

A THIRD NORTH ISLAND RECORD OF THE
BLACK-WINGED PETREL

On 23/3/63 the body of a small *Pterodroma* species of petrel was found on Foxton beach. Subsequent examination of literature (Fleming, 1954; Oliver, 1955) indicated that the specimen was a Black-winged Petrel (*Pterodroma hypoleuca nigripennis*) and this identification was confirmed by Dr. R. A. Falla when the specimen was presented to the Dominion Museum. (See also the 1963 Beach Patrol Report by B. W. Boeson in *Notornis* 12: 169-175.)

It was estimated that the bird had died about one week before discovery, the remains being dried but not bleached. The specimen consists of the entire skeleton with bill, feet and most of the plumage of head, wings and tail intact. Plumage details of wings and tail of this specimen are as described for a previous specimen (Fleming, 1954). Although many of the wing feathers close to the body have been lost, sufficient of the underwing coverts remain to show an underwing pattern closely resembling that shown in Fleming's sketch. Measurements are: Culmen, 24 mm.; tarsus, 32; mid-toe and claw, 37.5; wing, 221; tail, 98; length of skull, 63.

There are two previous records of the Black-winged Petrel from the North Island, both being from the Wellington area. The first is the aforementioned specimen collected at Waikanae beach on 20/3/54 (Fleming, 1954) and the second, presented fresh to the Dominion Museum in August, 1954, is from the Upper Hutt district (Falla, *in litt.* 4/4/63).

It is possible to speculate on the meteorological factors which may have caused this bird to be stranded on Foxton beach. A depression of tropical origin moved from the vicinity of the Kermadec Islands to the Chatham Islands between 6/3/63 and 9/3/63 (N.Z. Met. Service, 1963). This cyclone varied in intensity but was very deep whilst passing the Kermadec Islands and East Cape (North Island). Immediately following the passage of this cyclone a westerly airstream began flowing over central New Zealand. The petrel was probably swept southwards from near the Kermadec Islands by gale force northerly winds associated with the depression. It may then have been carried north-westwards towards New Zealand and through Cook Strait into the Tasman Sea as the depression lay near the Chatham Islands. Finally the petrel was wrecked on the west coast of Wellington Province by westerly winds over the Tasman Sea.

A somewhat similar weather sequence preceded the discovery of the Waikanae specimen: a tropical cyclone passed down the west coast of the North Island from the 6th to the 8th of March, 1954; north-easterly gales affected most of the North Island on 6 and 7/3/54; following the passage of this cyclone a disturbed westerly airstream moved onto New Zealand (N.Z. Gazette, 1954).

Thus weather conditions preceding the discovery of both these specimens are consistent with displacement of the birds from an origin north of the North Island.

REFERENCES

- FALLA, R. A., 1963: *in litt.*
FLEMING, C. A., 1954: *Notornis* 6, 20-21.
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OLIVER, W. R. B., 1955: *New Zealand Birds*, 2nd edition. Reed, Wellington.

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