

SOLANDER ISLAND BIRDS

We flew to the Solander Islands by helicopter from Te Anau on 8 February 1984, arriving over Little Solander Island at 0710. After a brief aerial reconnaissance of Little Solander, we flew around Solander Island and landed in South-west Bay at 0725. On 9 February we were picked up at 1825 and returned to Te Anau. The weather was fine and sunny on 8 February but overcast and showery on 9 February.

Fiordland Crested Penguin (*Eudyptes pachyrhynchus pachyrhynchus*)

Twelve adults and one immature were ashore on boulder beaches along South-east Peninsula and two adults were ashore in Western Bay. All birds were in moult, one towards completion.

Buller's Mollymawk (*Diomedea bulleri*)

These were nesting on both islands. Nests were well scattered up to the summit of Little Solander (180 m) and on Solander Island from 18 m to 210 m above sea level on open slopes, ridge tops and under dense canopy on the edge of the summit plateau. Most birds were incubating clean pinkish-white eggs. Some lone birds were occupying empty nests. Courting behaviour was seen at some nests and one pair copulated behind our camp at 0845 on 9 February. Sitting and non-incubating birds rarely moved from nests if disturbed, and then only to about a metre away.

White-capped (Shy) Mollymawk (*Diomedea cauta cauta*)

One was flying off South-west Bay on 8 February.

Northern Giant Petrel (*Macronektes halli*)

One was sitting on the sea in South-west Bay on 8 February.

Prions (*Pachyptila* spp.)

On 9 February at 0410-0426 prions were heard over the camp and seen in torchlight. As it was raining at the time, we were unable to identify the species.

Sooty Shearwater (*Puffinus griseus*)

Throughout the day several hundred Sooty Shearwaters were flying offshore and moderate numbers were calling overhead from 2245 to 0610. Burrows were scattered sparsely over the higher slopes behind South-west Bay but mainly in areas of scrub. Three dead chicks were found outside burrows. Two of these had been extensively pecked about the head and breast, and weka tail feathers were close by.

Southern Diving Petrel (*Pelecanoides urinatrix chathamensis*)

Skeletons were found on the beaches at South-west Bay and along South-east Peninsula. Extensive areas of small burrows, apparently of this species, were seen from the air on Little Solander.

Australasian Gannet (*Sula bassana serrator*)

Two groups were seen from the air on Little Solander. One group of 28 birds was in a clearing on the northern slope about 60-80 m above sea level, and the other group of six birds was on steep rock at the north-eastern end about 20 m above sea level. The birds were obviously nesting but it was not possible to count the nests.

Small numbers were flying off South-west Bay during both days.

Stewart Island Weka (*Gallirallus australis scotti*)

Common and well distributed. Up to 12 at a time were on the beach at South-west Bay, feeding among weedy rocks at low tide. A pair with two juveniles were seen on the summit (340 m), and a pair with one juvenile were seen on South-west Bay beach.

Variable Oystercatcher (*Haematopus unicolor*)

Three were in South-west Bay on both days and a further five were on the boulder beach around South-east Peninsula on 9 February.

Southern Great Skua (*Stercorarius skua lonnbergi*)

A skua midden was seen from the air on Little Solander and one bird was seen flying between there and Solander Island a few minutes later. One unidentified skua was flying in South-west Bay on 8 February.

Southern Black-backed Gull (*Larus dominicanus*)

Moderate numbers were around all the beaches visited and more were flying close inshore, especially in the morning and early evening. Two unfledged chicks were at South-west Bay and one was on the boulder beach along South-east Peninsula.

Red-billed Gull (*Larus novaehollandiae*)

Small numbers were around all the beaches visited and several adults with juveniles were ashore between South-east Peninsula and Western Bay.

New Zealand Pigeon (*Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae*)

On 8 February three New Zealand Pigeons flew into *Olearia lyallii* at 325 m and later a group of eight circled the edge of the summit plateau near the razorback ridge.

Red-crowned Parakeet (*Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae*)

Single parakeets or groups of up to three were regularly seen flying over scrub. We positively identified five Red-crowned Parakeets in *Olearia-Senecio* scrub on the summit.

Hedgesparrow (*Prunella modularis*)

Three single sightings on the summit plateau, at Western Bay and South-west Bay.

Grey Warbler (*Gerygone igata*)

In moderate numbers but not conspicuous by song.

South Island Fantail (*Rhipidura fuliginosa*)

Seven adults and one juvenile were seen on the summit plateau.

Yellow-breasted Tit (*Petroica macrocephala macrocephala*)

Widespread in areas of scrub.

Silvereye (*Zosterops lateralis*)

Seen and heard in low numbers on scrub faces.

Bellbird (*Anthornis melanura*)

Well distributed in moderate numbers.

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