

SEABIRDS FOUND DEAD IN NEW ZEALAND IN 1979

By C. R. VEITCH

During 1979, 3478 kilometres of coast were patrolled by 133 members of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand and their friends. 5876 dead seabirds were found. There were no major wrecks, although high numbers of Sooty Shearwaters (*Puffinus griseus*) from the November/December 1978 wreck continued to be found. Unusual finds were three Erect-crested Penguins (*Eudyptes sclateri*), three Sooty Terns (*Sterna fuscata*), three White-tailed Tropic Birds (*Phaethon lepturus*), and one Wedge-tailed Shearwater (*Puffinus pacificus*).

INTRODUCTION

This paper records the results of the Ornithological Society of New Zealand's Beach Patrol Scheme for 1979. The coastline of New Zealand is divided into 15 sections (Imber & Boeson 1969) with an additional grouping "OI" for Outlying Islands, which this year includes patrols from the Chatham Islands. This year patrols were carried out on all sections of coast except East Coast NI and Fiordland. 586 Beach Patrol Cards and 14 Specimen Record Cards were filed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The numbers of birds found and kilometres of beach travelled and covered per month are recorded in Table 1. The total length of beaches patrolled (3478 km) is about average for recent years. The total number of birds found (5876) is the lowest since 1972. The average number of birds found per kilometre of coast covered monthly (1.69) is lower than the previous 19 years' average of 2.25. Kilometres travelled (Table 1) are the total lengths of coast patrolled; kilometres covered are the lengths of coast covered monthly. Hence, if a kilometre of beach is patrolled three times in one month, three kilometres have been travelled but only one kilometre covered per month.

Monthly and coastal distribution of the less common birds is given in Table 2 and of the more common birds in Tables 3 and 4.

There were no large wrecks this year.

High numbers of Sooty Shearwaters (*Puffinus griseus*) continued to be found during January and February as a result of the large wreck in November and December 1978. Very low numbers of Sooty Shearwaters were found during the rest of 1979.

TABLE 1 — Numbers of dead seabirds recorded and kilometres patrolled on each coast in 1979.

COAST	CODE		MONTH												TOTALS KM	BIRDS	BIRDS/KM /COAST
			JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC			
AUCKLAND WEST	AW	KM	183	183	123	141	180	123	125	146	53	72	49	60	1438	2193	1.53
		BIRDS	746	308	107	90	408	70	53	197	21	59	94	40			
TARANAKI	TA	KM	38	36	22	10	-	9	11	15	6	6	8	-	161	352	2.19
		BIRDS	129	139	21	10	-	3	4	27	5	3	11	-			
WELLINGTON WEST	WW	KM	26	105	47	14	77	18	21	15	43	14	21	49	450	1572	3.49
		BIRDS	208	801	249	10	35	8	20	8	54	37	35	107			
WESTLAND	WD	KM	10	-	-	1	1	-	2	-	5	1	4	8	32	28	0.87
		BIRDS	8	-	-	1	3	-	0	-	5	0	1	10			
AUCKLAND EAST	AE	KM	105	28	28	19	57	67	48	63	49	46	50	44	604	716	1.19
		BIRDS	294	55	48	13	36	42	22	32	7	9	112	46			
BAY OF PLENTY	BP	KM	14	10	9	22	13	-	3	20	4	24	7	7	133	119	0.85
		BIRDS	29	18	4	11	5	-	3	12	0	12	4	21			
WAIRARAPA	WA	KM	5	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	18	28	1.56
		BIRDS	9	14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5			
CANTERBURY NORTH	CN	KM	10	1	4	15	1	5	1	4	-	-	-	-	41	65	1.59
		BIRDS	15	16	5	11	3	5	10	0	-	-	-	-			
CANTERBURY SOUTH	CS	KM	8	7	6	10	6	6	8	4	7	6	8	8	84	236	2.81
		BIRDS	14	65	44	28	10	4	18	1	21	9	3	19			
OTAGO	OT	KM	1	4	18	25	10	25	-	-	-	-	-	1	84	75	0.85
		BIRDS	1	4	16	33	5	12	-	-	-	-	-	4			
SOUTHLAND	SD	KM	8	1	13	11	-	13	13	7	6	-	-	11	83	57	0.69
		BIRDS	23	2	12	2	-	15	0	0	2	-	-	1			
WELLINGTON SOUTH	WS	KM	10	7	30	22	24	23	25	12	19	26	19	6	221	273	1.24
		BIRDS	24	10	27	16	29	24	11	17	37	48	25	5			
NORTH COAST SI	NS	KM	6	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	8	26	3.25
		BIRDS	18	-	-	-	4	-	-	4	-	-	-	-			
OUTLYING ISLANDS	OI	KM	83	8	23	1	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	121	136	1.12
		BIRDS	82	18	23	5	8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-			
TOTAL KILOMETRES TRAVELLED			580	461	369	329	448	321	273	329	264	250	193	248	4065		
TOTAL KILOMETRES COVERED			507	393	323	291	376	289	257	287	191	195	165	204	3478		
TOTAL SEABIRDS RECORDED			1600	1450	556	230	546	183	141	298	152	177	285	258	5876		
BIRDS/KM COVERED/MONTH			3.16	3.69	1.72	0.79	1.45	0.63	0.55	1.04	0.76	0.91	1.73	1.26		1.69	

No patrols were reported from East Coast NI or Fiordland.

