

First Record of Streaked Shearwater (*Calonectris leucomelas*) for British Columbia.

By Rick Toochin and Louis Haviland.

Introduction and Distribution

The Streaked Shearwater (*Calonectris leucomelas*) is found in the northwestern Pacific Ocean where it breeds on islands from Ryuku Island, south through Izu Island, Daito Island, and the Senkoku group of islands of Hokkaido, Japan (Onley and Scofield 2007). This species also breeds off eastern China, Korea, and southeast Russia (Brazil 2009). The Streaked Shearwater is on eggs from May to June (Onley and Scofield 2007). This species forages near breeding islands during the breeding season (Onley and Scofield 2007). Adult birds leave the breeding grounds between October and December when the young fledge the nest and do not generally winter in this region (Yoshida 1962, Onley and Scofield 2007). This species mostly migrates south to winter in the pelagic waters from tropical south-east China Sea, Philippines, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Coral Sea, Indian Ocean as far as Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Abrolhos Island and in the waters off northern, eastern and western Australia, but is absent from New Zealand (Hamilton *et al.* 2007, Onley and Scofield 2007). There are records of vagrants that have been found in the Indian Ocean off South Africa and even to the head of the Red Sea with 2 photographic records from Eilat, Israel (Shirihai 1996, Onley and Scofield 2007). The Streaked Shearwater has ventured westward to Hawaii where it is a casually occurring species (Hamilton *et al.* 2007). Along the west coast of North America, this species is an accidental vagrant. In California, there are 18 accepted records by the California Bird Records Committee, all of which occur between August and October (Hamilton *et al.* 2007, Tietz and McCaskie 2014). In Oregon, there is 1 accepted record for the State by the Oregon Bird Records Committee of a single bird found at Heceta Bank on September 13, 1996 (OFO 2012). The Streaked Shearwater is an accidental in British Columbia with a recent sight record off Port Renfrew (Toochin *et al.* 2014). There are currently no records for Washington State (Wahl *et al.* 2005, WBRC 2014) or from Alaska (West 2008, Gibson *et al.* 2013). There is 1 incredible record of a Streaked Shearwater found dead and saved as a specimen from Medicine Bow, southeastern Wyoming on June 13, 2006 (Faulkner 2006).

Identification and Similar Species

The identification of the Streaked Shearwater is covered in most standard North American field guides. This species has a unique and very obviously different flight style to the more commonly occurring species of shearwaters found off British Columbia. The Streaked Shearwater, like other "*Calonectris*" shearwaters, such as the Cory's Shearwater (*Calonectris diomedea*) which occurs on the Atlantic Ocean have long, almost lazy, languid, prolonged soaring arcs to their flight style and wheel around before finishing the arch to begin the process again (Onley and Scofield 2007). The Streaked Shearwater is a large tubenose measuring 48 cm in length with a

wingspan of 122 cm (Dunn and Alderfer 2011). This species has longer and broader wings than the more common and slightly similar looking Pink-footed Shearwater (*Puffinus creatopus*) that measures 48 cm in length with a wingspan of 109 cm (Sibley 2000, Dunn and Alderfer 2011). There is no other species commonly found in the pelagic waters of British Columbia that looks or flies like the Streaked Shearwater making identification straightforward with good views. For a more in-depth identification study it is recommended that observers read Harrison (1983) or Onley and Scofield (2007).

This is a large, long-winged shearwater with broad wings, white underparts and underwings, and a prominent pale or white head that is visible at a distance (Onley and Scofield 2007, Brazil 2009). The bill is horn-coloured with a darker tip (Onley and Scofield 2007). This species has a plain mid-brown hindneck, mantle, upperwing, and rump with pale fringes to the secondaries and some pale fringes on the wing-coverts and the mantle producing the impression of a dark M across the paler part of the wings and mantle, and a pale V on the uppertail coverts on worn birds (Brazil 2009). The uppertail has traces of a pale U-shaped mark formed by the pale bases to the coverts that become more prominent with feather wear (Onley and Scofield 2007). The head and neck are flecked with white streaks and in some cases, possibly older birds; almost the entire head is white (Onley and Scofield 2007, Brazil 2009). The face, throat, and breast all the way down along the underparts to the undertail coverts are white (Dunn and Alderfer 2011). The undersides of the wings have dark primaries that end the entire length of the wing along the secondary edge to the body (Onley and Scofield 2007, Brazil 2009). The axillaries are white with a prominent dark carpal area (Onley and Scofield 2007, Brazil 2009). The flight style is steady with slow flaps, gull-like on angled wings, interspersed with long glides (Brazil 2009).

