

SEABIRDS FOUND DEAD IN NEW ZEALAND IN 1967

By DAVID E. CROCKETT

ABSTRACT

During 1967, 1 137 kilometres of coast were patrolled by 38 members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand and 2 228 dead seabirds were found. Localized wrecks of Blue Penguins (*Eudyptula minor*), Fairy Prions (*Pachyptila turtur*) and Sooty Shearwaters (*Puffinus griseus*) were recorded. Meteorological evidence shows that these wrecks coincided with unusually severe weather conditions.

INTRODUCTION

This report summarises results of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand's Beach Patrol Scheme for 1967. During this year 126 beach patrol cards and 15 specimen record cards were filed covering 9 of the 15 geographical zones detailed by Imber & Boeson (1969). Nomenclature follows the *Annotated Checklist* (OSNZ 1970). In most cases binomials have been used, as it is not reasonable to identify subspecies from beach wrecked specimens. Trinomials are only used where confirmed identifications have been made.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The numbers of birds found, kilometres of beach travelled, kilometres of beach covered per month and per zone are presented in Table 1. In only four sections — Auckland West, Auckland East, Wellington West and Taranaki — was an excess of 100 km covered. *Kilometres travelled* is the sum of distances patrolled. *Kilometres covered* is the length of coast actually inspected monthly. Hence, if one kilometre of beach is patrolled 3 times in one month, 3 kilometres have been travelled but only one kilometre covered. The monthly and zonal distribution of more common species is listed in Tables 3 and 4. Details of the rarer specimens are recorded in Table 2.

Minor wrecks of Fairy Prions, Sooty Shearwaters, and Blue Penguins were recorded, otherwise mortality was at normal levels.

During December 1966 and January 1967 strong south west winds were recorded as shown by the following extract from the Meteorological Service records:— "The cold spell which had been affecting the country in the last week of 1966 continued for about the first ten days of 1967. South to west winds dominated during this period. The 18th to 25th January was a period of westerlies which terminated on the 25th with gale force winds" (Gabites 1967). This weather could account for the high number of birds (4 per km) ashore on Auckland West beaches in January 1967.

TABLE 1 Number of dead seabirds recorded and kilometres patrolled on each coast in 1967.

Code	Coast	MONTH												TOTALS	Birds Km month
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Km Birds cov.	
AW	Auckland West	32 143	5 6	-	37 19	34 51	11 25	50 16	4 3	-	3 5	103 359	135 145	449	772
T	Taranaki	10 5	-	12 5	10 -	15 5	-	16 8	25 4	4 4	13 6	-	10 29	115	66
WN	Wellington West	-	42 73	19 7	32 23	20 41	-	-	-	-	11 2	72 669	2 14	190	849
WD	Westland	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6 3	-	6	3
AE	Auckland East	58 99	4 2	20 189	3 2	23 59	-	32 36	11 10	14 13	48 22	48 61	24 23	285	516
BP	Bay of Plenty	-	-	5 6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	6
EC	East Coast	-	-	-	-	6 4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	4
O	Otago	2 2	7 7	-	-	2 0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	9
WS	Wellington South	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2 3	2	3
Total Kilometres Patrolled (Not listed above)		102	58	61	82	100	11	103	40	18	75	314	173	1137	1150
Total Kilometres Covered		102	58	56	82	100	11	98	40	18	75	274	173	1047	
Total birds Recorded		249	83	207	44	160	25	60	17	17	35	1112	214		2228
Birds/Kilometres covered/month		2.44	1.51	3.69	0.53	1.60	2.27	0.61	0.42	0.94	0.46	4.75	1.23		2.12

No patrols were reported from Fiordland, Wairarapa, Canterbury North, Canterbury South, Southland and North Coast South Island

TABLE 2 -- Seabirds of which 1 to 5 specimens were found dead in 1967.
Coast and Month of discovery given.

