



**British Birds Rarities Committee**  
**Rarity Form**

Email to: [secretary@bbrc.org.uk](mailto:secretary@bbrc.org.uk)

**This form has been designed to be used electronically. Your submission will be processed far more quickly and accurately if it is typed rather than handwritten.**

To move to the next field simply press 'Tab' then 'End' and start typing.

**Note: If attaching images please send them as separate files and not within this Word document.**

Species: <a href="#">Black-browed Albatross</a>	
Date first seen: <a href="#">26 July 2009</a>	Date last seen: <a href="#">26 July 2009</a>
No. of Birds: <a href="#">1</a>	Age/Sex: <a href="#">1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> year</a>
County: <a href="#">Cornwall</a>	Location: <a href="#">Gwennap Head, Porthgwarra</a>
<b>Please fill in your email address to ensure that you get an acknowledgement</b>	
Finder: <a href="#">Dr Russell B Wynn</a>	Email: <a href="mailto:rbw1@noc.soton.ac.uk">rbw1@noc.soton.ac.uk</a>
Identifier (if different):	Email:
Submitter (if different):	Email:
Other observers: <a href="#">Miss Alice R Jones (and 14 observers who independently saw it from nearby Hella Point)</a>	
Any who disagrees with identification? <a href="#">No</a>	
Optical aids: <a href="#">10x Leica binos, 30x Swaro scope</a>	
Distance from bird: <a href="#">Roughly 500-600 m throughout</a>	
Have you enclosed photographs? <a href="#">No</a>	Was the bird videoed? <a href="#">No</a>
If photos are available on public websites ( <i>BirdGuides</i> & <i>Surfbirds</i> etc) then please give www address:	
Have the photographs been published in magazines? If so, where:	
Species present for comparison: <a href="#">Gannet (of various ages)</a>	
Which species were alongside the bird: <a href="#">As above</a>	
Observer(s) experience of the species: <a href="#">None</a>	
Observer(s) experience of similar species on the same day or previously: <a href="#">Have seen and photographed Wandering, Shy, Salvin's and Yellow-nosed Albatross during pelagic off New Zealand in 2006. Very familiar with all plumages of Gannet (several thousand seen in preceding days) and the regular large shearwaters, e.g. Great and Cory's (both species seen in preceding days).</a>	
Weather (general description): <a href="#">Wet, murky and breezy</a>	
Wind direction and Force: <a href="#">SSW 5</a>	
Light conditions (good, dull, etc & sun behind, side etc): <a href="#">Neutral, and good for observing plumage tones</a>	
Visibility (distance): <a href="#">2-5 km</a>	
Rain, mist, etc: <a href="#">Sporadic light/moderate rain</a>	
Cloud cover: <a href="#">Total (100%)</a>	
Address of submitter: <a href="#">Dr Russell B Wynn, National Oceanography Centre, Southampton, European Way, Southampton, SO14 3ZH, UK</a>	
Phone No: <a href="#">07874 930081 (mobile)</a>	
<b>And finally, is the record 100% certain? <a href="#">Yes</a></b>	

Hit 'Page Down' key several times to move to Description section

*Please try to cover*

- 1. Circumstances of finding the bird (if applicable) but keep it brief*
- 2. Plumage, bare parts etc and call (if possible)*
- 3. Jizz (that 'indefinable something' about the way it behaved)*

## **Description:**

On 26 July 2009 I was 'on duty' at the SeaWatch SW watchpoint at Gwennap Head, Porthgwarra, for my 12th day in a row. At 0831 hrs I was scanning the sea to the southeast with binoculars when I picked up the unmistakable shape of an albatross, heading west well inside the Runnelstone Buoy (which is about 1.6 km offshore). I shouted directions to my student, Alice Jones, while getting onto the bird in the scope. We both then enjoyed fantastic scope views as it drifted west in front of us, just a few hundred metres offshore. The combination of observed plumage features clearly pointed towards an immature Black-browed Albatross, and we continued to watch it and note the key features as it rounded Gwennap Head and gradually drifted away west towards Longships Lighthouse. We lost sight of it at 0834 hrs.

I was concerned as to whether the cluster of observers at Hella Point (some 500 m upwind of our watchpoint) had also seen the bird. Fortunately, scope views revealed a line of smiling faces! The following few minutes were a blur of mobile phone action, but once things settled down we made some notes and sketches and continued our observations. The bird was not seen again off Gwennap Head in subsequent days, despite blanket coverage by SeaWatch SW observers. Later correspondence with one of the 14 observers at Hella Point (Steve Rogers) confirms that we are in agreement about the identification and ageing of the bird. Steve also shared my frustration at having left the DSLR at home that day because of the horrendous weather forecast!

