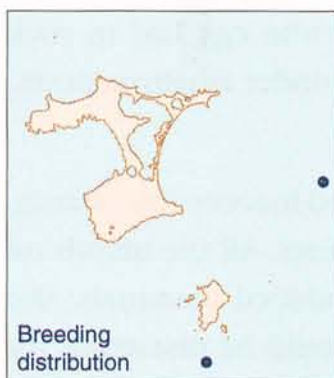




Chatham Island fulmar prion 26 cm *Pachyptila crassirostris pyramidalis*

CHATHAM ISLANDS ENDEMIC SUBSPECIES,
RANGE RESTRICTED



Identification

The Chatham Island fulmar prion looks similar to the more common fairy prion, but is slightly larger and paler, with a more robust bill. There is some dispute regarding the subspecific status of *pyramidalis*, and the Chatham Island birds are sometimes regarded as the same as those from the large population on the Bounty Islands.



Chatham Island fulmar prion
on nest in rock crevice,
The Pyramid. Photo:
Christopher Robertson.

Distribution and ecology

A relatively small population of 1000–5000 pairs breeds in the Chatham Islands, on The Pyramid and The Forty Fours. Another subspecies breeds on the Bounty Islands (c.80,000 pairs) and there are smaller populations at the Snares and Auckland Islands. The fulmar prion's range at sea is poorly known because of the difficulty in identifying it. Some birds remain around their breeding islands all year. Breeding is from November to February, with a single white egg laid in rock crevices, boulder scree, or in burrows in soil under albatross nests.

Threats and conservation

Because fulmar prions are found only on isolated inaccessible islands, they are secure from most human-induced threats. All the islands on which they currently breed are free of introduced mammals; the introduction of rats to any of these islands would be disastrous for prions. There is a need for taxonomic revision of fulmar prions to clarify the relationship between the birds found in the Chatham Islands and other populations.



Chatham Island fulmar prion,
The Pyramid.
Photo: Christopher
Robertson (DOC).