

WINDY HILL SEABIRD SURVEY

November 26-29th November 2013

SUMMARY

- *No Cooks petrels were found.*
- *3 new black petrel burrows found*
- *1 black petrel found on surface*
- *1 unknown burrow found to be determined*
- *A new grey-faced petrel colony found near Smugglers Cove*
- *New GFP burrows & chicks confirmed at first site*

- *5 kaka nests detected by dogs at ground level in hollow puriri trees*

26th November

Spent 1 hour searching near Judy's house.

One new black petrel burrow was detected in a horizontal puriri tree by the dogs. I couldn't see the bird but a very strong petrel smell emanated from this trunk and it was very long hollow burrow. This was marked with pink tape.

Of interest, a nesting kaka was also found by the dogs at ground level in a hollow puriri. The entrance was on the downhill side of the tree, about 4 feet above the ground but the kaka was sitting on 4 eggs at ground level directly below the entrance. Very close to a trap line.

Waypoint = E1826355 N5979871

27th November

Walked out to Smugglers Cove with Kevin. No interest from dogs until the coast where a new small colony of at least 5 Grey-faced petrel burrows were found.

Waypoint = E 1828798 N 5978642

We walked through a valley that Kevin thought may have potential. The dogs showed little interest, then indicated on another ground nesting kaka at the base of a puriri tree. The bird flew off, but 2 birds hung around, then the female returned to the nest within minutes of us moving away from the tree. Although this is not what we are searching for, I am confident if seabirds were present in this area, the dogs would have detected them as they smell stronger than kaka.

Waypoint = E1828364 N 5978822

28th November

Started at the ridge above Benthorn. Almost immediately, a black petrel burrow was detected amongst kiki in amongst an old tree stump. A petrel was just visible with a torch - it was good to see the burrow was dry after the heavy rain.

Way point = E 1826734 N 5979815



Further on this track, another kaka nest was found at the base of a puriri tree. Two chicks were visible and 3 eggs. No adult kaka seen.



One of the 5 kaka nests found near ground level

We continued along these Benthorn tracks - no more sea birds detected but another(!) kaka nest found in the base of a large wind fallen tree. Three chicks were seen with 2 eggs.

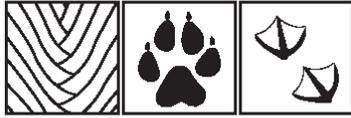
We then sidled up and along from B14 to D3 and BW11 and walked along BW12 & BW13. Enroute, Maddi wined a black petrel sitting on the surface under a log approximately 65m off the track. I am confident that this is a prospecting bird that is looking for a burrow and possibly it is a chick returning to its natal area.

Waypoint = E



Prospecting black petrel found on surface

Walking along BW14, a burrow was detected by the dogs about 10m below the track in the base of a horizontal puriri - with the burrow going into the hill not into the tree trunk. We then noticed that it had been marked on the track and later found out that Kyle had smelt a petrel smell here in February 2013 and marked it as BP03. Maddi was



indicating very strongly here about approximately 1 metre uphill from the entrance which means a bird was present. Most likely a black petrel. Good on Kyle and good to have it independently confirmed by the dog that a burrow was there.

Further along the track about 20m, the dogs indicated on a puriri tree on the track. I could not determine what was in here. It could be kaka or black petrel. I would recommend putting a camera here to see what does live here.

No further seabirds detected. Another kaka nest found along Line BW15 - again at ground level in a hollow puriri tree.

“BP01” - the black petrel burrow found last year above Judy’s was checked but no bird was present. It is quite early, so a bird may still return here.

29th November

Walked out to the Grey-faced petrel colony found last year. 6 burrows were found in the immediate vicinity and another 6 further along the ridge. At least half of these had a bird home as indicated by the dog and/or smell/stick/torch.

The speakers were checked and 4 white-grey feathers were found directly underneath the bottom megaphone.

Conclusions

This is not a comprehensive survey of Windy Hill and there are large blocks that have not been surveyed. We attempted to cover areas we thought that had the most suitable petrel habitat.

Disappointing that no Cooks petrels have been found but exciting that there are more breeding black petrels and Grey-faced petrels here. Now 6 confirmed black petrel burrows and at least 20 GFP (probably more) between the 2 sites. Note too, that it is still quite early for returning breeding black petrels at this time of year.

Very interesting that there appears to be so many kaka breeding at ground level in hollow puriri trees - which is similar to where black petrels can be found. This could be interpreted as having excellent predator control and/or only completely hollowed out puriri trees exist, rather than partial hollows. Whatever the reason, it demonstrates the importance of having old growth puriri trees and predator control for both parrots and petrels successful breeding.

Recommendations

- Camera put on unknown burrow on track just along from BP03
- Be vigilant with all dogs on ridge above Benthorn and opposite where black petrels are
- Keep listening to acoustic recorders
- If another camera is put out at the coastal site where the speakers are, aim the camera at the megaphones.
- This could be an excellent place for someone to study kaka with so many ground nests!