

# A second documented record of Spectacled Petrel *Procellaria conspicillata* in Argentine waters

Juan Pablo Seco Pon<sup>1,3</sup> and William Stein, III<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Grupo Vertebrados. Instituto de Investigaciones Marinas y Costeras (IIMyC), Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Técnicas (CONICET) –Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata (UNMDP). Funes 3250 (B7602AYJ), Mar del Plata, Argentina.

<sup>2</sup> Pontchartrain Institute for Environmental Sciences, University of New Orleans. 2000 Lakeshore Drive (LA 70148) New Orleans, USA.

<sup>3</sup> Corresponding author: secoPON@mdp.edu.ar

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**ABSTRACT:** The Spectacled Petrel *Procellaria conspicillata* is endemic to Inaccessible Island, in the Tristan da Cunha group (central South Atlantic). The species is considered an occasional visitor to Argentina and there are few records of the species in national waters. On 13 February 2014, two birds were observed (and photographed) 89 nautical miles southeast off Buenos Aires Province at 38°55'S, 56°00'W. This record represents the second documented record of Spectacled Petrel for Argentina.

**KEY-WORDS:** Occurrence, Argentina, Buenos Aires Province, Continental shelf, Spectacled Petrel.

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The Spectacled Petrel *Procellaria conspicillata* is a breeding endemic of Inaccessible Island, in the Tristan da Cunha group (Ryan 1998, Ryan & Moloney 2000, Ryan *et al.* 2006), and at sea is essentially confined to the South Atlantic Ocean north of the South Polar Front, chiefly between 24–41°S (Enticott & O'Connell 1985). The species disperses to southeast South America as far north as northern Brazil and the Benguela Current off Namibia and southwest South Africa (Camphuysen & van der Meer 2000, Lima *et al.* 2004). The Spectacled Petrel is considered to be a vagrant to the Indian Ocean, where it has been reported from Amsterdam Island and Australia (Onley & Scofield 2007, Shirihai 2008).

To date there are few records of Spectacled Petrels in Argentine Continental Shelf (<200 m depth) waters. The presence of the Spectacled Petrel in Argentine waters (<200 nm) was first recorded by Savigny (2002), who reported three birds attending commercial trawlers off the northeastern Islas Malvinas/Falkland Islands on 9 February 2000. White *et al.* (2002) reported a single bird from vessels whilst conducting at-sea seabird and marine mammal surveys northeast of Isla Soledad/East Falkland Island during March 2000. Imberti (2002) recorded a total of four birds from vessels close to the edge of Argentine territorial waters – along the shelf-break, east of Golfo San Jorge and Golfo San Matías (northern Patagonia) between 13 and 14 March 2000. A single bird was also recorded north of Islas Sebaldes/Jason Islands on 14 February 2004 (Black *et al.* 2005). It has to be stressed that these are

all undocumented records. In recent years, Ginsburg & DeWitt (2013) photographically documented the species (a single bird) for the first time within Argentine waters off southeastern Buenos Aires Province on 3 February 2013.

On 13 February 2014 (16:00 local time, -3 GMT), two Spectacled Petrels were seen and photographed 89 nautical miles off southeastern Mar del Plata (Buenos Aires Province) at 38°55'S, 56°00'W. Water depth at this location was 84 m. The sighting was made opportunistically whilst onboard the *MV Seabourn Quest* during its voyage between Valparaiso, Chile, and Buenos Aires, Argentina, between 25 January and 15 February 2014, by way of Ushuaia, Argentina, the Antarctic Peninsula, and the Malvinas/Falkland Islands-Montevideo, Uruguay transect. The birds had distinctive white face markings (the spectacles) and white chins (Figure 1). The Spectacled Petrels were first noticed when crossing the wake of the vessel, about 50/70 m astern, and were observed flying in large circles behind the vessel, but did not come close to it during the observation. The Spectacled Petrels were seen along several Great Shearwaters *Puffinus gravis* and a few White-chinned *P. aequinoctialis* and Wilson's Storm-petrels *Oceanites oceanicus*, and an Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross *Thalassarche chlororhynchos*. A few minutes prior to the observation, at least 50 Common Dolphins, *Delphinus delphis*, were sighted crossing the wake of the ship. The birds were observed for about 10 minutes.

To our knowledge, this represents the second photographically documented record of the Spectacled



FIGURE 1. Spectacled Petrel *Procellaria conspicillata* recorded at sea off southeastern Buenos Aires Province, Argentina. Photo: W. Stein, III.

Petrel in Argentine waters. This is novel information considering that the literature generally refers to the species as being found in the central South Atlantic Ocean close to Inaccessible Island during the breeding season (Enticott & O'Connell 1985). Moreover, tagged birds concentrated their foraging activity along the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, predominantly north and north-west of Inaccessible Island, with 50% of locations within 500 km of the islands whilst breeding (Reid *et al.* 2014). However, the satellite data reported by Reid *et al.* (2014) clearly provides additional records for Argentine waters and may suggest that the (northern) Patagonian Shelf is an important feeding ground for this species. The low encounter rate for the Spectacled Petrel in this region of the southwestern Atlantic during summer is probably due to (1) the low coverage of observers specifically trained in seabird identification on board research and commercial vessels operating in the vicinity of the Rio de la Plata Estuary and its neighboring waters and (2) local poorer oceanographic conditions in comparison with more northern latitudes (i.e. subtropical and tropical waters preferred by the birds are located north of 35°S), which contribute to the scarcity of published records.

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