

## SHORT NOTE

### Notes on a gadfly petrel *Pterodroma* sp collected off the Antipodes Islands.

While examining the Whitney Collection in the American Museum of Natural History on a grant from its Chapman Fund in 1962 I noticed a puzzling specimen referred to the White-headed Petrel *Pterodroma lessonii* (AMNH 211660) which did not seem important at the time, but has gained in interest as a result of events discussed below. It was a male collected at 50°S 179°W immediately east of the Antipodes Islands on 17 February 1926, with measurements in mm (kindly checked by Richard Sloss): wing 287 + (growing), tail 127, exposed culmen 31, tarsus 42 and middle toe and claw 53. While in most respects it resembled a White-headed Petrel, it had a grey crown, nape and collar as in a giant Soft-plumaged Petrel *P. mollis*.

Since at the time only the White-headed Petrel was known to occur at the Antipodes Islands my initial assumption was that it must indeed be an extreme variation of that species. Following the discovery that Soft-plumaged Petrels *Pterodroma mollis* also breed on the islands (John Warham *in litt.*, Warham & Bell 1979) the next possibility in view of the fact that it is almost exactly intermediate in size between the two species was that it might be a hybrid between them, of the sort which may occur in gadfly petrels of the *Pterodroma neglecta-arminjoniana-alba* group (Bourne & David 1982). Finally, following the rediscovery of the Chatham Island Taiko *Pterodroma magentae*, which has proved almost identical in size but darker in colour (David Crockett *in litt.*, 1994) it now also seems possible that it may be either a pale variation or southern race of that form, or hybrid between it and the White-headed Petrel. Clearly the subject deserves further study.

#### LITERATURE CITED

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- W.R.P. BOURNE, *Department of Zoology, Aberdeen University, Tillydrone Avenue, Aberdeen AB9 2TN, Scotland*

*Received 19 March, revised & accepted 21 May 1995*