

**FIRST RECORD OF WHITE-FACED STORM-PETREL  
IN THE RIAU ARCHIPELAGO**

by

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(Received 20 February 1997)

On 1 October 1996, I travelled to Tanjong Sebung in north Bintan on the ferry with Robert Teo, Ng Bee Choo and Wang Luan Keng. As we crossed international waters and into Indonesian waters off Batam, at 09.25 hrs, we observed a significant passage of storm petrels off the starboard bow. Most were about 200-300 m distant and heading east. They appeared to be all Swinhoe's Storm petrels *Oceanodroma monorhis*. However, small groups of these were also noticed at much closer range (some as close as 30-50 m), migrating west at a faster pace.

As we were watching these closer groups, I noticed a tight flock of five white-bellied petrels also heading west. I watched these closely until they were out of sight. Although not all the features could be seen during the short time the birds were in view (five to seven seconds, in good sunny conditions with 8 x 30 Swarovski binoculars), the following notes were taken:

Size: about that of Swinhoe's Storm petrel, but more bulky in appearance; flight appeared slightly slower and more direct. Underparts and face white; no markings noted though these could have been overlooked. Crown dark, upper wings dark, mantle a distinct fawn-brown colour, rump pale but not white. The tail did not appear forked though no projection was noted.

On consulting Harrison (1983), only one species fitted this description, mainly on the colouration of the face and mantle, the White-faced Storm petrel *Pelagodroma marina*. The breeding birds of south-western Australia are stated to migrate through the Indian Ocean to the Arabian Sea, with a return movement beginning in August. These birds, somewhat north of their presumed normal route through the Indian Ocean, would appear to be on late passage.

[This is the second record from Sumatran waters, the first being a specimen taken off the northern tip of Aceh on 6 June 1930 - see Marle & Voous 1988 *Ed.*]

### References

- Harrison, P. 1983. *Seabirds, an identification guide*. Revised edition. Croom Helm, London & Sydney.
- Marle, J.G. van & K.H. Voous. 1988. *The birds of Sumatra: an annotated check list*. Brit. Orn. Union Check list No. 10. Tring, UK.