

### NSW ORAC CASES DECIDED IN 2014

601	Southern Royal Albatross	off Ulladulla	October 18, 2009	Accepted
602	Northern Royal Albatross	off Wollongong	August 29, 2010	Accepted
604	Grey-headed Albatross	off Wollongong	August 12, 2006	Accepted
605	Grey-headed Albatross	off Wollongong	June 24, 2006	Accepted
606	Cotton Pygmy Goose	Kyogle	February 26, 2014	Accepted
607	Light-mantled Albatross	off Port Stephens	March 9, 2014	Accepted
608	Black-breasted Button-Quail	Cougal	March 7, 2014	Accepted
609	Long-toed Stint	south of Milton	April 27, 2014	Not Accepted
610	Cotton Pygmy Goose	Hillston	April 18, 2014	Accepted
611	Salvin's Albatross	off Wollongong	June 26, 2010	Accepted
612	Salvin's Albatross	off Sydney	October 8, 2011	Accepted
613	Northern Royal Albatross	off Wollongong	August 27, 2005	Accepted
614	Northern Royal Albatross	off Ulladulla	March 30, 2007	Accepted
615	Northern Royal Albatross	off Wollongong	July 26, 2008	Accepted
616	Northern Royal Albatross	off Wollongong	August 24, 2008	Accepted
617	Northern Royal Albatross	off Ulladulla	October 20, 2008	Accepted
618	Northern Royal Albatross	off Wollongong	August 24, 2013	Accepted
620	Long-toed Stint	Tuggerah	March 29, 2014	Accepted
622	Dusky Myzomela	Tweed Heads	June 29, 2014	Accepted
623	Oriental Plover	near Largs	January 26, 2014	Accepted
624	Cotton Pygmy Goose	Nana Glen	August 12, 2014	Accepted

### OVERVIEW

NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee (ORAC) reviewed 21 submissions in calendar year 2014 of which 20 were accepted and one was not accepted. The record which was not accepted related to a possible Long-toed Stint near Milton which was seen at some distance by experienced observers. Four of the eight committee members felt that, although the identification may have

been correct, there was just not enough detail provided to rule out a small Sharp-tailed Sandpiper or the very similar (albeit unlikely) Least Sandpiper

With the adoption of IOC taxonomy by NSW ORAC, there were three new albatross species added to the ORAC Review List in 2013 due to splits, these being Southern and Northern Royal Albatross and Salvin's Albatross. In addition, the committee added Grey-headed Albatross to the Review List since it was felt that many historical records of this species off NSW have been incorrectly identified young Black-browed and/or Campbell Albatross. The committee is indebted to Brook Whyllie and Nikolas Haass who researched every claimed sighting of these four species since the 1990's and submitted details of the cases which were thought to be reliable to NSW ORAC – all of these cases were accepted by the committee and comprised 12 of the 21 submissions reviewed in 2014.

### CASE SUMMARIES

Case 601: A juvenile or young immature Southern Royal Albatross *Diomedea epomophora* was seen and well photographed at the continental shelf break off Ulladulla on October 18, 2009. The high quality submission showed the key differentials between a young Southern Royal Albatross and the similar Northern Royal Albatross. The committee voted unanimously to accept this record and it becomes only the 3rd confirmed record to be accepted by NSW ORAC although there have doubtless been valid sightings of this species when it was not on the NSW ORAC Review List. Nikolas Haass and Raja Stephenson

Case 602: A Northern Royal Albatross *Diomedea sanfordi* was seen and well photographed at the continental shelf break off Wollongong on August 29, 2010. The photographs and description of the bird clearly showed it to be a Northern Royal Albatross and the committee voted unanimously to accept the record and it becomes the 4<sup>th</sup> confirmed record to be accepted by NSW ORAC. Nikolas Haass and Raja Stephenson

Case 604: An immature Grey-headed Albatross *Thalassarche chrysostoma* was seen and photographed some 3 km east of Wollongong Harbour on August 12, 2006. The author of this historical submission did an excellent job of analysing the key differentials between this species and young Black-browed/Campbell Albatross. The committee voted unanimously to accept this record and it is the 27<sup>th</sup> record of this species off NSW although some previous sightings may perhaps not be valid. Brook Whyllie

Case 605: An immature Grey-headed Albatross *Thalassarche chrysostoma* was seen and photographed some 15 km east of Wollongong Harbour on June 24, 2006. The author of this historical submission did an excellent job of analysing the key differentials between this species and young Black-browed/Campbell Albatross. The committee voted unanimously to accept this record and it is the 28<sup>th</sup> record of this species off NSW although some previous sightings may perhaps not be valid. Brook Whyllie

Case 606: Three male and two female Cotton Pygmy-Goose *Nettapus coromandelianus* were seen and photographed at Lake Harrison, Geneva near Kyogle on March 3, 2014. Although the written description was a little lacking in detail, the photographs left no doubt as to the identity of the birds.

