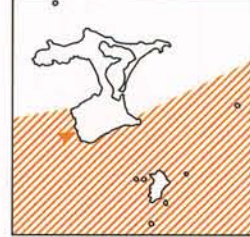


Medium to large seabirds with mostly short deep and heavily hooked bill, nostrils encased in a tube, joined at the base of the bill. Most are dark above and mainly white below. Sexes and ages alike; males slightly larger. Underwing patterns are often distinctive. In flight, long narrow wings held stiffly and appear graceful as they glide and wheel in huge arcs. Generally oceanic; rarely seen near land. Many species highly migratory. Many species give high-pitched repetitive calls over breeding grounds at night. Lay 1 large egg, usually deep in a burrow. Long incubation and fledging periods.

CHATHAM ISLAND TAIKO (Magenta Petrel) *Pterodroma magentae* Rare endemic

38 cm, 475 g. Head, neck, upper breast and upperparts uniformly dark sooty grey except for variable greyish scalloping on forehead and grey chin; lower breast, underparts and undertail white; underwing sooty grey. Bill robust (32 x 16 mm), black; legs and feet pink with dark outer toe and tips to webs. **Habitat:** Breeds in forests of southern Chatham I. Assumed to migrate into subtropical Pacific. **Breeding:** Nov–May. [Sp 63]



SHEARWATERS, FULMARS, PRIONS and PETRELS Procariidae

The Procariidae is the largest and most diverse family of seabirds, with about 72 species. In the New Zealand region, 49 species have been recorded, including 11 endemic species and 23 other breeding species.

The Procariidae includes a wide variety of seabirds from the giant petrels to the diving petrels. All have distinctive external nostrils encased in a tube on the top or sides of the bill. They have 11 primaries. The 11th (outermost) is minute, but the 10th is at least as long as the 9th, giving the wing a pointed tip. All seabirds have webbed feet with three forward-pointing toes of about the same length.

Most species nest in burrows or crevices, normally clumped into colonies. Birds return

to their colony months before egg-laying to claim their nest sites (usually the same site is used year after year) and to court. After copulation, females leave the colony for one to six weeks on a 'pre-laying exodus' to form the egg. Males also leave but often make occasional visits to the nest site.

All species lay one white egg, which is very large relative to the female's size. The few instances of two eggs in a nest are from two females using the same site. A long incubation period is typically split up into several incubation stints lasting from several days to several weeks between changeovers. Occasionally the changeovers do not coincide and the egg is left unattended for several days; however, eggs have hatched successfully after

being chilled for six days. Incubation stints shorten as incubation proceeds, and when the egg hatches the downy chick is brooded and guarded for only a few days in hole-nesting species, but for several weeks in surface-nesting species, until it is able to maintain body temperature.

Throughout its development, the chick is fed large meals at irregular intervals. It gains weight rapidly, becoming much heavier than its parents, but this declines towards adult weight before it fledges. Chicks normally spend some time on the surface exercising their wings before they eventually leave the colony. Once they have flown, they are completely independent of their parents. Young birds usually return to their home colony at 2–7 years old, and spend several years visiting the colony, especially when breeders are incubating or feeding chicks, before attempting to breed. The Procariidae are typically long-lived, with several species known to live over 25 years.

Most species now breed only on offshore and outlying islands because mainland colonies have been ravaged by introduced mammalian predators. They generally return to their colonies at night, and once on land they are clumsy and unable to take flight rapidly; their only defence is by biting or by spitting stomach oil. The nestling is particularly vulnerable to predators because it is often left unattended for long periods while the parents feed at sea and it emerges from the nest at night to exercise its wings in the week or two before it can fly.

The Procariidae feed on a wide variety of sea life, ranging from some of the prions, which sieve zooplankton on comb-like lamellae along the edge of their bills, to the giant petrels, which scavenge on dead marine mammals and occasionally kill small seabirds. Most species feed within a few metres of the sea surface, but some shearwaters dive to at least 20 m. These seabirds have well-developed nasal glands for extracting salt from their blood and exuding it out of the prominent nostrils.

The shearwaters (*Calonectris*, *Puffinus*) include about 15 medium to large species with long slender bills and flat nasal tubes. They

are usually brown to black above and white or brown below. Some have large sternums and dive well for fish and squid, using their wings for propulsion, while others have small sternums and feed on, or close to, the surface.

The four species of diving petrel (*Pelecanoides*) are small, stocky black and white seabirds with short wings adapted for propulsion under water. They have a fast, direct, whirring flight and readily dive for small krill and copepods.

