



**British Birds Rarities Committee
Rarity Form**

Email to: 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: Fea's-type Petrel	
Date first seen: 31 Aug 2009	Date last seen: 31 Aug 2009
No. of Birds: 1	Age/Sex:
County: Cornwall	Location: Gwennap Head, Porthgwarra
Please fill in your email address to ensure that you get an acknowledgement	
Finder: Russell Wynn	Email: rbw1@noc.soton.ac.uk
Identifier (if different):	Email:
Submitter (if different):	Email:
Other observers: James McCallum, Brian Field, Alice Jones and Kathryn Driscoll	
Any who disagrees with identification? No	
Optical aids: 10x Leica binos, 30x Swaro scope	
Distance from bird: Roughly 1000 m throughout	
Have you enclosed photographs? No	Was the bird videoed? No
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: Manx, Balearic and Sooty Shearwater seen in the same hour	
Which species were alongside the bird: Manx Shearwater	
Observer(s) experience of the species: Saw one two days later; seen several off northwest Africa	
Observer(s) experience of similar species on the same day or previously:	
Weather (general description): Breezy and cloudy with rain arriving from west	
Wind direction and Force: SSW force 4	
Light conditions (good, dull, etc & sun behind, side etc): Light OK, but a bit murky	
Visibility (distance): 10-15 km	
Rain, mist, etc: Moderately murky	
Cloud cover: 100%	
Address of submitter: Dr Russell B Wynn, National Oceanography Centre, Southampton, European Way, Southampton, SO14 3ZH, UK	
Phone No: 07874 930081 (mobile)	
And finally, is the record 100% certain? Yes	

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 31 August I was 'on shift' at the SeaWatch SW watchpoint at Gwennap Head, Porthgwarra, with visiting birders James McCallum (JMc) and Brian Field for company (as well as PhD student Alice Jones and Marine Wildlife Observer Kathryn Driscoll). The previous day JMc and John Swann had seen a Fea's-type Petrel moving west off Gwennap Head at 1125 hrs. Frustratingly, this was while I was on transit to the watchpoint! At lunchtime we heard that another Fea's-type Petrel had been seen moving west off Prawle Point (Devon) at 1000 hrs, by SeaWatch SW observer Mark Darlaston. Knowing from previous experience that this site is four or five hours 'upstream' of Gwennap Head, we were full of anticipation for the afternoon session!

Right on cue, at 1521 hrs I picked up a lone *pterodroma* petrel at about 1 km range approaching from the southeast. I had no hesitation in shouting "Fea's!", and JMc was onto it almost immediately. We enjoyed reasonably good views of the bird as it steadily moved west off our watchpoint, and noted most of the key plumage features. It was particularly nice to see the bird chase after a Manx Shearwater, at which point it switched flight style from the usual looping languid flight to a much faster more direct flight with relatively rapid wingbeats. At 1523 hrs both birds disappeared away to the west, and were not seen again that day.

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

Size and structure: Similar body size but slightly longer-winged than Manx Shearwater in direct comparison. Also the head was noticeably bulkier than Manx, and the bird overall felt more powerful. Flight profile often recalled a mini-Cory's Shearwater, with wings pressed forward and slightly bowed.