The committee voted unanimously to accept the record and it becomes the 21<sup>st</sup> confirmed record for NSW. Robert Elvish

Case 607: A Light-mantled Albatross *Phoebastria palpebrata* was well seen and photographed about halfway to the continental shelf break off Port Stephens on March 9, 2014. The thorough description and the photographs left no doubt as to the identification and the committee voted unanimously to accept the record. It becomes the 22<sup>nd</sup> confirmed record for NSW and the first since 2012. Mick Roderick

Case 608: A male Black-breasted Buttonquail *Turnix melanogaster* was seen at Lion's Road, Border Ranges NP, 3 km north of Cougal on March 7, 2014. The combination of the description, the fact that this is within the known range for the species and the observer's experience with this species were sufficient for the committee to accept the record unanimously. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> confirmed record for NSW since 2000 and the first since 2005. Neville Schrader

Case 609: A bird thought to be a Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* was seen at wetlands at the end of Wilfords Lane, 3.6 km south of Milton on April 27th, 2014 and again on April 28th, 2014. Several members of the committee felt that, because the bird was seen at ranges of 250 – 300 metres and with the description not adequately ruling out other species, they could not accept the record. One committee member made the observation that this species should be moulting into breeding plumage at this time of the year and the description did not fit this moult stage. Also, even though Least Sandpiper is a most unlikely occurrence in Australia, any claimed Long-toed Stint sighting needs to rule out this possibility. The committee reluctantly voted not to accept this record even though the bird may well have been a Long-toed Stint.

Case 610: A female Cotton Pygmy-Goose *Nettion coromandelianus* was seen and photographed at Lake Woorabinda, Hillston on April 18, 2014. Although the written description was quite brief, the photographs left no doubt as to the identity of the bird. The committee voted unanimously to accept the record and it becomes the 22<sup>nd</sup> confirmed record for NSW. Joy Tansey

Case 611: A juvenile and a sub-adult Salvin's Albatross *Thalassarche salvini* were seen and well photographed on a pelagic trip off Wollongong on June 26, 2010. This was the first submission for this species since it was split by the IOC and added to the NSW ORAC Review List and the authors did an excellent job of highlighting the key features which differentiated these birds from young Shy/White-capped Albatross. The committee voted unanimously to accept this record which becomes the first record accepted by NSW ORAC since it was added to the Review List. Nicholas Haass, Raja Stephenson, Brook Whyllie, Dan Mantle, Robert Hynson and Lindsay Smith

Case 612: An adult Salvin's Albatross *Thalassarche salvini* was seen and well photographed on a pelagic trip off Sydney on October 8, 2011. Adult Salvin's Albatross are rarely reported in NSW waters and the detailed description together with excellent photographs left no doubt as to the identification of this bird. The committee voted unanimously to accept this record which becomes the second record accepted by NSW ORAC since it was added to the Review List. Nikolas Haass, Raja Stephenson and Robert Hynson

Cases 613 to 618 relate to a collation of historical records of Northern Royal Albatross by Nikolas Haass from 1999 to 2013 since this species was recently reinstated to the NSW ORAC Review List.

Nikolas found a total of twelve records for this period, all of which he submitted to the committee. Of the twelve records, six could not be accepted by the committee due to insufficient supporting documentation and Cases 613 to 618 comprise the six records which were accepted unanimously by the committee.

Case 613: A Northern Royal Albatross *Diomedea sanfordi* was seen and photographed on a pelagic trip off Wollongong on August 27, 2005. Peter Milburn and Brook Whyllie

Case 614: A Northern Royal Albatross *Diomedea sanfordi* was seen and photographed on a pelagic trip off Ulladulla on March 30, 2007. Lindsay Smith and Jason Goodwin

Case 615: A Northern Royal Albatross *Diomedea sanfordi* was seen and photographed on pelagic trips off Wollongong on July 26 and 27, 2008. Peter Milburn, Frank Valckenborgh and Rob Morris

Case 616: A Northern Royal Albatross *Diomedea sanfordi* was seen and photographed on a pelagic trip off Wollongong on August 24, 2008. Peter Milburn, Frank Valckenborgh and Rob Morris

Case 617: A Northern Royal Albatross *Diomedea sanfordi* was seen and photographed on a pelagic trip off Ulladulla on October 20, 2008. Peter Milburn and Anthony Overs

Case 618: A Northern Royal Albatross *Diomedea sanfordi* was seen and photographed on pelagic trips off Wollongong on August 24 and 25, 2013. Brook Whyllie, Mick Roderick and Frank Valckenborgh

Case 620: A Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* was seen and photographed at Dairy Swamp, Central Coast Wetlands, Tuggerah from March 29, 2014 until March 31, 2014. The well prepared submission and excellent photographs provided persuasive evidence as to the identity of this bird although one committee member was disappointed that Least Sandpiper (which has been reported in NZ on 3 or 4 occasions) had not been eliminated as a confusion species. The committee voted unanimously to accept the record and it becomes the 29<sup>th</sup> confirmed sighting in NSW and the fifth in the last ten years. Alan Morris and Trevor Waller

Case 622: A juvenile Dusky Myzomela *Myzomela obscura* was seen and poorly photographed at Terranora Broadwater, Tweed Heads on June 29, 2014. Despite the poor documentation, the committee considered it sufficient to confirm the identification and voted unanimously to accept the record. This is only the second confirmed record for this species in NSW even though there have been previous anecdotal reports from this area in the past. Nick Talbot

Case 623: An Oriental Plover *Charadrius veredus* (probably an immature bird) was seen and well photographed in a field beside Phoenix Park road, some 1.5 km east of Largs in the lower Hunter on January 26, 2014. The excellent description along with the diagnostic photographs left no doubt as to the identity of this bird. The committee voted unanimously to accept the record and it becomes the 34<sup>th</sup> confirmed record for NSW. Dan Williams and Trevor Williams

Case 624: An immature Cotton Pygmy-Goose *Nettapus coromandelianus* was seen and photographed at "Glenbrook" property on Nana Creek Road, Nana Glen on August 12 and 13, 2014. Although the written description was quite brief, the photographs left no doubt as to the identity of

the bird. The committee voted unanimously to accept the record and it becomes the 22nd confirmed record for NSW. Joy Tansey

Roger McGovern

Secretary NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee

January 16, 2015