

## SHORT NOTE

### A response to M.Tove's rebuttal of Imber (2004)

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Since Imber (2004) was published I have obtained significant new information relating to that paper.

Firstly, there has been confirmation of the breeding of Kermadec petrels (*Pterodroma neglecta*) on Round Island, Mauritius, Indian Ocean (R. Ashcroft pers. comm. in Brooke 2004: 329). This was predictable but, nevertheless, reassuring to have the fact established. Also, in the western Indian Ocean, a Kermadec petrel has recently been observed ashore at a possible nest on another archipelago. As it was pale phase, we are reminded not to be blind to other than dark phase Kermadec petrels in the Indian and Atlantic Oceans.

Secondly, at South Meyer Island, Kermadec Islands on 7 November 2004, I observed many Kermadec petrels flying in the updraughts along the eastern cliffs and confirmed Heintzelman's (1961) observation of white patches at the bases of the outer tail feathers, particularly prominent in dark phase birds. The white patches were displayed as the petrels fanned their tails for aerodynamic effect. This is further proof of the correctness of identification of this Kermadec petrel in Pennsylvania (Heintzelman 1961).

The following are some specific points regarding Tove (2005). The vocalization reported by Silva (1995) at Ilha Trindade, South Atlantic Ocean, though a single call, was obviously heard from numerous petrels (birds attending nest sites, birds with eggs and birds with chicks), being the third most important call type there. This Kermadec petrel call is one of the most highly distinctive calls among the Procellariiformes. Birders and biologists unfamiliar with petrels on their breeding grounds need to be aware that the calls of many Procellariidae and Hydrobatidae are among their most characteristic identification criteria.

The feather louse *Halipeurus kermadecensis*, regularly hosted by Kermadec petrels, is present on both this petrel and the Trindade Petrel (*Pterodroma arminjoniana*) in the Atlantic Ocean: for example, this louse has been collected from numerous skins of undoubted Trindade petrels in the Natural History Museum, Tring, UK. The implication is that Kermadec petrels colonized Ilha Trindade probably before Trindade petrels, and their *H. kermadecensis* lice switched host there to parasitise Trindade petrels, and have partially or completely displaced *H. heraldicus*, usually hosted by Trindade petrels and by Herald petrels (*P. heraldica*) in the Pacific Ocean.

Details of the intestines of a Kermadec petrel from Ilha Trindade were given in Imber (1985), though the spirit specimen was identified by its label as a Trindade petrel and this identification was not questioned at that time. It is now known to be a Kermadec petrel.

If Tove and others have been seeing Trindade petrels having primaries with pale shafts and extensively white inner webs, they should seriously consider whether they have been seeing Kermadec petrels. The additional information given by Tove (2005) on his 29 May 1994 sighting off Cape Hatteras of a dark phase gadfly petrel with pale primary shaft bases is very interesting, and strongly indicates that it was a first year Kermadec petrel. The two B.Patteson sightings with photos on his website listed in Imber (2004), were only tentatively identified as Kermadec petrels, but were inserted in my paper to draw attention to those petrels that need to be critically examined by perceptive observers.

Kermadec petrels have had colonies as far north as 21° 15'S in the Pacific Ocean (at Rarotonga: E.K. Saul pers. comm.), and breed at 19° 50'S in the Indian Ocean at Round Island. At 20° 35'S in the Atlantic Ocean, Ilha Trindade is thus within Kermadec petrels' latitudinal range for breeding. South Africa, extending to nearly 35°S, represents little barrier to a petrel capable of ranging to 44°S (Imber 2004). Thus the occurrence of Kermadec petrels breeding in the Indian Ocean leads to the expectation of their breeding in the Atlantic Ocean at available islands between 20° and 34°S: that is, only Ilha Trindade and the nearby rocky islets of Martin Vas.

The distribution of non-breeding Kermadec petrels in the North Atlantic may be further north or offshore than the seas off Cape Hatteras, but they could still pass through that area. They are also likely to be rarer than Trindade petrels in the Atlantic Ocean but there is no doubt that they are there.

Brazilian ornithologists seeking to locate the breeding Kermadec petrels on Ilha Trindade may be best to concentrate their efforts around June, as this seems when these petrels are more active at colonies (Imber 2004). The nest sites are likely to be at the higher altitudes on Ilha Trindade, and the petrels' calls will be the best searching cue. However, G.L. da Silva, with his knowledge of these petrels on that island, would be the best guide. A concern, however, is that the considerable reduction in the size of the petrel colonies on Ilha Trindade last century (Murphy 1915, Birdlife International 2000) may have adversely affected Kermadec petrels more than Trindade petrels.

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