The following notes are reproduced from those made immediately after the sighting, which were hastily scribbled on SeaWatch SW recording forms:

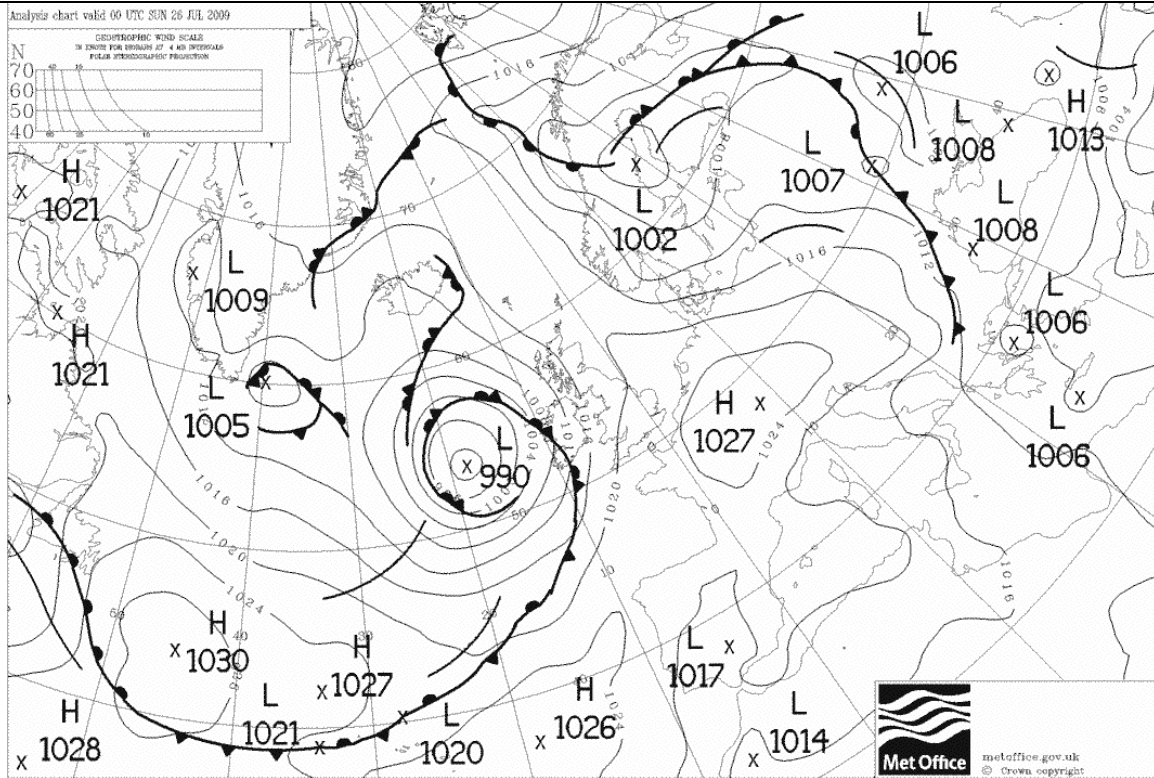
*Size and structure:* Clearly a very large, long-winged bird. Interestingly, although the wingspan clearly exceeded that of adjacent Gannets, the overall impression was of a bird not much larger than a Gannet when seen on its own. The body and head were markedly heavier than those of a large shearwater, e.g Cory's Shearwater, being more reminiscent of a giant Fulmar.

*Plumage:* Dark brownish-black upperwings, shading to paler grey-brown on the upper mantle. Underwings were dusky grey-brown, with slightly paler centres. The underbody was clean white. The head was white, with a small dark area around the eye. A pale grey-buff wash to the nape and neck sides was clearly visible, forming a half-collar. The rump was clean white, with a well-defined greyish-black uppertail.

*Bare parts:* The long heavy bill looked to be pale pinkish-grey, with a well-defined dark tip.

*Flight action:* Described at the time as a 'languid shearing flight with no flapping'. In fact, I don't recall seeing the bird flap once during our four minutes of observation. The flight action recalled a giant Cory's Shearwater, with a meandering 'uncertain' course on slightly bowed wings. At times it was flying directly away or towards our watchpoint. It occasionally banked vertically, allowing good views of both the under- and upperparts.

What was probably the same bird was apparently seen by a fisherman off Salcombe (Devon) on 23 July, and there were subsequent reports from St Martin's (Scilly) on 27 and 28 July. An unconfirmed report from 1.5 km offshore Porthgwarra on 2 Aug has not been verified, and SeaWatch SW and visiting observers on site at the time saw nothing unusual. Overall, the evidence points towards a single bird slowly moving along the coast of southwest England. The pressure chart for 00 hrs on 26 July is shown on the following page:



*Pressure chart for 00 hrs on 26 July 2009; the low-pressure system responsible for the inclement weather early on 26 July is located immediately west of Ireland, with a strong SW airflow crossing Cornwall.*

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Attach extra sheets if needed