

# Rare and Vagrant Birds in the Falkland Islands 2003

Andy Black, Sue Morrison, Mike Morrison, Robin Woods and Alan Henry

*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 2003. Several species (including Cattle Egret, Coscoroba Swan, Baird's Sandpiper, Chilean Swallow and Barn Swallow) that have been recorded in reasonable numbers over recent years are not now included in this report.*

## Systematic list

### Great Grebe *Podiceps major*

An immature Great Grebe, first reported on 14 November 2002 (Black, Henry and Reid 2002), was still present on Sea Lion Island on 20 February 2003 having attained adult plumage (J. Luxton). Also observed at New Island (T. and K. Chater).

### Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*

A single Pied-billed Grebe was sighted in the harbour at New Island settlement on 2 June, seen in the same location up till the 10th October (T. and K. Chater).

### Erect-crested Penguin *Eudyptes sclateri*

Since January 1997, a single Erect-crested Penguin has made an annual pilgrimage to the Marble Rookery, Pebble Island. This year M. Morrison reported seeing the bird on 15 November but it had been present for several weeks prior to that (J. Jennings). A second bird was also seen on New Island (T. and K. Chater).

### Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria fusca*

Since 1998, at-sea surveys conducted by Falklands Conservation have shown Sooty Albatrosses to be rare but regular visitors to the oceanic waters to the east and north-east of the Falklands during the summer and autumn months. This year, a Sooty Albatross was recorded approximately 90 nautical miles (nm) to the east of Stanley on 27 March (A. Black). More unusually, a single Sooty Albatross was sighted off Rookery Cliffs, Saunders Island, on 1 December (D. and S. Pole-Evans). The bird was later seen to alight and was photographed near the Black-browed Albatross colony.

**A Sooty Albatross near the Black-browed Albatross colony on Saunders Island.**  
D. Pole-Evans.



### Great-winged Petrel *Pterodroma macroptera*

A Great-winged Petrel was recorded from a fishery patrol vessel approximately 25nm to the east of Stanley on 14 March (A. Black). This represents the fifth record of this species for the Falklands.

### Leach's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

On 27 March, a single Leach's Storm-petrel was recorded approximately 120nm to the east of Stanley while returning

from undertaking seabird surveys around South Georgia (A. Black). This is the first record of this species for the Falklands.

### Georgian Diving-petrel *Pelecanoides georgicus*

A dead bird was sighted on Villiers Street, Stanley, on 9 March, further investigation identified the bird as a Georgian Diving-petrel (N. Huin). This species is likely to be present within the Falklands conservation zones, however, Common Diving-petrel *P. urinatrix* and this species can not be reliably separated at-sea.

### Cocoi Heron *Ardea cocoi*

Multiple sightings of what are presumed to be the same birds indicate that Cocoi Herons are quite able to survive the Falklands winter. A single Cocoi Heron was sighted at Duperrey Harbour on 22 March (P. and D. Whitney) this bird was seen in the same area on 30 April and again on 4 October (S. and M. Morrison). A second bird was reported on Bleaker Island on 19 April (J. and C. May). The record of a Cocoi Heron on Bleaker Island on 11 November (R. Woods) is presumed to be the same bird. A third was reported at Blackhill Corner Bridge, Roy Cove, on 22 October (S. Bonner).

### Snowy Egret *Egretta thula*

A Snowy Egret was seen near the bridge leading to FIPASS, Stanley, on 7 April (A. Henry).

### Roseate Spoonbill *Ajaia ajaja*

Several sightings of Roseate Spoonbills occurred along the east coast of East Falkland between 10 and 18 May. It is not clear how many represent re-sightings of the same birds but at least five individuals were sighted simultaneously. The first record of two birds came from Cape Pembroke on 10 May (A. Henry). The following day, up to five birds were seen on Cape Pembroke (many observers). A single bird was sighted in the creek at Fitzroy on 12 May (S. Felton). This bird was later found dead and is now on display as a mounted specimen in Stanley Museum. On 13 May three birds were seen on the beach at Whalebone Cove and were later seen flying north (A. Henry). Finally, a single bird was reported at Fish Creek, Darwin, on the 18 May (S. and M. Morrison, A. Henry).



**Several Roseate Spoonbills were recorded during the year. One individual is now on display in the Stanley Museum.**  
Alan Henry.

### Ashy-headed Goose *Chloephaga ploiocephala*

A single Ashy-headed Goose was reported at Hill Head on 25 October (L. and J. Harris). A second bird was observed on New Island (T. and K. Chater).

### Cinnamon Teal *Anas cyanoptera*

During 2003, there were four reported sightings of Cinnamon Teal; one observed on the small pond at Elephant Beach, Smylies Farm, on 1 January (A. Henry, S. and M. Morrison) a single male on the pond in North Harbour, New Island 20 October (T. and K. Chater), a pair on pond in Ship Harbour New Island on 25 October (T. and K. Chater) and the other on Green Pond, Newhouse, on 8 December (A. Henry, S. and M. Morrison).

### Red Shoveler *Anas platalea*

As with the majority of previous records of this species (Woods and Woods 1997), all three sightings of Red Shovelers came from East Falkland. On 1 December, J. Cromarty sighted a Red Shoveler at Volunteer Point. A single male was observed at Ronda Pond, Salvador, on 7 December and was still present on 29 December (S. and M. Morrison). Six birds, three males and three females, were reported at Cattle Point, North Arm, on 13 December (S. and M. Morrison). This sighting of several males and females during the breeding season suggests that breeding could be possible. Also observed on New Island (T. and K. Chater).

