

White-faced storm petrel

Pelagodroma marina maoriana

20 cm

NEW ZEALAND ENDEMIC SUBSPECIES,
NOT THREATENED



White-faced storm petrel,
Rangatira.
Photo: Don Merton.

White-faced storm petrels are large storm petrels with white, grey, and dark grey plumage. The face is white with a grey crown, and a grey patch across the eye. They have a distinctive habit of skipping along on the water using their feet. White-faced storm petrels are confined to off-shore islands due to their vulnerability to introduced predators. Despite this, the New Zealand population is large and widespread. The largest population nationally is on Rangatira, where there are an estimated 840,000 breeding pairs in forested areas. They also breed on Tapuaenuku, Little Sister Island, Star Keys, the Murumurus, Rabbit Island, and Kokope, and have recently recolonised Mangere. Adults visit breeding colonies over September–April, and lay a single egg in a burrow about 1 metre long. On Rangatira, white-faced storm petrels are occasionally caught up in vegetation by ‘anklets’ of the naturally occurring marine trematode worm *Distomum filiferum*. The parasites become attached around the birds’ legs, sometimes tangling the legs together and snagging in the trees. In some years this can cause the death of hundreds of birds.