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Antarctic prion: pp 55-56.

Prions summary: p 52-53.

ANTARCTIC PRION

Family Procellariidae

Species *Pachyptila desolata*

Common names Antarctic Prion

Status Native

Abundance Common in southern waters

Size 260 mm (House Sparrow 145 mm, Fluttering Shearwater 300 mm)

Breeding islands close to New Zealand Auckland Islands.

Range Around New Zealand.

Description

Face Above eye white. Behind eye black. **Upperparts** Light bluish-grey.

Underparts White except for tip of tail, which is black. **Wings** Grey with a black, open, M marking across wings when in flight. **Underwing** White. **Bill** Light grey.

Conspicuous features

- Open M wing marking.
- Light-grey forehead.
- White stripe above the eye.

Conspicuous characteristics

- Birds in fast flight reveal white underwing.
- Fast, erratic flyers.

Where to find – South Island and Stewart Island

Waters off Kaikoura and Stewart Island.

PRIONS

All six recognised species of prion are known from New Zealand waters. These are:

- Fairy Prion (*Pachyptila turtur*), which is a true New Zealand species breeding on offshore islands from the Poor Knights in the north to Stewart Island. Regularly seen at any season off the New Zealand coast.
- Fulmar Prion (*Pachyptila crassirostris*), which breeds on Snares Island and other southern islands. Sometimes included with the Fairy Prion.

- Thin-billed Prion (*Pachyptila belcheri*), which breeds from the Macquarie Islands (small colony only), east to the Indian Ocean. It occasionally strays into New Zealand waters.
- Antarctic Prion (*Pachyptila desolata*), which breeds on the southern islands from the Auckland Islands eastwards. This species is a common winter visitor to the northern seas about New Zealand. Some authorities place this species with the Broad-billed Prion.
- Salvins Prion (*Pachyptila salvini*), a species which breeds on Indian Ocean islands but straggles to New Zealand and is sometimes collected from “beach wrecks”. Placed with the Broad-billed Prion by some authorities.
- Broad-billed Prion (*Pachyptila vittata*), which breeds in abundance around the Chatham Islands and Stewart Island. This species can be found in all New Zealand waters and especially those to the south.

Similarities All species of prion are difficult to identify in normal sea conditions. They are all of blue-grey colouring with white underparts, apart from dark central tail feathers, and all have a dark brown open M mark across the wings and back. In New Zealand waters in summer, only Fairy Prions are likely to be seen in northern waters but both Fairy and Broad-billed Prions in southern waters. In winter all species might be found in the same waters so reliable identification will be difficult.