

SIGHTING OF BLACK-CAPPED PETRELS AT SEA OFF THE NEW ZEALAND WEST COAST

Single Black-capped Petrels (*Pterodroma externa cervicalis*) were observed on 20 February 1972 from 1145 to 1400 hours (N.Z.S.T.) between 16 and 20 miles (25 and 35 km) off the coast between Piha and Muriwai Beach, on the west coast of the North Island. The birds (or bird) were seen on several occasions during this period and came close enough to the vessel (m.v. *Ikatere*, the Fisheries Research Division's 63-ft trawler) to allow positive identification. The petrel was distinctive enough for other members of the crew to recognise and point out to me. The weather at the time was fine with a glassy sea, and generally calm weather with light winds from an easterly quarter had prevailed over the previous week.

Black-capped Petrels, which breed on the Kermadec Islands and are regularly seen north of New Zealand, have not been observed at sea in New Zealand coastal waters, though they must sometimes occur close to New Zealand, because damaged specimens have been recorded from Rotorua after a severe tropical storm in April 1968 (Kinsky 1971) and near Hamilton by Reed (1972) after strong northerly winds during October 1971. These previous records have been associated with strong winds, but the present sighting was made during a period of settled weather, and it is possible that Black-capped Petrels occur more regularly on oceanic waters off the New Zealand northern coasts than indicated by storm-wrecked specimens.

Details of the sightings were:

Date	Time	Position		Sea surface temperature °C	Other Birds
		Latitude S	Longitude E		
20/2/72	1145-1200	36° 58'	174° 03'	20.3	Black-winged Petrels, <i>Pterodroma</i> spp.
	1300-1330	36° 52'	174° 02'	20.3	Grey-faced Petrels, <i>Pterodroma</i> spp.
	1400	36° 48'	174° 03'	20.3	Black-winged Petrels Buller's Shearwaters Fluttering Shearwaters Flesh-footed Shearwaters

LITERATURE CITED

- KINSKY, F. C. 1971. Recent occurrences of rare petrels in New Zealand. *Notornis* 18 (3): 215-216.
- REED, S. 1972. Black-capped Petrel in the Waikato. *Notornis* 19 (1): 91.

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