



## **WINDY HILL PETREL SURVEY**

### **1<sup>ST</sup>-3<sup>RD</sup> DECEMBER 2014**

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**1<sup>st</sup> December Henry, Jo, Maddi & Rua.**

Surveyed area to the north of Judy's house along lines I2 & I3.  
Walked up P6 with no birds detected.

Walked near Little Windy Hill to check out the known burrow on the I12 line as this was not included on the map. There was an adult petrel present sitting on an egg. This would be an easy burrow to check for fledgling success. It was GPS'd @ E1826827 N5979659.

We returned to the meeting house, dropped off Maddi, and then surveyed the area near Black petrel 01 burrow which was initially found with a bird in it, in 2012. There was a bird present - couldn't see if on an egg, but probably, given the time of year. From memory this was vacant last year so good to see it back.

No more burrows found in this area to the south and southwest-west of Judy's house.

Checked "Henry's burrow", from Maddi's indication and the strong seabird smell emanating out of the log, I am confident that a bird was present. Despite using torches and a video on a cable, the bird could not be seen.

An old petrel burrow was found just below the road with old pink flagging tape with the number 1 written on it. There were 3 possible entrances, I GPS'd this and put stick fences up at the entrances. Weak dog indication here. I checked this on 3<sup>rd</sup> December and the fence was still up. The co-ordinates are E1826827 N5979768.

**2<sup>nd</sup> December Jo, Maddi & Rua**

Started at "Henry's burrow" and searched the immediate vicinity. Both dogs gave an indication on a horizontal puriri log just off the track on the way to the lookout. I could not determine if there was a bird present. It was a smallish entrance and it looked like something had been going into the cavity as no spider webs and what looked like soft soil outside that may have been dug out earlier. E1826825 N5979570

I looked just below the lookout rock (western side) and carried on down the BPI4 line and walked across the D2 line and over to the BWI 1 line.



A new black petrel burrow was detected here just below the track in a HUGE puriri log pointing down hill. The petrel was a long way down this log and quite hard to see even when inside the log using a good torch(!).

Co-ordinates E1827339 N5979352

A small piece of pink tape was tied around a small sapling above the log.

Carried along this line then up and along the BWI 2 line. The base of a live puriri tree was of great interest to the dogs @ E1827415 N5979352  
I could not see or smell seabirds here. It may have been a Kaka nest/roost.

I walked along PI20 and re-checked the area where a bird was found on the surface in 2013. No burrows were found here. The new burrow found down on BWI 1 line possibly may have been where this bird was heading.

I cut down to the D2 line and walked this with the dogs and then traversed above staying parallel to this, until hitting the line that took us back to Henry's burrow. No burrows found.

From here we dropped down the western face and surveyed through here - which was dominated by kiki, rocky substrate, Nikau and supple jack, until cutting back onto to the road. No burrows found.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> December with Kevin, Jo, Maddi & Rua**

Walked around Big Windy Hill to BWI 10 and surveyed BWI 7 & BWI 15 using Rua. No sea bird burrows detected here despite the large puriri logs/trees. One suspected kaka nest was found.

We carried on along BWI 6 line and re-checked a burrow found previously. Both dogs indicated strongly suggesting a bird was present. Again we could not see a bird.

We walked back along BWI 3. No new burrows detected, but birds were present in the 2 found last year (based on the dog's strong indications).

## **SUMMARY**

Not much was found this year in comparison to other years. This year emphasis was put on searching new areas, this may confirm that we have been surveying in the correct places of which this remnant petrel population prefers to nest - in areas of good slope with large puriri trees/logs present.

Of the known burrows that were checked this year, it was very encouraging to find 100% occupancy.

If no more surveys are to be done in the near future, it maybe worthwhile to band the chicks from the known burrows when possible (this will depend on a certified petrel bander being available and the birds being within reach). This will contribute to a small but accurate picture of the population dynamics here at Windy Hill. If banded as chicks the exact age will be known and whether they return or are recaptured dead/alive here or elsewhere in the future could be very interesting and useful information.

Given the amount and the timeframe of predator control here, I am surprised that there are not more black petrels here. The ones that we have found are probably older birds displaying high site fidelity - but I would have expected new birds to be appearing (e.g. returning "chicks"). This could be an artifact of chicks not surviving at sea, not returning to Windy Hill (e.g. being attracted to Hirakimata), limited habitat, or a combination of all these factors. This demonstrates the challenges facing the recovery of slow breeding long lived species.

If further surveys are done, then March/April could be a good time as this will mean the burrows are very strong smelling as there have been adults sitting on eggs and chicks growing there for 3-4 months. However the timing of this will only pick up successful breeders.

Sorry we didn't find any more than this on this trip. We certainly put the effort in and clocked about 19km and over 30ha of area covered.

Thanks for the work, the accommodation, and support from Judy and the knowledgeable local field staff.