

Providence Petrel (*Pterodroma solandri*)

Description

Dark grey petrel to 40cm. Underparts paler, head grey-brown with white scaly feathers around the face. Bill stout and black, eyes dark brown.

Conservation Status

Listed as Vulnerable under both the 2000 IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals and the NSW TSC Act 1995.

Listed Migratory species under the Commonwealth EPBC Act 1999.

Distribution

Breeds at Lord Howe Island (and formerly Norfolk Island); pelagic range unknown, but recorded at sea in the Tasman, off Japan and tentatively near Hawaii.

Ecology

Breeding: Breeds on Lord Howe Island from late February until November (mainly mid May), laying one egg. Adults share nest building, incubation and care of young. Incubation about seven weeks. Pairs vigorously defend the area close around the burrow. Very inquisitive, attracted by shouting and hand clapping.

Nest: In chamber at end of burrow 1-1.8m long. Burrows are often flooded in heavy rain. Nests are often densely spaced in a colony.

Diet: Squid, fish and crustaceans.

Foraging Behaviour: Providence Petrels go on foraging trips of 1-14 days duration, return to feed their chicks during the late afternoon and throughout the night and bring back predominantly squid, fish and crustaceans for their chicks (Bester 1999).

Population Data/Health

Population c. 32,500 breeding pairs with a total population of less than 100,000 (Bester *et al.* 2005).

Habitat

Marine, pelagic in waters 15-25°C.

On Lord Howe Island, this species nests in soil burrows and rock cavities. The colonies extend over all the upper slopes of Mt Lidgbird 777m and Mt Gower 875m. Smaller populations occur on Little Slope, Big Pocket, Little Pocket and the Far Flats. It has been recorded off Balls Pyramid but it is not known if it breeds there (McAllan *et al.* 2004).

Threats

Providence Petrels are threatened by rat predation at the nesting grounds and may be threatened by long-line fishing at their foraging sites (Bester 1999).

Other threats identified by Bester *et al.* (2005) include predation on chicks by the Lord Howe Island Woodhen and flooding of burrows.

Impacts Upon Other Species

General disturbance to invertebrate fauna may result from burrow excavations.



Photo: Ian Hutton

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References

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Photo: Ian Hutton

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