

SHORT NOTE

Soft-plumaged Petrels (*Pterodroma mollis*) in New Zealand waters

During 1987 I made the following observations of Soft-plumaged Petrels (*Pterodroma mollis*) in New Zealand waters.

On 6 September, a bird approached the stern and briefly followed in the wake of the *MV Fijian*, which was on passage from Onehunga to Suva. The ship was in the Tasman Sea at 36° 18' S, 173° 38' E, about 15 nautical miles (nm) NW of Kaipara Harbour North Head (sea temperature 13.7 °C). Despite a wide distribution in the Southern Ocean, the Soft-plumaged Petrel is not often reported in Australasian waters, apparently seldom penetrating far into the Tasman Sea (Harper 1973, Nakamura 1982), and is only rarely reported as a beach-wreck in New Zealand (Powlesland 1987). A strong SW air flow predominated over the Tasman Sea during 4 and 5 September 1987, which probably resulted in the bird being driven northwards out of its usual range.

On 16 December, when SRV *Totorore* was at 44° S, 177° W, about 50 nm SSW of Chatham Island (sea temperature 15.4 °C), Gerry Clark and I observed a Soft-plumaged Petrel close behind the yacht. Two more birds were seen soon after dawn the next day, when *Totorore* was at 45° S, 177° W. It is probable that these records refer to birds from a population now suspected to be breeding at the Antipodes Islands (Imber 1983).

LITERATURE CITED

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- POWLESLAND, R. G. 1987. Seabirds found dead on NZ beaches in 1985, and a review of *Pterodroma* species recoveries since 1960. *Notornis* 34: 237-252.

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