

SEABIRDS FOUND DEAD IN NEW ZEALAND IN 1977

By C. R. VEITCH

During 1977, 3073 kilometres of coast were patrolled by 132 members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand and their friends. 5542 dead seabirds and 135 non-seabirds were found. There were no major wrecks. Small, sometimes local, wrecks of Broad-billed Prions (*Pachyptila vittata*), Sooty Shearwaters (*Puffinus griseus*), Short-tailed Shearwaters (*P. tenuirostris*) and Fluttering Shearwaters (*P. gavia*) are noted. Unusual finds were one each of: Antarctic Petrel (*Thalassoica antarctica*), Fulmar Prion (*Pachyptila crassirostris*), Black-bellied Storm Petrel (*Fregetta tropica*), Grey Ternlet (*Procelsterna cerulea*) and Pitt Island Shag (*Stictocarbo punctatus featherstoni*) (a new record for beach patrolling).

INTRODUCTION

This paper records the results of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand's Beach Patrol scheme for 1977. The coastline of New Zealand is divided into 15 sections (Imber & Boeson 1969) with an additional grouping of "OI" for Outlying Islands which this year includes patrols from the Chatham Islands. This year there were patrols on all sections of coast except Fiordland. 440 Beach Patrol Cards and 21 Specimen Records Cards were filed.

Nomenclature follows the Annotated Checklist (OSNZ 1970), except where patrollers could not identify birds to a subspecific level and where some trinomials have not been used in the tables to save space.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The numbers of birds found and kilometres of beach travelled and covered per month and per coast are recorded in Table 1. Kilometres covered are the lengths of coast covered monthly; kilometres travelled are the total lengths of coast patrolled. Hence, if one kilometre of beach is patrolled three times in one month, then three kilometres have been travelled but only one kilometre covered.

The total distance travelled (3563 kilometres) is slightly above the average for the past nine years and the total number of seabirds found (5542) is slightly lower than average. The number of birds found per kilometre of coast covered (1.8) is the lowest since 1972.

This year there were no major wrecks. Several minor and localised wrecks occurred. The monthly and coastal distribution of the more common birds is given in Tables 2 and 3 and of the less common birds in Table 4.

In February, large numbers of Fairy Prions (*Pachyptila turtur*) were found on Wellington West beaches. The young of this species leave the nest at the end of January (Falla 1970), and so mortality at this time can be expected.

In May, there was the usual mortality of Sooty Shearwaters (*Puffinus griseus*). During August, large numbers, presumably from the same wreck, were found on Mason's Bay, Stewart Island (Southland beach patrol district).

In July, Fluttering Shearwaters (*Puffinus gavia*) were found in high numbers on Auckland East beaches. The centre of this wreck moved around to Auckland West during August when dead birds of this species were found at a rate of 2.4 per kilometre. During the same period higher numbers than usual of Fluttering Shearwaters were also found on Taranaki, Bay of Plenty and Wellington South beaches. There is no apparent reason for this wreck.

Following severe westerly gales during late October and early November, high numbers of Broad-billed Prions (*Pachyptila vittata*) were found on Southland beaches. There were also several reports of live Broad-billed Prions being found in inland Southland (M. L. Barlow, pers. comm.).

Also in November, Short-tailed Shearwaters (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) were found to be at least three times more numerous than usual on Auckland West beaches due, it appears, to persistent west to north-west winds during the latter half of October and early November. This high, in addition to slightly increased numbers in January and December, made the total for the year the highest since 1968.

It is notable that with the relative absence of south-west winds during October and November there was no marked increase in numbers of Sooty Shearwaters on North Island west coast beaches as has been observed in other years (Veitch 1977).

Throughout the year the numbers of Spotted Shags (*Stictocarbo punctatus*) found on Canterbury South beaches continued to be high, the peak being 32 birds on 5 km of beach during May. Many of these birds were reported as shot.

The Antarctic Petrel (*Thalassoica antarctica*) found on Muriwai Beach (AW) in November was the sixth specimen of this species found during beach patrols. Previous records are 1973, two birds (AW & SD); 1975, three birds (WW, 2 & AE).

The Fulmar Prion (*Pachyptila crassirostris*) was found on Petone Beach, in Wellington Harbour, during September. Previous records are 1970, three birds (AW, 2 & WW); 1971, two birds (CS); 1973, two birds (CN).

