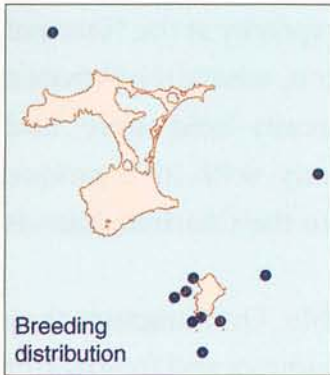
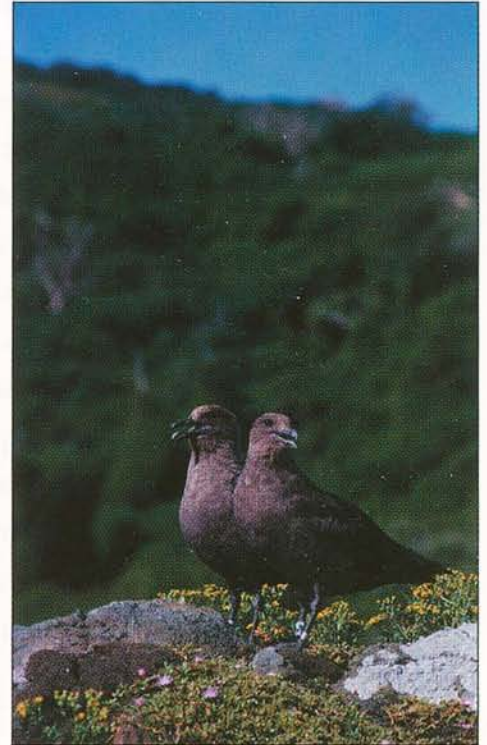


Brown skua *Catharacta skua lonnbergi* 63 cm

NEW ZEALAND NATIVE, SPARSE



Also known as southern skua, subantarctic skua, sea hawk, or hakoakoa, this is a large, dark brown gull-like bird with a large, hooked black bill. The wings are broad, with white flashes at the base of the primaries. Females are heavier than males. The brown skua breeds on numerous islands in the subantarctic and antarctic region. It is considered a full species by some experts. There are an estimated 200 skuas in the Chatham Islands, most of which breed on Rangatira and Mangere.



Pair of brown skuas,
Rangatira.
Photo: Colin Miskelly.

Smaller numbers breed on the Star Keys, Tapuaenuku, Rabbit Island, the Murumurus, southern Pitt Island, The Sisters, The Forty Fours, The Pyramid, and The Castle, and they range to the rest of Pitt Island and coasts of Chatham Island. Brown skuas are strongly territorial when breeding, and will dive aggressively at people passing too close to their nest. While most skuas breed in pairs, a significant number breed in trios comprising two unrelated males and one female; breeding groups of up to seven birds have also been recorded. Skuas eat small seabirds such as prions,

storm petrels and diving petrels, as well as fish, goose barnacles, eggs and scavenged carcasses. Skuas are sometimes shot on Chatham and Pitt Islands, where they occasionally attack cast sheep or lambs. This is of concern, as the brown skua is one of the rarest bird species on the Chatham Islands.



Brown skua diving to defend its nest,
Mangere, December 1982.
Photo: Dave Crouchley (DOC).