

## FURTHER NOTES ON PROCELLARIIFORMES OCCURRING IN COOK STRAIT

### WHITE-CAPPED and SALVIN'S MOLLYMAWKs

The reliability of the dark tip of the lower mandible (mandibular unguis) for separating Salvin's Mollymawks (*Diomedea cauta salvini*) from White-capped Mollymawks (*D. c. cauta*) has been questioned by Vooren (1973) and others. Although all adult Salvin's Mollymawks show this feature, a dark mandibular unguis may persist in adult White-capped Mollymawks even after the rest of the dark grey on the bills of first and second year birds has disappeared. Recently Johnstone *et al.* (1975) found White-capped Mollymawks on their breeding grounds at Albatross Island, Bass Strait, with dark grey at the tip of the bill, especially on the mandibular unguis. Although most of these birds did not appear to be attached to a nest (so were probably subadult), some were seen feeding chicks. My statement (Bartle 1974) that the dark mandibular unguis in *salvini* is the most reliable feature for separating adults of these subspecies in the field is therefore wrong. There is, however, no doubt about the identity of the numerous *salvini* in Cook Strait during autumn because they have been identified by a combination of characters including size and bill, head and mantle colouration.

To complicate matters, Johnstone *et al.* found some White-capped Mollymawks on Albatross Island with pale grey on the neck and cheeks. They pointed out that the dark mark at the base of the leading edge of the underwing is also common to both subspecies. The only diagnostic features of *salvini* always visible at sea may be the larger area of black on the tip of the underwing and the paler grey mantle (Harper & Kinsky 1974, plate 3).

Johnstone *et al.* concluded that nearly all adult White-capped Mollymawks spend the night on the colony, and not at sea. This agrees with the scant nocturnal activity of this mollymawk observed in Cook Strait (Bartle 1974).

### BLACK, WESTLAND BLACK and WHITE-CHINNED PETRELS

The side plates (latericorn and ramicorn) of the bills of adult Black Petrels (*Procellaria parkinsoni*) are not an even bluish shade as I described them (Bartle 1974). In fact, the yellowish side plates contrast strongly with the blackish nails of the upper and lower mandibles when seen at sea in good light (J. M. Moreland, pers. comm.). The colour of the latericorn and ramicorn in adult *parkinsoni* is intermediate in hue between the "buff-yellow" and "spectrum yellow" of Smithe (1975), whereas in the Westland Black Petrel (*P. westlandica*) these bill plates are even more whitish in hue than the "cream colour" illustrated by Palmer (1962) and Smithe (1975). Oliver (1955), Falla *et al.* (1966), and Serventy *et al.* (1971) are mistaken in describing

the latericorn and ramicorn of adult *parkinsoni* as "bluish white," "bluish horn," and "bluish white" (respectively). The yellowish colour may fade after death. However, several specimens in the National Museum which had "blue-grey" side plates when freshly dead were found to be immature birds (F. C. Kinsky, pers. comm.), suggesting that bill colour changes with age.

The large size of the Westland Black Petrel and its relatively larger bill enable separation from *P. parkinsoni* at sea under good conditions. An excellent photograph (taken off Guatemala) showing the much less prominent bill of *parkinsoni* is given in Jehl (1974, Fig. 2), although he erroneously states that the bill of *P. parkinsoni* is "relatively much stouter" than *P. westlandica* and *P. aequinoctialis*; for the converse is true. The photograph of the White-chinned Petrel (*P. aequinoctialis*) in Vooren (1973, Fig. 5) clearly shows the heavy pale bill. Recent observations of White-chinned Petrels at close quarters in Cook Strait (December 1974) confirmed my view that the "cream coloured" nails of the mandibles are the most useful character for distinguishing White-chinned Petrels from other large black petrels at sea (Bartle 1974).

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