

PENNSYLVANIA ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORDS COMMITTEE
210 Welcome Ave. Norwood, PA 19074

14 February 2002

Jerry McWilliams
3508 Allegheny Road
Erie, PA 16508

Dear Jerry,

The Band-rumped Storm-Petrel record went two rounds, as you know, and the Committee ultimately voted not to accept it.

The final vote was three favoring acceptance (you, Ickes, Rodewald), three against acceptance (Couchman, Hess, Reid), and one abstention (Armistead). The result was Class IV-B, insufficient evidence.

The three who voted against acceptance, as well as Armistead, expressed concern about one or more of three issues: 1. lack of evidence for making an independent judgment about the identification, believing that measurements of the specimen are needed; 2. for a first state record, a need to explicitly separate it from other storm-petrels besides Leach's and Wilson's; 3. doubt about whether the bird arrived here naturally or was ever alive in Pennsylvania.

I have requested a third round, and the two other members who voted against acceptance have indicated that they agree. It won't satisfy the question of the carcass's origin, but it could clinch the identification if we can get a diagnostic measurement the retrices. This may not be possible because neither the Carnegie nor the North Carolina museum has the specimen. Do you know what may have happened to it?

We've had the second round, so I can comment. Frankly, the instant I saw the photo I believed it was a Band-rumped and no other species with white in the rump/coverts/tail area. But you know that I've stubbornly held the position that we must see the actual measurements to make an independent judgment and not simply rely on another's opinion, even an expert's. Dave Lee commented that the outer retrices were out of the range of the NC museum's Leach's, but is the collection large enough to encompass the Band-rumped and Leach's ranges? I don't know.

This is the same position I've taken about the old Hammond's and Dusky records. Without seeing the evidence, particularly wing formula, I can't vote to accept them based only on Ned Johnson's opinion.

I hope we can get the ID accepted, and I want to recommend that we come to a conclusion about this first -- then separately tackle the question of origin. You've read my

original comments, and Armistead seemed as troubled as I am in his comment: "My biggest concern is what Hess alludes to in that we have no idea if this bird was ever alive in PA. It is an odd date with no associated storm and could have arrived completely unnaturally."

Jerry, I've taken a much more personal tone here than in the usual non-acceptance letter, but I think it's appropriate. I hate prolonging a final decision, but I just want to give such a significant record all the attention we can.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Paul", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Record No. 052-01-1998

16 August 2001

Nick,

Re: Band-rumped Storm-Petrel record # 052-01-1998

I am requesting a third-round reconsideration of this record under Article VII Section 1 of the bylaws, no matter whether it is accepted or rejected on the second round.

Before giving final action to such an important and extraordinary record, my opinion is that we must have additional information.

I'm inclined to believe this is a Band-rumped and have no reason to doubt David Lee's conclusion, but I believe PORC has a responsibility to evaluate a record based upon all available information – not merely on what an expert (even a top-rank expert like Lee) concludes that it is. This particularly important for a first state record, but it should be a standard policy.

As a precedent for the position I am taking, we have not automatically accepted the Hawk Mountain petrel even though *two* of the world's great seabird experts agreed on its identification, because we have not seen all the evidence for ourselves.

The information needed in the present case is as many as possible of three measurements: tail, tarsus, & middle toe and claw.

Judging by the documentation a culmen measurement is not possible, and I am reluctant to ask for a wing chord measurement because the wings surely are flattened by this point so that no chord length can be obtained.

At present we do not have a single critical measurement to use in evaluating this specimen independently of Lee's conclusion.

The documentation fails to tell us where the specimen is located, but I ask that the Secretary track it down and obtain as many of these measurements as are available considering the condition of the specimen. (Obviously, at least the tail measurement is available because Lee used it for his conclusion.)

Only after having the measurements to judge ourselves can we fulfill our records committee's purpose.

unfortunately, the specimen has been lost!

