

SEABIRDS FOUND DEAD IN NEW ZEALAND IN 1975

By C. R. VEITCH

ABSTRACT

During 1975, 3681 kilometres of coast were patrolled by 163 members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand and their friends: 21 425 dead seabirds and 192 non sea birds were found. Four wrecks contributed to this total. In February there was a wreck mainly of Fairy Prions (*Pachyptila turtur*) on Wellington West beaches. From late June to September there was a wreck of Diving Petrels (*Pelecanoides urinatrix*) and Prions (except *Pachyptila vittata*) with high numbers of six other species. In late August and September there were extra numbers of Antarctic Fulmars (*Fulmarus glacialis*) and Kerguelen Petrels (*Pterodroma brevirostris*) with an increase in numbers of some other species. During October-November there was a record wreck of Sooty Shearwaters (*Puffinus griseus*) on west coast beaches.

INTRODUCTION

This paper records the results of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand's Beach Patrol Scheme for 1975. 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 Wairarapa and Fiordland. 575 Beach Patrol Cards and 61 Specimen Record Cards were filed.

Nomenclature follows the *Annotated Checklist* (OSNZ 1970), except that in some instances it is not possible for patrollers to identify birds to a subspecific level. 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 (Table 1) 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 (4582 kilometres) is a 25% increase on the previous longest distance travelled (1974) and the total number of birds found (21 425) is a threefold increase on most previous years

TABLE 1 - NUMBERS OF DEAD SEABIRDS RECORDED AND KILOMETRES PATROLLED ON EACH COAST IN 1975

COAST	CODE	MONTH												KIL. TOTALS METRES BIRDS	BIRDS /KM COAST
		JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC		
AUCKLAND WEST	AW	38	122	73	39	44	190	314	206	243	229	137	297	1932	15676 8.1
	BIRDS	68	308	45	18	128	493	6859	1160	1560	2534	1419	1013		
TARANAKI	T	-	4	31	-	5	24	62	30	29	23	12	1	231	1274 5.5
	BIRDS	-	14	10	-	1	41	950	95	86	41	35	1		
WELLINGTON WEST	WW	8	56	21	9	21	46	57	55	80	11	4	-	368	2469 6.7
	BIRDS	8	1063	30	9	20	63	537	190	417	62	50	-		
WESTLAND	WD	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	-	1	51	69	25 0.4
	BIRDS	-	11	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	6		
AUCKLAND EAST	AE	44	34	19	42	26	23	33	68	48	6	19	20	384	548 1.4
	BIRDS	109	99	76	68	14	13	12	65	33	4	18	37		
BAY OF PLENTY	BP	11	2	2	13	9	4	10	3	2	2	2	10	70	59 0.8
	BIRDS	24	0	0	7	13	0	2	1	1	3	0	8		
EAST COAST NORTH IS	EC	-	7	-	-	16	4	4	-	-	4	4	-	39	47 1.2
	BIRDS	-	4	-	-	18	3	11	-	-	6	5	-		
CANTERBURY NORTH	CN	1	7	5	-	-	6	6	1	3	6	9	6	50	59 1.2
	BIRDS	0	23	0	-	-	1	4	1	3	10	15	2		
CANTERBURY SOUTH	CS	9	7	36	7	5	7	4	12	8	6	5	7	113	259 2.3
	BIRDS	42	36	67	35	15	15	2	11	6	6	3	21		
OTAGO	O	6	2	5	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	4	4	25	45 1.8
	BIRDS	23	4	13	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	2	1		
SOUTHLAND	S	-	2	6	5	5	5	5	6	5	5	5	1	53	62 1.2
	BIRDS	-	4	6	17	0	0	10	13	1	3	5	1		
WELLINGTON SOUTH	WS	15	13	11	16	15	40	55	27	48	26	18	26	280	755 2.7
	BIRDS	23	43	9	10	14	88	430	45	25	31	9	18		
NORTH COAST SOUTH IS	NS	4	3	6	2	2	3	5	3	12	3	3	7	58	134 2.3
	BIRDS	30	6	19	4	6	5	5	6	30	15	2	6		
OUTLYING ISLANDS	OI	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	13 1.4
	BIRDS	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		
TOTAL KM TRAVELLED (NOT LISTED ABOVE)		160	283	257	178	177	406	742	479	579	450	266	455	4582	
TOTAL KILOMETRES COVERED		145	205	215	133	155	352	559	411	472	321	223	430	3681	
TOTAL BIRDS RECORDED		350	1637	275	168	230	722	8843	1598	2169	2735	1564	1114	21425	
BIRDS/KM COVERED/MONTH		2.4	6.3	1.3	1.3	1.5	2.1	15.8	3.9	4.6	8.6	7.0	2.6	5.8	

No patrols were recorded for Marlborough and Fiordland coasts

although less than the 1974 record of 24 747. The average number of birds found per kilometre covered (5.8) is more than twice the average of 2.34 for the years 1960 to 1974.