This is the third time that a Black-bellied Storm Petrel (*Fregetta tropica*) has been found on the New Zealand mainland. This specimen was on Oreti Beach, Southland, in November. Previous records are of single birds in 1968 (WS) and 1975 (WW).

TABLE 1 — Numbers of dead seabirds recorded and kilometres patrolled in 1977.

COAST	CODE	MONTH												TOTALS		BIRDS/ /COAST
		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	KM	BIRDS	
AUCKLAND WEST	AW KM	167	143	116	64	160	91	114	203	92	88	231	274	1743	3146	1.80
	BIRDS	262	249	130	129	645	31	116	657	32	129	424	342			
TARANAKI	TA KM	21	22	7	19	12	2	20	11	4	2	2	1	123	103	0.84
	BIRDS	23	26	2	24	5	1	7	12	3	0	0	0			
WELLINGTON WEST	WW KM	4	27	—	1	17	7	2	1	14	14	12	7	102	471	4.44
	BIRDS	5	314	—	4	91	1	1	1	20	14	12	8			
WESTLAND	WD KM	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	0.50
	BIRDS	0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—			
AUCKLAND EAST	AE KM	109	23	39	35	47	45	62	37	40	14	28	36	515	685	1.33
	BIRDS	236	33	23	10	22	21	179	79	13	4	25	40			
BAY OF PLENTY	BP KM	7	15	15	2	3	14	16	9	2	21	2	11	117	100	0.85
	BIRDS	4	2	8	0	3	3	28	33	0	11	1	7			
EAST COAST NORTH IS	EC KM	—	—	6	4	—	—	—	—	—	4	—	—	16	7	0.44
	BIRDS	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	3	—	2	—	—			
WAIRARAPA	WA KM	5	—	—	—	4	35	—	—	—	—	—	—	50	11	0.22
	BIRDS	1	—	—	—	2	5	—	—	—	—	—	—			
CANTERBURY NORTH	CN KM	—	—	2	1	10	13	—	10	—	—	—	11	47	98	2.09
	BIRDS	—	—	6	1	17	19	—	48	—	—	—	7			
CANTERBURY SOUTH	CS KM	7	5	7	6	5	4	5	4	5	5	6	4	63	220	3.50
	BIRDS	42	9	16	21	54	21	22	9	3	14	6	3			
OTAGO	OT KM	—	—	—	—	11	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	11	17	1.55
	BIRDS	—	—	—	—	17	—	—	—	—	—	—	—			
SOUTHLAND	SD KM	14	—	8	14	—	15	8	2	8	—	13	7	89	292	3.28
	BIRDS	7	—	15	7	—	17	0	78	1	—	165	2			
WELLINGTON SOUTH	WS KM	3	17	25	6	24	10	15	11	22	4	4	14	155	342	2.21
	BIRDS	1	28	9	6	200	18	13	13	25	3	?	24			
NORTH COAST SOUTH IS	NS KM	14	—	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	17	21	1.24
	BIRDS	12	—	—	—	9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—			
OUTLYING ISLANDS	OI KM	—	6	—	13	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	19	28	1.47
	BIRDS	—	10	—	18	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—			
TOTAL KM TRAVELLED		371	270	252	211	385	255	297	330	227	177	354	434	3563		
TOTAL KM COVERED		352	258	225	165	296	236	242	290	187	152	298	372	3073		
TOTAL BIRDS		593	671	210	221	1065	137	366	933	97	177	635	437		5542	
BIRDS/KM COVERED/MONTH		1.68	2.60	0.93	1.34	3.60	0.58	1.51	3.22	0.52	1.16	2.13	1.17			1.8

TABLE 2 — Coastal distribution of the more common seabirds found dead in 1977.

