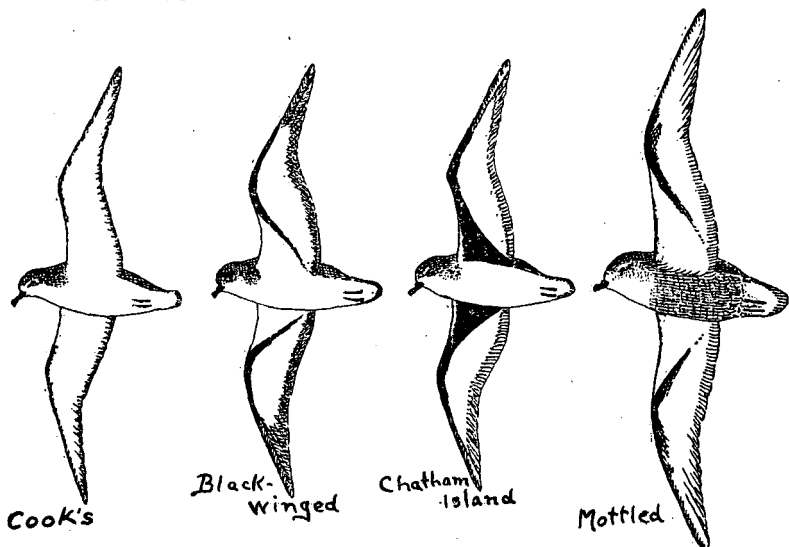


A NORTH ISLAND RECORD OF THE BLACK-WINGED PETREL.

By C. A. Fleming, Wellington.

The black-winged petrel (*Pterodroma hypoleuca nigripennis*) nests at the Austral, Kermadec and Lord Howe Islands, and at the Three Kings Islands, where it was discovered by P. C. Bull in 1945 (Turbott and Buddle, 1948), but has not previously been recorded from the New Zealand mainland (Checklist, 1953, p. 25). This note is prompted by the discovery at Waikanāe Beach on March 20, 1954, of a battered specimen identified as *nigripennis*, now lodged in the Dominion Museum.

The Waikanāe specimen had probably been on the beach a week or more before it was found. It consists of a sand-dried body, fairly well covered by feathers, with a complete tail, two partly feathered wings and the bones of the neck and head, completely devoid of skin. Available measurements are: Wing, 222mm.; tail, 99 mm.; tarsus, 30 mm.; toe, 37mm. The skull agrees in shape with a skull of *P. h. axillaris* with which it has been compared, but is 4 mm. shorter (62 compared with 66 mm., compare Fleming, 1941, p. 74).



The upper surface of the wing is dusky black, lacking the grey coverts of the Chatham Island subspecies *axillaris*. The under surface shows a well-defined dark leading edge contrasting with the white of the under coverts and with the axillaries, fortunately preserved on one wing. The primaries are brownish black, with white areas on the basal half of the inner webs, only visible when the wing is spread. The primaries (and other wing characters) agree with those of Kermadec specimens of *nigripennis*. *P. h. axillaris* has more extensive pale areas on its inner webs, and *P. h. hypoleuca*, the North Pacific race, has entirely dark inner webs (Falla, 1942, p. 116). The tail is incomplete, but what remains agrees well with that of *nigripennis*; its brownish-black rectrices contrast with the grey coverts, giving a dark-tipped effect lacking in *axillaris*, which has grey rectrices. The tarsi and proximal third of the feet are flesh-coloured, in contrast with the rest of the feet which are black.

In size, the Waikanāe bird falls within the range of specimens of *nigripennis* from breeding stations. Its wing and tail are both one millimeter shorter than the smallest of seventeen measured by Turbott and Buddle (1948), but Murphy (1929) recorded tail measurements as low as

95mm. and some of the Dominion Museum's adult skins have shorter wings (e.g., D.M. 1909, Sunday Island, Dec. 17, 1918). The short wing measurements are not due to wear for the primaries are fresh, nor to immaturity, since the skull (of the Waikanae bird) is well ossified, nor to recent moult. They are due to rather short outer primaries, only a few millimeters longer than the adjacent "second" primaries.

Mr. R. B. Sibson, Auckland, has kindly allowed me to quote some unpublished observations on *P. h. nigripennis* made in the South Pacific, east of the North Island, from R.M.S. Rimutaka on the journey from New Zealand to Panama. He first saw the species in the evening of Jan. 14, 1950, in 39° S., 175° W. There were several next morning in 37° S., 169° W., a few in the afternoon, and in the evening a bird flew on board in 37° S., 167° W., a position north-east of the Chatham Islands. The skin is preserved in the Dominion Museum.

The under-wing patterns of some of the "gad-fly petrels" are diagnostic. The accompanying sketches are based chiefly on dried skins and so are probably not as accurate as they would have been if based on birds in the flesh. Alexander's sketch (1928, pl. 11, fig. 47) of the mottled petrel (Peale's petrel) is quite misleading.