TABLE 2 — Seabirds of which 1 to 9 specimens were found dead in 1979.

SPECIES OR SUBSPECIES	NUMBER FOUND	COAST(S)	MONTH(S)
<i>Megadyptes antipodes</i>	9	OT(7),SD(2).	JAN,MAR,APR(6),JUN.
<i>Eudypetula minor albosignata</i>	5	CN(2),CS(3).	FEB(2),MAR(2),APR.
<i>Eudypetes spp*</i>	1	OT.	MAR.
<i>sclateri</i>	3	OT(2),OI.	MAR(2),APR.
<i>Diomedea exulans</i>	4	AW(3),CS.	MAY(2),AUG,SEP.
<i>epomophora</i>	4	CN,WS,I0(2).	JAN(2),FEB,APR.
<i>bulleri</i>	5	AW(2),TA,SD,WS.	APR,JUL,AUG(3).
<i>cauta subsp*</i>	5	AW(5),	MAY,AUG(3),NOV.
<i>cauta</i>	9	AW,TA(2),WW(4),OT,SD.	JAN(2),FEB(2),MAR,AUG,SEP,OCT(2).
<i>salvini</i>	8	AW(2),WW(2),WS(4).	JAN,MAR(2),OCT(5).
<i>eremita</i>	3	OI(3).	JAN(3).
<i>Phoebastria palpebrata</i>	6	AW(6).	JAN,FEB(2),JUN,AUG,OCT.
<i>Thalassoica antarctica</i>	1	AW.	MAY.
<i>Pterodroma spp*</i>	4	AW,WW,AE(2).	JAN(2),FEB,JUN.
<i>brevirostris</i>	1	AW.	AUG.
<i>nigripennis</i>	8	AW(7),WW.	JAN(2),FEB(3),MAR,APR(2).
<i>Procellaria parkinsoni</i>	6	AW(3),AE(3).	JAN,MAY(2),JUN,NOV(2).
<i>westlandica</i>	7	AW(3),WW,WS(3).	JAN,AUG(2),SEP,OCT,DEC(2).
<i>aequinoctialis</i>	4	AW(3),WS.	JAN,FEB,MAR,DEC.
<i>Puffinus spp*</i>	9	AW(7),WW(2).	JAN(2),MAY(3),MAR,JUL,OCT,NOV.
<i>pacificus</i>	1	AW.	DEC.
<i>Phaethon lepturus</i>	3	AW(2),TA.	FEB(2),JUN.
<i>Phalacrocorax spp*</i>	3	AW,WW,WS.	MAR,MAY(2).
<i>sulcirostris</i>	1	AW.	MAR.
<i>brevirostris</i>	9	AW,TA,WW(2),AE,BP(2),CN,WS.	JAN,APR(3),MAY,JUL,SEP,OCT,NOV.
<i>Leucocarbo carunculatus onslowi</i>	4	OI(4).	JAN,MAR,MAY(2).
<i>Stictocarbo punctatus featherstoni</i>	3	OI(3).	JAN(2),APR.
<i>Stercorarius skua lomnbergi</i>	1	WW.	NOV.
<i>Larus spp*</i>	1	OT.	MAR.
<i>Sterna fuscata</i>	3	AW(2),WW.	FEB(3).

TOTAL 131

* Species or subspecies could not be identified by the pilot.

TABLE 3 — Coastal distribution of the more common seabirds found dead in 1979.

