

# WESTERN PACIFIC ODYSSEY

13-18 March 2020

## SYSTEMATIC LIST

The taxonomy and English names used in this checklist generally follows the recommendations of the *International Ornithologists' Union's World Bird List* with revisions made where an alternative name/taxonomy is considered more appropriate.

This systematic list was compiled by Chris Collins based on the figures agreed at the nightly logs. It includes all species recorded between departing Tauranga, New Zealand and the evening before arriving at Port Vila, Vanuatu where the voyage was curtailed due to the unprecedented events that unfolded as a result of Covid 19. This systematic list, therefore, only lists the species seen on the first six days of the expedition and no landbirds are included, as a large weather system meant it was impossible to land on Norfolk Island.

Accurately counting seabirds at sea is extremely difficult (eg as one can never be sure which birds are following or revisiting the ship), so the system outlined below was adopted, with this also used for the more numerous land birds:

1-10 = actual number seen

11-100 = A

101-1,000 = B

1,001-10,000 = C

10,001-100,000 = D

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## BIRDS

### **White-faced Storm-petrel** *Pelagodroma marina*

Eight birds in and around the Hauraki Gulf (14 March), with one seen the following day near the Three Kings Islands.

### **New Zealand Storm-petrel** *Fregetta maoriana*

Oiling in the outer Hauraki Gulf (14 March) proved highly successful with about fifteen birds visiting our slick.

### **Antipodean Albatross** *Diomedea antipodensis*

A lone bird was seen on 15 March not far from the Three Kings Islands.

### **Gibson's Albatross** *Diomedea (antipodensis) gibsoni*

Exceptional numbers were seen compared with previous years. Although only a single bird was seen in the Hauraki Gulf (14 March), a low A (ie 10-20 individuals) was logged on both subsequent days.

### **Campbell Albatross** *Thalassarche impavida*

Single birds were recorded on both 14 and 15 March (Hauraki Gulf and off Three Kings Islands).

**White-capped Albatross** *Thalassarche steadi*

Two birds were logged as we cruised northwards through the Hauraki Gulf (14 March) with the same number found the following day.

**Salvin's Albatross** *Thalassarche salvini*

A rare bird on the WPO with a singleton not far from the Three Kings Islands on 15 March.

**Southern Giant Petrel** *Macronectes giganteus*

The only sighting was a single bird on 14 March.

As with the previous species, Southern Giant Petrel has only been infrequently recorded on previous WPOs.

**Northern Giant Petrel** *Macronectes halli*

Three in the Hauraki Gulf (14 March).

**Fairy Prion** *Pachyptila turtur*

Reasonable numbers were found in the Hauraki Gulf on 14 March (A) but only three individuals the following day near the Three Kings Islands.

**Grey-faced Petrel** *Pterodroma gouldi*

After relatively few sightings on WPO 2019, a return to normality in 2020, with daily sightings from 14-18 March and B logged on two dates.

**Providence Petrel** *Pterodroma solandri*

This species is not recorded annually on the WPO, however, decent numbers were found in 2020 with a total of twelve birds across the 17-18 March.

**Kermadec Petrel** *Pterodroma neglecta*

Seen on the four dates north from the Three Kings Islands (15 March) with a very low A logged on the first two dates and a total of three birds on the subsequent two days.

**White-necked Petrel** *Pterodroma cervicalis*

Seen on a daily basis between 15-18 March with a low A logged on the first three dates.

**Black-winged Petrel** *Pterodroma nigripennis*

Encountered on all sea days northwards from the Hauraki Gulf (15-18 March). The highest count was on 16 March when several hundred were encountered with B logged.

**Gould's ("White-winged") Petrel** *Pterodroma leucoptera*

A lone bird on 16 March not far from the Three Kings Islands was the first sighting on the expedition with a very low A then recorded on both subsequent days.

**Collared Petrel** *Pterodroma brevipes*

The first sighting was on 16 March as the ship cruised not far from the Three Kings Islands. Another singleton was then noted the following day with four birds also logged on 17 March.

As is typical for this species, the birds varied in appearance with most being somewhat dusky below with more dark on the underwing than on a Gould's Petrel.

It is worth noting that there have been significantly more sightings of this species closer to New Zealand on recent WPOs than in the early trips. It is interesting to speculate whether changing water temperatures could account for this distributional shift.

**Cook's Petrel** *Pterodroma cookii*

This species has generally finished breeding by the time the WPO starts. A very low B (ie somewhat over one hundred individuals) was, however, logged in and around the Hauraki Gulf on 15 March, with just four birds found the following day near the Three Kings.

**Tahiti Petrel** *Pseudobulweria rostrata*

This species was first logged on 16 March (seaday north of the Three Kings) when four individuals were found. A was then logged on both subsequent days.

**Black Petrel** *Procellaria parkinsoni*

First seen in the Hauraki Gulf (14 March) and then for the next three days. The highest count was on 15 March (Three Kings) when B was logged, although accurately estimating numbers of this species is very difficult, as some birds seemingly follow the ship for extended periods but will also drop away and then return.

**Wedge-tailed Shearwater** *Puffinus pacificus*

This species was seen on a daily basis from 15-18 March with B logged on two dates.

