

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

Birds of New Zealand - Locality Guide. 3rd edn.

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Flesh-footed shearwater: pp 31-32.



FLESH-FOOTED SHEARWATER

Family Procellariidae

Species *Puffinus carneipes*

Common name Flesh-footed Shearwater

Status Native

Abundance Common

Size 440 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Black Petrel 460 mm)

Breeding islands close to New Zealand Breeds on many offshore islands from the Bay of Plenty northwards. Main colonies are on Mercury Islands and the Hen and Chicken Islands. It also breeds on islands in Cook Strait and off Taranaki on the Sugar Loafs. Also Lord Howe Island off Australia.

Breeding months November to April. 1 white egg is laid in a burrow.

Range worldwide New Zealand and Australian birds range north into the Pacific to Alaska and Siberia.

New Zealand range Ranges from Cook Strait northward but more common in northern waters, especially in the Hauraki Gulf.

Description

Upperparts Brownish-black. **Underparts** Slightly paler than the upperparts. **Bill** Pale yellow with top edge and tip dark grey. **Feet** Flesh coloured.

Conspicuous features

- Dark black plumage.

Conspicuous characteristic

- A slow wing-flapping shearwater.
- Glides along waves with the occasional toss into the air.
- Often will alight and sit on water near fishing boats.

Differences between the Flesh-footed and the Sooty Shearwater

- The Flesh-footed Shearwater has darker plumage than the Sooty.
- The Flesh-footed Shearwater lacks the silver underwing of the Sooty.
- The Flesh-footed Shearwater has a yellowish bill.
- The Sooty Shearwater has a dark grey bill. (Bill colouring also separates it from Black Petrel, Westland Black Petrel and White-chinned Petrel.)
- The Flesh-footed Shearwater has a pale yellow bill with a grey top edge.
- The Sooty Shearwater has a dark grey bill.
- The Flesh-footed Shearwater has flesh coloured feet.
- The Sooty Shearwater has dark lilac-brown feet.

Note The Flesh-footed Shearwater is easily confused with the Sooty (and with the Black Petrel, Westland Black Petrel, and White-chinned Petrel).

Call A wailing “ku-koo-wah”, heard after dark above nesting burrows.

Where to find – North Island

Bay of Islands – Regularly seen out from Paihia in deeper waters.

North Auckland – Towards Little Barrier Island. P. 289.

Auckland – Towards Tiri Tiri Matangi Island. This is an easy place to see this bird if the weather is windy. P. 292.

Coromandel – Mercury Islands – Regularly seen out from Whitianga.

Where to find – South Island

Wellington – Cook Strait – From the Cook Strait ferry.

Kaikoura – Not on the Kaikoura list but worth looking for. P. 345.

BLACK-COLOURED PETRELS AND SHEARWATERS

From pages 43-45

Black-coloured petrels and shearwaters ranging around New Zealand waters are always difficult to identify. These include the dark brownish coloured Sooty Shearwater (*Puffinus griseus*), Flesh-footed Shearwater (*P. carneipes*), White-chinned Petrel (*Procellaria aequinoctialis*), Westland Black Petrel (*P. westlandica*) and Black Petrel (*P. parkinsoni*).

In the deeper waters of the Hauraki Gulf, Sooty Shearwater, Flesh-footed Shearwater, and the Black Petrel can be seen together. In waters such as Cook Strait all the above species might be seen.

Locality and breeding differences between White-chinned Petrel (*Procellaria aequinoctialis*) Westland Black Petrel (*P. westlandica*) and the Black Petrel (*P. parkinsoni*):

- The Westland Black Petrel is a winter breeder occupying its breeding colonies from February to December. The Black Petrel breeds from October through to July and the White-chinned from November to May.
- The Westland Black Petrel is considered to be non-migratory in the true annual migration sense. It spreads across the Tasman towards Australia while the Black Petrel migrates north-east of New Zealand and above the equator. The White-chinned Petrel is truly circumpolar.
- Breeding colonies of the three species are widely separated with Black Petrel breeding on Little Barrier Island and Great Barrier Island, Westland Black Petrel nesting on the Paparoa Ranges of mainland South Island in Westland, while the White-chinned Petrel nests well to the south of New Zealand on Auckland Island, Campbell Island and Antipodes Island, as well as other islands around the southern oceans.

Diagnostic similarities and differences between Sooty Shearwaters, Flesh-footed Shearwaters, White-chinned Petrels, Westland Black Petrels and Black Petrels as to bills and feet:

- Sooty Shearwater – bill dark grey. Legs and feet, lilac-brown.
- Flesh-footed Shearwater – bill pale yellowish, with top edge and tip, greyish. Legs and feet, flesh pink.
- White-chinned Petrel – bill yellowish with dark grey only at the end of the nasal tubes. Pale yellowish bill tip. Legs and feet, black.
- Westland Black Petrel – bill pale yellowish with black tip. Legs and feet, black.
- Black Petrel – bill pale yellowish with dark grey tip. Legs and feet, black.

General

- Birds have either yellowish or dark grey coloured bills.
- Birds have either black or pinkish legs and feet.
- All birds are difficult to separate at sea.
- The white chin of the White-chinned Petrel is not a good diagnostic feature as not all birds have it, but those with it are White-chinned Petrels.
- With the population of the Black Petrel increasing, the chances of seeing this species are improving. Chances are good for the Westland

Black Petrel which numbers around 1100 breeding pairs, especially at Kaikoura.

- All species are noted for their habit of circling the coasts off their breeding islands at dusk, and then at dark, coming in and falling through the shrub canopies to land, all the time making very noisy and vocal calls. After a brief respite around midnight the noise again starts as birds leave the burrows for their take-off points.