This year the usual pattern of lowest mortality in late summer and autumn and higher mortality in late winter and spring has been obscured by a wreck in February and a series of wrecks almost continuously from late June to November.

In February there was a small increase in numbers of Sooty Shearwaters (*Puffinus griseus*) and Fluttering Shearwaters (*P. gavia*) and a considerable increase in numbers of Fairy Prions (*Pachyptila turtur*) found dead. This Fairy Prion wreck was most noticeable on Wellington West beaches (15.7 birds/km covered) where they were recorded as being mainly juveniles. Gale force south west winds were recorded during the first week of February.

The major wreck of the year spread from late June to September with a peak in July. Weather during this period was varied. In June there were numerous depressions down to 970 mb south of Campbell Island and throughout June and the first three weeks of July there were more west and south west winds than usual blowing onto New Zealand. Diving Petrels (*Pelecanoides urinatrix*) were the most abundant single species found during July (3 155 birds, 36% of the monthly total) mainly on Auckland West, Taranaki, Wellington West and Wellington South coasts with highest densities on the Taranaki coast (12.8 birds/km covered). This is the first time that a wreck of Diving Petrels has been recorded (234 birds in 1973 being previous highest). Fairy Prions were almost as abundant with a total of 3 075 birds during July mainly on Auckland West (9.2 birds/km covered) with lesser numbers on Taranaki, Wellington West and Wellington South beaches. Other Prion species (except *Pachyptila vittata*) were also more numerous than usual during July and there were extra numbers of Blue Penguins (*Eudyptula minor*), Grey-headed Mollymawks (*Diomedea chrysostoma*), Giant Petrels (*Macronectes giganteus*), Cape Pigeons (*Daption capensis*), Blue Petrels (*Halobaena caerulea*) and Fluttering Shearwaters (*Puffinus gavia*). These species all continued to be found in higher numbers than usual throughout August and into September.

In late August and September the weather reports show further deep depressions, down to 955 mb, south of Campbell Island. These were followed by a period of west and south west winds. This brought to New Zealand a numerically moderate, but ornithologically interesting, wreck of Antarctic Fulmars (*Fulmarus glacialisoides*) and Kerguelen Petrels (*Pterodroma brevirostris*) and an increase in numbers of Grey-headed Mollymawks and Blue Petrels to higher levels than during the July wreck. White-headed Petrels (*Pterodroma lessoni*) were also more frequently found during September but did not reach a peak until October (114 birds). Nearly all these birds were found on west

TABLE 2 - SEABIRDS OF WHICH 1 to 5 SPECIMENS WERE FOUND DEAD IN 1975.

COAST AND MONTH OF DISCOVERY GIVEN

SPECIES OR SUBSPECIES	NUMBER FOUND	COAST(S)	MONTH(S)
<i>Eudyptes pachyrhynchus pachyrhynchus</i>	2	WD(2),	DEC(2)
<i>sclateri</i>	2	CS,).	MAR, AUG.
<i>Diomedea cauta salvini</i>	5	AW(3), WS, OI.	JAN, FEB, SEP(2), OCT.
<i>Thalassoica antarctica</i>	3	WW(2), AE	FEB, SEP(2)
<i>Pterodroma spp*</i>	2	AW(2),	JUN(2)
<i>pycrofti</i>	2	AE(2)	JAN(2),
<i>leucoptera</i>	1	AW	JUN
<i>hypoleuca nigripennis</i>	2	AW(2)	FEB, DEC.
<i>Procellaria spp*</i>	1	NS	JUL.
<i>cinerea</i>	3	AW(3)	SEP, NOV, DEC.
<i>Fregetta tropica</i>	1	WW	JUN
<i>Phalacrocorax spp*</i>	1	AW	OCT
<i>melanoleucos</i>	5	AE, EC, O, WS(2)	JAN, JUN, AUG, SEP, OCT.
<i>Leucocarbo carunculatus chalconotus</i>	3	S(3).	APR(2), AUG
<i>Stercorarius skua lombergi</i>	1	AW	JUL
<i>parasiticus</i>	1	AW	FEB
<i>Larus spp*</i>	1	AW	NOV
<i>Sterna paradisaea</i>	1	OI	JAN
<i>albifrons sinensis</i>	1	CS	OCT
TOTAL	38		