PDH — 9/22/03



**A Band-rumped Storm-Petrel (*Oceanodroma castro*) Found on
the Shore of Lake Erie in Pennsylvania.**

by

Gerald M. McWilliams

On 24 February 1998 a beach walker came upon the remains of a small dark bird while walking along Manchester Beach. This beach is located at the mouth of Walnut Creek in Fairview Township, Erie County, Pennsylvania. Having some knowledge of birds, he recognized it as a bird unfamiliar to him. He took it back to his house, searched through a bird book, and matched the remains with the illustration of a petrel. He gave the bird to Jean Stull Cunningham and Sam Stull who confirmed his identification. However, it was a challenge to name the species, since the bird was in very poor condition. Its size and all-dark plumage narrowed the possibilities to three species of storm-petrel: Wilson's (*Oceanites oceanicus*), Leach's, and Band-rumped. Jean and Sam immediately dismissed it as a Wilson's Storm-Petrel because the legs were far too long, the webs between the toes were all black, and the wings were too long and narrow. They concluded that it was most likely a Leach's (*O. leucorhoa*) or a Band-rumped Storm-Petrel. Jean called me and suggested that I take a look at this bird to see what I thought. After taking measurements of the petrel and reading through several sources of information, we concluded that the bird was most likely a Band-rumped Storm-Petrel. Band-rumped Storm-Petrels breed in the tropical Pacific and Atlantic Oceans and disperse north in the Atlantic Ocean to Massachusetts. To be sure, I went to Pittsburgh to look at skins at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History. Kenneth Parkes and I looked at Leach's and Band-rumped Storm-Petrel skins and compared them to this bird. Ken agreed that the Lake Erie petrel most closely matched the Band-rumped Storm-Petrel skins in the museum collection. Since there were very few band-rumped skins at the Carnegie Museum, I decided to send the specimen to David Lee at the North Carolina State Museum of Natural Sciences where a large collection of Band-rumped Storm-Petrel skins is housed. David also agreed that the bird was a Band-rumped Storm-Petrel. He wrote, "The specimen was a challenge. I concluded it was *castro* based on subtle differences of the arrangement of white on the outer tail feathers." He continues to say "Nevertheless, I would not be comfortable with using this for species identification on such an aberrant record. A more measurable difference is the length of the outer tail feathers. Leach's Storm-Petrels have outer tail feathers which average 10 mm longer than those on Band-rumped Storm-Petrels. Your specimen is within the range of measurements of all our *castro*, and all of the *leucorhoa* in our series are at least 5-8 mm longer."

As you can see by the photographs of this specimen, nearly all of the critical identification characteristics for either Leach's or Band-rumped storm-Petrel are missing. To complicate the identification further, the remaining plumage is very worn. All that was left of the head was the lower mandible, which was twisted around to the dorsal side of the bird. Most feathering was missing from both the upper and undersides of the bird. Perhaps one of the most important identification features of the petrel was not present, the white tail coverts that form a distinctive pattern used in separating these two species. All of the uppertail coverts were missing and only a couple of the undertail coverts were present. Even the shape of the tail was difficult to discern because there were only five rectrices. However, three of those feathers were the outer three that seemed to suggest a square or perhaps a notched tail rather than a forked tail. The wings were the best preserved parts of the bird: both the upper and undersides were dark, showing no white feathering. The greater and outer median coverts were distinctly paler than the rest of the wing, but the extent of darkness and lightness is irrelevant on this specimen because of the significant wear to these feathers.

It is uncertain when this bird arrived on Lake Erie, how long it survived, or when it got here. It seems most likely that the bird was carried inland to Lake Erie by Hurricane Fran after it passed across Pennsylvania on 7 September 1996. Several other species of seabirds carried inland from this storm were found in Pennsylvania and at the northeast end of Lake Erie. A few were still being observed on Lake Erie several days following the storm's passage.

This is the first confirmed record of Band-rumped Storm-Petrel for Pennsylvania. A bird identified as this species was found dead along one of the streets of Chambersburg in Franklin County in April 1912, but the whereabouts of the specimen is not known.

There have been very few records of Band-rumped Storm-Petrels away from the open ocean in North America. Below is a list of all known Band-rumped Storm-Petrels for the interior and coast of North America prior to 1996 (Brinkley, E. S. pers. comm.).

