

NSW ORAC CASES DECIDED IN 2022

787	Southern Fulmar	Magic Pt, Maroubra	June 11, 2020	Not Accepted
788	Little Curlew	Casino	October 15, 2021	Accepted
789	Little Curlew	SW of Griffith	November 8, 2021	Accepted
790	Little Curlew	Narran Lake NR	November 16, 2021	Accepted
791	Eyrean Grasswren	Winathee Station	Dec 28 – 29, 2021	Accepted
792	Little Curlew	Lake Bathurst	November 30, 2016	Accepted
793	Spinifexbird	east of Hungerford	November 9, 2021	Accepted
794	Little Curlew	Hexham Swamp NR	Jan 12 – 17, 2022	Accepted
795	Oriental Pratincole	Lake Goran	January 26, 2022	Accepted
796	Long-toed Stint	Lake Goran	February 5, 2022	Accepted
800	Long-toed Stint	Lake Wollumboola	Dec12, 20 – Feb 26, 21	Accepted
801	Oriental Pratincole	Lord Howe Island	March 4 – 8, 2021	Accepted
802	Torresian Imperial Pigeon	Kew	April 17-May 15, 202	Accepted
809	Red-footed Booby	off Sydney	March 12, 2022	Accepted
810	Sooty Albatross	off Port Stephens	May 22, 2022	Accepted
811	Bulwer's Petrel	off South West Rocks	March, 27, 2022	Accepted
812	South Polar Skua	off Kiama	April 23, 2022	Accepted

OVERVIEW

NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee (NSW ORAC) reviewed a total of 17 cases in calendar year 2021 with 16 cases being accepted and one which was not accepted. This is a substantial increase compared to the number of cases reviewed in 2020, no doubt a reflection of the increased amount of birding activity caused by the easing of Covid 19 restrictions.

There were some noteworthy cases in 2021 but the highlight of the year had to be the first ever record of Spinifexbird in NSW which was not only well seen and described but was also photographed, videoed and sound recorded by the observers Tiffany Mason, Amanda Bryan and Sue Gould. A Spinifexbird was recorded from Currawinya NP in Queensland on November 7, 2020 about 100kms from Yantabulla and there is some speculation that it may have been the same individual. The Eyrean Grasswren record from Winathee Station is a second record for NSW and is from close to the same location of the first record in April 2016 indicating that there is a resident population at

this location. The two Oriental Pratincole records are the first for NSW since February 2017 and are probably indicative of the unusual weather patterns in NSW during 2022. The Sooty Albatross off Port Stephens was an unexpected record for the participants of the May 22 pelagic and was the first sighting off the mainland coast of NSW since 2009.

With five cases of Little Curlew reviewed by the committee in 2022, the occurrence of this species has now exceeded the requirements for remaining on the NSW ORAC Review List and it was removed from the list on February 15, 2022.

CASE SUMMARIES

Case 787: A Southern Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialisoides* was claimed to have been seen during a land-based sea watch at Magic Point, Maroubra on June 11, 2020. The bird was seen twice although distantly in each case (1/3 the distance to the horizon and 2/3 the distance to the horizon) and no photographs were obtained. The description in the submission was not detailed and some committee members found the description a little confusing. In the initial round of voting, there were six votes in favour of acceptance and two votes for non acceptance – consequently, a second round of voting was required. Two committee members, who had voted for acceptance reluctantly in the first round, changed their vote to non acceptance in the second round and the report was therefore not accepted with only four votes for acceptance. This was a difficult case for the committee as is often the case with distantly seen seabirds and it was the general opinion of the committee that the bird may indeed have been a Southern Fulmar but that the evidence was not strong enough for acceptance.

Case 788: A juvenile Little Curlew *Numenius minutus* was well seen and photographed at Jabiru Wetlands, Queensland Road, Casino on October 15, 2021. The bird had been sighted by several observers since October 11, 2021 and the diagnostic photographs left no doubt as to the identity of the bird with all distinguishing features clearly shown. The committee voted unanimously in favour of acceptance and it becomes the 54th accepted record for NSW and the first since November 9, 2019 (NSW ORAC Case 736). Mark Delany

Case 789: A juvenile Little Curlew *Numenius minutus* was well seen and photographed in a rice field at Bringagee Road, south west of Griffith on November 8, 2021. Although very little description was provided in the submission, the diagnostic photographs left no doubt as to the identity of the bird with all distinguishing features clearly shown. The committee voted unanimously in favour of acceptance and it becomes the 55th accepted record for NSW. Michael Todd

