

FIRST RECORDS OF KERGUELEN PETREL *PTERODROMA BREVIROSTRIS* AT HEARD ISLAND

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The Kerguelen Petrel *Pterodroma brevirostris* breeds at Tristan da Cunha and Gough Islands in the South Atlantic Ocean, and at Iles Kerguelen, Iles Crozet and the Prince Edward Islands in the South Indian Ocean (Serventy *et al.* 1971, Watson 1975, Williams 1984, Jouventin *et al.* 1984, Weimerskirch *et al.* 1989). The non-breeding range is circumpolar in sub-Antarctic and Antarctic seas, and generally north of the pack ice (Harper *et al.* 1972, Watson 1975). The species has not been recorded from Heard or the McDonald Islands (Downes *et al.* 1959, Woehler in press), in spite of these islands' proximity to the large breeding population at Iles Kerguelen, approximately 360 km north-west of Heard Island. Weimerskirch *et al.* (1989) estimated the breeding population at Iles Kerguelen to be tens of thousands of pairs.

On the evening of 21 February 1988, a Kerguelen Petrel was captured at the Australian National Antarctic Research Expeditions' (ANARE) station at Atlas Cove, at the northwest of Heard Island. The weather at the time was calm, with low cloud and misty drizzle, and there were many prions *Pachyptila* sp. and diving petrels *Pelecanoides* sp. sitting on the ground and flying around the station lights. The Kerguelen Petrel was measured, examined for parasites, photographed and then released.

The measurements obtained from the bird are presented below (Table 1), in comparison with morphological data from Serventy *et al.*, (1971). The culmen and tarsal data are not absolute in describing the sex of the individual but the bird was likely to have been a female. No external parasites

were noticed. All primary and tail feathers were fresh, and showed no sign of abrasion. It is likely that the bird had recently completed moult.

A pectoral girdle with a pair of wings of a Kerguelen Petrel, presumably left by Subantarctic Skuas *Catharacta antarctica*, had been collected above the high water mark on Stephenson Spit, on the northeast coast of Heard Island, two days earlier on 19 February. The wings were dry and slightly weathered when found, and were of unknown age or origin (P.B. Copley pers. comm.).

Heard Island was occupied by ANARE between 1947 and 1955, and then only intermittently between 1963 and 1987 (Woehler in press). Given the pelagic range of the species (Watson 1975), it is likely that the absence of this species from the region of Heard Island before these first two records is due to the lack of observers, rather than the true absence of the species.

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TABLE 1

MORPHOLOGICAL DATA OBTAINED FROM A KERGUÉLEN PETREL *PTERODROMA BREVIROSTRIS* AT HEARD ISLAND, 21 FEBRUARY 1988. COMPARABLE DATA FROM SERVENTY *ET AL.* (1971)

Measurement (mm)	Heard Island Specimen	Male (n = 4)		Female (n = 12)	
		Mean	Range	Mean	Range
Culmen	27.4	26.9	(26.4-27.5)	26.6	(25.5-28.5)
Wing	260	252	(242-260)	258	(250-265)
Tail	106	108	(104-111)	107	(101-114)
Tarsus	40.0	38	(37-39)	38	(34-40)

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