Occurrence and Documentation

The Streaked Shearwater is a relatively new species to be recorded in North America with the first record collected on October 3, 1975 in Monterey Bay, California (Morejohn 1978).

This species is an accidental vagrant in British Columbia waters with a recent sight record by Rick Toochin and Louis Haviland off Botanical Beach, Port Renfrew on September 5, 2009 (Toochin *et al.* 2014). This bird was observed close to shore and was directly compared to 20 Pink-footed Shearwaters, 1000s of Sooty Shearwaters (*Puffinus griseus*), 6 Northern Fulmars (*Fulmarus glacialis*), 1 adult Long-tailed Jaeger (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) and 1 adult Pomarine Jaeger (*Stercorarius pomarinus*) (R. Toochin Pers. Obs.). The following description is taken directly from Rick Toochin's field notes: "As soon as I got on the bird I was immediately struck by the flight style being completely different to all other species in the area. The other species were doing various direct arcing styles of flight while this bird would do a prolonged soaring arcing flight style and would wheel around before finishing its arc to begin the process again. The bird was clearly larger than the Pink-footed Shearwaters in its wing length and a bit heavier

bodied. What immediately caught our eyes was it had a white face with a pale lightly streaked head and long pale gray bill. The bird holds its head differently from the other shearwaters, almost with its head tilted up slightly. The underside of the body was pure white and the under wings were white with a large dark trailing edge to the wing and distinct dark carpal markings in the elbows on the underside of the wing. The wings were bow shaped as well helping enhance the way the bird glides. The Upper surface of the bird was brown with light edges that ran down the back and rump and on the upper surface of the wings with the primaries being dark and rounded in shape. In certain light, there was an M shape that went across the upper surface of the wings. This was light-coloured and not a dark or distinct M as in the case of Buller's Shearwater (*Puffinus bulleri*), but noticeable none-the-less! We note this M effect that we saw as we have never seen a Pink-footed Shearwater show anything remotely like this as a pattern on the upper wing. This bird was the only other large white-bellied Shearwater we saw today off Port Renfrew. The birds' flight was much heavier than the Pink-footed Shearwaters and the large wings helped exaggerate this action to the observers".

In California, the pattern of vagrancy records along the west coast falls from August 5 to October 15 with a distinct peak of records from September into early October (Hamilton *et al.* 2007, Tietz and McCaskie 2014). The bulk of records for North America and California come from the pelagic waters of Monterey Bay (Hamilton *et al.* 2007, Tietz and McCaskie 2014). Both the record for Oregon and the sight record for British Columbia come from early to mid-September and fall into the established timing of records in California. The bird was viewed close to shore off Port Renfrew during a month long period of warm water that had moved up and onshore from Hawaii that pushed many pelagic species into both the mouth and west entrance of the Juan de Fuca Strait that year. During the same period this species was observed, there was also a large push of Sooty Shearwaters, Pink-footed Shearwaters, Northern Fulmars, some Buller's Shearwaters, Black-footed Albatross (*Phoebastria nigripes*) and other rare pelagic species that were seen both by zodiac and from shore. It is impossible to know if such an event will occur again in the near future. If El Nino and climate change keep occurring it is possible a repeat of this type of shearwater event could happen again bringing with it both large numbers of regular species and some rare gems mixed in. Future pelagic trips should watch for the Streaked Shearwater as it may well turn up again in the fall period.

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