

FIRST RECORD OF LEACH'S STORM PETREL *OCEANODROMA LEUCORHOA* FOR KING GEORGE ISLAND, SOUTH SHETLANDS, ANTARCTICA

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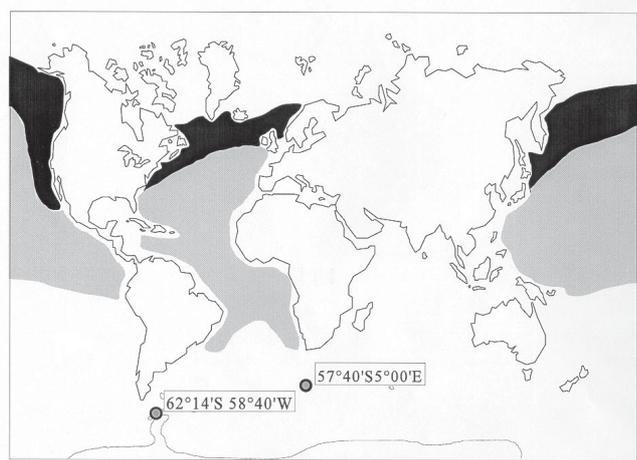
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The breeding areas of Leach's Storm Petrels *Oceanodroma leucorhoa* are the northern coasts of Atlantic and Pacific Ocean. During the northern winter, they undertake movements into tropical seas (Harrison 1985, Cramp & Simmons 1977). The main wintering areas of the Atlantic breeding populations are the Gulf of Guinea, off Brazil and southwards off South Africa (Griffiths & Sinclair 1982). For the Pacific populations, the wintering area is assumed to be south of Peru (Del Hoyo *et al.* 1992). Additionally, there are observations reported from the Indian Ocean (Lapthorn *et al.* 1970), from Australia and New Zealand (Marchant & Higgins 1990) and from the Southern Ocean (Veit *et al.* 1996). Up to now the southerly record is from 57°40'S, 5°00'E, in January 1947 (Biermann & Voous 1950, Fig. 1).

In the austral summer of 1995/96, we caught Black-bellied Storm Petrels *Fregatta tropica* and Wilson's Storm Petrels *Oceanites oceanicus* by mist-netting in a colony on the slopes of Three Brothers Hill at Potter Peninsula, King George Island, South Shetland Islands (62°14'S, 58°40'W). The site of capture was in the north-eastern part of these slopes at a height of 110 m above sea level. During the night of 20/21 February 1996 at 01h20 local time we caught a Leach's Storm Petrel, the first record for the island. The bird was measured, photographed and a full description was taken. The weather two days before was stormy with cyclones from the Drake Passage (direction of the wind 27–36°N) and a mean wind speed of 50–92 km per hour.

Description

Size: similar to Black-bellied Storm Petrel; plumage: head, neck, back, breast and flanks brownish-black; rump white, divided down centre by a grey stripe; tail brownish-black, strongly forked; bare parts: legs, toes and bill black; very short legs compared with Black-bellied Storm Petrel.



Measurements: mass: 48 g; wing length: 154 mm; culmen: 16.3 mm; head length, including bill: 42.8 mm; tarsus: 25.0 mm.

According to the brood patch scale of Beck & Brown (1971), the Leach's Storm Petrel was at score 4: surprisingly the brood patch was completely bare with no residual feathering. The bird was given a band of the Hiddensee Ornithological Station, Germany and was released on the morning of 21 February 1996.

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Fig. 1. Distribution and most southerly records of the Leach's Storm Petrel. Black indicates breeding areas, grey indicates wintering areas.