

## An Erroneous Panama Record of *Puffinus tenuirostris* and other Misidentifications of *P. griseus*

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The all-dark shearwaters are notoriously difficult to identify, both to field observers and museum workers, and the two species, the Sooty Shearwater (*Puffinus griseus*) and the Short-tailed or Slender-billed Shearwater (*P. tenuirostris*), have been frequently confounded. In the past museums have had inadequate series of skins for satisfactory studies. The present paper refers to one such problematical specimen whose original erroneous identification proved troublesome to later investigators.

On June 8, 1915, Thomas Hallinan collected a male specimen of a shearwater off Naos Island, near Balboa, Panama Canal Zone, one of several birds floating, apparently exhausted, on the water in the vicinity. His collections were deposited at the American Museum of Natural History, New York, and the species were identified by W. deW. Miller. In the subsequent paper which Hallinan published on this material (*Auk*, 1924, 41: 306) the shearwater was referred to as *Puffinus tenuirostris*. The record has since been repeatedly mentioned in the literature, including Murphy's great work, *Oceanic Birds of South America* (1936) and the latest (fifth) edition of the A.O.U. *Checklist of North American Birds* (1957).

It had long been apparent to one of us (Serventy, cf. *Proc. 7th Pacific Sci. Congress*, 1953, 4: 405) that this record was anomalous. It was the only apparently authentic report of the species in America south of Baja California and was many hundreds of miles south-east of the presumed normal migratory path of the species. Accordingly, at Serventy's suggestion, Eisenmann made a re-investigation of the specimen.

The bird is in the usual all dark, greyish-brown plumage with some narrow paler edging below; the under wing-coverts are white with blackish shaft lines and some mottling of brownish-grey, chiefly near the axillaries and near the edge. Although some *tenuirostris* specimens in the A.M.N.H. collections show some white on the under wing-coverts, this bird has the white area more extensive and, in fact, is whiter than several juvenile *griseus* taken off the coast of Colombia in May 1941. No soft part colours are indicated on the label. In the dry skin the total effect of the bill is dark, but the sides show a somewhat paler horn colour with some reddish tone. The inner parts of the tarsi, toes and webs are light yel-

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lowish-brown while the outer edge and outer toes are blackish-brown.

The measurements are as follows:

Bill: exposed culmen, 37.3 mm; bill to gape, 46; depth (height) of bill measured from base of exposed culmen, 11.6; depth of upper mandible measured at base of exposed culmen, 9; width of upper mandible measured at base of exposed sides of maxilla, 16.5 (the last two measurements are given to allow comparison with Loomis' measurements, *Proc. Calif. Acad. Sciences*, 4th ser., 1918, 2: 137).

Wing: flattened, 278 mm; chord, 271; arc (measured with tape), 285. The wing is worn and if fresh would certainly be at least two or three mm longer.

Tail: 86 mm. The tail is *very* worn and if fresh would certainly be at least five mm longer.

Tarsus: length, 52 mm; diameter at middle, 8.5.

Middle toe and claw: 59 mm.

The data given above make it evident that the specimen is really a Sooty Shearwater, *Puffinus griseus*. With the exception of the bill, the measurements fall within the range of variation of both species. The bill measurements are near the minimum of the range for *griseus*, but are so far greater than the maximum of a series of 80 breeding adults of *tenuirostris* from Australia that the Panama bird could not be reckoned as belonging to that species. The Australian *tenuirostris* exposed culmen measurements made by Serventy are as follows:

♂ (40 specimens)—29.5—33.9, av. 32.2 mm.

♀ (40 specimens)—29.3—33.8, av. 31.4 mm.

In a series of 20 *griseus* from Australia the exposed culmen length varied from 38.3 to 45.0, with an average of 41.4 mm.

The plumage characters of the Panama specimen, in particular the extensively white under wing-coverts, agree with *griseus*.

The label bears a pencilled note by Dr. Robert Cushman Murphy. He had written a "?" after Miller's identification and on the back had commented: "probably a young *P. griseus* judging by the bill. Compare with a series of skins." Presumably Dr. Murphy wrote this note after the publication of his book on South American birds, as therein the Panama record is accepted at its face value. Dr. Murphy, to whom the skin was shown again very recently, reiterated his belief that the bird is probably a juvenile *griseus*. It is now known that *griseus* regularly appears along the coast of Panama and adjacent Colombia as part of its migration along the Pacific American seaboard. As stated earlier, *tenuirostris* is unknown in the eastern Pacific south of Baja California and on its southward migration it apparently swings out westwards into the central Pacific after skirting

the North American shoreline to about the Los Coronados Islands.

We take this opportunity of referring to some other inaccurately labelled specimens of *Puffinus griseus*, misidentified as *tenuirostris*, which Serventy has noted in various European museums. Some of these, if accepted uncritically, would provide misleading information on the migratory course of the species.

In the Royal Natural History Museum at Stockholm is a specimen of *griseus* which was identified as *tenuirostris* by Einar Lönnberg. It was collected at Saghalien Chebisani on July 26, 1906: ♀, culmen, 42.6 mm; wing 285+ (worn); tarsus, 57.4; under wing-coverts white; bill slender, narial tube flattened, evidently a juvenile.

In the Zoological Museum, Copenhagen, there are two skins of *griseus*, labelled as *tenuirostris*. The first, which had also been called *carneipes*, was collected at Callau (= Callao) on March 4, 1847. The second was a mounted bird, "Pacific Ocean, coast of Chili", collected by Commander Svenson, May 24, 1832: its measurements—culmen, 40.0 mm; wing, 286; tail, 89; under wing-coverts whitish.

In the Übersee Museum, Bremen, two *griseus* from Trio I., New Zealand, December 24, 1896, are labelled *tenuirostris*.

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**A record of the Blue-winged Parrot in north-central N.S.W.**—Narran (or Terewah) Lake in the far north of N.S.W. (lat. 29° 50' S.; long. 147° 25' E.) is a large body of fresh water that fluctuates with the seasons; at the present time (May) it is almost full, with lush seeding grasses growing to its very edge.

While observing on the shores of the lake with two companions on May 18, 1962, I flushed a single Blue-winged Parrot (*Neophema chrysostoma*) from the ground; it flew about a chain, then settled on the ground again. We flushed the bird about six times and it was obviously very much at home in this treeless and scrubless area.

As I am quite familiar with the Blue-winged, and all other species of *Neophema* except *chrysogaster*, I feel sure of my identification, basing this on the blue shoulder, or wing-bar, which almost completely encompassed the folded wing—quite distinct from the narrow wing-edging of dark blue in the Elegant Parrot (*N. elegans*).

I believe this record extends the known range of *chrysostoma* in northern N.S.W.—A. C. HUNT, Inverell, N.S.W., 21/5/62.