

FURTHER SIGHTINGS OF NORTHWARD MIGRATING SHORT-TAILED SHEARWATERS

The note by Neil Cheshire (1980, *Notornis* 27: 234) and recent discussions with both him and John Jenkins prompt me to record similar observations which I made in May 1978. This was on a voyage from Ile des Pins, New Caledonia, to Whangarei between 2 and 11 May 1978 on the Whangarei sloop *Derwent*.

The prevailing wind throughout the voyage was a light to moderate south-easterly. Thus the course to New Zealand was to windward, and we had to tack several times. One of these tacks took us to a point about 100 nautical miles west of Norfolk Island and about 300 n. miles westward of the rhumbline.

The first northward-migrating Short-tailed Shearwaters (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) were encountered about 100 n. miles south-west of Norfolk.

My observations are as follows:

8/5/78 1350. A tight bunch of c.15 flying low to the water heading NNE
1430. c.12 heading NNE, flying swiftly
1505. Two " " " "
1630. Five " " " "
Our fix at 1530 was 31°21'S, 168°19'E, the course 107°, and the sea temperature 21.7°C.

9/5/78 0730. Four heading on a similar course to those seen on 8/5/78
0900. Six " "
1035. Ten " "
1100. Twelve " "
Our noon fix was 32°52'S, 169°48'E, the course 128°, and the sea temperature 19.4°C.

I saw very few birds compared with the thousands recorded by Cheshire on 25/4/80. Also they were 500-600 n. miles ENE of the area of Cheshire's observations.

Jenkins (1980, *Notornis* 27: 220) commented that the northward migration of *P. tenuirostris* seems to pass west of Fiji. Cheshire (1980) projected his observations northward and commented that the birds that he saw were probably going to pass close to the south-eastern tip of New Caledonia. Figure 1 shows the possible tracks of the shearwaters seen by NCC and TGL.

Young birds leave their burrows and head northward on migration ". . . in the latter part of April or early May . . ." (Serventy *et al.*, 1971, *The handbook of Australian sea-birds*, p. 130). Adults apparently leave earlier.

No Short-tailed Shearwaters were seen from *Derwent* anywhere between Ile des Pins and the area west of Norfolk in the first week of May. Perhaps most of the migrants had gone through and the birds seen on 8 and 9 May were stragglers, on the very eastern edge of their normal migration track. The weather had been settled with

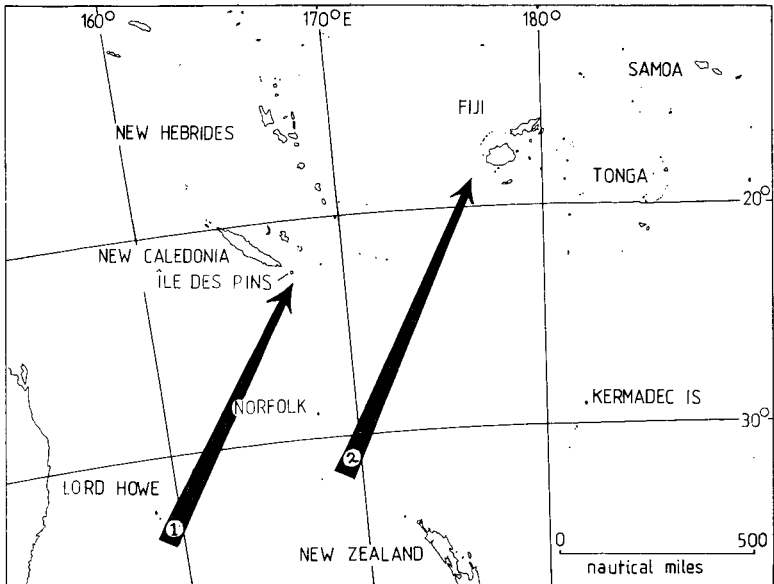


FIGURE 1 — Possible migration paths of Short-tailed Shearwaters.

1. Possible track of birds seen by Cheshire on 25 April 1980.
2. Possible track of birds seen by TGL on 8 & 9 May 1978.

light to moderate south-easterlies for the previous fortnight. Had there been strong south-westerlies, we may have logged more Short-tailed Shearwaters in this part of the Tasman. They certainly occur further south-eastward, along the west coast of the North Island of New Zealand during May, as shown by beach patrol records over the years.

Our average course at the time was about 118° and our speed only about 5 knots. I estimated that most of the shearwaters were heading on a course of about 030° . They were flying directly and quickly at c.40 knots. Their speed and heading were much the same as Cheshire noted, but they were over 500 n. miles further eastward. If these birds maintained their course and we allow for some slip to the north-west caused by the south-east trades, they would probably have passed through the western part of the Fiji Islands.

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WHY IS THE KIWI SO CALLED ?

It has been widely accepted that the kiwi was named because of its cry, *kiwi*. The cry is in two syllables, but there the similarity ends. Anyone listening to the hoarse cry of the female, *ah-eh*, or the