SPECIES OR SUBSPECIES	COAST											TOTAL BIRDS				
	AW	TA	WW	WD	AE	BP	EC	WA	CN	CS	OT		SD	WS	NS	OI
<i>Mezodyptes antiipodes</i>	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	3	7	—	—	14
<i>Eudiptula minor</i>	111	10	25	—	65	1	—	—	2	1	3	10	12	5	1	246
<i>Diomedea</i> spp*	9	2	—	—	5	—	—	—	—	4	1	—	3	—	1	21
<i>exulans</i>	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	2	—	—	11
<i>cauta</i> subsp**	11	—	2	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	16
<i>cauta</i>	11	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3	2	—	—	16
<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	2	—	—	15
<i>Daption capensis</i>	25	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	9	—	—	2	—	—	50
<i>Pterodroma macroptera</i>	24	2	—	—	6	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	5	—	—	40
<i>lessoni</i>	29	1	—	—	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	35
<i>inexpectata</i>	32	—	1	—	1	2	—	—	—	4	—	—	2	—	—	38
<i>cooki</i>	11	—	—	—	9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	20
<i>Pachyptila</i> spp*	71	3	17	—	5	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	11	1	3	216
<i>vittata</i>	17	—	2	—	3	—	—	—	1	—	—	108	1	3	—	135
<i>belcheri</i>	3	1	—	—	9	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	14
<i>turtur</i>	196	2	213	—	38	1	—	—	—	2	—	5	17	—	2	476
<i>Puffinus carneipes</i>	31	—	—	—	24	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	57
<i>bulleri</i>	150	5	5	—	30	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	192
<i>eriseus</i>	795	2	43	—	54	6	—	—	24	—	1	84	143	1	12	1170
<i>tenuirostris</i>	248	7	8	—	44	4	—	5	—	24	5	28	2	—	4	353
<i>zevia</i>	733	13	16	—	235	49	1	—	3	3	—	—	28	—	—	1081
<i>assimilis</i>	13	2	—	—	8	4	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	28
<i>Peleadroma marina</i>	6	—	1	—	5	1	—	—	—	12	—	—	—	—	—	25
<i>Pelecanoides urinatrix</i>	122	3	4	—	39	2	—	—	1	—	—	8	9	—	—	189
<i>Sula bassana</i>	118	1	—	—	24	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	145
<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	16	2	3	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	24
<i>varius</i>	18	—	—	—	3	3	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	26
<i>Stictocarbo p. punctatus</i>	16	—	4	—	2	—	—	1	57	98	2	2	2	3	—	190
<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	97	18	19	1	15	6	1	4	9	32	—	9	53	—	—	269
<i>novaeollandiae</i>	146	20	2	—	24	7	1	1	15	13	—	3	11	2	—	245
<i>striata</i>	25	3	—	—	9	—	—	—	2	5	—	1	4	—	—	49
TOTALS	3096	97	470	1	668	98	5	11	93	213	12	274	327	20	23	5405

*Species or subspecies could not be identified by patroller.

TABLE 3 — Monthly distribution of the more common seabirds found dead in 1977.

SPECIES OR SUBSPECIES	MONTH												TOTAL BIRDS
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	
<i>Megadyptes antipodes</i>	—	—	1	1	7	3	1	—	—	—	1	—	14
<i>Eudyptula minor</i>	58	47	9	9	26	7	13	19	9	4	25	20	246
<i>Diomedea</i> spp*	6	4	1	5	2	1	—	—	—	1	1	—	21
<i>exulans</i>	1	2	4	—	1	2	—	—	—	1	—	—	11
<i>cauta</i> subsp*	4	2	—	1	4	—	—	1	—	4	—	—	16
<i>cauta</i>	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	3	1	—	6	4	16
<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	—	—	2	—	—	—	2	2	5	3	1	—	15
<i>Daption capensis</i>	2	3	—	2	1	—	3	7	2	9	11	10	50
<i>Pterodroma macroptera</i>	7	6	1	—	2	—	6	7	—	1	8	2	40
<i>lessoni</i>	3	2	1	3	2	1	4	3	1	2	7	6	35
<i>inexpectata</i>	4	3	—	1	15	—	—	—	—	—	1	14	38
<i>cooki</i>	3	4	3	5	—	—	—	—	—	1	2	2	20
<i>Pachyptila</i> spp*	9	101	1	2	21	2	4	10	7	20	27	12	216
<i>vittata</i>	8	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	9	114	3	135
<i>belcheri</i>	9	1	—	—	2	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	14
<i>turtur</i>	25	209	2	3	30	5	43	63	9	22	50	15	476
<i>Puffinus carneipes</i>	18	20	7	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	6	5	57
<i>bulleri</i>	42	29	6	7	5	1	1	—	—	12	20	69	192
<i>griseus</i>	116	56	21	20	711	30	2	55	—	12	88	59	1170
<i>tenuirostris</i>	63	13	1	9	37	1	—	—	—	23	132	74	353
<i>gavia</i>	83	73	20	15	18	5	189	586	18	11	33	30	1081
<i>assimilis</i>	4	—	—	—	1	1	2	5	—	4	6	5	28
<i>Pelagodroma marina</i>	9	—	2	—	2	1	1	1	—	2	4	3	25
<i>Pelecanoides urinatrix</i>	17	7	1	2	12	4	37	68	4	2	15	19	188
<i>Sula bassana</i>	39	9	4	8	5	3	7	20	4	10	19	17	145
<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	—	—	1	1	1	—	1	1	—	2	8	9	24
<i>varius</i>	1	1	1	—	1	2	1	1	—	3	7	8	26
<i>Stictocarbo p. punctatus</i>	7	5	8	8	68	32	14	33	3	7	2	3	190
<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	23	39	26	32	42	17	11	13	20	8	11	27	269
<i>novaehollandiae</i>	12	14	67	69	25	9	9	22	5	2	6	5	245
<i>Sterna striata</i>	5	2	11	4	4	2	4	3	1	1	7	5	49
TOTALS	578	653	201	207	1046	130	356	925	89	176	618	426	5405