SPECIES OR SUBSPECIES	NUMBER FOUND	COAST(S)	MONTH(S)
Diomedea exulans	5	AE, AW (4)	Jan, Mar, May, Dec (2)
epomophora	2	WW, O	Feb (2)
chrysostoma	1	AW	Jan
bulleri	3	AE, AW (2)	Jan, May, Nov
cauta salvini	2	AW (2)	Jan, Dec
Phcebetria palpebrata	2	AW, WW	May, Nov
Pterodroma spp*	2	AW	Jul (2)
cookii	4	AW (2) AE (2)	Apr, May (2), Dec
Pachyptila vittata	5	AW (2), T, WW (2)	May (2), Oct, Nov (2)
desolata	4	AW, WW (3)	May, Oct, Nov (2)
Procellaria spp*	1	AW	Apr
cinerea	1	AW	Nov
Puffinus spp*	1	T	Jul
huttoni	3	AW, WW (2)	Nov (3)
Pelagodroma marina	3	AE, AW, WW	Jan, Nov (2)
Phalacrocorax carbo	4	AE, (2), T, WW	Jan, Feb, May, Sept
varius	3	T, AE (2)	Aug, Oct, Nov
melanoleucos	1	AE	Mar
Stictocarro punctatus	2	O, AW	Jan, Feb
Larus spp*	1	WW	Nov
bulleri	2	O	Feb
Sterna spp*	1	AW	May
Hydroprogne caspia	3	AE	Oct, Dec (2)
TOTAL	56		

* Species could not be identified by patroller.

TABLE 3 -- Monthly Distribution of the more common seabirds found dead in 1967.

SPECIES OR SUBSPECIES	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL BIRDS
<i>Eudiptula minor</i>	79	4	176	8	33	-	15	5	5	3	126	30	484
<i>Diomedea cauta</i>	1	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	2	13
<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>	3	-	-	-	-	-	4	2	-	1	2	1	13
<i>Daption capensis</i>	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	1	2	6	2	13
<i>Pterodroma macroptera</i>	3	-	-	-	-	2	2	1	-	1	3	2	14
<i>lessoni</i>	1	-	-	1	2	-	-	1	-	1	9	7	22
<i>inexpectata</i>	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	6
<i>Pachyptila species</i>	-	14	1	-	4	-	2	-	-	1	232	1	255
<i>belcheri</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	5	-	6
<i>turtur</i>	5	36	1	6	17	2	-	1	1	4	155	5	233
<i>salvini</i>	-	-	3	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	6
<i>Puffinus carneipes</i>	4	1	-	1	6	3	4	-	-	-	7	3	29
<i>bulleri</i>	6	4	3	-	4	3	1	-	-	2	10	4	37
<i>griseus</i>	90	4	15	3	41	12	2	-	-	3	430	102	702
<i>tenuirostris</i>	-	-	-	1	5	2	-	-	-	-	10	21	39
<i>gavia</i>	17	6	2	9	6	1	3	2	-	4	16	6	72
<i>assimilis</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	-	11	1	14
<i>Pelecanoides urinatrix</i>	17	3	-	5	12	-	5	2	4	8	25	5	86
<i>Sula serrator</i>	8	1	-	1	11	2	3	-	1	-	11	5	43
<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	7	4	2	5	8	-	11	1	1	1	9	4	53
<i>novaeollandiae</i>	5	1	2	-	1	-	5	-	2	2	-	6	24
<i>Sterna striata</i>	2	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	2	-	8
TOTAL	249	82	206	41	152	28	60	17	17	33	1078	209	2172

TABLE 4 -- ZONAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE MORE COMMON SEABIRDS FOUND DEAD IN 1967

SPECIES OR SUBSPECIES	AW	T	WW	WD	COAST	AE	BP	EC	O	WS	TOTALS
<i>Edyptula minor</i>	92	10	114	-	262	-	6	-	-	-	484
<i>Diomedea cauta</i>	7	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	13
<i>Macrorhynchus Giganteus</i>	5	1	-	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	13
<i>Leption capensis</i>	6	1	5	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	13
<i>Pterodroma macroptera</i>	8	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	14
<i>lessoni</i>	13	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	22
<i>inexpectata</i>	4	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
<i>Pachyptila species</i>	5	-	248	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	255
<i>belcheri</i>	-	-	5	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	6
<i>turtur</i>	26	3	197	-	6	-	-	-	-	1	233
<i>salvini</i>	2	-	3	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
<i>Puffinus carneipes</i>	14	-	-	-	15	-	-	-	-	-	29
<i>bulleri</i>	18	-	3	-	16	-	-	-	-	-	37
<i>griseus</i>	431	15	171	1	84	-	-	-	-	-	702
<i>temnirostris</i>	34	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	39
<i>gavia</i>	32	2	15	-	23	-	-	-	-	-	72
<i>assiniis</i>	4	-	8	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	14
<i>Pelecanoides urinatrix</i>	14	6	37	-	28	-	-	-	-	1	86
<i>Sula serrat</i>	21	2	2	-	18	-	-	-	-	-	43
<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	17	8	12	-	8	-	-	4	3	1	53
<i>novaeollandiae</i>	1	16	1	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	24
<i>Sterna striata</i>	3	2	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	8
TOTALS	757	67	841	3	486	-	6	4	5	3	2172

