

## COMMENT TO ROSELAAR & VAN BRANDWIJK (2019): AN OLD RECORD OF A BALEARIC SHEARWATER *PUFFINUS MAURETANICUS* FROM GERMANY

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Recently, an old specimen of a Balearic shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus* was discovered at Naturalis Biodiversity Center in Leiden, The Netherlands. The specimen was supposedly collected on or near Heligoland, Germany, on 5 December 1893 by local fishermen and was given to Dr. René Baron Snouckaert van Schauburg by Hugo Weigold, probably between 1910 and 1913 (Roselaar & van Brandwijk 2019). At that time, Balearic shearwater was still treated as a subspecies of Manx shearwater *P. puffinus*, and consequently, the specimen was labelled as Manx shearwater. This would constitute the first record of Balearic shearwater for Germany, predating the next one by almost a hundred years. However, the record was rejected by the relevant Rarities Committees in 2011 and 2019 and was therefore deleted.

Before the publication by Roselaar & van Brandwijk (2019), the specimen had already been subject to scrutiny. After I received pictures of the specimen via Ommo Hüppop, Institute of Avian Research, on 3 February 2011, I submitted the details of the record to the Heligoland Rarities Committee. After initial enthusiasm, the committee soon questioned the origin of the specimen. Therefore, although the identification as Balearic shearwater was unanimously accepted, the record was rejected in March 2011. The following points were made:

- Hugo Weigold was a keen collector for the Heligoland collection. Apparently, Weigold gave some specimens to the Snouckaert collection (Roselaar & van Brandwijk 2019), but none of these were rarities at the time. The shearwater would have been an exception. Although Manx shearwaters were common around Heligoland before 1840, there were only three records afterwards in the 19th century (Dierschke *et al.* 2011). It seems unlikely that Weigold would have given away such a rare specimen, especially because only a single Manx shearwater (*ca.* 1840) is listed in the catalogue of the museum from 1931;
- the label attached to the specimen was handwritten. During a search in the Heligoland collection (at that time stored in Wilhelmshaven), Rolf Nagel, former curator of the collection, could not find handwriting similar to that on the label of the Balearic shearwater on any label of the collection. In his opinion, the label of the shearwater was written by two different persons. He checked many labels, but could not assign the handwriting to any collecting period. Labels used during that time were pre-printed with inscription 'Helgoland'. Self-made labels only occur on a few external specimens. On the other hand, many old specimens of the Heligoland collection were relabelled after 1910 and there are only few specimens from the last decade of the 19th century left in the collection left to compare labels. Another search by myself on 8 February 2011 confirmed Nagel's findings;
- the collection on Heligoland contained many specimens collected in other countries. Therefore an origin from outside Heligoland is at least possible;
- there is no additional record of the Manx shearwater in the 2nd edition published in 1900 (Gätke 1900). Heinrich Gätke included various records from the years following the publication of his book in 1891. However, no further Manx shearwater was mentioned, and only a single specimen was reported between 1840 and 1890. If either Gätke or the museum would have received a Manx shearwater, this most probably would have been mentioned in the 2nd edition of his book (Gätke 1900);
- although there are some records of a Balearic shearwaters in December from The Netherlands, they were never recorded in Germany in that month. Even Manx shearwaters are rare in December in Germany and there is only a single record from Heligoland.

Although these arguments do not prove that the specimen does not originate from Heligoland, as said, the doubts regarding its origin predominated, leading to unanimous rejection of the record. A summary of this discussion was communicated to Kees Roselaar on 7 January 2015. After publication of the paper by Roselaar & van Brandwijk (2019), the record was again considered by the Heligoland Rarities Committee in March 2019, and rejected again unanimously. The rejection was confirmed by the German Rarities Committee (Deutsche Avifaunistische Kommission 2019) and therefore the record published by Roselaar & van Brandwijk (2019) should not be used in further analysis.

## REFERENCES

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- Gätke H. 1900. Die Vogelwarte Helgoland. Zweite vermehrte Auflage, herausgegeben von Professor Rudolf Blasius. Johann Heinrich Meyer Verlag, Braunschweig.
- Roselaar K (C.S.) & H. van Brandwijk 2019. An old record of a Balearic Shearwater *Puffinus mauretanicus* from Germany. Sula 27: 1-3.

### **SAMENVATTING – COMMENTAAR OP ROSELAAR & VAN BRANDWIJK (2019): 'AN OLD RECORD OF A BALEARIC SHEARWATER *PUFFINUS MAURETANICUS* FROM GERMANY'**

De waarneming van de vale pijlstormvogel als beschreven door Roselaar & van Brandwijk (2019) is indertijd bekeken door de Duitse zeldzaamhedencommissie (Deutsche Avifaunistische Kommission). De vogel zou door Weigold aan Snouckaert geschonken zijn, maar dit wordt betwijfeld omdat noordse pijlstormvogel ook toen een zeldzaamheid was, zeker in de winter. Deze vale pijlstormvogel wordt in oude publicaties niet vermeld. Bovendien komt het label niet overeen met labels die in die tijd werden gebruikt en er is in de Duitse vogelcollectie van Helgoland ook geen label met hetzelfde handschrift te vinden. Wel wordt hierbij opgemerkt dat de labels van veel Helgoland-exemplaren in 1910 zijn vervangen voor nieuwe. Op grond van de twijfels over de herkomst van dit exemplaar is besloten het niet te aanvaarden voor de Duitse avifauna.



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