

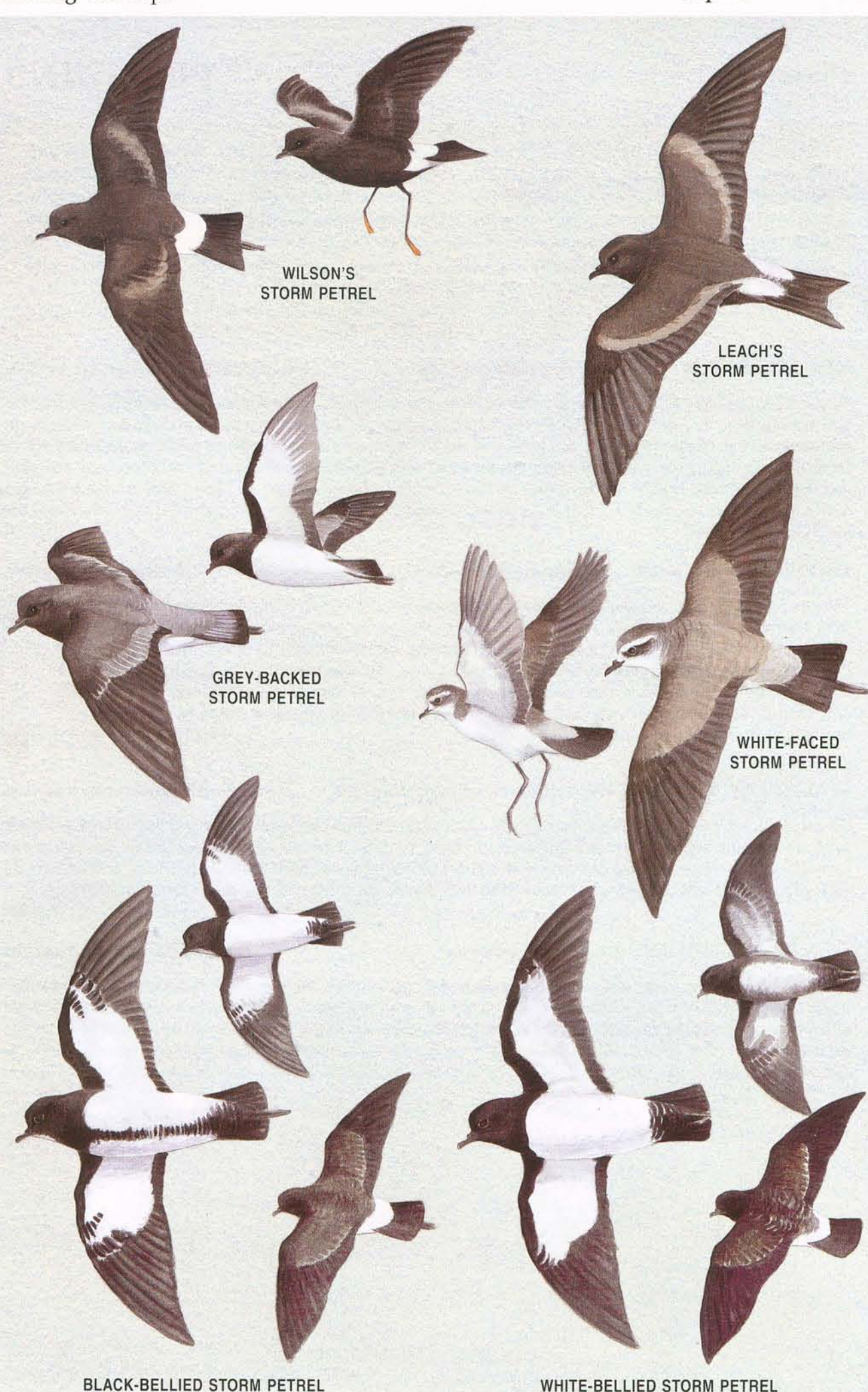
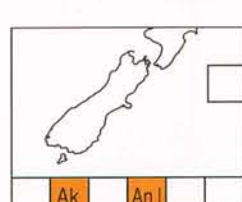
Very small dainty seabirds with broad rounded wings, short bill with a prominent nostril with a single opening, and very long legs. Mostly black or grey upperparts except for rump. Sexes and ages alike. Fly close to the surface, erratically with short glides or hops. Pick up food while hovering or pattering on the water. Oceanic; rarely follow boats. Most silent at night over colonies, but give coos, churrs or whistles from burrows or the ground.