<u>No. of birds</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Storm</u>
1	29 Aug 1893	Washington, DC	Sea Islands Hurricane
1	01 June 1902	Indiana	no hurricane activity
1	28 Aug 1933	Ottawa Carleton, Ontario	Great Hurricane of 1933
1	02 Sept 1950	near Defiance St., Charles Missouri	Hurricane/Tropical Storm Baker

Hurricane Bertha was the first storm to make landfall in 1996. This single storm carried more Band-rumped Storm-Petrels to the Atlantic seaboard than in all previously recorded history. In September 1996, Hurricane Eduardo brought seabirds to Cape Cod, and Hurricane Fran carried seabirds as far inland as the Great Lakes, but no Band-rumped Storm-Petrels were reported among them.

Below is a list of Band-rumped Storm-Petrels carried inland from Hurricane Bertha (Brinkley, E. S., T. Hass, and J. Lockyer 1997. The Storms of '96. Field Notes 51(4) 823)

<u>No. of birds</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>
1	12 July	89th Street, Virginia Beach, Virginia
7	13 July	Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, Virginia
2-3	13 July	False Cape State Park, Virginia Beach, Virginia
11	13 July	Cape May (Bay side), New Jersey
1	14 July	Cape May/Lewes Ferry, Delaware
1	14 July	Cape May (Bay side), New Jersey
1	15 July	Cape May/Lewes Ferry, Delaware
2	17 July	Delaware Bay, Cumberland County, New Jersey

Acknowledgments:

I am greatly indebted to Kenneth Parkes for assisting me with the initial identification of the petrel; to David Lee for examining and conclusively identifying the specimen; and to Edward Brinkley for the pre-1996 Band-rumped Storm-Petrel records and for permission to use the list of Hurricane Bertha records for this paper. I wish to thank Ted Floyd, Paul Hess, Don Snyder, Jean Stull Cunningham, Harry Cunningham, Sam Stull, and Brian Pardini for additional information.

References:

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Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation- Round One

Species: Band-rumped Storm Petrel (*Oceanodroma castro*)

Date of Sighting: 24 February 1998 to 24 February 1998

Location: LAKE ERIE SHORE

County: ERIE

Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams

Date of Submission: 1998

Submitted by: Jerry McWilliams

Written Description YES PHOTO YES SPECIMEN NO RECORDING NO

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
D. Couchman					X			
T. Floyd								X
P. Hess					X			
R. Ickes			X					
J. McWilliams	X							
B. Reid	X							
P. Rodewald	X							
TOTALS	3		1		2			1
DECISION								

Comments: 4-2-1 2ND ROUND

Signature (Secretary): 

Date: 9/18/00

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round Two

Species: Band-rumped Storm-petrel (*Oceanodroma castro*)

Date of Sighting: 24 February 1998 to 24 February 1998

Location: LAKE ERIE SHORE

County: ERIE

Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams

Date of Submission: 1998

Submitted by: Jerry McWilliams

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

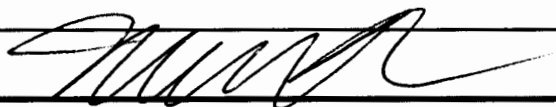
Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
D. Couchman					X			
G. Armistead								X
P. Hess					X			
R. Ickes			X					
J. McWilliams	X							
B. Reid					X			
P. Rodewald	X							
TOTALS	2		1		3			1
DECISION					X			

Comments: 3/3/1

Signature (Secretary):



Date: 02/21/01

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Tabulation Form - Round Three

Species: Band-rumped Storm Petrel (Oceanodromo castro)

Date of Sighting: 24 February 1998 to 24 February 1998

Location: LAKE ERIE SHORE

County: ERIE

Observer(s): Jerry McWilliams

Date of Submission: 1998

Submitted by: Jerry McWilliams

Written Description: Yes

Photo: Yes

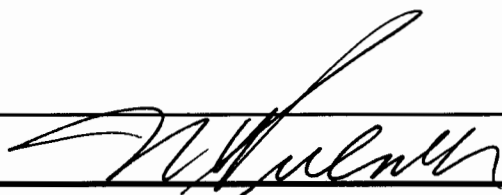
Specimen: No

Recording: No

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV-A				Abstain
					Class IV-B	Class IV-C	Class V	
G. Armistead					X			
D. Heathcote				X				
P. Hess					X			
J. Stanley					X			
E. Witmer				X				
R. Leberman					X			
M. Sharp							X	
TOTALS				2	4		1	
DECISION					X			

Comments: 0/6

Signature (Secretary):



Date:

1/9/98