

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.  
Birds of New Zealand - Locality Guide. 3rd edn.  
Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.  
Cape pigeon (petrel): pp 48-49.



## CAPE PIGEON

**Family** Procellariidae

**Species** *Daption capense*

**Common name** Cape Pigeon

**Other name** Cape Petrel Pintado Petrel

**Status** Native

**Abundance** Common

**Size** 400 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm)

**Subspecies** Two subspecies are recognised, the Southern Cape Pigeon (*D. c. capense*) and the smaller Snares Cape Pigeon (*D. c. australe*). In winter and early spring both subspecies overlap in range and spread widely well to the north of New Zealand.

**Breeding months** November to March. Birds are cliff nesters with 1 white egg being laid in a rough scrape. The subspecies *australe* breeds up to three weeks earlier than *capense*.

**Breeding islands near New Zealand** The subspecies *australe* breeds on Chatham Island, Pyramid Rock, Snares Island, Antipodes Island, Bounty Island and Campbell Island. The subspecies *capense* breeds on the Antarctic coast.

**Range worldwide** Southern hemisphere to latitude 18°.  
**New Zealand range** Right around the New Zealand coast.

### **Description**

**Head and neck** Black. **Upperwings** Black and lightly speckled with white with two large white patches on the upper primary feathers of each wing. **Back and rump** Mottled with black and white. **Underwings** White with black leading edges and thin black trailing edges. Primary wing-tip feathers black. **Underparts** White. **Tail** Mottled with black and white and tipped with broad black tail-band. **Bill and feet** Black.

**Discussion** The Southern Cape Pigeon (*D. c. capense*) has much more white on the upper wings than Snares Cape Pigeon (*D. c. australe*). This is obvious and makes it easy to separate the two sub-species.

### **Conspicuous features**

- In flight the four white wing patches are noticeable.
- The black and white check markings on the Southern Cape Pigeon.

### **Conspicuous characteristics**

- Flies off the stern of boats and follows ships for some distance, including the Cook Strait ferry.
- Quickly finds fishing boats.

#### **Where to find – North Island**

**Bay of Islands** – In deeper waters in winter.

**North Auckland** – Waters towards Little Barrier Island. P. 289.

**Bay of Plenty** – Waters towards White Island.

**Wellington** – From the Cook Strait ferry usually Cape Pigeons are the first birds to be encountered. They will follow the ferry for some distance.

#### **Where to find – South Island**

**Marlborough** – Queen Charlotte Sound Into outer waters. P. 340.

**North Canterbury** – Kaikoura. P. 345.

**Otago** – Common in waters around the Otago Peninsula. Look for it if visiting the Taiaeroa Heads and the Royal Albatross colony. P. 361.

#### **Where to find – Stewart Island**

**Foveaux Strait** – Common from the Bluff to Stewart Island ferry and around Stewart Island.