

Rare and Vagrant Birds in the Falkland Islands 2002

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This report summarises the sightings of rare and vagrant birds submitted to Falklands Conservation or made by the authors and employees of Falklands Conservation during 2002.

Sightings that are backed up by photographic evidence are indicated with an asterisk*.

Species that are frequently recorded during most years (including cattle egret, coscoroba swan, Chilean swallow and barn swallow) have been omitted from this report.

Although this list is not comprehensive and only covers those records that are reported to Falklands Conservation, 2002 seems to have been a particularly good year for rare birds with six firsts for the Falkland Islands.

Systematic list

Great grebe *Podiceps major*

Over recent years great grebes have been recorded in low numbers on an annual basis (White and Henry 2001). During 2002, an immature great grebe was reported from Sea Lion Island on 14 November (NH and JCr). This bird remained all summer and had attained adult plumage by 20 February 2003.

Pied-billed grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*

On 8 June a pied-billed grebe was observed in Stanley Harbour (DG and JCh, identified by AH). The bird favoured the west end of the harbour where it stayed for eight weeks. This may represent the first record of pied-billed grebe in the Falkland Islands.

Chinstrap penguin *Pygoscelis Antarctica*

Surely one of the most unusual sightings during the year occurred on 26 November when a chinstrap penguin was observed crossing the Mount Kent road some 8 miles from the nearest open water. The bird was encountered by an FC field team (NH, JCr, LB, PT and MT) on their way to Volunteer Point and was taken to Berkeley Sound for release.

Erect-crested penguin *Eudyptes sclateri*

A single bird first seen in a rockhopper penguin colony on Pebble Island in 1997, returned again in 2002.

Shy/white-capped albatross *Thalassarche cauta/steadii*

One juvenile was seen south-east of Beauchêne Island on 10 April (TR). Immature birds are regularly sighted in low numbers within Falkland Islands waters during the autumn (White *et al.* 2002).

White-headed petrel *Pterodroma lessonii*

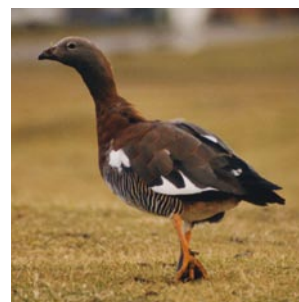
One was observed over the north of the Falklands Outer Conservation Zone (FOCZ) from a fishing vessel on 06 May (AB). Over recent years, white-headed petrels have rarely been sighted (White *et al.* 2002) and are regarded as vagrants to Falkland Islands waters.

Soft-plumaged petrel *P. mollis*

Soft-plumaged petrels are regular summer / autumn visitors to the offshore waters surrounding the Falkland Islands (White *et al.* 2002), however, they are infrequently sighted from land. On 9 January one was seen off Hookers Point (PM) and between 21



Chinstrap penguin, one of the more unusual sightings of the year, seen on the Mount Kent road.
TUI DE ROY.



Ashy-headed goose, distinguished from the ruddy-headed by grey head and neck with white eye-ring and chestnut breast. A total of four birds were seen in 2002.

March and 3 May up to five soft-plumaged petrels were sighted off Cape Pembroke (AH).

Broad-billed prion *Pachyptila vittata*

One was seen over offshore waters to the north-west of the Falkland Islands on 21 February (TR).

Grey petrel *Procellaria cinerea*

On 26 March a single grey petrel was observed from Cape Pembroke (AH). Like soft-plumaged petrels, grey petrels are sighted over offshore waters but are rarely sighted from land.

Manx shearwater *Puffinus puffinus*

A single Manx shearwater was sighted north of Cape Dolphin on 26 October (TR). At-sea observations (White *et al.* 2002) indicate that Manx shearwaters are present within Falkland Islands waters in very low numbers during the summer months.

Georgian diving-petrel *Pelecanoides georgicus**

On 29 January a Georgian diving-petrel was found on board a cruise ship (THi). This is only the second record of this species from Falkland Islands waters, however, they are likely to be more numerous than records imply.

Cocoi heron *Ardea cocoi**

Cocoi herons are regarded as irregular vagrants to the Falkland Islands (Woods 1988). During 2002 there were two reported records; between 27 and 31 July one was present at Fitzroy (AE and SE) and one was sighted at Port Louis on 23 October (NH*).

Great white egret *Egretta alba*

On 15 July a great white egret was sighted on the Murrel River (BT).

Snowy egret *E. thula*

Over recent years snowy egrets have rarely been recorded, however, 2002 appears to have been an exceptional year with three separate sightings. Between 9 and 17 March one was sighted at Estancia (AN and AH), another at MPA from 16-18 March (AH) and on 10 April one was spotted at Surf Bay (DC).

Buff-necked ibis *Theristicus melanopsis*

A buff-necked ibis was first sighted at Volunteer Point on 14 January (SH). It remained until at least 23 January when it was observed feeding amongst sea cabbage (RW). A second bird was observed on 15 July at Port Stephens (PR).

Ashy-headed goose *Chloephaga poliocephala* *

Ashy-headed geese were regarded as rare breeders within the islands during the 1960s and possibly 1980s but there are no recent records of breeding. During 2002 there were two records totalling four birds; three at Stanley Dairy between 9 October and 11 November (DD*) and one at Motley Point on 18 November (NH, JCr, TR, JH, AB*).

Cinnamon teal *Anas cyanoptera* *

Cinnamon teal are regarded as rare resident breeders (Woods and Woods 1997). From 3 to 20 November a pair was present on Cape Pembroke (AH and THe).

