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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

White-chinned petrel: pp 47-48.



### WHITE-CHINNED PETREL

**Family** Procellariidae

**Species** *Procellaria aequinoctialis*

**Common name** White-chinned Petrel

**Status** Circumpolar

**Abundance** Uncommon

**Size** 550 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, Black Petrel 460 mm, Westland Black Petrel 480 mm)

**Breeding islands close to New Zealand** Breeds on Auckland Island, Campbell Island, Antipodes Island and their surrounding and southern islands.

**Breeding months** November to May. 1 white egg is laid in a burrow.

**Range worldwide** The southern oceans from the Antarctic to about 30°S, although ranging further north in winter around southern Australia, South America and South Africa.

**New Zealand Range** North to the Northland coast in winter and to Cook Strait in summer. Most commonly seen off the south-east coast of the South Island, from Otago south in summer.

### Description

**Upper and underparts** Black. **Chin** Variable amounts of white. **Bill** Pale yellow with dark grey at the end of nasal tubes in front of nostrils and on the groove of lower mandible.

**Conspicuous features**

- The pale yellow bill lacks the dark tip of the Black Petrel, the Westland Black, and the dark top and tip of the bill of the Flesh-footed Shearwater.
- The white chin is seldom seen on birds in New Zealand waters.

**Conspicuous characteristics**

- A slow and lazy flier.
- Has a tendency to follow ships.
- Has typical petrel-like flight in rough weather of tossing and wheeling.

**Call** Near the burrow, it groans, squeals, clacks and clatters.

**Where to find – North Island**

**Wellington** – Cook Strait in winter from the ferry.

**Where to find – South Island**

**Otago** – South of Taiaroa Heads in winter. The Westland Black Petrel is also known from these waters. P. 360.

**Otago Peninsula** – Sometimes seen from the land at Taiaroa Heads and Cape Saunders from mid-March onwards. P. 360.

**Southland** – From the Nugget Point lighthouse it is sometimes seen but a telescope would be needed here. P. 362.

**BLACK-COLOURED PETRELS AND SHEARWATERS**

**From pages 43-45**

Black-coloured petrels and shearwaters ranging around New Zealand waters are always difficult to identify. These include the dark brownish coloured Sooty Shearwater (*Puffinus griseus*), Flesh-footed Shearwater (*P. carneipes*), White-chinned Petrel (*Procellaria aequinoctialis*), Westland Black Petrel (*P. westlandica*) and Black Petrel (*P. parkinsoni*).

In the deeper waters of the Hauraki Gulf, Sooty Shearwater, Flesh-footed Shearwater, and the Black Petrel can be seen together. In waters such as Cook Strait all the above species might be seen.

**Locality and breeding differences between White-chinned Petrel (*Procellaria aequinoctialis*) Westland Black Petrel (*P. westlandica*) and the Black Petrel (*P. parkinsoni*):**

- The Westland Black Petrel is a winter breeder occupying its breeding colonies from February to December. The Black Petrel breeds from October through to July and the White-chinned from November to May.

- The Westland Black Petrel is considered to be non-migratory in the true annual migration sense. It spreads across the Tasman towards Australia while the Black Petrel migrates north-east of New Zealand and above the equator. The White-chinned Petrel is truly circumpolar.
- Breeding colonies of the three species are widely separated with Black Petrel breeding on Little Barrier Island and Great Barrier Island, Westland Black Petrel nesting on the Paparoa Ranges of mainland South Island in Westland, while the White-chinned Petrel nests well to the south of New Zealand on Auckland Island, Campbell Island and Antipodes Island, as well as other islands around the southern oceans.

**Diagnostic similarities and differences between Sooty Shearwaters, Flesh-footed Shearwaters, White-chinned Petrels, Westland Black Petrels and Black Petrels as to bills and feet:**

- Sooty Shearwater – bill dark grey. Legs and feet, lilac-brown.
- Flesh-footed Shearwater – bill pale yellowish, with top edge and tip, greyish. Legs and feet, flesh pink.
- White-chinned Petrel – bill yellowish with dark grey only at the end of the nasal tubes. Pale yellowish bill tip. Legs and feet, black.
- Westland Black Petrel – bill pale yellowish with black tip. Legs and feet, black.
- Black Petrel – bill pale yellowish with dark grey tip. Legs and feet, black.

**General**

- Birds have either yellowish or dark grey coloured bills.
- Birds have either black or pinkish legs and feet.
- All birds are difficult to separate at sea.
- The white chin of the White-chinned Petrel is not a good diagnostic feature as not all birds have it, but those with it are White-chinned Petrels.
- With the population of the Black Petrel increasing, the chances of seeing this species are improving. Chances are good for the Westland Black Petrel which numbers around 1100 breeding pairs, especially at Kaikoura.
- All species are noted for their habit of circling the coasts off their breeding islands at dusk, and then at dark, coming in and falling through the shrub canopies to land, all the time making very noisy and vocal calls. After a brief respite around midnight the noise again starts as birds leave the burrows for their take-off points.