*Species could not be identified by patroller

TABLE 3 - COASTAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE MORE COMMON SEABIRDS FOUND DEAD IN 1975

SPECIES OR SUBSPECIES	AW	T	WW	WD	AE	COAST BP	EC	CN	CS	O	S	WS	NS	OI	TOTAL BIRDS
Megadyptes antipodes	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	8
Eudypitula minor	831	78	83	1	106	4	10	-	3	3	2	26	6	2	1161
albesignata	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	6	29	-	-	-	-	-	36
Diomedea spp*	19	3	7	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	32
exulans	27	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	3	-	-	33
pomophora	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	3	-	-	7
melanophris	18	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	19
chrysostoma	110	1	6	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	1	2	1	-	124
bulleri	9	1	1	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	13
cauta*	22	-	2	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26
cauta	23	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	3	1	-	34
Phaethria palpebrata	31	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	1	36
Macronectes giganteus	106	4	4	-	7	-	-	-	1	1	4	5	-	-	133
Fulmarus glacialis	561	21	46	2	-	-	3	3	-	-	1	1	1	-	639
Diapton capensis	250	15	19	-	4	1	1	1	2	-	-	13	-	-	306
Pterodroma macroptera	80	1	-	-	10	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	93
lessoni	249	10	11	-	2	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	3	-	278
inexpectata	27	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	29
brevirostris	133	2	21	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	162
cooki	9	-	1	-	13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	23
Halobaena caerulea	63	8	6	-	10	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	89
Pachyptila spp*	819	17	452	-	2	-	-	1	2	1	6	23	2	-	1325
vittata	33	1	7	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	1	2	-	-	48
salvini	194	4	22	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	9	-	-	231
desolata	718	6	21	-	-	-	3	-	2	-	1	1	-	-	752
belcheri	411	11	28	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	-	-	455
turtur	3767	47	1101	10	16	1	4	16	1	-	8	113	30	4	5118
Procellaria parkinsoni	2	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	6
westlandica	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	8
aequinoctialis	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
Puffinus spp*	6	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
carneipes	21	1	-	-	53	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	79
bulleri	170	4	4	-	29	1	1	1	4	-	-	3	-	-	217
griseus	3465	49	40	2	22	9	10	5	21	-	6	32	4	3	3668
tenuirostris	207	2	8	-	26	2	-	1	5	-	2	1	-	-	254
gavia	760	66	65	-	93	3	3	1	4	-	-	54	8	-	1057
huttoni	19	-	2	-	-	-	-	6	7	-	-	-	-	-	34
assiniilis	61	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	68
Pelagodroma marina	9	-	-	-	4	7	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	22
Pelecanoides urinatrix	1981	839	409	1	33	6	2	-	-	-	3	307	-	-	3580
Sula bassana	232	4	12	-	42	2	1	3	-	-	1	4	2	-	303
Phalacrocorax carbo	3	2	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	8
varius	4	-	-	1	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	12
Stictocarbo punctatus	34	36	-	1	1	-	-	4	125	18	10	1	10	-	204
Larus dominicanus	114	32	51	1	7	1	2	7	22	4	4	82	49	-	382
novaehollandiae	9	-	12	-	28	10	-	2	12	2	-	41	7	-	155
bulleri	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	3	5	2	-	-	-	11
Hydroprogne caspia	11	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	15
Sterna striata	33	4	11	-	21	2	-	-	6	-	-	3	4	-	84
TOTALS	15661	1274	2466	23	544	59	46	59	237	43	59	752	133	11	21387