Case 790: Three Little Curlew *Numenius minutus* were well seen and photographed on the eastern edge of Clear Lake in the Narran Lakes Nature Reserve on November 16, 2021. Although very little description was provided in the submission, the diagnostic photographs left no doubt as to the identity of the birds with all distinguishing features clearly shown. The committee voted unanimously in favour of acceptance and it becomes the 56th accepted record for NSW. Pat Johnston and Joanne Ocock

Case 791: Two Eyrean Grasswren *Amytornis gayderi* were sighted at Winathee Station, north of Hawker Gate adjacent to the South Australian border, the first being seen on December 28, 2021 at

6.00pm and the second on December 29, 2021 at 9.00am. The first bird gave close views for 5 to 10 seconds but photographs were not obtained. The second bird was located on a different dune the following morning and it spent considerable time calling from a nearby shrub where poor quality but diagnostic photographs were obtained. The photographs clearly show the large finch-like bill, plain pale breast and lack of dark facial marks all diagnostic features of Eyrean Grasswren. The rather rufous forehead, crown, upperparts and upper tail together with the quite bold white streaking on the scapulars appears to represent an undescribed variation in the eastern-most population of this poorly known species (pers. com. Ian McAllan). The committee accepted this record unanimously and it becomes the second confirmed record of Eyrean Grasswren in NSW with the previous sighting being close to the same location on April 3, 2016 (NSW ORAC Case 654). Chris Rehberg and Allon Traub

Case 792: A Little Curlew *Numenius minutus* was sighted at Lake Bathurst on November 30, 2016 and was accepted by the Canberra Ornithologists Group at the time but no submission was made to NSW ORAC. With the agreement of the observer, Mick Roderick prepared a brief submission providing links to all the records related to the sighting. The committee voted unanimously in favour of acceptance and it becomes the 57th accepted record for NSW. Michael Lenz

Case 793: A Spinifexbird *Poodytes carteri* was sighted in lignum bushes on private land 2kms north of Willara Crossing Road, Yantabulla on November 9, 2021. The bird was seen and photographed in the morning and again in the afternoon, and video footage and sound recordings were also obtained. The description, photographs, video footage and sound recording all left no doubt as to the identification and the committee voted unanimously in favour of acceptance. It becomes the first confirmed record of Spinifexbird in NSW and the committee thanked the observer for taking the time to prepare a very thorough submission for this historic record. Tiffany Mason

Case 794: A Little Curlew *Numenius minutus* was well seen and photographed on the Old Pipeline Track, Hexham Swamp Nature Reserve on January 12, 2022 and was subsequently seen by many birders until the last sighting on January 17, 2022. Although very little description was provided in the submission, the diagnostic photographs left no doubt as to the identity of the bird with all distinguishing features clearly shown. The committee voted unanimously in favour of acceptance and it becomes the 58th accepted record for NSW. Rachel Ivory

Case 795: An Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* was seen on Goran Lake Road, Lake Goran on January 26, 2022. The submission included two photographs of the bird, one sitting and one standing but there were no photographs of the bird in flight. One committee member voted not to accept this record since Common and Black-winged Pratincole could not be totally eliminated without evidence of distinguishing features such as short tail streamers producing a long primary extension, chestnut underwing coverts and all dark secondaries with no white trailing edge. However, the remainder of the committee voted for acceptance and it becomes the 16th confirmed record in NSW but only the sixth to be accepted by NSW ORAC. Denise and Christopher Kane

Case 796: A Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* was seen and well photographed at Lake Goran on February 5, 2022. The description and excellent photographs clearly separated this bird from any possible confusion species such as Sharp-tailed Sandpiper and even from Least Sandpiper which has not been recorded in Australia. The bird was considered to be an adult which was moulting from basic to alternate plumage. The committee voted unanimously to accept this record which becomes

the 31st confirmed sighting in NSW and the first since a record from Stockton Spit on November 22, 2014 (NSW ORAC Case 637). Chris Rehberg

Case 800: Two Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* were seen and photographed at Lake Wollumboola, Shoalhaven on December 25, 2020. The birds, or at least one of them, continued to be seen by multiple observers until February 26, 2021. The detailed description and diagnostic photographs clearly separated these birds from any possible confusion species – they were both considered to be adults with the southern bird being in basic plumage and the northern bird in formative (first winter) plumage. The committee voted unanimously in favour of acceptance and it becomes the 32nd confirmed record for NSW. Demetrios Bertzeletos