The four species of *Procellaria* are large stocky seabirds with large, heavily hooked pale bills with dark markings and prominent nostrils. They feed mainly at night on bioluminescent squid but also now take offal discarded from fishing boats.

The three species of *Pseudobulweria* are medium-sized seabirds with exceptionally large feet and a notch on the cutting edge of the upper bill caused by the latericorns having blunt ends.

The fulmarine petrels (*Lugensa*, *Pagodroma*, *Daption*, *Thalassoica*, *Fulmarus* and *Macronectes*) are a diverse group of 8 species, all of which have robust bills with prominent joined nasal tubes, rising from the base.

The six species of prion (*Pachyptila*) are small seabirds pale blue above and white below with a prominent M-shaped mark across the upperwings and a dark-tipped tail. Comb-like lamellae on the inside of the bill are used to filter zooplankton.

The single *Halobaena* species looks like the prions but has a white-tipped tail and the upper bill has small tooth-like serrations at the base.

The gadfly petrels (*Pterodroma*) consist of 29 species of highly agile seabirds with long wings and short, laterally compressed black bills with a strongly hooked nail. They feed mainly on squid and small fish.

Reading: Harrison, P. 1987. *Seabirds of the World: a photographic guide*. London: Christopher Helm. Harrison, P. 1988. *Seabirds: an identification guide*. London: Pterodroma. Imber, M.J. 1985. *Ibis* 127: 197–229. Murphy, R.C. 1936. *Oceanic Birds of South America*. New York: MacMillan. Serventy, D.L. et al. 1971. *The Handbook of Australian Seabirds*. Sydney: Reed. Warham, J. 1990. *The Petrels: their ecology and breeding systems*. London: Academic Press.

63. CHATHAM ISLAND TAIKO *Pterodroma magentae* Plate 16

Other names: Magenta Petrel

Size: 38 cm, 475 g

Distribution: Breed only in dense forest near the Tuku-a-Tamatea River in the southwest of Chatham Island. Subfossil and midden evidence suggests that they formerly bred in huge numbers on the Chatham Islands. Little is known of their distribution at sea; the only confirmed record of Chatham Taiko away from the Chathams was the first specimen, collected in winter 1867 in the central South Pacific near 40°S. Radio-tracking during the breeding season shows that they probably feed in subantarctic seas to the south of the Chathams.

Population: One of the rarest birds in the world; c. 100 birds and only about six nesting burrows are known, all on Chatham Island.

Conservation: Protected critically endangered endemic. Chicks were harvested in huge

numbers by Moriori and Maori up to the start of the 1900s. Former colonies were ravaged by pigs, cats, rats and Weka, and possums compete for burrows. Taiko were thought extinct until Ornithological Society parties led by David Crockett attracted two parties to bright lights in the Tuku Valley, Chatham Island, in January 1973, and finally caught and banded two birds on 1 January 1978. Photographs and measurements confirmed that the Magenta Petrel and the Chatham Island Taiko were the same species.

Up to December 1999, 92 Taiko have been banded in the southwest part of Chatham Island, and six active nesting burrows have been found, mainly by following radio-tagged birds. The Department of Conservation is trapping cats, possums, rats and Weka near the known burrows, and monitoring breeding attempts each year.

Breeding: Adults return in late September

to clean out their burrows and to court. Females have a long pre-laying exodus of 40–55 days and males are away for 25–45 days. Females return to lay at the end of November. 1 white egg (65 x 47 mm) is laid in a burrow up to 3 m long. Eggs hatch in mid- to late January after c. 55 days, and chicks depart 25 April to 10 May at c. 105 days old.

Behaviour: Generally silent over their nesting area. The calls from their burrows, or rarely while being handled, are 'or-wik', 'si si si' and 'orrrr'. They sometimes emerge from their burrows in response to war-whooping.

Feeding: Apart from the regurgitated remains

of squid, the diet and feeding methods are not known.

In the hand: Chatham Island Taiko resemble Phoenix Petrels (*P. alba*), but Taiko are larger (wing 284–302–316 mm cf. 265–267–290 mm, and bill 30.5–33.0–35 mm cf. 25.5–27.9–29.5 mm). Tahiti Petrels (*Pseudobulweria rostrata*) are similar, but have a different bill structure to *Pterodroma* petrels, and their bill is larger (33–35.7–39 mm) but wings are shorter (283–294–309 mm).

Imber: Crockett, D.E. 1994. *Notornis* 41(S): 49–60. Imber, M.J. et al. 1994. *Notornis* 41 (S): 61–68. Imber, M.J. et al. 1994. *Notornis* 41 (S): 69–96. Taylor, G.A. 1991. *DoC Threatened Spec Occ Publ* No. 2.