* Species or subspecies could not be identified by patroller

TABLE 4 - MONTHLY DISTRIBUTION OF THE MORE COMMON SEABIRDS FOUND DEAD DURING 1975

SPECIES OR SUBSPECIES	MONTH												TOTAL BIRDS
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	
<i>Negadypetes antipodes</i>	4	-	3	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
<i>Dudyptula minor</i>	35	71	31	37	25	80	455	105	177	66	20	53	1161
<i>albocincta</i>	6	12	8	1	1	1	2	2	-	4	-	1	36
<i>Diomedea</i> spp*	-	3	-	1	-	1	2	6	4	9	-	6	32
<i>exulans</i>	-	5	-	-	-	6	6	3	1	3	2	7	33
<i>epomophora</i>	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	6	-	2	1	3	7
<i>melenophris</i>	-	-	-	-	-	2	6	6	-	2	-	1	19
<i>chrysostoma</i>	1	-	-	-	-	1	16	11	52	34	4	4	124
<i>bulleri</i>	-	-	-	-	-	4	5	-	4	-	-	-	13
<i>cuta</i> *	-	3	-	-	2	3	3	3	2	1	3	6	26
<i>cauta</i>	-	2	3	1	-	5	5	2	7	6	3	-	34
<i>Phoebastria palpebrata</i>	1	2	-	-	-	6	8	4	5	8	-	2	36
<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	-	3	3	3	-	9	49	21	23	8	6	8	133
<i>Pulmarus glacialisoides</i>	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	462	147	17	6	639
<i>Daption capensis</i>	-	1	-	-	-	4	127	39	32	86	7	9	306
<i>Pterodroma macroptera</i>	4	22	-	1	3	12	12	7	6	5	8	13	93
<i>lessoni</i>	-	3	-	1	4	11	8	5	43	114	33	56	278
<i>inexpectata</i>	1	8	-	-	1	-	-	-	2	1	3	12	29
<i>brevirostris</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	13	140	7	-	1	162
<i>cocki</i>	6	4	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	2	23
<i>Halobuena celerulea</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	13	14	46	13	2	-	89
<i>Pachyptila</i> spp*	3	102	8	-	2	55	270	131	597	108	35	14	1325
<i>viitata</i>	4	-	2	-	-	-	21	4	-	9	2	-	48
<i>salvini</i>	-	5	-	-	6	21	161	22	9	4	1	2	231
<i>desolata</i>	-	-	-	-	1	33	581	113	11	12	1	-	752
<i>belcheri</i>	1	1	-	1	-	9	260	166	15	1	1	-	455
<i>turtur</i>	51	972	20	3	11	143	3075	491	183	77	50	42	5118
<i>Procellaria parkinsoni</i>	-	-	1	-	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
<i>westlandica</i>	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	1	1	1	1	-	8
<i>asquinoctialis</i>	-	4	-	-	-	1	3	-	-	-	-	1	6
<i>Puffinus</i> spp*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	10
<i>arripes</i>	15	25	11	7	2	2	1	-	1	1	2	12	79
<i>bulleri</i>	16	23	6	7	5	2	1	2	12	31	40	63	217
<i>griseus</i>	20	70	19	4	56	40	16	2	3	1748	1104	586	3638
<i>tenuirostris</i>	23	22	-	3	30	53	1	2	-	40	35	45	254
<i>gavia</i>	37	97	32	11	6	30	392	149	91	71	73	68	1057
<i>huttoni</i>	4	4	2	1	-	-	1	-	1	1	17	3	34
<i>assimilis</i>	1	3	-	-	1	2	33	5	7	4	8	4	68
<i>Pelagordroma marina</i>	7	2	1	-	1	1	-	-	3	1	2	4	22
<i>Pelecanoides urinatrix</i>	23	15	1	-	-	83	3155	175	89	19	10	10	3580
<i>Sula bassana</i>	20	37	3	8	8	9	51	20	51	35	34	27	303
<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	2	-	-	-	1	8
<i>varius</i>	-	4	1	-	3	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	12
<i>Stictocorbo punctatus</i>	22	30	23	42	39	12	7	3	6	5	4	11	204
<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	17	63	46	14	7	34	57	43	46	34	10	11	382
<i>novae-hollandiae</i>	11	15	20	9	9	26	22	14	7	13	3	6	155
<i>bulleri</i>	5	-	2	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	11
<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	3	5	-	-	-	1	2	-	4	-	-	-	15
<i>Sterna striata</i>	4	13	24	7	1	6	5	4	5	2	5	8	84
TOTALS	345	1653	274	166	230	717	8841	1595	2163	2731	1564	1110	21387

* Species or subspecies could not be identified by patroller

coast beaches, the majority on Auckland West. Three Antarctic Fulmars were found on East Coast N.I. and three on Canterbury North beaches and 10 Blue Petrels on Auckland East.

During the 15 years of beach patrol records prior to 1975 Antarctic Fulmars have been recorded during 7 years:— 1964, 1; 1965, 1; 1970, 16; 1971, 3; 1972, 5; 1973, 134; 1974, 19. The total for 1975 was 639. Kerguelen Petrel records show a similar pattern. This year's total for White-headed Petrels (278) is a threefold increase on the previous highest (1970, 99).

The last wreck of the year was of Sooty Shearwaters (*Puffinus griseus*) which occurred during October and November on west coast beaches. Sooty Shearwater wrecks have been a regular occurrence at this time of the year when the southward migration reaches New Zealand. This year's wreck was slightly earlier and considerably more numerous than in previous years (Fig. 1). In October the average for all of New Zealand of 5.4 birds per kilometre covered was some ten times higher than the previous highest in 1963. The November average of 4.9 was some two and a half times higher than that of the previous best in 1971.

