

The Italian Specimen of *Bulweria fallax* (Procellariidae)

by Storrs L. Olson

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The enigmatic Jouanin's Petrel *Bulweria fallax* was described only in 1955 (Jouanin 1955) and its breeding grounds remain unknown, although islands off southeastern Arabia are said by Cramp & Simmons (1977) to be suspected; they also state that it occurs at sea in the western Indian Ocean, including the Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, Arabian Sea and possibly the Red Sea. Two far extralimital records consist of a specimen taken 4 September 1967 at Lisianski Island in the northwestern Hawaiian chain (Clapp 1971), and another specimen, one of 3 observed, taken 2 November 1953 at Cimadolmo (Treviso), Italy (Giol 1957).

Through the kindness of Signora Vittoria Giol, I was able to examine the Italian specimen (Giol collection 586, unsexed) and compare it in detail with the Lisianski specimen (USNM 543185) and another taken in the Arabian Sea (USNM 485538), both males. There are no points by which the Italian bird can be distinguished from other examples of *B. fallax* in overall external appearance, bill shape, plumage coloration, or size (culmen 30.5 mm, wing 232, tail 112, tarsus 29.5—cf. the measurements in Jouanin 1955, 1957, and Moltoni 1956).

In one character, however, namely the distinctly bicoloured feet, the Italian bird differs from all previously described specimens. The tarsi and the proximal two-thirds of the inner and middle toes and web and the bases of the claws were originally light, probably flesh coloured, whereas the outer toe and the distal thirds of the webbing and of the other 2 toes are black, with the 2 colours being strongly demarcated, as shown in the photographs accompanying Giol's (1957) note. The specimen is prepared as a mount and the light coloured portions of the feet have been painted; but by viewing the underside of the webbing it is clearly seen that the black portions of the webbing, which are the novel feature of the specimen, were not painted, Sr. Giol's taxidermist having followed the natural pattern of colouration very accurately when painting the specimen.

In no case has the colouration of the feet of previously known specimens of *Bulweria fallax* been described as distinctly bicoloured (Jouanin 1955, 1957, Berlioz 1955, Moltoni 1956, Bourne 1960, specimen label on USNM 485538). Typically, all the webbing is light in colour, with only the outer toe being blackish. C. Jouanin confirms that he has seen no specimens of *B. fallax* with distinctly bicoloured feet. It is possible that such a condition occurs in the Indian Ocean population (or populations) of *Bulweria fallax*, but alternatively, the Italian bird may have come from another, as yet undiscovered population.

Bourne (1960), who was in turn cited by Cramp & Simmons (1977), considered *Bulweria fallax* to be "a large Indian Ocean representative of Bulwer's Petrel [*Bulweria bulwerii*] of the Atlantic and Pacific, probably best regarded as a race of that species." Size alone precludes such an interpretation, as do numerous skeletal differences. Furthermore, bones of a large species of *Bulweria* (*B. bifax*—Olson 1975) have been recovered from Quaternary deposits on the island of St. Helena, thus showing that at least one population of *Bulweria* the size of *B. fallax* once occurred in the Atlantic. It is not at all unlikely that other populations of large *Bulweria* existed elsewhere in the Atlantic and perhaps in the Mediterranean as well. Remnants of some of these populations might still exist.

Although the Italian occurrence was considered "so extraordinary that unnatural origin, such as release by sailor, must be regarded as possibility (Jouanin)"

(Cramp & Simmons 1977: 135), the record is certainly no more extraordinary than that from Lisianski, where human interference was never regarded as a possibility, particularly given the natural propensity for petrels to wander far out of their normal ranges (Bourne 1967). Considering that the Italian bird was accompanied by 2 others like it and came to land during a period of storm, I see no reason to question the naturalness of this occurrence. I would regard transportation of 3 of these birds to the Mediterranean by a sailor to be far more unlikely than their having arrived on their own; the possibility that they may have come from some population other than those in the western Indian Ocean, a possibility which is supported by the differences in foot colour, further supports the validity of the Italian record.

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Systematics of the *Turdus fumigatus/hauxwelli* group of thrushes

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There has been much disagreement about the systematic treatment of the thrushes for which the specific names *fumigatus*, *hauxwelli* and *obsoletus* are used. The group is widely distributed, from Costa Rica and Panama through much of northern South America south to Bolivia, Mato Grosso and southeastern Brazil (Fig. 1). They are lowland forest thrushes, brown above and paler and more rufous below, mostly with dark bills, and without a coloured eye-ring. Part of the difficulty is the usual one affecting groups of closely related forms with geographically isolated populations: whether to treat moderately differentiated allopatric forms as specifically or only subspecifically distinct. A further difficulty,