

## **Beach Patrol Scheme 2020 Report**

**from co-ordinator Lloyd Esler on 1 April 2020**

2020 produced no significant wrecks and no particularly unusual species. There were single specimens of Pitt Island shag (on Chatham Island), Kerguelen petrel, white-phase Giant petrel, Arctic skua and Reef heron. There were no mass mortalities but there was evidence of Canada goose and Black-backed gull control programmes and high mortality in a Red-billed gull colony on Mana Island. No wreck of juvenile Sooty shearwaters was noted from Southland beaches. No banded birds were noted on cards.

The returns, compared to previous years, show a continued decline and represent a drop to about a third of the number of kilometres covered and the number of patrols being undertaken a decade ago.

As with last year only five regions – Wellington West, Bay of Plenty, Auckland West, Auckland East and Southland – were averaging more than one beach patrol per month. There were no records at all from Otago, Canterbury South, North Coast South Island and Taranaki.

The figures as at 1 April 2021 are:

Cards or forms returned: 145 (161 in 2019, 270 in 2018, 230 in 2017, 253 in 2016, 210 in 2015, 231 in 2014, 262 in 2013, 324 in 2012 and 352 in 2011)

Birds: 931 (1,071 in 2020, 3,069 in 2018, 1,315 in 2017, 1,483 in 2016, 1,325 in 2015, 1,388 in 2014, 4,851 in 2013, 1,924 in 2012 and 57,920 in 2011)

Kilometres: 688 (710 in 2019, 1,013 in 2018, 885.3 in 2017, 1,189 in 2016, 1,014 in 2015, 1,069 in 2014, 1,388 in 2013, 1,625 in 2012 and 1,846 in 2011)

I have been contacting people posting beach-wrecked birds on Inaturalist and some of the results come from this source.

This is the first year we have recorded Chatham Island beach patrols (CI) separately from the Subantarctic islands. There were no Subantarctic beach patrols and there is probably little value to the beach patrol scheme in counting skua-picked remains of local subantarctic birds.

There were questions about recording seabirds that have been killed on roads or picked up in urban areas. These could be recorded but will not become part of the beach patrol scheme which records bird mortality at sea or on a beach. Landbirds picked on beach patrols should be recorded as they may represent a failed migration, a weather event or a population expansion.

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Beach Patrol Scheme Convener