This is the second year that Antarctic Petrels (*Thalassoica antarctica*) have been recorded in the Beach Patrol Scheme (2 birds in 1973). This year's records followed the periods of south west winds in February and August-September. It is the third time that the following species have been recorded:— Erect-crested Penguin (*Eudyptes pachyrhynchus sclateri*) (1963, 2; 1974, 2), Black-bellied Storm Petrel (*Fregetta tropica*) (1963, 1; 1968, 1), and Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*) (1963, 1; 1969, 1).

The one Eastern Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons sinensis*) found in Canterbury South in October is a new record for beach patrolling. This species is a regular summer migrant to New Zealand although it has only recently been recorded from areas south of the Firth of Thames (Falla, Sibson & Turbott 1970).

Miscellaneous birds recorded, but not considered to be seabirds, totalled 192. These were:— 24 Magpies (both subspecies), 19 Black Swans, 16 each of Blackbirds and Mallard Ducks, 15 Rock Pigeons, 13 Starlings, 12 Song Thrushes, 8 Kingfishers, 7 South Island Pied Oystercatchers, 6 House Sparrows, 5 each of Harriers and Pukekos, 4 Chaffinches, 3 each of Bar-tailed Godwits, Variable Oystercatchers, Pheasants, Tuis, Silver-eyes, Mynas, White-faced Herons and unidentified Passerines, 2 each of Paradise, Shoveller and Grey Ducks and Eastern Rosellas, and one each of Bellbird, Pipit, Goldfinch, Skylark, Canada Goose, Shinging Cuckoo, Californian Quail, N.Z. Dotterel and Morepork.

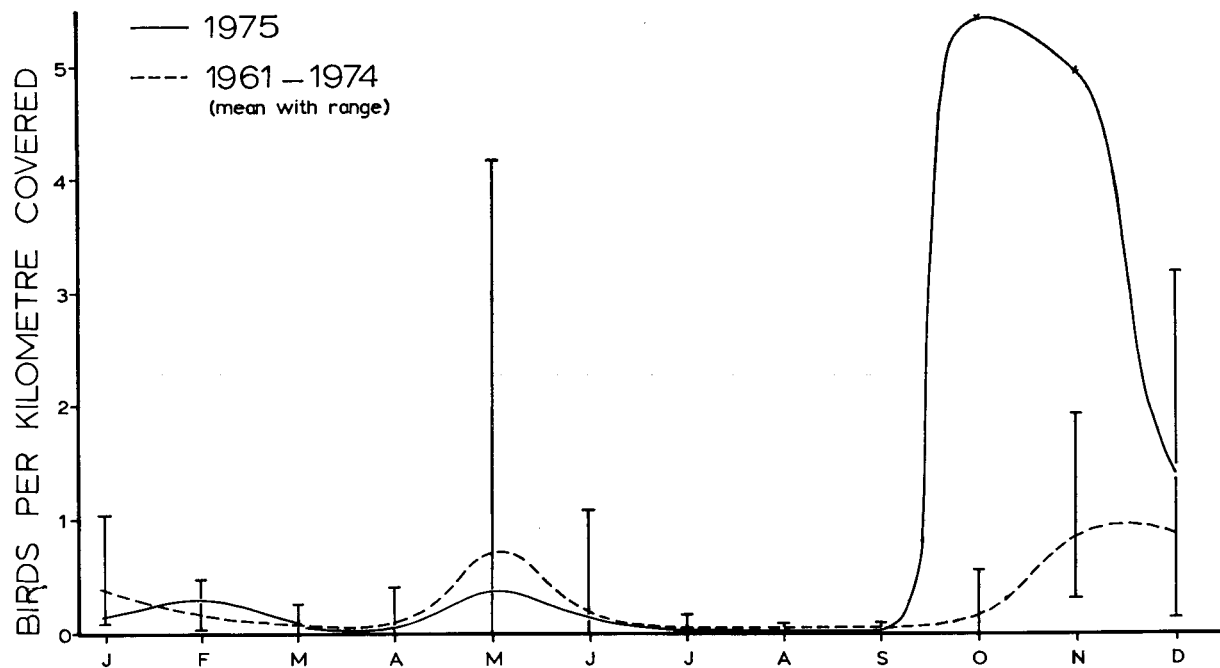


FIGURE 1. SOOTY SHEARWATERS FOUND DEAD ON NEW ZEALAND COASTS.

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