*Species or subspecies could not be identified by patroller.

TABLE 4 — Seabirds of which 1 to 10 specimens were found dead in 1977.

SPECIES OR SUBSPECIES	NUMBER FOUND	COAST(S)	MONTH(S)
<i>Eudiptula albosignata</i>	8	AE,CN,CS(3),OT,WS(2).	JAN,FEB(2),MAY(2),JUN,AUG,DEC.
<i>Eudiptes pachyrhynchus</i> subspp*	1	CS.	APR.
<i>pachyrhynchus</i>	2	AW,SD.	NOV(2).
<i>sclateri</i>	1	OT.	MAY.
<i>Diomedea epomophora</i>	5	EC,WS(4).	MAR,MAY(2),DEC(2).
<i>melanophris</i>	9	AW(6),EC,SD(2).	FEB(2),APR,MAY(2),AUG(2),NOV,DEC.
<i>chrysostroma</i>	10	AW(6),TA,AE,WS(2).	JAN(3),FEB,MAY(2),AUG(3),SEP.
<i>bulleri</i>	4	AW(2),SD,OI.	MAR,APR,MAY,JUN.
<i>cauta salvini</i>	1	WS.	SEP.
<i>Phoebastria palpebrata</i>	2	AW(2).	FEB(2).
<i>Thalassoica antarctica</i>	1	AW.	NOV.
<i>Pterodroma</i> spp*	2	AW(2).	MAR,NOV.
<i>brevirostris</i>	2	AW(2).	MAY,OCT.
<i>pycrofti</i>	1	AE.	JAN.
<i>h. nigripennis</i>	2	AW(2).	FEB,DEC.
<i>Halobaena caerulea</i>	5	AW(3),WS,OI.	APR,JUL,SEP,NOV,DEC.
<i>Pachyptila salvini</i>	7	AW(2),AE(3),SD,WS.	JAN(2),FEB,APR,MAY,SEP,NOV.
<i>desolata</i>	7	AW(2),AE(3),BP(2).	APR,JUL(4),NOV(2).
<i>crassirostris</i>	1	WS.	SEP.
<i>Procellaria cinerea</i>	5	AW,TA,BP(2),CS.	JAN,MAR,JUL(2),SEP.
<i>parkinsoni</i>	4	AW,AE(3).	FEB,MAR,MAY,JUN.
<i>westlandica</i>	4	AW(3),NS.	JAN,SEP(2),DEC.
<i>aequinoctialis</i>	3	AW(2),WS.	JAN,FEB,MAY.
<i>Puffinus</i> spp*	6	AW(3),TA,AE,WS.	JAN,MAR(2),JUL(2),DEC.
<i>huttoni</i>	10	AW(2),TA(3),WW,CN(3),WS.	JAN,FEB(2),APR,MAY,AUG,NOV(2),DEC(2).
<i>Garrodia nereis</i>	1	AW.	NOV.
<i>Fregatta tropica</i>	1	SD.	NOV.
<i>Phalacrocorax</i> spp*	1	AE.	JUL.
<i>sulcirostris</i>	1	AE.	JUN.
<i>brevirostris</i>	4	BP,CN,OT(2).	MAY(2),JUN,AUG.
<i>Leucocarbo carunculatus chalconotus</i>	6	OT,SD(5).	MAR,APR(2),MAY,JUN,NOV.
<i>onslowi</i>	2	OI(2).	FEB,APR.
<i>Stictocarbo punctatus featherstoni</i>	1	OI.	APR.
<i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>	3	AW(3).	JAN,FEB(2).
<i>Larus bulleri</i>	9	CS(2),SD(7).	JAN,FEB,MAR,APR(2),JUN,NOV(3).
<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	4	AW(3),AE.	JAN,APR,MAY,DEC.
<i>Procelsterna cerulea</i>	1	AE.	FEB.
TOTAL	137		

