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BULWER'S PETREL IN INDONESIA

by

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Summary

Based on observations of 15 and 14 Bulwer's Petrels in Sulawesi and Irian Jaya respectively, the occurrence of the species in Indonesia is described.

Observations in Sulawesi and Irian Jaya in 1993

In autumn 1993 we observed significant numbers of Bulwer's Petrels *Bulweria hiiwerii* in eastern Indonesia. Details of these sightings are given and compared with other observations of Bulwer's Petrels in Indonesia.

On 27 September 1993, during a boat trip from Manado to the island of Bunaken (North Sulawesi), up to 15 Bulwer's Petrels were observed by the authors. Most birds were solitary although on three occasions two were seen together. Weather conditions were good, sunny with no wind. Three came within a distance of less than 150 m. The birds were identified as Bulwer's Petrels on the following characters: all-dark petrels with a faint diagonal bar on the upper median coverts of the inner wing; tail length about 1.5 x the width of the inner wing and tapering towards the end; small, round head with fine, short, dark bill. They flew just above the surface, alternating active flight of 3-5 wingbeats, with glides with wings hanging down slightly.

The birds were observed between 09.00 and 15.30 hours. In the morning, 6 out of 11 birds flew south. On our way back from Bunaken, after 15.00 hours, the petrels were flying in various directions, seemingly at random. Other seabirds observed were Brown Booby *Sula leucogaster*, Bridled Tern *Sterna anaelhetus* and Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus*.

On 9 October 1993, 14 Bulwer's Petrels were seen flying west in the Dampier Strait between Sorong and the island of Waigeo (Irian Jaya). On one occasion three were seen together, on two occasions two, while the remainder were solitary. All sightings were at least five km offshore. Weather conditions were fine; no wind and mainly sunny. The same field characters as above were noted. In a direct comparison with Streaked Shearwater *Calonectris leucometas* the birds in question were obviously smaller, which besides the other characters, ruled out Wedge-tailed Shearwater *Puffinus pacificus*. The birds were observed between 10.00 and 13.00 hours. These

are the first records of this species for Irian Jaya.

Besides Bulwer's Petrels, migrating Common Terns *Sterna hirundo* (10's), Pomanne Skuas *Stercorarius pomarinus* (7), skuas *Stercorariids* spp. (8) and Streaked Shearwaters *Cahneetris leucomelas* (9) were seen.

Bulwer's Petrel in Indonesia

Although Bulwer's Petrel has been observed in five of the seven faunal regions of Indonesia prior to 1993 (i.e. Sumatra, Java, Sulawesi, the Moluccas and the Lesser Sundas), there are few records (see Table 1) and little is known of its movements.

Despite the limited number of observations, several authors have mentioned the possibility that the species might be more common in eastern Indonesia (White & Bruce 1986). Bulwer's Petrel breeds at various locations such as on Bonin Island and islands off Taiwan, 1500 to 2000 km north of Indonesia (Harrison 1985), and it is known to migrate from its breeding grounds in the Atlantic Ocean such as the Azores, Canary Islands and Cape Verde Islands, from September onwards (Harrison 1985).

The observation in Irian Jaya is the first for this region. Up to 1995 Bulwer's Petrel has been observed in six of the seven faunal regions of Indonesia in six different months: May, June, July, September, October and November. The observations in May to July possibly refer to immatures which stay for the summer in or near the wintering area (Cramp 1977).

Conclusion

There is still little evidence to suggest Bulwer's Petrels are wintering in Indonesian waters. Along with Swmhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* and Matsudaira's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma matsudairae*, Bulwer's Petrel probably winters in the Indian Ocean south of Indonesia (R. Johnstone, pers. comm.). Our observations in September and October support this southwest migration from islands in the Pacific Ocean to the wintering areas in the Indian Ocean, and it is concluded that the species is more common in Indonesian waters than originally believed.

