# THE LARGER SHEARWATERS



• Short-tailed Shearwater leaving its breeding island.

Photo: V. N. Serventy

## The Larger Shearwaters Puffinus spp.

The following diagnostic features should help to distinguish the chicks and adults of the all-dark Wedge-tailed, Short-tailed and Sooty Shearwaters. The average dimensions of the eggs of each species are also given, as these may be a useful guide to the species present on a breeding site.

#### WEDGE-TAILED SHEARWATER

Puffinus pacificus

Legs and feet: Predominantly pale, flesh-coloured.

Tarsus: Slender, more or less rounded in cross

section.

Toe nails: White.

#### Adult

A slim bird with a large wedge-shaped tail.

Mass: 300-450 g Tail: 125-140 mm Culmen: 33-42 mm Tarsus: 45-51 mm

Culmen/tarsus ratio: 0.66-0.83

## Chick

Culmen: 32-42 mm\* Tarsus: 45-52 mm\*

#### Egg

Width: 39-43 mm; Length: 57-64 mm

#### SOOTY SHEARWATER

Puffinus griseus

Legs, feet and toe nails: As in Short-tailed

Shearwater.

## Adult

In all respects a larger version of the Short-tailed Shearwater.

Mass: 650-970 g Tail: 80-94 mm Culmen: 38-45 mm\* Tarsus: 53-61 mm\*

Culmen/tarsus ratio: 0.66-0.75

#### Chick

Culmen: 38-45 mm\* Tarsus: 53-61 mm\*

#### Egg

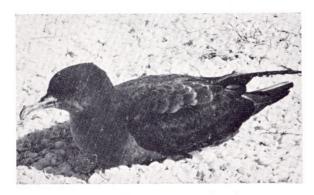
Width: 44-52 mm; Length: 72-83 mm



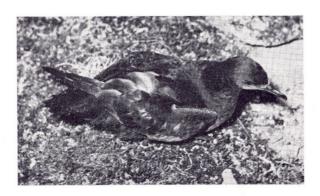


Wedge-tailed

Short-tailed



Wedge-tailed Shearwater.



Short-tailed Shearwater.

Photos: V. N. Serventy

#### SHORT-TAILED SHEARWATER

Puffinus tenuirostris

Legs and feet: Predominantly dark grey.

Tarsus: Stout, distinctly flattened from side to

Toe nails: Dark grey.

#### Adult

A heavily built, stubby looking bird with a small fan-shaped tail.

Mass: Usually well over 450 g.

Tail: 75-86 mm Culmen: 28-36 mm Tarsus: 48-56 mm

Culmen/tarsus ratio: 0.56-0.68

#### Chick

Culmen: 28-36 mm\* Tarsus: 48-56 mm\*

### Egg

Width: 43-50 mm; Length: 68-76 mm

NOTE: The only other all-dark shearwater that breeds in Australia is the Fleshy-footed Puffinus carneipes. This species is readily distinguished by its strong, distinctly coloured pale straw bill with dark tip,

Possible confusion could arise between the species already described and the similar Great-winged Petrel Pterodroma macroptera. When in the hand, however, the latter has the characteristically shaped black bill of a Gadfly Petrel, grey-black legs and feet and tarsus more rounded than is usual in shearwaters (see Slater 1970, for extra details).

This guide is a revision of an earlier account by van Tets, Robinson and McKean (1964).

#### References

Slater, P. (1970), A Field Guide to Australian Birds, Non-Passerines. Rigby, Adelaide. 428 pp.

van Tets, G. F., Robinson, F. N., and McKean, J. L. (1964), 'Bird in the Hand'. Aust. Bird Bander 2: 82-83.

<sup>\*</sup> These measurements apply only to chicks weighing more than 300 g or to those examined after about mid-March.