

General Field Notes

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Second Specimen of Leach's Storm Petrel Collected in North Carolina

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Blem and Sonneborn recently reported the first collection of a specimen of Leach's Storm Petrel (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*) in North Carolina (*Chat*, 36:29) in November 1969. Following the passage of Hurricane Agnes 22 June 1972, a second Leach's Storm Petrel was found alive at Atlantic Beach, N.C. The bird was discovered by unknown teenagers and brought to the attention of the authors. Attempts were made to maintain the bird, but it quickly died. The specimen was frozen immediately. Subsequent measurements (mm) of the bird by Harry LeGrand and Elizabeth Teulings were: wing, 161; tail, 85; tarsus, 25; culmen, 17. Now on deposit at the North Carolina State Museum of Natural History, the specimen is the first Leach's Storm Petrel at the museum and, as far as is known, in North Carolina.

Leach's Storm Petrel and Other Pelagic Birds Seen off North Carolina Coast

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During the period 25 to 28 June 1972, within 4 days of the passage of Hurricane Agnes along the North Carolina coast, I was aboard the R/V *Eastward*, Duke University's oceanographic research vessel, in the general area from SE of Morehead City to NE of Cape Hatteras. Each evening, using 7 x 50 binoculars and 20X spotting telescope, I maintained a lookout for pelagic birds. My records are as follows:

25 June 1972, 18:00 to 19:30. Moderate seas, wind 20 knots, clear. Location at 18:45 was 33°56' N, 76°08' W, and about 40 miles offshore.

- 8 Wilson's Storm Petrels (*Oceanites oceanicus*)
- 5 Leach's Storm Petrels (*Oceanodroma leucorhoa*)
- 2 Audubon's Shearwaters (*Puffinus lherminieri*)

26 June 1972, 18:15 to 19:45. Calm seas, wind 5 knots, clear. Location at 19:00 was 34°19' N, 75°54.5' W, and 25 miles offshore.

- 20 Wilson's Storm Petrels
- 1 Greater Shearwater (*P. gravis*)
- 2 Cory's Shearwaters (*P. diomedea*)

27 June 1972, 18:30 to 19:45. Calm seas, wind 1 to 2 knots, clear. Location at 19:00 was 35°49' N, 74°43.5' W and 30 miles offshore.

- 45 Wilson's Storm Petrels
- 3 Greater Shearwaters
- 1 Cory's Shearwater

Of special interest in the above list was the observation of Leach's Storm Petrels on 25 June. Some individuals were seen as close as 30 yards from my vantage point, the boatdeck of the stern of the *Eastward*. The Leach's were contrasted with the Wilson's Storm Petrels by the appearance of a forked tail and the absence of feet extending beyond the tail. At some angles, when viewed from the lateral aspect, the feet of Wilson's extending beyond the tail may produce an illusion of a forked tail. Therefore, only those birds were identified as Leach's Storm Petrels which showed a forked tail from a full dorsal or ventral view. Because of the moderate winds which caused all petrels to fly close to the water between crests of waves, I did not find the erratic flight of Leach's Storm Petrel (Peterson, *A Field Guide to the Birds*, and Alexander, *Birds of the Ocean*) to be a particularly significant distinguishing characteristic. I feel confident of my ability to recognize the Leach's Storm Petrel, having held and studied one in hand only 3 days before the sighting (McCrimmon et al., see above).

In 1967 Williams and Williams (*Chat*, 32:45) reported the first sighting of Leach's Storm Petrel in North Carolina waters during late May and early June. The present records thus provide confirmation of the occurrence of this species in June.

These observations were conducted during a period when support, in part, was furnished to McCrimmon by a Grant from the Chapman Memorial Fund of the American Museum of Natural History.

[Dept. Ed. — The separation of Leach's Storm Petrel from Wilson's Storm Petrel under field conditions is extremely difficult. In view of the recent collections of two Leach's Storm Petrels from the North Carolina coast, it appears that this species may be more common than realized. Well documented visual records thus may help to add to our knowledge of this species. However, all such records even when well documented by careful experienced observers are open to some question. Therefore all identifications should be made with extreme caution, and acceptance and publication will always be tentative with this species.]

Disorientation of Migrating Shorebirds at Beaufort, N.C.

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I have birded in the Beaufort, N.C., region for several years and am well aware that this is not a good area to observe flocks of shorebirds that are unquestionably in migratory flight. There are several reasons for this, including: an east-west beach that tends to disorient southward moving shorebirds, a wide expanse of estuaries that