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Location	Date	No.	Reference
Ternate? (Maluku)	?	?	Bourne 1967
between Java and Australia	Nov	37	Harrison 1985
north of Java (Ardjuna Field) ¹	28-Oct-1981	1	P. Andrew (pers. comm.)
"	11-Nov-1981	1	"
"	26-Nov-1981	1	"
"	15-Sep-1982	1	Andrew 1992
"	17-Sep-1982	1	P. Andrew (pers. comm.)
"	4-Nov-1982	1	"
off Manado (Sulawesi)	30-Nov-1983	1	JP Gee in <i>Kukila</i> 5:5
off Enggano (Sumatra)	1-Jul-1984	few	van Marle & Voous 1988
south of Pulau Krakatau (Java)	13-Sep-1989	4	S. van Balen (pers. comm.)
Pulau Seribu (Java) ²	24-Sep-1984	4	P Andrew (pers. comm.)
south Banda Sea	14-Jun-1990	1	Bishop 1992
between Bali and Nusa Penida	20-Jun-1990	2	H. Kaestner (pers. comm)
Tual (Kai Islands)	1-Oct-1992	4- 6 ³	R. Johnstone (pers. comm.)
Komodo (Lesser Sundas Is)	4-Sep-1993	7 ⁴	Butchart <i>et al.</i> . 1994
off NE Flores (")	20-Sep-1993	7 ⁴	"
between Alor and Wetar (")	24-Sep-1993	1	K. Salwegter (pers. comm.)
between Manado and Bunaken	27-Sep-1993	15	Argeloo & Dekker (this paper)
between Sorong and Waigeo	9-Oct-1993	14	Argeloo & Dekker (this paper)
Banda Sea ⁵	14-May-1994	5 ⁵	S. van Balen (pers comm)
Piru Bay (Seram)	24-Oct-1994	1	K. Moeliker (pers. comm)

Table 1. Observations of Bulwer's Petrels in Indonesian waters

Notes:

1. Ardjuna Field lies 8-32 km north of Java at *ca.* 107°15'-108°15'E.
2. Pulau Seribu lies 32-48 km north of Java at *ca.* 106°40'E.
3. Identified as 'probable',

4. The 4 Sep sighting was of 'a loose flock of seven', while there were seven singles on 20 Sep.
5. Five individual sightings, identified as probable, between 3°33'-36'S, 129°30'-43'E.

NOTES ON THE OCCURRENCE OF THE LITTLE CURLEW IN INDONESIA

by

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The Little Curlew *Numenius minutus* breeds in the dry, open steppes of northern Siberia and winters in the dry grassy plains of the northern interior of Australia, where they gather in thousands (Pringle 1987). The birds are passage migrants through the eastern part of Indonesia. The largest numbers appear to pass through New Guinea (Beehler *et al.* 1986; Coates 1985), with very few records either further east (Coates 1985: New Britain and Bougainville) or west of the island. The habitat where the birds on passage are encountered in Indonesia resemble the breeding and wintering habitat, and they should be sought in areas of short grass, at airports for example.

The status of the species in the area west of New Guinea (Sulawesi, the Moluccas, and Greater and Lesser Sundas) is discussed in this paper.

Distributional notes

Table 1 lists all known records of Little Curlew for Indonesia and North Borneo. During recent years a number of localities have been added but few of these have been published, and therefore details of the observations are given below.

New records from the author.

Bali

On 16 October 1993 the open dry savanna-like grazing field beside Gilimanuk Bay, adjacent to the Bali Barat National Park, was visited by Sujatnika and the author in order to survey palearctic waders. Instead of the expected Oriental Plovers *Charadrius veredus*, which are normally present at this time of the year, a Little Curlew was present. It was observed from 17.55 to 18.45 hrs. The following description was made in the field after approaching to within a few meters.

Feathers of the upperparts were dark brown with bold buffy fringes; the light coloured head showed two broad dark stripes on the crown, coming together on the nape and leaving a narrow light stripe over the middle of the crown, which ended with a broader spot on the nape; here a dark stripe continued downward; the remaining parts of the neck and the underparts were light buff brown with a darker wash on the breast, wing coverts were light grey brown with very dense broad fringes, the primaries had fine brown bars. The black bill was of medium length, somewhat curved at the end, with lighter coloured and broader proximal part; legs were light grey brown. Head looked broad and fat, with upper part of neck broader than lower part. The bird was