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ANTARCTIC PETREL *THALASSOICA ANTARCTICA* RECORDS FROM THE PRINCE EDWARD ISLANDS AND SOUTH AFRICA

V.L. WARD

Western Cape Nature Conservation, Pvt Bag X9086, Cape Town 8000, South Africa

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The Antarctic Petrel *Thalassoica antarctica* breeds in Antarctica, on a number of inland nunataks and on several coastal islands (van Franeker *et al.* in press). It has a circumpolar pelagic distribution, and is largely restricted to the extreme Southern Ocean, south of 63°S. Vagrants have been recorded from Africa, South America and Australia (Marchant & Higgins 1990). There are six previous records of this species in the African sector of the Southern Ocean; three records from the Prince Edward Islands and three records from South Africa (Table 1). All South African specimens were recorded south of 33°S, and during the species' non-breeding season, i.e. March–October (Marchant & Higgins 1990). The fourth record of this species in South African waters is presented below.

A single Antarctic Petrel was sighted from Bird Island, Algoa Bay, on 13 August 1996 (Hockey *et al.* 1997). The bird was seen approximately 100–200 m east of the island, flying in association with White-chinned Petrels *Procellaria aequinoctialis*, Sooty Shearwaters *Puffinus griseus* and Cape Gannets *Morus capensis*. It was first observed at 16h15, and numerous intermittent sightings were made until 17h10, when light conditions made further observations impossible. Adverse weather conditions prevailed, as a frontal system passed to the south of the country. Wind speeds were in excess of 40 knots, and the swell size reached five metres. Two squid fishing boats were operating to the north-east of the island, and had attracted, in addition to the seabird species mentioned

TABLE 1
Antarctic Petrel records from the Prince Edward Islands and South Africa

Location	Date	Comment	Source
Prince Edward Islands			
Marion Island (46°54'S, 37°45'E)	August 1984	Sighted from a ship west of the island	Gartshore (1987)
	September 1984	Wing washed ashore	Gartshore (1987)
	October 1978	Off East Cape	Gartshore (1987), Sinclair (1981)
South Africa			
Over continental shelf south of Bird Island, Algoa Bay (34°00'S, 26°15'E)	September 1965	Specimen shot from a trawler south of the island, East London Museum collection	Courtney-Latimer & Quickelberge (1966), Chadwick (1991)
Yzerfontein (33°21'S, 18°07'E)	July 1984	Beached specimen, South African Museum collection	Avery (1989), Ryan <i>et al.</i> (1989), Ryan & Rose (1989)
Milnerton (33°52'S, 18°29'E)	May 1990	Beached specimen, South African Museum collection	Chadwick (1991)
Bird Island, Algoa Bay (33°50'S, 26°08'E)	August 1996	Sighting east of the island	This paper

above, giant petrels *Macronectes* spp., Subantarctic Skuas *Catharacta antarctica* and Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicanus*. The fishing boats had sailed from a position south of the island, and it is likely that the petrel had been following the boats.

The slightly faded brown head and mantle, as well as the white wing bars, bordered by a thick brown leading edge were very conspicuous. It is these features that distinguish this species from the similar and potentially confusing Pintado or Cape Petrel *Daption capense*, which has a dark chequered mantle, and mottling on the upper wings (Harrison 1988, Sinclair *et al.* 1993). The nominate subspecies of the Pintado Petrel is a common winter visitor to southern African waters (Ryan & Rose 1989), as well as to Algoa Bay (Craig 1988).

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