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## SHORT NOTE

### Gould's Petrel from Dunedin City

On 19 December 1988 an unusual seabird was recovered from under a truck in south Dunedin and handed to Portobello Marine Laboratory staff. The bird was weak but in apparently good condition. However, it died on the night of 19-20 December. In the days before the bird was found, the weather was anticyclonic over the lower South Island, with light or moderate southeast or east winds in Dunedin. The specimen was identified as a Gould's Petrel (*Pterodroma leucoptera*), as confirmed by J. T. Darby of the Otago Museum. It has the Otago Museum catalogue no. OM Av 936.

*Description:* Crown, nape and hindneck sooty black. Grey mottle on forehead, fading out below and behind the black bill to white throat and breast. Black around eye. White belly. Tail pale grey (upper) and white with pale grey tip (lower). Incomplete M from very dark grey (upper) wing to back, and pale grey forward part of inner wing and mantle. Underwing white with narrow, dark grey leading edge turning diagonally inwards at the carpal joint. Primaries and secondaries pale grey, darkening distally to very dark grey. Legs pale grey-blue. Inboard webs very dark grey toward claw; outboard webs very dark grey except for a small section of pale grey-blue towards the ankle.

#### *Measurements (mm)*

Body: Length	310	Foot: Tarsus	29.1
Wingspan	710	Mid-toe and claw	37.5
Wing	230	Bill: Length	26.4
Tail	95	Depth	10.7
		Width	12.0

Weight: 125 g

*Discussion:* Identification of the "Cookilaria" petrels is frequently difficult. However, the specimen's very dark crown and nape, narrow underwing bar and the lack of any significant throat collar is diagnostic of *P. leucoptera* (Harrison 1983).

Since 1942, 22 specimens of *P. leucoptera* have been recovered in New Zealand, 10 of these from Muriwai Beach in 1942. Before the present record at 47°S, the most southern specimen was from Titahi Bay, Wellington (42°S), in 1973 (Veitch 1975). Imber & Jenkins (1981) presented sightings from the Tasman sea. These results show significant *P. leucoptera* observations in the southeast Tasman Sea extending from west of Fiordland into Foveaux Strait. Subtropical waters from this region flow up the east coast of the South Island as the Southland Current (Jillett 1969, Heath 1985). The present record from Dunedin is therefore oceanographically consistent with the field observations of Imber & Jenkins (1981), although it is 1-2 months earlier than expected.

Imber & Jenkins (1981) also analysed previous records of *P. leucoptera* in New Zealand and argued that the relatively large measurements of New Zealand birds were consistent with a subspecies of *P. leucoptera*, *P.l. caledonica*. They then argued that most of the sightings in the Tasman Sea toward New Zealand have been of the subspecies *P.l. caledonica* and not of *P. l. leucoptera*. Although I have not been able to compare plumage characteristics, measurements of the present specimen generally fit the conclusions of Imber & Jenkins (1981). However, I have retained the *P. leucoptera* nomenclature in the light of present usage and the apparent absence of further evidence supporting the description of a subspecies.

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