

NSW ORAC CASES DECIDED IN 2016

652	Red-backed Buttonquail	Tuncurry	February 27, 2014	Accepted
653	Red-necked Phalarope	East Ballina	March 3, 2016	Accepted
654	Eyrean Grasswren	Winnathee Station	April 3, 2016	Accepted
655	Banded Whiteface	Winnathee Station	April 5, 2016	Accepted
656	Torresian Imperial Pigeon	Palm Beach	June 10, 2016	Accepted

OVERVIEW

NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee (NSW ORAC) reviewed only five submissions in calendar year 2016 all of which were accepted. Although fourteen cases were reviewed in 2015, most of those records were historical and only two submissions were for sightings in the 2015 calendar year. It has therefore been a relative extended quiet period for rarities in NSW and, in particular, for rare seabirds – the last reviewed was a Great Frigatebird which was recorded in January 2015. The highlight of the records appraised in 2016 was the first ever sighting of Eyrean Grasswren in NSW and, with their presence having been suspected along the South Australian border, we are indebted to the intrepid band of birders who searched the area in April 2016 to confirm their occurrence.

CASE SUMMARIES

Case 652: An adult male Red-backed Buttonquail *Turnix maculosus* was seen and photographed at Tuncurry Racecourse on February 27, 2014. Although very little description was provided by the submitter, the two excellent photographs left no doubt as to the identification. The committee voted unanimously to accept this record which is the first confirmed sighting in the state since January 2012 (NSW ORAC Case545). Nick Thompson

Case 653: A Red-necked Phalarope *Phalaropus lobatus* was discovered at Flat Rock, Ballina on March 3, 2016 and was seen by many observers until it was last reported on April 6, 2016. The excellent submission included detailed descriptions of plumage and structure and, together with some high quality photographs, there was no doubt as to the identity of this bird. The committee voted unanimously to accept this record and it becomes only the third confirmed record for NSW, there being previous records from Guyra in January 1979 and from offshore Wollongong in October 1994. Steven McBride

Case 654: Four individual Eyrean Grasswrens *Amytornis goyderi* were seen and photographed at Winnathee Station, north of Hawker Gate adjacent to the South Australian border on April 3, 2016. The excellent description and good diagnostic photographs left no doubt as to the identity of these birds and the committee accepted the record unanimously. This is a very exciting and historic record since it represents the first time that this species has been confirmed as occurring in NSW and the

committee congratulates the group of birders who made the expedition through this remote part of the state. Ian McAllan, Pam Kenway and Michael Moody

Case 655: Two days after the sighting of the Eyrean Grasswrens (NSW ORAC Case 654), a group of four Banded Whiteface *Aphelocephala nigricincta* were seen and photographed at Winnathee Station, north of Hawker Gate adjacent to the South Australian border on April 5, 2016. The excellent description and good diagnostic photographs left no doubt as to the identity of these birds and the committee accepted the record unanimously. This is only the fifth record of Banded Whiteface in NSW with the most recent of these being on September 25, 1986. Ian McAllan and Barbara Cooper

Case 656: A juvenile Torresian Imperial Pigeon *Ducula spilorrhoe* was seen and photographed in a Port Jackson Fig tree in Palm Beach on June 10, 2016 and again on June 13, 2016. At the time of the last record of this species in NSW in 2009 it was a subspecies *D. bicolor spilorrhoe* of Pied Imperial Pigeon. Since then, it has been split by the IOC into Pied Imperial Pigeon *D. bicolor* which occurs in SE Asia to the Philippines and Indonesia and Torresian Imperial Pigeon *D. spilorrhoe* which occurs in PNG and northern Australia. It was determined that the faint barring on the undertail coverts which were whitish rather than buffy, and the dull lime-green coloured bill were diagnostic features for Torresian Imperial Pigeon and the committee voted unanimously to accept the record. It is the 10th confirmed record for NSW and the first since 2009 when four records were confirmed over a short time span. Nick Wilson

UNCONFIRMED REPORTS

With an increasing number of reports of unusual or rare species being posted onto on-line and social media sites, NSW ORAC is concerned that some of these reports do not receive the level of scrutiny required to verify them as confirmed records. It was agreed by the committee members that NSW ORAC would attempt to gather more information from the authors of postings of rare or out-of-range species in the form of photographs and/or a submission. In the event of failure to obtain corroborating information, NSW ORAC would publish the report as an unconfirmed sighting to clarify that it had not undergone a review by the relevant rarities committee. There are seven such reports which have come into this category that have been discovered in 2016.

A sighting of a Torresian Imperial Pigeon was reported from Alstonville on March 27, 2016 but, with no further information available, this remains an unconfirmed report.

A Red-backed Buttonquail was reported from Murwillumbah on August 23, 2016 but, with no further information available, this remains an unconfirmed report.

A Salvin's Albatross was reported from a pelagic charter for an American tour company off Sydney in October 2016 but, with no further information, this remains an unconfirmed report.

White-throated Honeyeaters were reported from Ingleside on July 3, 2009 but, with no confirmed records of this species existing for the Sydney region, this remains an unconfirmed report.

A sighting of a Pied Heron was reported from the far south coast of NSW on May 31, 2008 but, with no further information available, this remains an unconfirmed report.

A White-eared Monarch was reported from Pearl Beach on March 26, 2006 but, with no further information available, this remains an unconfirmed report.

A Magellanic Penguin was reported from Pacific Palms near Forster on March 15, 2010 but, despite some intense searching by a number of people, it was never relocated and it remains an unconfirmed report.

Roger McGovern

Secretary NSW Ornithological Records Appraisal Committee

January 10, 2017