

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Brown skua: pp 183-184.



### **BROWN SKUA**

**Family** Stercorariidae

**Species** *Catharacta skua lonnbergi*

**Common names** Brown Skua or Southern Skua

**Status** Native

**Abundance** Common in selected areas.

**Size** 630 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Black-backed Gull 600 mm)

**Habitat** A coastal species during the breeding season which ranges into deeper

waters over the winter months.

**Worldwide range** Circumpolar with Subantarctic distribution.

**New Zealand range** The New Zealand subspecies (*C. s. lonnbergi*) ranges around the south of the South Island, Stewart Island, Snares Island and to the islands further south. It sometimes is seen around Cook Strait when not breeding.

**Discussion** Skuas can be described as predatory gulls with the Brown Skua being well known as both a predator and a scavenger content to raid nesting colonies of penguins, shearwaters, gulls and terns. Although it is bigger than the South Pole Skua (*C. maccormicki*) it has a wide size range and so can be confused with it, and with the immature Black-back Gull.

## Description

**Upperparts and underparts** Dark brown. **Wings** Dark brown with white wing-flashes on both sides of the wing primary feathers.

### Conspicuous feature

- White wing-flashes.

**Call** “Charr-charr-charr” at nesting site only.

**Nest** Breeds either in loose colonies or as a solitary breeder making a scrape of a nest on a promontory lined with grasses, twigs and dried seaweed. Up to 2 light brown, blotched with dark brown, eggs are laid.

### Differences between the Brown Skua and the immature Black-backed Gull

- The Skua is heavier looking.
- The Skua has wider wings.
- The Skua has very conspicuous white on the wings.
- The Skua has a thicker neck.
- The Skua has a much heavier bill with a hook on the end.

### Differences between the Brown Skua and the South Pole Skua

- Brown Skua appears of heavier.
- Brown Skua is of a warmer brown colouring.
- The South Pole Skua is of a generally darker brown except around the face and neck where it has creamy tonings.

### Where to find – South Island

**Cook Strait** – From the Cook Strait ferry.

### Where to find – Stewart Island

**Ackers Point** – From the south side of Half Moon Bay. P. 367.

**Paterson Inlet** – On islands at the entrance of Paterson Inlet. P. 367.