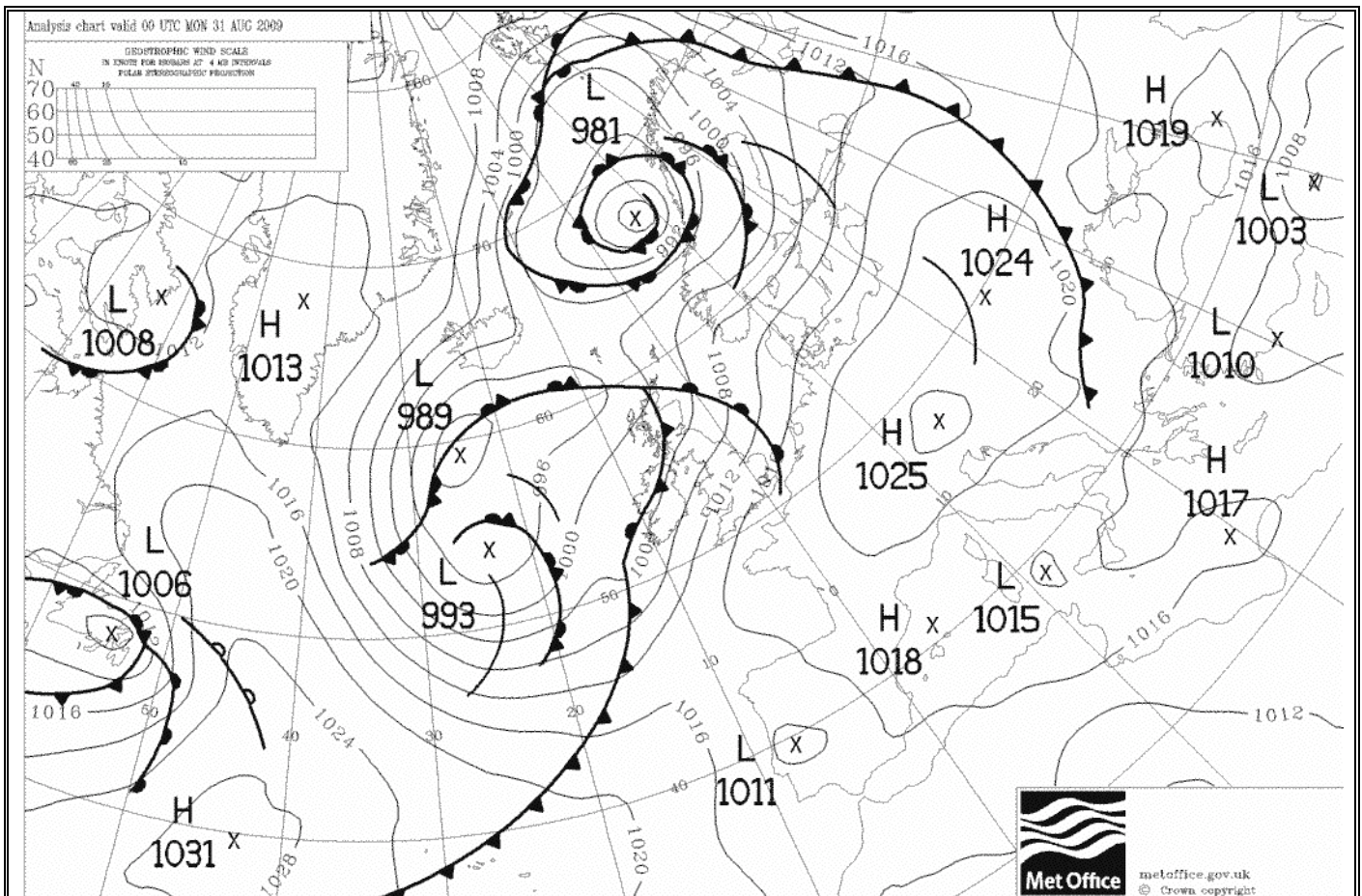
Plumage: Upperwings overall dark smoky grey with a faint hint of the darker 'W' pattern. The uppertail appeared dull grey, and was markedly paler than the upperwing. The underparts and head were clean white, although a small dark eye patch and a dark cap were clearly visible. The underwings were dark.

Bare parts: Not seen clearly. Bill and legs appeared dark.

Flight action: Highly distinctive! When seen alone employed classic 'meandering flight' reminiscent of Cory's Shearwater, with frequent loops and switchbacks. A brief series of flaps was typically taken at the base of a loop, propelling the bird upwards into an arcing glide. When pursuing Manx Shearwater employed faster more direct flight, which nevertheless appeared 'lighter' than Manx Shearwater.

After the bird had passed out of sight I sat there dribbling and swearing, while JMc knocked up a quick watercolour! His sharp artist eye had picked out the white patches at the leading edge of the underwing, adding another observed plumage feature. However, we agreed that the views obtained were insufficient to claim this as anything other than 'Fea's-type petrel'. We then debated whether this could have been the same bird as that seen the previous day. I felt it improbable that an accomplished wanderer like a Fea's Petrel would move west off Gwennap Head late morning one day, then turn around and re-enter the western English Channel as far east as Lyme Bay, before doing exactly the same thing the next day. For that reason we feel it is most likely that two separate birds were involved, but obviously this cannot be proven.

The pressure chart for 00 hrs on 31 Aug is shown on the following page:



Pressure chart for 00 hrs on 31 Aug 2009; a low pressure system located west of the UK pulls a strong southwesterly airflow over Cornwall, with a cold front arriving early afternoon.

Dr Russell B Wynn
SeaWatch SW co-ordinator
rbw1@noc.soton.ac.uk
<http://www.seawatch-sw.org>

Attach extra sheets if needed