Cinereous harrier *Circus cinereus*

Cinereous harriers were formerly Falkland Island breeders, however through a combination of habitat loss and persecution, they are much reduced in number and unlikely to breed in the islands today (Woods 1988). Over recent years there have been very few sightings (White and Henry 2001, Henry and Reid 2002). During 2002, one was sighted at Fox Point on 2 March (AE).

Austral rail *Rallus antarcticus* *

Although resident throughout Patagonia, austral rail was recorded within the Falkland Islands for the first time during May 2002. A single bird remained on New Island from 10 to 25 May (KC and TC).

American purple gallinule *Porphyryla martinica*

Recorded infrequently over recent years (Woods 1988, White and Henry 2001), however, they appear to have a very poor survival rate, as most individuals are dead on discovery. During 2002, a single American purple gallinule was sighted at Port Howard on 14 April (RR).

Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus* *

Whimbrel is probably a regular vagrant / visitor to the Falkland Islands with several records over recent years. During 2002, Shag Island beach, Salvador, produced two records, which may be the same bird; firstly on 25 February (GL) and 9 December (MM and SM*).

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

A single sanderling was observed on Bertha's Beach on 15 September (TR). This species appears to have become rarer in the last few years.

Baird's sandpiper *C. bairdii*

Baird's sandpipers are thought to be regular visitors to the Falklands. One was sighted at Cape Dolphin on 19 January (AH and BH) and up to five were seen on Cape Pembroke between 28 November and 14 December (NH, AH, MM and SM)

Least seedsnipe *Thinocorus rumicivorus*

Three records of least seedsnipe during 2002 add to several other records of this species over recent years (White and Henry 2001). The first sighting occurred at Greenpatch on 16 April (PW and DW), on 13 and 14 September one was seen at Chartres, and one was seen on Beaver Island on 21 September (TR, NH, PT).

Arctic skua *Stercorarius parasiticus*

One seen on the Burdwood Bank on 8 January (TR).

Franklin's gull *Larus pipixcan*

One was observed on 31 May from a fishing vessel to the south-east of Burdwood Bank (AB). This is thought to be the second record of this species for the Falklands.

Blue ground-dove *Claravis pretiosa*

One landed on a fishing boat in the north of the FOCZ on 1 October (TR). This is probably the first record of this species in the Falkland Islands.

Violet-eared dove *Zenaida auriculata*

Violet-eared doves have been regularly recorded over the years (Woods 1988, Henry and Reid 2002). They habitually associate with settlements and apparently have good survival rates,

which may increase the chances of this species being recorded when compared with some of the other more elusive vagrants. During 2002, a single violet-eared dove was sighted in Stanley on 22 May (AH and SM).

Bar-winged cinclodes *Cinclodes fuscus* *

Three bar-winged cinclodes were sighted on Bleaker Island between 25 May and 21 August (MM and RD). These represent the second to fourth records of this species in the Falkland Islands.

White-crested elaenia *Elaenia albiceps*

Over recent years, white-crested elaenias have been regularly recorded (White and Henry 2001, Henry and Reid 2002). During 2002, one was sighted in Government House Garden on 2 March (JS and CH).

Fire-eyed diucon *Xolmis pyrope*

Fire-eyed diucons have been recorded regularly in the Falklands over recent years (White and Henry 2001, Henry and Reid 2002). Those that make it to the islands show good survival rates and are often seen in the same area for several months (Woods 1988). A single fire-eyed diucon was sighted in Stanley on 12 May (SM).

Grey-breasted martin *Progne chalybea*

The first record of grey-breasted martin for the Falkland Islands occurred at Gypsy Cove during January 2002 (AC and PL).

Southern martin *P. modesta*

It appears that southern martins were formerly more regular visitors to the Falklands than recent records indicate (Woods 1988). On 11 November a single southern martin was sighted at Moody Brook (HM).

Patagonian yellow finch *Sicalis lebruni*

On 13 and 14 April the first Patagonian yellow-finch to be recorded in the Falklands was sighted at Port San Carlos (TA).

Mourning sierra finch *Phrygilus fruticeti* *

There were two records of mourning sierra finch during 2002. One was present at Fitzroy from 2 August to 27 September (AE and SE*) and on 21 September a single bird was sighted singing on Beaver Island (TR, NH, PT*).

Rufous-collared sparrow *Junco capensis* *

Between 31 March and 10 April an FC field team (DC, JH, AH, NH and BS) sighted up to 10 rufous-collared sparrows while working on Steeple Jason. These records add to numerous others over recent years (White and Henry 2001).

Shiny cowbird *Molothrus bonariensis* *

Between 7 and 20 April a shiny cowbird was present at Johnson's Harbour settlement (GS and JS). This was the first record of this species within the Falkland Islands.



The shiny cowbird – first recorded in the Falklands in 2002.

List of observers:

AB Andy Black, AC Andy Clarke, AE Alan Eagle, AH Alan Henry, AN Andrew Newman, BH B. Henry, BS Ben Sullivan, BT Bower Tristram, CH Chris Harbard, DC Darren Christie, DD Doreen Davies, DG David Gray, DW D. Whitney, GL Gordon Liddle, GS George Smith, HM Hay Miller, JCh Jan Cheek, JCr John Cromarty, JH Jeff Halliday, JSm Jenny Smith, JSt Jim Stevenson, KC Kim Chater, LB Leandro Bugoni, MM Mike Morrison, MT Malcolm Thompson, NH Nic Huin, PL Prof. Lawton, PM Phil Middleton, PR Paul Robertson, PT Phillipa Thompson, PW P. Whitney, RD R. Dickson, RR R. Reeves, SE Sonia Eagle, RW Robin Woods, SH Sharon Halford, SM Sue Morrison, TA Tony Anderson, TC Tony Chater, The Trish Henry, THi T. Hirtle, TR Tim Reid.