*Species or subspecies could not be identified by patroller.

The Grey Ternlet (*Procelsterna cerulea*), found at Pataua (AE) in February, is the third record for this species. Although not numerous, this species is regularly seen near northern off-shore islands. Previous records are from Auckland East in 1974 and Auckland West in 1976.

The Pitt Island Shag (*Stictocarbo punctatus featherstoni*) is a new record for beach patrolling but, considering the number of patrols now done in the Chatham Islands, not unexpected.

Miscellaneous birds recorded but not considered to be seabirds totalled 135. These were:—

20 Blackbirds, 14 Mallard Ducks, ten each of Magpies (both sub-species) and Rock Pigeons, nine Black Swans, seven Grey Ducks, five Starlings, four each of Bar-tailed Godwits, Pukekos, Pheasants and Song Thrushes, three each of South Island Pied Oystercatchers, Pied Stilts, unidentified ducks, Mynas, Yellowhammers and Skylarks, two each of White-faced Herons, Banded Dotterels, Spine-tailed Swifts, Brown Teal, NZ Pigeons and Chaffinches and one each of Stewart Island Kiwi, Variable Oystercatcher, NZ Dotterel, Wrybill, Cattle Egret, Shoveler Duck, Welcome Swallow, Oriental Cuckoo, Kingfisher, Harrier, California Quail, Tui, Greenfinch and House Sparrow.

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AUSTRALIAN SIGHT RECOVERY OF A COLOUR-BANDED BANDED DOTTEREL

During and since the 1977-78 breeding season, many Banded Dotterels (*Charadrius bicinctus*) have been colour-banded by Mary Bomford and Ray Pierce on the Cass River delta, Lake Tekapo, as part of their behavioural and population studies. On 25 November 1977, a nesting adult female was trapped and colour-banded with its own colour combination. In 1978, this bird returned to nest at the same part of the delta, where on 11 November 1978 Peter Dann found it with two chicks, at least one of which later fledged. The last sighting in the 1978-79 season was on 27 November.

While cannon-netting waders in southern Victoria with the Victorian Wader Study Group, Peter Dann saw this colour-banded female on 17 June 1979. It was in a flock of 150 Banded Dotterels and several Red-capped Dotterels (*C. alexandrinus ruficapillus*) roosting during high tide in a saltmarsh at Point Wilson, 46 km south-west of Melbourne and about 2000 km from the place of banding in New Zealand. The bird showed noticeably paler bands than most of the other adults in the flock. At this time, the juveniles had not acquired breeding plumage. The flock remained in the area for several days, but the female was not seen again.

During the 1979 winter and early spring, Ray Pierce kept a close check on Banded Dotterels returning to the Cass Delta. At that time of year all dotterels foraged either at the rivermouth or at a nearby muddy inlet of Lake Tekapo, and so they were easily checked for colour bands. The colour-banded female was not present on all dates leading up to and including 18 July. The next check was on 21 July when the bird (with the unusually pale breast and neck bands retained throughout the breeding season) was found at the rivermouth actively defending a small feeding territory. Three further sightings up to 21 August involved the bird at the rivermouth (once) and at the muddy inlet (twice). By 9 September, it had occupied a territory in the same area as the previous two years.

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