

Black-capped Petrel in Horseheads, NY. One does not expect to encounter extremely rare birds while attending an evening choir rehearsal. However, on Monday, 25 Sep 1989, I was waiting for the start of a choral group rehearsal at Elmira College, when another member of the group, Neva Kelly, approached me with a plastic shopping bag containing an unidentified bird. The bird had been discovered by members of Neva's fifth grade class outside Ridge Road School in Horseheads that morning. When she opened the bag, I realized immediately that I was looking at a first record for Chemung County. The tubenose beak placed it in the order Procellariiformes. I had never seen any procellariiform species mentioned on our county lists. I went to my car to get my copy of *The Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding*, Vol. 1, pp. 56-57 (Farrand, J., Jr., ed., 1983. Alfred A. Knopf, New York), which helped us decide that the bird probably was a Black-capped Petrel.

DESCRIPTION: Size and shape: The bird was 36 cm from tip of beak to tip of tail. The tail, however, was so worn that it appeared to be notched. The wings were long and pointed. The beak was heavy and somewhat hooked. The nostrils were tubular. **Color and pattern:** The beak was black. The cap, nape, eye patch, upper parts, and upper rump were all black-brown. The underparts, the sides of the rump, and most of the upper side of the tail were

white. The underwings had black-brown primaries and leading and trailing edges. The inner third of the leading edges of the underwings was white. A streak of black-brown extended from the wrist of each underwing to a point midway between the elbow and the trailing edge of the wing. The black-brown of the junction of the upper back and lower nape continued ventrally in a poorly defined streak around the sides of the lower neck. The legs and proximal half of the webbed toes were pink. The distal half of the toes were black. The outer tail feathers were dark dark ventrally as well as dorsally.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER SPECIES: The extensive white of the tail distinguished it from the Bermuda Petrel. The heavy bill, white of tail, and length of bird distinguished it from the Greater Shearwater.

The following morning, I researched the historical records of the species in New York State using *Birds of New York State* (Bull, J. 1974, pp 61-62. Doubleday/Natural History Press, Garden City, N.Y.), and Regional reports in *The Kingbird* since the mid-1970's. Neva Kelly's fifth grade class made a project of identifying the bird themselves. Some members of the class also concluded that it was a Black-capped Petrel. I took the bird to the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology that afternoon, and several members of the staff confirmed the identification (Charles Smith, Greg Budney, Charles Wolcott). The specimen has been deposited in the Cornell University Vertebrate Collections.

My research indicates that this specimen is only the sixth record of a Black-capped Petrel in New York State. The first four records were from the latter half of the nineteenth century. The fifth was from near Owego in neighboring Tioga County in 1933. All of these records immediately followed the passing of hurricanes. Winds from Hurricane *Hugo* Passed through Chemung County Saturday evening, 23 Sep. According to *The Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding*, the species breeds only in the mountains of Hispaniola. It is thought to occur in the Gulf Stream north to about the same latitude as Cape Hatteras, North Carolina.

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