

## Mana Island seabird monitoring trip report, 26–27 November 2023

Team: Helen Gummer, Mike Jacobson, and Grant Timlin

### Purpose

- Diving petrels – band chicks at burrows AB91, AB94, DP79 and AH11/23 that were too young to band on 10-11 November.
- White-faced storm petrels – check all WFSP artificial burrows used for the translocations for evidence of breeding; and monitor area at night for presence/identification of adults.
- Fairy prions – check burrows with eggs in October (AB05, AB19, AB21 and AB24) for potential hatched chicks; check all FP boxes for signs of visitation by prions; and monitor at night for presence of potential non-breeders.
- Fluttering shearwaters – check burrows of breeding status in October and early November (44 with eggs and 1 with chick) for hatches; and monitor all other South Point burrows at night for presence or sign of non-breeders.

### Summary of tasks

*Sunday 26 November 2023* - Sargent Pepper arrived at the Mana Island mooring at 2015 h. Following biosecurity checks we went directly to the mixed species colony for checks of all artificial WFSP and FP burrows, and night monitoring for storm petrels, non-breeding fairy prions and fluttering shearwaters. Arriving after 2130 h, the weather and moon phase were suboptimal for seabird activity!! – near full-moon, no wind at all, and no cloud cover. We also visited the potential WFSP location 100 m north of the diving petrel shed. The last part of the night was spent at South Point looking in all boxes that were not occupied by breeding fluttering shearwaters, for potential non-breeding adults; contents were noted as more boxes appeared recently activated. No seabirds were heard in the air or on the ground up to midnight, except two fluttering shearwaters (likely breeders) quietly landing.

*Monday 27 November 2023* - Helen and Mike spent approximately 5 hours at the seabird colonies, banding outstanding diving petrel chicks, checking progress of previously banded diving petrel chicks, checking for four potential fairy prion hatches, searching AB burrows in front of the northern cone speaker for potential WFSPs, and checking for fluttering shearwater hatches. Sargent Pepper departed the mooring at 1600 h to reach the mainland before the increasing winds made conditions uncomfortable, rocked around at a mooring waiting for the tide to rise, and arrived back in the marina sometime after 2000 h.

### Diving petrels

Diving petrel chicks were banded on 27 November (bands submitted to FALCON under Mana Island Seabird Restoration Project) as follows:

- AB91 – D-201652 – 98 g/pins only, feather tips barely emerging.
- AB94 – D-201653 – 112 g/pins with primary feathers just emerging.
- AB79 – D-201654 – 134 g/82 mm (primaries visible) – the oldest chick handled. Burrow extremely fragile with very thin ceiling; wharf timber placed on top to prevent damage.
- AH11/23 – I forgot to photograph the instruction to find this one burrow and my old phone wouldn't open Annemieke's report so we looked for this but could not find without the

instructions. Chick was 28 mm on 10-11 November and will be an estimated 112 mm wing 8 December if growing a max of 3 mm/day, so should be present still on the next work bee.

The following burrows with chicks banded on the last trip were checked for chick presence. No chicks were removed from burrows, just felt (with bands on) in chambers.

- Southern cluster – DP15, DP70, DP76 and DP78 – all chicks present and still downy.
- Central cluster – AB22, AB39, AB88, DP55 and DP73 – all chicks present and still downy.

At the Northern cluster, DP58 had an adult calling from inside burrows and was not disturbed, so it was not ascertained if the egg had hatched since the last monitoring trip, but this can be done, and any chick banded, on the next monitoring trip.



*Diving petrel chick (M. Jacobson)*

### **Fairy prions**

The following burrows were checked for hatches:

- AB05 – tiny, hatched chick, unguarded
- AB19, 21 and 24 – adult feathers felt, no further disturbance (on eggs or brooding chicks)

Note that AB23 was empty, but none of the other potential AB prion burrows that did not have eggs on 10-11 November were checked and perhaps should have been for very late breeding attempts?

No clear evidence of recent prion visits was noted in the FP burrows.

### **White-faced storm petrels**

All 107 boxes were found to be empty and there was no sign of any recent (greener) nesting material in any of them. No birds were seen or heard at night. A few kakariki feathers were found inside and at the entrance of WFSP53.

A selection of old AB burrows was examined for possible visits by the species as they lie in the path of the northern cone speaker (AB late 60s and 70s), but these were mostly non-existent (collapsed) burrows except for AB78 which showed signs of possible visitation by seabirds – no guano or feathers

but apparent small bits of nesting material? – and warrants further observation. I recommend cleaning out and reshaping some of the disused AB burrows here (such as AB64, 65, 68, 69, 72, 74, 75, 79 that were found) to offer them as potential sites to WFSP as they lie in front of the speaker.

### **Fluttering shearwaters**

All 101 artificial burrows at South Point and only the easily accessible burrows at the mixed species colony were checked for hatched chicks. Of 45 known fluttering shearwater breeding attempts, the following was recorded on 27 November:

- Twenty-four chicks were alone in burrows of which 10 were very small (not long unguarded).
- Eight chicks were brooded or guarded by an adult.
- Eight burrows contained either incubating or brooding adults (not disturbed).
- One burrow (FS14) had signs of egg failure (broken shell).
- Four natural burrows were not checked to minimise disturbance of potential incubators/brooders.

Several other burrows showed signs of fresh activity with feathers and nest material, some of these activated for the first time, most likely by new arriving non-breeders. Only one adult was recaptured, a known breeder entering its neighbouring (secondary) burrow.



*Adult fluttering shearwater (brooding) with hatched eggshell (H. Gummer)*

### **Recommendations for next trip (FOMI work bee planned 8-10 December 2023)**

- Diving petrels – band chick at A11/23 and check for chick at DP58 to band.
- Fairy prions – check burrows AB11, 16, 36 and 38 (not checked this trip) for any very late breeding attempts. Possible hatch checks of other breeders? (tbc with Colin).
- Fluttering shearwaters – check outcome at burrows AB54, 62, 80 and DP32. Band as many of the oldest chicks as possible. Check new active burrows for non-breeder IDs at night and to ID occupants of suspected secondary burrows. Grass clearance (lids and channels) if time.
- White-faced storm petrels – reconstruct (dig out) old, disused AB burrows in front of northern cone speaker as potential burrows for WFSP to use? Grass clearance if time.

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