

STATUS OF THE FULMAR PRION IN AUSTRALIA

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Currently there are two published records of the Fulmar Prion *Pachyptila crassirostris* for Australia, Learmonth (*Emu* 57:57-59) NMV No. B6840; and McKean and Lewis (*Emu* 71:141) CSIRO No. 14670. Slater (1970: p. 167: *A Field Guide to Australian Birds*) without references says "a few records from Victoria."

While examining Fairy Prions *P. turtur* found at Goolwa Beach on July 6, 1969, J. Eckert and myself found a *P. turtur* type bird with a larger and more pronounced nail than the average. This bird was taken to the South Australian Museum (No. B27910) and later sent to the National Museum of Victoria for comparison with their specimens of *crassirostris*. Mr. McEvey thought that the bird might be *P. crassirostris eatoni*, but considered that a second opinion should be obtained. Mr. Condon then agreed with these remarks; but by this time we were doubting whether in fact the Goolwa Beach bird was *crassirostris*, because in the meantime several more heavy billed *turtur* type birds were found. The bill dimensions of some of these heavier billed birds either matched or were greater than those given for *crassirostris* by Learmonth in 1957.

Some of these heavy billed birds were sent to Mr. F. C. Kinsky (Dominion Museum, Wellington, New Zealand) for comparison with New Zealand specimens. However none of the skins were of *P. crassirostris*. Some of the larger billed *turtur* were said to be similar to a hitherto undescribed form from Motunau Island off the coast of New Zealand. The reasons given by Kinsky for the *P. turtur*

identification was that the distance between the nostril tubes and the nail is generally shorter with *crassirostris* than in *turtur*; also the lower mandible is usually more robust and the unguis (or nail) is usually larger and more curved with *crassirostris* than it is with *turtur*.

J. Eckert and I then obtained on loan the specimen from the CSIRO, and from the NMV the specimen of Learmonth's, along with a skin from Heard Island collected by M. Downes (ANARE) in 1951 No. B6284. When the two Australian specimens are compared with the *crassirostris* from Heard Island the following differences are apparent. Learmonth's specimen is indeed a large billed bird which has a considerable distance between the nostrils and the maxillary unguis. The bird of McKean and Lewis has a large nail on the maxilla, but the dimensions of the bill are not as great as with some of the Goolwa Beach specimens which Kinsky says are similar to Motunau Island birds. Both these specimens and the Goolwa beach skin B27910 have a shrunken mandibular unguis unlike the bulbous unguis of the Heard Island *crassirostris*.

We only had one *crassirostris* (NMV B6284) with which to make comparison. Because of this lack of material it is unwise to make definite identification; but after examination of the specimens the recording of *P. crassirostris* for Australia seems doubtful. To clarify the position, it is suggested that these two specimens should be compared with a greater selection of *crassirostris* material, preferably in New Zealand, to see if *P. crassirostris* warrants inclusion on the Australian list.

	Portland B6840	N.S.W. 14670	Heard Is. B6284	Goolwa Beach B27910	Goolwa Beach *	Goolwa Beach *	Goolwa Beach *
Culmen	24.3	22.4	23.0	23.2	23.3	22.5	23.0
Bill width ...	12.3	11.4	11.5	11.2	11.4	11.0	11.4
Depth in front nostrils	7.7	7.5	7.6	7.9	8.0	7.8	7.6

* Skins sent to New Zealand and identified as *P. turtur*.