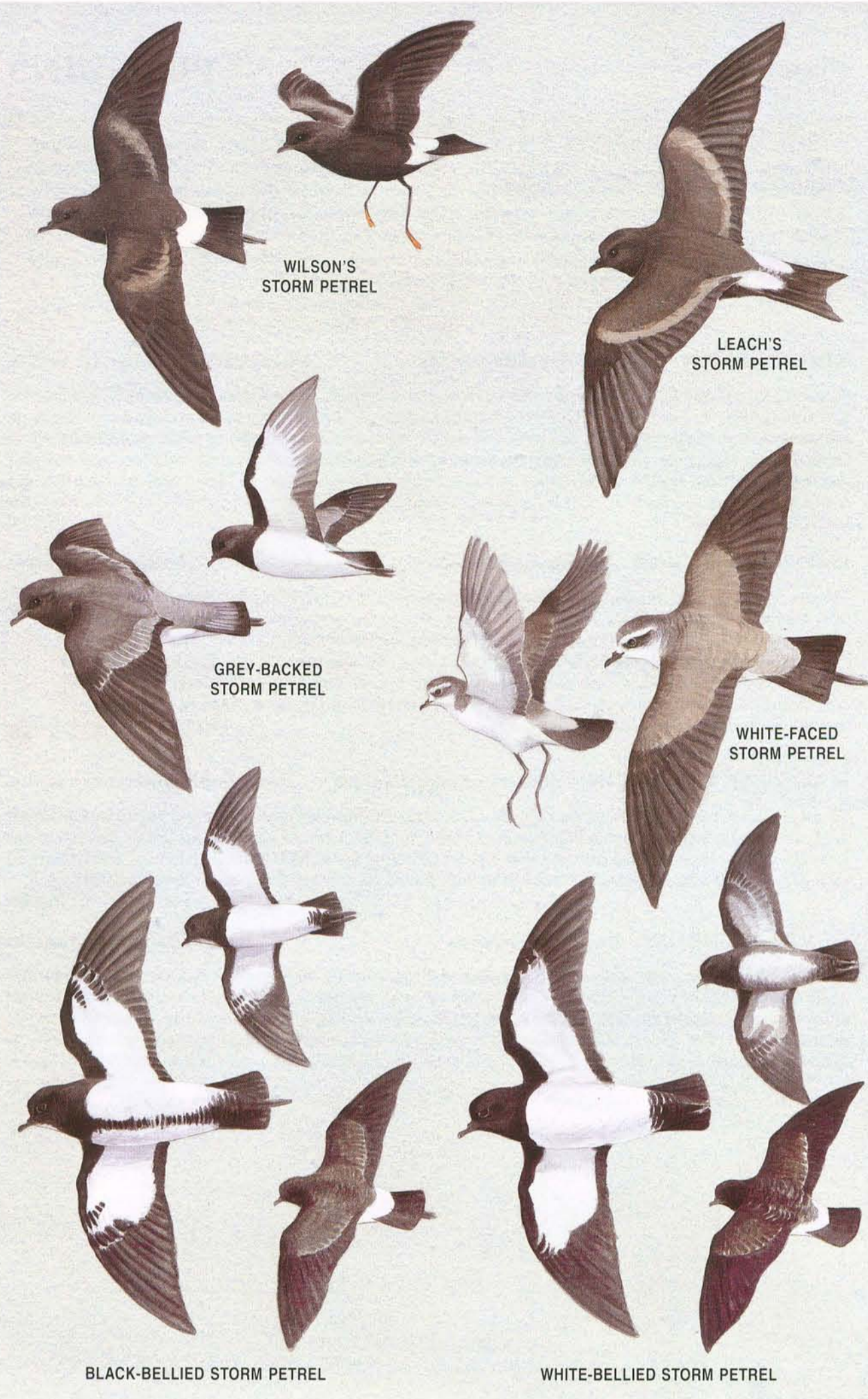


Very small dainty seabirds with broad rounded wings, short bill with a prominent nostril with a single opening, and very long legs. Mostly black or grey upperparts except for rump. Sexes and ages alike. Fly close to the surface, erratically with short glides or hops. Pick up food while hovering or pattering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

**LEACH'S STORM PETREL** *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*

Rare straggler

20 cm, 45 g. All blackish brown except head darker, clear diagonal grey-brown bar on upperwing from bend of wing to body, white rump with a dark central line; forked tail. **Habitat:** Breeds N Pacific and N Atlantic. Migrates to tropics, but a few reach NZ waters. [Sp 66]



**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.

**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.

*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.

**66. LEACH'S STORM PETREL**

*Oceanodroma leucorhoa* **Plate 17**

**Size:** 20 cm, 45 g  
**Geographical variation:** Four subspecies: *leucorhoa* breeds widely in the North Atlantic and North Pacific, and straggles to New Zealand; three others (*beali*, *chapmani* and *socorroensis*) breed on the Pacific coast of North America.

Chathams (two prospecting in November 1980) and 90 Mile Beach (October 1998).  
**Behaviour:** At Rabbit Island, two birds gave soft chuckles – 'kuk-ku-huk' – in flight and on the ground, and a prolonged loud churring with a rising pitch, interspersed with 'ik' notes, was given by a bird in a burrow.

**Distribution:** Breed on small islands in the North Atlantic and North Pacific, mainly between 42 and 68°N, except along the Pacific coast of North America down to northern Mexico. They migrate south to tropical and subtropical waters after breeding, and stay from September to March, with some non-breeders remaining all year. A few have straggled to New Zealand: Muriwai Beach (August 1922); Matamata (April 1978); Dargaville Beach (August 1978); Rabbit Island,

**In the hand:** Leach's Storm Petrels are similar to Wilson's Storm Petrel, the only other black storm petrel with a white rump from the region, but have a larger bill: 13.5–16.0–17.5 mm cf. 11–12.5–13.5 mm. The white rump patch of Leach's Storm Petrel is divided or partially divided by a dark central line of feathers, whereas Wilson's Storm Petrel has a pure white rump.

**Reading:** Imber, M.J. & Lovegrove, T.G. 1982. *Notornis* 29: 101–108.