SPECIES OR SUBSPECIES	COAST															TOTAL BIRDS
	AW	TA	WW	WD	AE	BP	WA	CN	CS	OT	SD	WS	NS	OI		
<i>Eudyptula minor</i> subsp* 208	20	20	69	1	108	11	1	1	-	4	9	20	1	40	493	
<i>Diomedea</i> spp*	6	2	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	16	
<i>melanophrys</i>	7	2	-	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	12	
<i>chrysostoma</i>	16	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	19	
<i>Macronectes</i> spp*	20	2	3	-	8	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	36	
<i>Fulmarus glacialisoides</i>	4	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	10	
<i>Daption capense</i>	19	4	4	-	4	3	-	-	4	-	-	10	-	1	49	
<i>Pterodroma macroptera</i>	10	-	-	-	13	6	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	32	
<i>lessonii</i>	29	3	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	37	
<i>inexpectata</i>	12	3	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	
<i>cookii</i>	12	1	4	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26	
<i>Halobaena caerulea</i>	16	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	19	
<i>Pachyptila</i> spp*	61	8	397	2	3	-	-	-	-	-	5	4	-	4	484	
<i>vittata</i>	11	1	12	2	-	-	-	2	10	-	-	2	-	7	47	
<i>salvini</i>	13	-	1	1	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	20	
<i>desolata</i>	10	-	-	1	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	15	
<i>belcheri</i>	46	3	2	-	2	3	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	1	61	
<i>turtur</i>	123	90	674	2	29	6	13	2	1	-	-	39	1	10	990	
<i>Puffinus carneipes</i>	21	1	1	-	83	6	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	113	
<i>bulleri</i>	40	9	20	-	37	2	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	110	
<i>eriseus</i>	938	67	115	5	82	15	3	4	19	5	6	41	3	25	1328	
<i>tenuirostris</i>	77	22	40	4	44	13	-	-	4	2	16	-	-	2	220	
<i>gavia</i>	94	20	38	-	112	9	1	3	8	-	1	18	9	-	313	
<i>huttoni</i>	13	2	12	-	-	-	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	32	
<i>assimilis</i>	3	-	1	-	13	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	
<i>Pelagodroma marina</i>	1	-	-	-	2	5	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	10	
<i>Pelecanoides urinatrix</i>	64	17	37	1	34	9	-	1	-	-	2	4	-	1	170	
<i>Sula bassana</i>	116	5	9	-	37	4	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	-	173	
<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	10	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	1	17	
<i>varius</i>	8	-	-	-	11	2	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	22	
<i>Leucocarbo chalconotus</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	4	-	-	-	19	
<i>Stictocarbo p. punctatus</i>	6	-	-	1	3	3	-	27	140	14	-	-	2	-	196	
<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	69	24	89	4	30	5	3	8	26	15	3	57	5	25	363	
<i>novaeollandiae</i>	25	33	10	-	24	6	2	4	1	8	1	24	1	1	140	
<i>bulleri</i>	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	1	15	1	16	-	-	-	35	
<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	7	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	
<i>Sterna striata</i>	25	2	8	1	11	4	5	-	3	1	1	6	-	5	72	
TOTALS	2140	347	1556	28	710	117	28	61	232	63	53	26	26	123	5745	

* Species or subspecies could not be identified by the patroller.

TABLE 4 — Monthly distribution of the more common seabirds found dead in 1979.

SPECIES OR SUBSPECIES	MONTH												TOTAL BIRDS
	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	
<i>Eudiptula minor</i> subsp* [*]	99	85	59	43	77	20	7	35	7	8	21	32	493
<i>Diomedea</i> spp*	4	5	1	-	-	-	2	1	-	1	1	1	16
<i>melanophrys</i>	1	-	-	3	4	-	-	2	-	1	1	-	12
<i>chrysostoma</i>	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	3	4	2	-	19
<i>Macronectes</i> spp*	10	-	-	2	1	4	2	15	-	2	-	-	36
<i>Fulmarus glacialisoides</i>	7	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	10
<i>Daption capense</i>	4	1	2	1	-	-	2	18	8	7	4	2	49
<i>Pterodroma macroptera</i>	10	3	2	-	-	2	1	9	2	1	1	1	32
<i>lessonii</i>	6	6	3	1	3	-	3	6	5	1	2	1	37
<i>inexpectata</i>	7	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	17
<i>cookii</i>	-	-	3	12	1	-	-	1	4	-	5	-	26
<i>Halobaena caerulea</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	9	-	7	-	-	19
<i>Pachyptila</i> spp*	113	142	147	2	27	2	5	14	13	6	4	9	484
<i>vittata</i>	15	2	-	-	5	-	2	-	-	-	1	22	47
<i>salvini</i>	7	-	-	2	2	2	2	4	-	1	-	-	20
<i>desolata</i>	-	-	-	2	8	2	2	1	-	-	-	-	15
<i>belcheri</i>	4	22	1	-	2	1	8	18	4	1	-	-	61
<i>turtur</i>	89	673	54	6	8	3	12	27	32	35	26	25	990
<i>Puffinus carneipes</i>	22	15	15	1	2	3	1	-	-	2	42	10	113
<i>bulleri</i>	32	22	9	5	11	6	1	2	2	3	9	8	110
<i>griseus</i>	659	143	44	23	251	45	10	10	13	18	65	47	1328
<i>tenuirostris</i>	116	38	6	1	18	2	-	1	-	17	12	9	220
<i>gavia</i>	112	40	25	12	13	8	11	26	5	23	19	19	313
<i>huttoni</i>	6	2	1	1	1	-	-	1	1	2	16	1	32
<i>assimilis</i>	1	-	1	1	2	1	1	-	1	-	9	1	18
<i>Pelagodroma marina</i>	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	-	10
<i>Pelecanoides urinatrix</i>	93	20	1	-	3	2	3	13	5	1	10	19	170
<i>Sula bassana</i>	29	17	40	11	19	16	8	23	1	1	5	3	173
<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>	1	3	-	2	2	4	2	1	1	-	-	1	17
<i>varius</i>	3	2	4	5	1	1	1	4	-	-	-	1	22
<i>Leucocarbo chalconotus</i>	-	-	6	7	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	3	19
<i>Stictocarbo p. punctatus</i>	9	63	35	25	9	6	18	2	11	9	1	8	196
<i>Larus dominicanus</i>	58	65	54	26	44	22	18	22	20	6	13	15	363
<i>novaeollandiae</i>	32	35	10	6	12	10	9	7	6	2	7	4	140
<i>bulleri</i>	6	5	3	4	-	12	1	-	2	-	-	2	35
<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i>	-	1	-	-	-	1	2	3	1	1	1	-	11
<i>Sterna striata</i>	14	17	11	9	5	1	1	3	1	2	1	7	72
TOTALS	1577	1433	540	214	532	178	138	286	148	166	279	254	5745

