

Watola, G. 2011. The Discovery of New Zealand's Birds. (3rd Edition in prep.)
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South Pole skua: pp 165-166.

South Polar skua *Catharacta maccormicki* (Saunders 1893), Native
12/1/1841 Possession Island, Victoria Land
2/1/1940 Rangitikei Beach, Manawatu
late 1993 Norfolk Island

McCormick found a pair nesting amongst Adelie Penguins on Possession Island in January 1841 (British Museum (Nat. Hist.) 1902). This species was not formally named until 1893, as it was confused with the Subantarctic Skua. It breeds at the Ross Dependency.

The first mainland record was a sun-dried adult specimen on Rangitikei Beach (= Tangimoana) in January 1940 (Falla 1940c). A misidentified Southern Skua from Stewart Island had been thought to be the first record for almost 40 years until re-examined by R. A. Falla. It had been identified by Buller in 1897, although he had incorrectly recorded it as 1895 in his Supplement. Falla also commented that Buller too often misidentified and mis-recorded data in his publications.

An immature was then found dead at Muriwai Beach on 21/4/ 1940 by Charles Fleming, followed by a skull found at Mitimiti in 1946 or 1947. The first live bird was one hauled out of the surf at Waikanae by two children in March 1953. It is considered a regular migrant through New Zealand seas, but there are very few published records (23 known to me).