### Rosy-billed Pochard *Netta peposaca*

Rosy-billed Pochards have rarely been recorded over recent years (White and Henry 2001). During 2003, there were five records totalling 11 birds, which represents a good year for this species. Four birds, two males two females, were sighted at Big Pond, Pebble Island, on 12 November (Naturetrek Group), a single male was observed at Surf Bay Pond on 6 December (A. Henry), four birds, three males and a female, at Ronda Pond, Salvador, on 7 December, (S. and M. Morrison), a single male on Picasso Pond, Evelyn Station, on 8 December (A. Henry, S. and M. Morrison) and a single male at Keppel Island on 16 December (N. Huin).

### Cinereous Harrier *Circus cinereus*

Cinereous Harriers were formerly Falkland Island breeding birds, however, it is unlikely that they do so today. Over recent years this species has been recorded annually but in low numbers with the majority of records coming from East Falkland. This year, a juvenile Cinereous Harrier was reported from North East Island, adjacent to Lively Island, on 20 September (N. Huin). Also observed on New Island (T. and K. Chater).

### Red-gartered Coot *Fulica armillata*

A single Red-gartered Coot on pond in North Harbour, New Island, together with a White-winged Coot (see below) on 20 October (T. and K. Chater).

### White-winged Coot *Fulica leucoptera*

White-winged Coots have regularly been reported over recent years. This year produced six sightings: a single bird on the pond in North Harbour, New Island, on 20 October (T. and K. Chater), a single bird on Hawk's Nest Pond, West Falkland, on 10 November (Naturetrek Group), a single bird on Big Pond, Pebble Island, on 12 November (Naturetrek Group), a single bird on Bleaker Island 23 November (W. Wagstaff), four birds on Keppel Island on 16 December (N. Huin) and a single bird on Sea Lion Island on 20 December (A. Henry).

### Hudsonian Godwit

#### *Limosa haemastaca*

Hudsonian godwits are regarded as irregular vagrants to the Falkland Islands and the last records were in 1997 (White and Henry 2001). While conducting a survey of the Falklands southern sea lion population, M. Riddy, C. Duck and T. Loughlan reported one bird on Sandy Tyssen Island, Falkland Sound, on 22 January 2003. On 2 March, 21 birds were sighted at Kelp Point, Fitzroy, (A. Henry, S. and M. Morrison). These birds were re-sighted several times by various observers over the following week with at least 16 still present on 9 March. On 3 December up to 56 Hudsonian godwits were sighted in this same location (A. and S. Eagle). Also observed on New Island (T. and K. Chater).



**Hudsonian Godwits in winter and summer plumage.**

Alan Henry.

### Pectoral Sandpiper *Calidris melanotos*

During 2003, there were two records of Pectoral Sandpiper; on 28 November one was sighted at Volunteer Point (J. Cromarty) and a single bird was observed on Green Pond, Newhouse, on 8 December (A. Henry, S. and M. Morrison),



**Grey Phalarope on Surf Bay Pond. Mike Morrison.**

### Grey Phalarope *Phalaropus fulicarius*

Seabird surveys, conducted by Falklands Conservation since 1998, have produced two further records of Grey Phalarope within the Falkland conservation zones, both in December 1998. On 11 February, T. Reid recorded a single Grey Phalarope approximately 80nm west of Weddell Island and on 16 March, G. and A. Liddle sighted one on Surf Bay Pond.

### Arctic Tern *Sterna paradisaea*

A single Arctic Tern was sighted approximately 140nm to the south of Stanley on 5 October (T. Reid).

### Antarctic Tern *S. vittata*

On 7 October A. Douse reported two Antarctic Terns in the company of a large flock of Brown-hooded Gulls *Larus maculipennis* at Surf Bay.

### Least Seedsnipe *Thinocorus rumicivorus*

A single Least Seedsnipe was seen from a speeding Rover on the north camp road to the west of Teal Inlet (J. Scott).

### Violet-eared Dove *Zenaida auriculata*

A single bird was sighted on Short Street, Stanley on 19 March (M. Butler and M. McLeod).

### Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus*

S. Knight sent the body of a dead Yellow-billed Cuckoo into the Falklands Conservation office on 19 December. The bird was found on Coast Ridge, Fox Bay, and was probably killed by a domestic cat. This represents the first record of this species in the Falkland Islands.

### Dark-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus melacoryphus*

On 12 February, a dead Dark-billed Cuckoo was found on Brandon Road, Stanley (W. Goss). This bird suffered a similar fate to the aforementioned Yellow-billed Cuckoo and was dispatched by the finder's three-legged cat. This is only the second record of this species in the Falklands.

### Rufus-backed Negrito *Lessonia rufa*

A single Austral Negrito was sighted by J. Scott at Seal Cove Camp, west side of Motley Point, on 16 November. Also observed on New Island (T. and K. Chater).

### Elaenia species *Elaenia spp.*

Two or three Elaenias were observed hunting flying insects around New Island settlement on 11 March. They were thought to be White-crested Elaenia *E. albiceps*, although the white crest was not observed (T. and K. Chater).

### Cliff Swallow *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota*

On 12 March, a Cliff Swallow put in a brief appearance on Fitzroy Road, Stanley (N. Huin). Subsequently, the bird was seen by numerous observers between 14 and 22 March in the John Street area of Stanley, often in the company of Chilean Swallows. On 22 March the Cliff Swallow was observed singing while perched. Also seen on New Island (T. and K. Chater).

### Rufous-collared Sparrow *Zonotrichia capensis*

Three Rufous-collared Sparrows were first observed feeding on grass seeds near the main house on West Point Island on 12 March (R. Woods). The head pattern indicated they were of the southern race *Z. c. australis*. At least seven birds were seen frequently near the settlement on West Point until 27 March when they apparently departed, the day before a south-easterly gale (R. Napier). On 25 March a single bird was reported on Fitzroy Road, Stanley (S. and M. Morrison).