The high incidence of birds on the Auckland East beaches in March (9.5 birds per km) was probably due to the high frequency of north easterly winds recorded during this period. A wreck of Blue Penguins (*Eudyptula minor*) at a rate of 10 per km on Tokerau Beach and 2 per km at Mangawhai, can be directly related to this weather. Similar wrecks in Northland have been described by Crockett & Kearns (1975).

The wreck of Fairy Prions (*Pachyptila turtur*) occurred on Wellington West beaches during November with 2.1 birds per kilometre. A large number (232) of wings only, listed as *Pachyptila* species are likely to have also belonged to Fairy Prions. During 1967 only small numbers of the usual Indo-Atlantic prion species *P. belcheri* (6), *P. desolata* (4), *P. salvini* (5), and the local southern *P. vittata* (5) were found on our coasts.

The transequatorial migrant Sooty Shearwater (*Puffinus griseus*) returning from the North Pacific were wrecked on Auckland West and Wellington West beaches during November-December. Usual numbers (39) of the Short-tailed Shearwater (*Puffinus tenuirostris*) came ashore. Other migrant shearwaters (*P. bulleri* and *P. carneipes*) were apparently not affected. Adverse weather conditions were the probable cause of this mortality as shown by the following extract from the Meteorological Service monthly report:— "From the 5th to 7th November a deep depression crossed the South Tasman Sea and moved past Campbell Island while two associated troughs crossed the country. Winds were mainly between northwest and southwest reaching well beyond gale force in some areas, especially about Cook Strait. Six days of strong westerlies followed. Westerly conditions again prevailed between the 22nd to 24th November" (Gabites 1967).

In addition to seabirds, 28 land or freshwater birds were found, viz:— 2 Black Swans, 2 Grey Ducks, 2 Harriers, 1 Californian Quail, 2 Pheasants, 2 Domestic Fowl, 3 Variable Oystercatchers, 1 Rock Pigeon, 1 Dove sp., 1 Rosella, 1 Budgerigar, 1 Skylark, 1 Song Thrush, 5 Blackbirds, 1 Tui and 2 White-backed Magpies. These are not listed in the tables.

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Beach patrolling is a time-consuming, and sometimes expensive, recreation. Credit is due to the 38 members and friends who contributed cards during the year. Members taking part were:—

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LITERATURE CITED

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A G M 1977: A LATER REPORT

The following reports for presentation at the Annual General Meeting were received too late for publication with the others in the September *Notornis*.

CARD COMMITTEE REPORT

Two further original paintings, Yellowhead and Wrybill, by Mrs Janet Marshall were used for this year's cards. Mixed packs of the previous year's cards were also available. Sales remained at 60,000 but profits, \$4,200, were higher because no printing was involved. Also Mrs Marshall met the cost of distributing the brochures as she included one featuring her own prints. This resulted in a saving of some \$700.

The next cards will feature Kakapo and Pied Tit. Distribution will be handled from Auckland with Mr Russell Thomas as convener. The brochures will continue to be circulated from Wellington.

On behalf of the Society I would once again thank the Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society for addressing the brochure envelopes and Wellington members for their continuing help with sorting and packaging, and my wife for handling the dispatch. I would also like to extend the Society's thanks to Mrs Marshall for her valuable contribution. As this is my final year as convener I would ask all to support the Christmas Card Scheme under its new convener.

B. D. BELL, Convener