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MEETING OF DUNEDIN MEMBERS.—A meeting of Dunedin members and friends was held on February 24, 1954, in the biology lecture room at the Museum. In the absence of the South Island vice-president, Mrs. I. Tily, the chair was taken by the local regional organiser, Mrs. L. E. Walker. The speaker for the evening was Dr. Farner, of Pullman University, Washington, at present in New Zealand on a Fullbright Scholarship. His subject was "Birds of Crater Lake National Park." The park, which was established in 1902, covers an area of about 250 square miles with elevations varying from 4,500 ft. to just under 9,000 ft. Visitors, who number up to 500,000 a year, are allowed in only 1% of the total area. Thirty-eight species of breeding birds have been recorded in the transition zone forest (4,500-5,000 ft.), the same number in the Canadian zone forest (5,500-6,200ft.); 22 species in the Hudsonian zone forest (6,200-8,000ft.); and only two species of breeding birds in the alpine zone above 8,000ft. (treeless). Dr. Farner described the movements of birds in the area and showed how these were an upward movement after breeding. For instance, blue grouse commenced their upward movement before the young could fly. Consequently the young birds walked about 15-20 miles. He said he was most favourably impressed with the widespread interest in birds and in their conservation and protection in New Zealand, and he felt the Ornithological Society of New Zealand could be a most effective influence in furthering this interest. He stressed the importance of preserving entire areas as living museums where the native species could be observed, enjoyed and studied under conditions at least approximating the original primitive conditions. Excellent colour slides of the Crater Lake area and of the birds found therein were shown.

TWO BLACK-FRONTED TERN INCIDENTS.—On January 22, 1953, Mrs. A. C. Prentice, Miss M. L. Johnston and I were watching a colony of about 20 young black-fronted terns (*Chlidonias hybrida albostrigatus*) beside Lake Wanaka. The young birds were in various stages of development, and adult birds were flying to and fro with food for their young. One adult tern with food in its bill was intercepted by a black-billed gull (*Larus bulleri*) and we watched the gull chase the tern for about a quarter of a mile. The tern came back minus its catch. It flew past the colony of young birds to where it had made its previous catch in the lake. In a few moments, with something in its bill, it was flying towards the colony of young terns. This time a young tern arose from its perch on the rocks and flew to meet the adult. Until the attack made by the gull, no young terns had flown to meet adults carrying food. Two days previously, we, with other members of the Dunedin Naturalists' Field Club, had watched a black-fronted tern flying over Diamond Lake in the Matukituki Valley. Probably it was feeding young, for it would carry away its catch, always in the same direction, and in a short time was back for more. It is impossible to say that the tern was always the same bird, but during our stay of about an hour at the lake only one tern at a time was seen. A New Zealand falcon (*Falco novaeseelandiae*) which appeared to be a young, but fully-grown, bird, had been perched on a willow tree near the lake, and had allowed two of the party to approach within fifteen feet of it. We were about to depart from the lake when the falcon made an attempt to fly across the lake and was attacked by the tern. The falcon screamed and dodged, but the tern was the more agile of the two, and made repeated attacks on the falcon. The movements were too rapid to be sure if the falcon was actually struck. The falcon managed to dodge away from the tern and we lost sight of it. For about five minutes all was peaceful. Then the falcon attempted another flight across the little lake, and once more was attacked by the tern. Again there were wild screams from the dodging falcon, which finally found a refuge on the face of a cliff overhanging the lake—(late) I. Tily, Dunedin.

LINNETS REPORTED SEEN IN DUNEDIN.—On March 27, 1954, at 1500 hours, six birds belonging to the finch family were seen on a steep uncultivated hillside covered mainly in grass (cocksfoot), Scotch thistles and gorse. The hillside faces directly into the sun and overlooks North-East Valley. The birds were approximately twenty feet away from me and were watched through x10 binoculars. They were feeding on Scotch thistle seeds and appeared to be tame. I got within twelve feet of one before it flew away. They were the size of a sparrow and the general colour of the underparts was a yellowy-brown. The breast was pinkish and a conspicuous red stripe ran down the centre of the forehead. The tail was black, edged with white, and the bird did not have a dark chin spot—a redpoll's identification mark. Their call was a rather short and brisk "zip-zip." The weather was sunny with bright white clouds and a light southerly wind. Further visits were paid to the locality on March 28 and April 10, 17, 19, and 24 but no sign of the birds was seen.—James Watt, Dunedin.

BLACK-WINGED PETREL—A CORRECTION.—I am grateful to Mr. K. A. Hindwood, Sydney, for pointing out that I wrongly included Lord Howe Island among the nesting stations of *Pterodroma hypoleuca nigripennis* in my note in *Notornis* 6 (1):20 (see also Checklist of N.Z. Birds, 1953:25). The two specimens from Lord Howe Island in the Australian Museum were considered by Hindwood (*Emu* 40 (1), 1940) to represent stragglers, although the circumstances under which they were collected (in Feb. 1917 and Mar. 1923) have not been recorded. It would not be surprising if the black-winged petrel bred at Lord Howe, which lies between the latitudes of the known stations, and the two specimens were collected during its rather late breeding season, but Mr. Hindwood points out that Roy Bell thoroughly combed the island for sea birds on behalf of Mathews in 1913-1915 without finding it.—C. A. Fleming, Wellington.