radjah* was seen at a lake on Acacia Circuit, Yamba on April 1, 2013. As a result of a brief and confusing description in the submission, there was some doubt as to the identification and the case had to go to a second round of voting before the committee voted by majority to accept the record. This is the 8<sup>th</sup> confirmed record for NSW in addition to a number of unconfirmed reports. Joan Watson

Case 579: A bird thought to be a female Pink Robin *Petroica rodinogaster* was seen at Gambells Rest, Morton National Park on April 24, 2013. There has only been one accepted NSW record of Pink Robin north of the Southern Highlands and that was on September 4, 1987. Female Pink Robins are notoriously difficult to identify with certainty unless all key structural and plumage features are noted. In this case there was no mention of the bird's size, the feet were described as being black rather than yellow, the colour of the wing bars was not described and, also, the observer was only 90% sure of the identification. After much deliberation the committee voted by majority not to accept this record although some members felt that the bird may well have been a Pink Robin.

Case 580: A bird thought to be a Great Frigatebird *Fregata minor* was seen flying over the car park at South Broulee Beach during the aftermath of Cyclone Oswald on January 31, 2013. The bird was observed at a height of 100-150 metres without optical aids for a period of about 1 minute. The observer believed that it was a Great Frigatebird on the basis that he could not see any white axillary spurs as would be seen on Lesser Frigatebird, but placed only a 95% confidence on his identification

due to the distance and lack of binoculars. The committee shared the observer's doubt and voted by majority not to accept the record.

Case 581: A Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis* was seen at the shelf break on a pelagic trip out of Sydney on May 11, 2013. The bird was seen only briefly and at a distance of 400 metres but the committee felt that the one poor quality photograph obtained along with the description which picked up the key identification features was adequate for acceptance. The committee voted by majority to accept the record and it becomes the 7<sup>th</sup> confirmed record for NSW. Roger McGovern

Case 582: A Blue Petrel *Halobaena caerulea* was seen 36.7km SSE of Wollongong Harbour during a pelagic trip on June 22, 2013. The bird remained present for about 30 minutes and approached the boat down to a distance of 2 -3 metres thereby providing the opportunity to obtain some excellent photographs. The photographs along with a very thorough description left no doubt as to the identity of the bird and the committee voted unanimously to accept the record. Although this was the 25<sup>th</sup> confirmed record for NSW, this species is much rarer than that figure would suggest since this is the first confirmed record since 1998 when a total of eleven sightings were reported – not all confirmed. Brook Whyllie

Case 583: A Soft-plumaged Petrel *Pterodroma mollis* on a Wings/Sunbird pelagic charter off Sydney on October 26, 2012. The bird was seen down to a range of 20 metres and was well photographed and described. The committee voted unanimously to accept the record and it becomes the 8<sup>th</sup> confirmed record for NSW. David Fisher

Case 594: A non-breeding male Cotton Pygmy-Goose *Nettapus coromandelianus* was seen and photographed at Lake Harrison, Geneva near Kyogle on August 27, 2013. Although the written description was a little lacking in detail, the photographs left no doubt as to the identity of the bird. The committee voted unanimously to accept the record and it becomes the 20<sup>th</sup> confirmed record for NSW. Richard and Margaret Alcorn

Case 595: Two Oriental Plovers *Charadrius veredus* were seen and well photographed at Bushell's Lagoon, Wilberforce on September 27, 2013. The birds were seen at close range and some excellent photographs accompanied the written description. The committee voted unanimously to accept the record and it becomes the 30<sup>th</sup> confirmed record for NSW. Michael Rutkowski

Case 596: Two Oriental Plovers *Charadrius veredus* were seen and well photographed at Long Reef Golf Course, Collaroy on October 8, 2013. The birds were first seen on October 6, 2013 and were present until at least October 12, 2013. The birds were seen by many observers and were well photographed. The committee voted unanimously to accept the record and it becomes the 31<sup>st</sup> confirmed record for NSW. Kerry Allen

Case 597: A group of up to six Oriental Plovers *Charadrius veredus* were seen and well photographed near the southern end of the third runway at Sydney Airport from October 15, 2013 until November 9, 2013. The observer provided excellent photographs and even some video footage of these birds during the duration of their 24 day stay. The committee voted unanimously to accept the record and it becomes the 32<sup>nd</sup> confirmed record for NSW. Nigel Coghlan

Case 598: A Little Shearwater *Puffinus assimilis* was found beach cast on Bherwerre Beach, Boodooree National Park, Wreck Bay on June 28, 2013. The written description and photographs

were diagnostic of this species and the committee voted unanimously to accept the record. It is only the second confirmed record in NSW since 2011 when Little Shearwater was added to the NSW ORAC Review List. Martin Schulz

Case 599: An Oriental Plover *Charadrius veredus* was seen at Moruya Beach, Moruya Heads on October 11, 2013. Although there were no photographs taken, the detailed description left no doubt as to the identification of the bird and the committee voted unanimously to accept the record which became the 33<sup>rd</sup> confirmed record for NSW. Julie Morgan

Case 600: An Oriental Plover *Charadrius veredus* was seen at The Dairy Swamp, Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah on September 27, 2013 until September 30, 2013. The bird was seen at close range and some excellent photographs accompanied the written description. The committee voted unanimously to accept the record and it becomes the 34<sup>th</sup> confirmed record for NSW. Alan Morris

Case 603: An Asian Dowitcher *Limnodromus semipalmatus* was seen at Comerong Island at the Shoalhaven River entrance during an outing of the Illawarra BOC on November 16, 2013. Although the bird was seen from a distance of 100 metres, the photographs and description were diagnostic and the committee voted unanimously to accept the record. This species is an uncommon visitor to NSW and this is only the 4<sup>th</sup> confirmed record. Charles Dove

Roger McGovern

Secretary NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee