

A CAPE PETREL OFF MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA.

On an organized boat trip to look for pelagic birds off Monterey, Monterey County, California, on 9 September 1962 I saw a strange sea bird that I later identified as a Cape Petrel (*Daption capensis*). This bird was seen by some of the other people on the boat including Robert O. Paxton and Richard Stallcup, who also agreed upon the subsequent identification. The following description is taken from my notes:

Upperparts: entire head including the nape, sides of the head and throat, dark blackish-brown; back and scapulars sooty-brown boldly speckled with white; color of the rump and tail not noted. Wings: upper side of the primaries, secondaries and upper wing coverts dark sooty-brown except for a bold white patch near the base of the primaries, and another bold white patch near the body just out from the scapulars; under sides of the wings immaculate white. Underparts: chin and throat dark blackish-brown ending in an abrupt line across the upper breast; breast, flanks, belly and under tail coverts immaculate white. Soft parts: color of bill and legs not noted. Size: bird appeared to be about the size of a Sooty Shearwater (*Puffinus griseus*), but body appeared shorter and stockier; wings about the same length as those of the Sooty Shearwater; wing-beat similar to that of the Sooty Shearwater.

Three sketches of the bird (Fig. 1) were made shortly after I disembarked from the boat, about three hours after seeing the bird.

When first seen the Cape Petrel was flying alongside the boat at a distance of about 40 feet with a small flock of Sooty Shearwaters that had just flushed from the water. It rapidly passed ahead of the boat and after about eight seconds was lost from sight in a fog that was rising off the water like steam. The ocean was glassy calm all day, and there was only a slight breeze blowing.

When I first saw the bird its underparts were towards me. My first reaction was that it was a New Zealand Shearwater (*Puffinus bulleri*) because of its immaculate white under parts; however, the bird had a dark head, and when it tilted over I saw the checkered black and white back and the two bold white patches on each wing and realized that it was a bird I had never seen before. While viewing the bird through my 10 power binoculars I was trying to call other people's attention to it and to make mental notes of its characters. In doing this I failed to note anything striking about the rump and tail, and also did not notice what color the legs, feet, and bill were.

One of my earlier thoughts was that the bird might be a partial albino Sooty Shearwater; however, it bore a striking resemblance to a Cape Petrel; the pattern was symmetrical and very uniform, and the flight feathers were white below and dark above. All these factors indicate the bird was a genuine Cape Petrel that had crossed the equator into the North Pacific, and not a mutant Sooty Shearwater.

On 10 September I checked study skins in the San Diego Natural History Museum and felt that the skins of the Cape Petrel matched the bird I had seen the previous day. It was easy for me to see why I had not noted the tail and rump pattern for it did not contrast sharply with the checkered back. The rump is checkered black and white like the back, and the tail is white with a broad black terminal band. On 25 September I talked to Ken Stott of San Diego, who had just returned from the southern oceans where he saw many Cape Petrels. He

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stated that the Cape Petrel flies like any medium-sized shearwater, and would look very similar to a Sooty Shearwater in flight.

W. R. P. Bourne (*Ibis* 109: 150, 1967) pointed out that there were no satisfactory records of a Cape Petrel from anywhere north of the equator, but thought it likely that one would be found there sooner or later. The original field notes and sketches of the Monterey Bay bird were sent to Bourne for his comments, and he replied that he would accept the bird as a Cape Petrel. I thank W. R. P. Bourne for his time and comments. *Guy McCaskie, San Diego Natural History Museum, Balboa Park, San Diego, California.*

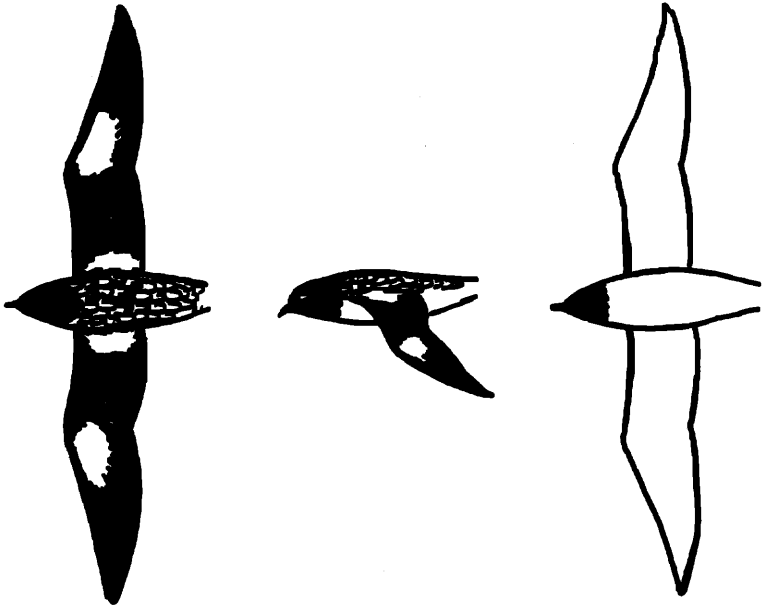


FIGURE 1. Three sketches of a Cape Petrel seen off Monterey, Monterey County, California, on 9 September 1962. The sketches show the bird as it appeared from above, from the side, and from below.