

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE
BIOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON

A SPECIES OF SHEARWATER (*PUFFINUS ASSIMILIS*
GOULD), NEW TO THE NORTH AMERICAN FAUNA.

BY JONATHAN DWIGHT, JR., M. D.

A specimen of a strange Shearwater was sent to me some time ago by Mr. R. J. Boutilier from Sable Island, Nova Scotia, where it struck the west end light-house on September 1, 1896. It was submitted to Mr. Robert Ridgway, Dr. J. A. Allen, and Mr. William Brewster for examination, all of whom, in the absence of any material for comparison, naturally hesitated to express positive opinions as to its identity. There can be little doubt, however, that it is referable to the Allied Shearwater (*Puffinus assimilis*), a species described by Gould,* from New South Wales, Australia, and found by later observers at several other points in the South Pacific Ocean. There are no specimens apparently in North American museums. It appears to be the smallest of the Shearwaters, in spite of certain discrepancies in the measurements of several writers. The dimensions as given originally by Gould differ considerably from those recently published by Salvin,† and those of my bird come nearly midway between the two, except that the bill of my bird is shorter than the bills described. Gould's statement that 2½ inches is the length of bill is surely a misprint. In color my specimen corresponds exactly with the descriptions of *P. assimilis*, especially the upper parts "slaty-black rather bluer than *P. obscurus*," which species, besides being larger, differs in having dusky under tail

*Proc. Zool. Soc., 1837, p. 156.

†Cat. Birds, British Mus., vol. XXV, 1896, p. 384.

coverts. It corresponds, too, with Gould's colored plate (Birds of Australia, vol. VII, 1848, pl. 59). Salvin considers *P. auduboni* a synonym of *P. obscurus*, and *P. subalaris* also has dusky under tail coverts. Another small species has been described, *P. elegans*, but the feathers of the back of this bird are edged with white. These are the only species to which my specimen is very closely related. It shows evidences of moult, for many of the body feathers are just sprouting, and several of the rectrices are barely out of their sheaths. It may be described as follows:

Puffinus assimilis.

Entire upper parts, including head, nape, back, wings, tail coverts, and tail, bluish slate black, the greater wing coverts obscurely tipped with white; entire lower parts, including under wing coverts, axillaries, and under tail coverts, pure white. The black and white blend along a fairly definite line, passing through the lores and eye and down the sides of the neck, losing itself beneath the folded wing. The coverts of the outer edge of the wing beneath and the outermost of the under tail coverts are faintly dusky. The primaries beneath are dingy white along the inner webs nearly to the apices. Bill, in dried specimen, slate black. Tarsi and feet brownish black, webs between the toes yellowish.

Length in inches, about 11; wing, 6.80; middle rectrix, 2.90; tarsus, 1.36; middle toe, 1.38; middle toe with claw, 1.64; bill, culmen, 0.97; gape, 1.35; from nostril, 0.70; depth at nostril, 0.17; width at nostril, 0.17; unguis, 0.47.

The capture of the Allied Shearwater at Sable Island simply extends the range of a pelagic species, one of a large family of ocean wanderers. It has strayed several times to the Madeira Islands, but its natural habitat is the South Pacific Ocean, in the vicinity of New Zealand and Australia. Its occurrence at Sable Island is of course purely accidental and constitutes the first and only record for North America.



Dwight, Jonathan. 1897. "A species of shearwater (*Pufftnus assimilis* Gould), new to the North American fauna." *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington* 11, 69–70.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/19431>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/211420>

Holding Institution

Smithsonian Libraries and Archives

Sponsored by

Internet Archive

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: NOT_IN_COPYRIGHT

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.