Case 801: An Oriental Pratincole *Glareola maldivarum* was seen at the eastern end of the airstrip on Lord Howe Island on March 4, 2021 and again on March 8, 2021 – what was assumed to be the same individual had previously been reported at the same location on February 22, 2021. Although the description was brief, the photographs were completely diagnostic of an adult Oriental Pratincole and the committee voted unanimously in favour of acceptance. It becomes the 17th confirmed record in NSW but only the seventh to be accepted by NSW ORAC. Dr Helen Larson and Jeff Larson

Case 802: A Torresian Imperial Pigeon *Ducula spilorrhhoa* was well seen and photographed at the corner of Sunnyvale Road and Ivers Road, Kew on April 24, 2022. The diagnostic photographs confirmed that it was a juvenile bird due to the absence of barring on the undertail coverts, and the committee voted unanimously in favour of acceptance. It becomes the 12th confirmed record for NSW and the first since NSW ORAC Case 735 which involved a bird seen at Coffs Harbour Cemetery on November 3, 2019. Chris Rehberg

Case 809: An adult white morph Red-footed Booby *Sula sula* was well seen and photographed on a pelagic trip out of Sydney on March 12, 2022. The consensus of the observers and committee members is that it was just finishing moult from 3rd cycle (3rd immature) to 4th cycle (adult) which accounted for the untidy pattern in the under primary coverts. The committee voted unanimously in favour of acceptance and it becomes the 16th confirmed record in NSW and the 13th to be accepted by NSW ORAC. Robert Hynson and Greg McLachlan

Case 810: A Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria fusca* was well observed and photographed on a pelagic trip out of Port Stephens on May 22, 2022. The description and photographs left no doubt as to the identification and the pale flecking throughout the body together with the indistinct sulcus suggested that it was an immature bird. The committee voted unanimously in favour of acceptance and it becomes the 20th confirmed record of Sooty Albatross in NSW and the first mainland record since July 23, 2009 when a bird was seen off Jervis Bay on July 10, 2009 (NSW ORAC Case 485)

Case 811: A Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii* was sighted on a pelagic trip out of South West Rocks on March 27, 2022. The bird was not identified on the boat at the time that it made a brief appearance but was clearly identified when photographs were examined later that evening. Even though there were no images of the bird's upperparts, the committee agreed that the bird was indeed a Bulwer's Petrel and voted unanimously in favour of acceptance. It becomes the 6th accepted record for NSW with all previous sightings occurring between December 2019 and March 2020. Liam Murphy and Nick Thompson

Case 812: A South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki* was well seen and photographed on a pelagic trip out of Kiama on April 23, 2022. The bird was well seen down to a range of about 100 metres and the excellent diagnostic photographs show a South Polar Skua in the pale to intermediate morph range of the continuous spectrum. The committee voted unanimously in favour of acceptance and it becomes the 15th confirmed record for NSW and the fifth to be accepted by NSW ORAC since pale to intermediate morph South Polar Skua was removed from the BARC Review List. Graham Barwell

UNCONFIRMED REPORTS

With an increasing number of reports of unusual or rare species being posted onto on-line and social media sites, NSW ORAC is concerned that some of these reports do not receive the level of scrutiny required to verify them as confirmed records. It was agreed by the committee members that NSW ORAC would attempt to gather more information from the authors of postings of species on the NSW ORAC Review List in the form of photographs and/or a submission. If, at the time of publishing this year-end summary, there were reports for which submissions had not been made to NSW ORAC or BARC for species on their Review Lists, NSW ORAC would publish the report as an unconfirmed sighting to clarify that it had not yet undergone a review by the relevant rarities committee. There are ten such reports which have been published on eBird, Eremaea and/or Facebook sites in 2022, and they are listed below.

South Polar Skua was reported from Redhead Beach, Lake Macquarie on March 28, 2020

Barn Swallow was reported from Hastings Point on January 5, 2022

Black-winged Petrel was reported from the South West Rocks pelagic trip on January 23, 2022

Red-footed Booby was reported from the South West Rocks pelagic trip on March 13, 2022

Eyrean Grasswren was reported from The Dunes Scenic Drive, Tibooburra on August 3, 2022

Eyrean Grasswren was reported from the Wild Desert Project Area, Sturt NP on August 11, 2022

Eyrean Grasswren was reported from Wild Desert Fence Training Area, Sturt NP on Sept 20, 2022

South Polar Skua was reported from the Eden pelagic trip on October 30, 2022

Pied Heron was reported from Narran Lake on November 29, 2022

Fairy Tern was reported from The Entrance on December 1, 2022

Roger McGovern

Secretary NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee

February 4, 2023