

SHORT NOTE

Seabirds crossing Stewart Island at night

Procellariiform seabirds are rarely seen over the larger islands of New Zealand during daylight but at least one species, Cook's Petrel (*Pterodroma cookii*), is reported to cross various parts of the North Island and Stewart Island at night (Imber 1985; p.80 in *Readers Digest Complete Book of New Zealand Birds*, Sydney, Reed Methuen). The observations recorded below suggest that a number of other species of seabird that are normally pelagic also cross Stewart Island at night.

1. In March 1989, I was camped at The Neck near the mouth of Paterson Inlet on the east coast of Stewart Island. On 9 March between 2000 h and 2100 h I heard several Mottled Petrels (*P. inexpectata*) calling as they flew in from the sea and headed west.
2. On the night of 10-11 December 1991, I was camped near the northern end of the Tin Range at SH 464. At about 0230 h I heard a prion (*Pachyptila* sp.) calling continuously as it flew low overhead from ESE to WNW.
3. On 22 December 1991, I found a dead Sooty Shearwater (*Puffinus griseus*) 500 m NW of the Table Hill trig at an elevation of 630 m a.s.l., also at the northern end of the Tin Range. The bird appeared to have been dead for between one and two weeks.

These observations, two of them from sites more than 10 km inland, suggest that at least three species of seabird (in addition to Cook's Petrel) cross Stewart Island at night. Large numbers of petrels breed on the small islands around Stewart Island and those recorded were probably travelling between feeding grounds and their breeding islands. Stewart Island is New Zealand's third largest, with an area of 1683 km²; these records are all from the central part of the island, where it varies from about 30 to 40 km in width.

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