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Birds of New Zealand - Locality Guide. 3rd edn.

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Common diving petrel: pp 41-43.



COMMON DIVING PETREL

Family Pelecanoididae

Species *Pelecanoides urinatrix*

Common name Diving Petrel

Status Native

Abundance Common

Size 200 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Little Shearwater 300 mm)

Subspecies Four sub-species are recognised of which only *P. u. urinatrix* is likely to be encountered on mainland.

Breeding islands close to New Zealand Breeds on many islands from Three Kings Islands to Stewart Island and the Chatham Islands. Also on Snares Island.

Breeding months August to February. 1 white egg is laid in a burrow.

Range worldwide Ranges around New Zealand and into the Tasman Sea towards Australia. Considered a sedentary species, many birds not moving far from their breeding islands and regularly visiting their nesting burrows at any

time of year.

New Zealand range Found in all New Zealand coastal waters.

Discussion A commonly seen bird in all waters. Can be mixed with the South Georgian Diving Petrel (*Pelecanoides georgicus*) in waters off Stewart Island where the two species are almost inseparable at sea. The South Georgian Diving Petrel is known to nest in burrows on the sand hills of the north-west coast of Stewart Island (see differences P. 43). Underwing and underparts are darker on the Common Diving Petrel than on the South Georgian.

Description

Upperparts Black. **Face, neck and throat** Sides of face, neck and throat mottled grey. **Chin** White. **Underparts** White. **Bill** Black. **Legs and feet** Blue.

Conspicuous features

- A small short-tailed bird similar in size to a storm-petrel.
- Stump-tail is noticeable.

Conspicuous characteristics

- When sitting on the water it can be mistaken for a penguin.
- Usually recognised by its fast flight.
- Has a tendency to fly on a parallel plane straight into waves.
- Stays under water for several seconds with each dive.

Call Very noisy near and at the breeding colony with “kuaka ka ka” type calls, the male and female calls being recognised by experts.

Differences between the Common Diving Petrel and the South Georgian Diving Petrel

- South Georgian Diving Petrels are up to 20mm shorter in length.
- South Georgian Diving Petrels have a longer and more slender bill.
- South Georgian Diving Petrels have a white underwing and all white underparts. They are grey or a mix of white and grey on Common.

Confusion between the Common Diving Petrel and the South Georgian Diving Petrel

- The Common Diving Petrel and the South Georgian Diving Petrel live in close proximity around Stewart Island with the South Georgian Diving Petrel, breeding in burrows on Codfish Island off the north-west coast of Stewart Island. It is estimated that less than 40 pairs breed here. Confusion arises with the two species overlapping.

Best time of year for viewing Diving Petrels are known to revisit their old nesting burrows at any time of year. This suggests that some birds are always in New Zealand waters at any time. Generally the breeding months of August to February provide most chances. If visiting Mason Bay on Stewart Island when looking for diurnal feeding kiwi, also look seawards for South Georgian Diving Petrels. It is possible to see birds returning to burrows or flying close to the

coast. Other seabirds might also be seen.

Where to find – North Island

Northland – Bay of Islands from Paihia or Kerikeri into deeper waters.

North Auckland – Towards Little Barrier Island. P. 289.

Auckland – In waters around Tiri Tiri Matangi Island. On windy days birds are sometime seen from the ferry. P. 292.

Whitianga – Waters around the Mercury Islands.

Where to find – South Island

Wellington – Cook Strait from the Cook Strait ferry.

Marlborough – Pelorus Sound in the deeper water. P. 342.

Kaikoura – Waters quite close to land. P. 345.

Where to find – Stewart Island

Foveaux Strait – Watch from the ferry.

Whero Island and beyond, birds are in good numbers; probably both species.