# New developments in the Beach Patrol Scheme for recording information about seabirds found dead on New Zealand coastlines

## Provide help with data entry into one of New Zealand's longest running citizen science projects

The *Birds New Zealand* Beach Patrol Scheme commenced in 1951 (although some records date from 1943) and for more than 60 years has aimed to systematically document the identity, location and numbers of seabirds found dead on New Zealand beaches. Regular beach patrols by members provides a unique long-term record and the data collected has helped to establish the occurrence and to some extent the distribution of more than 110 seabird species in New Zealand coastal waters. It has also provided information leading to an improved understanding of the seasonal movements, migration and causes of seabird deaths. However, the present Beach Patrol data management system has technical limitations which has contributed towards incomplete analysis and reporting since 2004.

The development of a new internet-based data management system has commenced that will overcome existing technical shortcomings and it is hoped will engage society members in sharing the beach records data entry effort. This approach will ensure that the database and data analysis is kept up-to-date. You can help to make this new system effective if you have the inclination, some time and a computer at home that is connected to the internet.

We are looking for volunteers to help enter data from more than 25,000 scanned cards into an online database. This can be done anywhere as long as you have a computer and access to the internet. If you would like to help with data entry, please contact Ian Armitage, Project Coordinator (ian.armitage@xtra.co.nz), or ask local Regional Representative for guidance.

A link has now been established on the Beach Patrol Scheme page http://osnz.org.nz/beach-patrol-scheme that takes interested members/contributors to a 'log-in' page on the secure Beach Patrol data entry website. A password will be issued once a member registers their interest in wanting to help. A set of instructions will be provided and, if necessary, some training can be arranged.

Data entry is partly automated and will involve transcribing data from scanned beach patrol records into a database entry form; a scanned card appears on the left side of the screen and a database entry form is on the right, as shown in the image below.

After a little practice it will be easy to and transcribe data from the card on the left to the database form on the right.  Once data for a card is transcribed and saved, a new card and blank data entry form arrives on the computer screen automatically.  There is no paper or cards to handle at all; all scanned cards and the database entry forms are stored electronically.

You do not have to have any earlier beach patrol experience, although that would of course be helpful, just some time and an interest in contributing to this long-running citizen science project.  Transcribing data carefully takes about 1 minute (more or less) for each form – and data entry shouldn't be tackled for long periods, just 20 to 30 minutes for each session is quite enough.  Have a rest and tackle more later!

Development is expected to take about three years with the aim of completing the project by 2018.  The design and testing of a new internet-accessible database system commenced earlier this year under contract to Dragonfly Science in Wellington.