* Species or subspecies could not be identified by the patroller.

1981

SEABIRDS 1979

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The number of Fairy Prions (*Pachyptila turtur*) found on Wellington West beaches in February appears to be high. However, mortality can be expected at this time of the year when the young fledge. The number of Fairy Prions found during the whole year (990 at a rate of 0.28 per kilometre) is lower than the average of previous years (0.31).

Erect-crested Penguins (*Eudyptes sclateri*) have been recorded on five previous occasions (1963, 3; 1974, 2; 1975, 2; 1976, 1; 1977, 1). Most of these birds were found on Canterbury South and Otago beaches in March and April. The three birds found this year were on Otago Peninsula and Chatham Island in March and North Otago in April.

There are five previous records of Sooty Terns (*Sterna fuscata*) totalling 14 birds. The three birds found this year were on Dargaville (AW), Muriwai (AW), and Ohau (WW) beaches in February.

This is the fourth year a Wedge-tailed Shearwater (*Puffinus pacificus*) has been found. Previous records are 1978, AW, April; 1966, AW, November; 1962, WW, January and June.

The three White-tailed Tropic Birds (*Phaethon lepturus*) are second, third and fourth records for the Beach Patrol Scheme. The previous record is from Bay of Plenty in January 1973 (Brown 1973). This year's birds were found on Oakura Beach (TA) in February (Medway 1979), Dargaville (AW) in February and Muriwai (AW) in June. These were all immature birds.

Miscellaneous birds recorded, but not considered to be seabirds, totalled 174. These were: 28 Magpies, 24 Black Swans, 19 Rock Pigeons, 19 Mallards, 12 Blackbirds, six Grey Ducks, six geese, five White-faced Herons, four each of Variable Oystercatchers, Pied Stilts and Starlings, three each of SI Pied Oystercatchers, Paradise Shelducks, unidentified ducks, Pukekos, Harriers, Moreporks, Kingfishers and Song Thrushes, two each of Pheasants, California Quail, Reef Herons, NZ Pigeons, Buff Wekas, and Mynas, one each of Shoveler Duck, Spine-tailed Swift, Skylark, Cattle Egret, Long-tailed Cuckoo, Shining Cuckoo, Yellowhammer, House Sparrow and Spur-winged Plover.

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E & O E

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SHORT NOTE

LEG COLOUR AND DOMINANCE IN BUFF WEKAS

During a 6-week stay on the main Chatham Island, casual observations were made of the Buff Weka (*Gallirallus australis hectori*). Buff Wekas, introduced to the Chatham Islands in 1905, are now very common over most of the main island. The following observations were made at a campsite in the Tuku-a-tamatea Valley between 15 December 1978 and 30 January 1979.

Up to 16 wekas could be seen at a time near the dining shelter at the camp, and considerable variation in plumage and leg colour was noted. Several of the birds were distinctive enough to be individually identified, and it soon became apparent that there was a definite pecking order among the camp's weka population.

About half-way through my stay, I realised there was a relationship between dominance and leg colour in the wekas around camp. The three most dominant wekas in camp had the most intense leg colour, that of the "top" bird reaching a strong pink-red. From this there was a continuous gradation through to pale orange-pink, the leg colour of the most lowly birds. Young birds were noted as having brownish-pink legs.