**Buller's Shearwater** *Puffinus bulleri*

Seen in good numbers in the Hauraki Gulf on 14 March with several hundred individuals seen (B logged) with somewhat smaller numbers the following day.

**Flesh-footed Shearwater** *Puffinus carneipes*

A low B was logged in the outer Hauraki Gulf on 14 March with slightly lower numbers found the following day not far from the Three Kings Islands.

**Fluttering Shearwater** *Puffinus gavioides*

A very low A was logged as the ship headed north from Tauranga in the afternoon of 13 March with slightly more seen the following day in the Hauraki Gulf.

**Little Shearwater** *Puffinus assimilis*

A lone bird in the Hauraki Gulf (14 March) is presumed to have been of the local subspecies *haurakiensis*, although it is likely that the two individuals seen a couple of days later were from Norfolk Island where the subspecies is *assimilis*.

It is interesting to note that according to Margaret Christian who wrote the field guide to the birds of Norfolk Island, that there are summer and winter breeding populations which vary so markedly in size that they require different size leg rings !!

**Common Diving-petrel** *Pelecanoides urinatrix*

A very low A was recorded on the afternoon of 13 March as the ship sailed away from Tauranga, with similar numbers the following day in the Hauraki Gulf.

**Red-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon rubricauda*

A total of seventeen individuals were recorded between 15-18 March with the highest count being seven on 17 March.

**White-tailed Tropicbird** *Phaethon lepturus*

This species is generally seen further north than Red-tailed Tropicbirds on WPO expeditions, so a singleton on 15 March not far from the Three Kings Islands was truly exceptional. Three days later, three further individuals were logged.

**Great Frigatebird** *Fregata minor*

Single individuals were noted on 17 and 18 March.

**Lesser Frigatebird** *Fregata ariel*

Logged on the same dates as the previous species with a total of four individuals recorded.

**Australian Gannet** *Morus serrator*

This species was recorded on each of the first three days of the trip with the highest count being in the Hauraki Gulf on 14 March with several hundred individuals seen on the Maori Rocks where they breed.

**Masked Booby** *Sula dactylatra*

A total of four individuals were recorded across 16-17 March.

It is worth noting that the birds which breed on Norfolk Island (and on the Kermadec and Lord Howe Islands) are 'Tasman Boobies' which may eventually be treated as a full species given there are structural and plumage differences from other populations. These birds also have dark eyes unlike those elsewhere which have yellow eyes.

**Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula*

First seen on 17 March when four birds were noted with a low A logged the following day.

**Brown Booby** *Sula leucogaster*

This species was seen on 18 March with a very low A being recorded.

**Australian Pied Cormorant** *Phalacrocorax varius*

There is a small colony of this species (low A) at the entrance to Tauranga Harbour which was seen shortly after the *Spirit of Enderby* left the wharf at (13 March).

**South Island Pied Oystercatcher** *Haematopus finschi*

Another species only recorded within the confines of the harbour at Tauranga with a few hundred individuals being seen (13 March).

**Variable Oystercatcher** *Haematopus unicolor*

Somewhat less common than the previous species with a low A logged in Tauranga Harbour.

**Brown Noddy** *Anous stolidus*

Reasonable numbers on 18 March with A recorded.

**Black Noddy** *Anous minutus*

This Noddy species was also seen on 18 March although somewhat few individuals were noted.

**Grey Ternlet** *Anous albivitta*

This species is regular at the Maori Rocks in the Hauraki Gulf and also breeds around Norfolk Island. Approximately half a dozen birds were logged at the Maori Rocks (14 March) with low single figure daily counts for the next few days.

**White Tern** *Gygis alba*

Daily from 16-18 March although only in small numbers with the highest count being a low A on 16 March.

**Silver Gull** *Chroicocephalus novaehollandiae*

This species was reasonably numerous (A) around the harbour at Tauranga (13 March) and also at the Maori Rocks in the Hauraki Gulf the following day.

It is worth noting that until relatively recently the birds in New Zealand were regarded as an endemic species, Red-billed Gull, but both the Birdlife International Illustrated Checklist and the *International Ornithologists' Union's World Bird List* now lump these birds with the more widespread Silver Gull.

**Kelp Gull** *Larus dominicus*

The only records were around Tauranga (13 March) with A logged.

**Sooty Tern** *Onychoprion fuscata*

This widespread tropical species was seen in reasonable numbers on 18 March with a low A logged.

**White-fronted Tern** *Sterna striata*

The only sightings were as the ship sailed from Tauranga on 13 March where A was logged.

**South Polar Skua** *Stercorarius maccormicki*

A migrant heading north was noted flying by on 16 March.

**Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus*

Single individuals were seen on 13, 15 and 16 March.

**Long-tailed Skua** *Stercorarius longicaudus*

A lone bird was noted on 16 March.

## CETACEANS

**Orca** *Orcinus orca*

A single animal was spotted on 14 March as the ship headed north from the Hauraki Gulf.

## OTHER NOTEWORTHY WILDLIFE

**Ocean Sunfish** *Mola mola*

Three individuals were seen on 14 March.