BLACK-BELLIED STORM PETREL *Fregetta tropica*

Locally common native

20 cm, 55 g. Variable; some almost identical to White-bellied Storm Petrel, but feet project well beyond tail. Typically has black upperparts except broad white rump, grey chin and variable black line down centre of white belly connecting black breast and undertail. A few have all white belly. **Habitat:** Breeds circumpolar subantarctic, including Antipodes and Auckland Is. Ranges widely and migrates to tropics in winter. **Breeding:** Dec–Apr.

[Sp 70]



STORM PETRELS

Oceanitidae

The Oceanitidae are very small seabirds, ranging from Antarctic waters to the tropics. There are 21 species, of which 5 breed in the New Zealand region, and 1 is a vagrant.

webbed toes are long and are used to skip or patter along the sea surface as the birds look for zooplankton.

The storm petrels are small, delicate birds with a weak black bill. They have prominent nostrils encased in a single, often upturned tube at the base of the bill. They have 11 primaries, but the 11th (outermost) is minute. The 10th primary is shorter than the 9th, giving the wing a rounded tip. The legs and

The biology of storm petrels and the threats to them are like those of the Procellariidae (see page 184). The main differences are that females are larger than males, they lay the heaviest egg relative to female weight of any birds (typically in the range of 25–29% of female weight for the smaller species), and the egg is regularly unattended for one or more days at a time during incubation, which

makes the total incubation period highly variable.

Flight of the Storm Petrel. Newton Abbot: David & Charles. Murphy, R.C. 1936. *Oceanic Birds of South America.* New York: MacMillan. Serventy, D.L. et al. 1971. *The Handbook of Australian Seabirds.* Sydney: Reed. Warham, J. 1990. *The Petrels: their ecology and breeding systems.* London: Academic Press.

Reading: Harrison, P. 1987. *Seabirds of the World: a photographic guide.* London: Christopher Helm. Harrison, P. 1988. *Seabirds: an identification guide.* London: Christopher Helm. Lockley, R.M. 1983.

70. BLACK-BELLIED STORM PETREL *Fregetta tropica* Plate 17

Size: 20 cm, 55 g
Distribution: Breed widely on subantarctic islands in the Atlantic (South Shetland, South Orkney and South Georgia Islands) and Indian Oceans (Prince Edward, Crozet and Kerguelen Islands), and in New Zealand at the Antipodes and Auckland Islands. Recorded from the Chathams in subfossil deposits and seen there in January 1979 and on Campbell Island in 1963. After summer breeding, New Zealand birds migrate to warmer subtropical waters of the Coral Sea and the southwestern Pacific Ocean. They are occasionally seen east of New Zealand and at the Chathams on passage during May–June as they head north and October–November as they return. Only seven birds have been beach-wrecked up to 1997, mainly in Southland or on beaches near Cook Strait.
Population: c. 50,000–100,000 pairs in New Zealand, mainly in the Auckland Islands, but 1000+ pairs recently found on the Antipodes. Elsewhere, large colonies are found on Elephant Island (South Shetland) and Prince Edward Islands.
Conservation: Protected native. Little is known of the trends of New Zealand populations.
Breeding: Little is known in New Zealand. At Signy Island (South Orkney), adults return

to their colonies in November and lay in late December and January, which is consistent with the discovery of two freshly laid eggs on the Auckland Islands on 1 February. They lay 1 white egg (37 x 27 mm, 15 g) in a burrow up to 0.5 m long in stream banks and peat hummocks. The incubation period is 35–45 days, and chicks fledge at 65–70 days old from mid-April to late May.
Behaviour: Breed in small scattered colonies. At sea, they feed alone or in small flocks. Silent in the air, but on the ground they give a piercingly shrill whistle, which is often hard to pinpoint.
Feeding: Little known but probably feed on krill, amphipods and other planktonic crustaceans, and small fish and squid. They take most prey from the surface while flying or pattering along. Sometimes feed around whales and trawlers.
In the hand: The few Black-bellied Storm Petrels lacking a central black stripe down the belly are almost identical to some White-bellied Storm Petrels; however, the feet of the former extend well (c. 10 mm) beyond the tail, and they have white (not black) bases to their throat feathers.
Reading: Beck, J.R. & Brown, D.W. 1971. *Ibis* 113: 73–90. Imber, M.J. 1973. *Notornis* 30: 283–298. Turner, D. 1980. *Notornis* 27: 94–95. Warham, J. & Bell, B.D. 1979. *Notornis* 26: 121–169.