

Motuora grey-faced petrel monitoring: 2008

Trip details: Jacqueline Beggs, Kerry Gillbanks, Shaun Trevan, Cheryl Gillbanks and Robin Gardner-Gee visited Motuora 0945 to 1600 24 May 2008 to revisit fixed monitoring plots. Island rangers also joined party for morning. It had rained during the previous week and soil at colonies was damp. Soil was smooth and packed at many burrow entrances. There was also guano and feathers at many burrows, so activity signs were much clearer than last year when there had been weeks of dry weather before the burrow check.

Results: In peripheral areas burrow counts were once again very similar to previous years. At seven of the nine established areas the 2008 burrow counts were also similar to those recorded in previous years. However numbers do seem to be increasing at the two largest breeding areas, Big North and Big South. Over the last four years the Big North count has gone from 22 to 28 burrows while Big South had gone from 26 to 34 burrows. It will be very interesting to see if this trend continues. We also recorded the total number of burrows in each plot for the first time this year: this indicated that most burrows present in the plots appear to be in use.

Another two dead petrels were found this year (two were found last year). Some mortality is normal at colonies and it is possible that these birds were injured while fighting over burrows or were hurt when landing. Live petrels were detected in several burrows again this year. Most breeding birds should have departed by May (but a few males may continue to visit up to early June). However there are likely to be non-breeders (younger birds prospecting or birds that missed out on getting a partner) who will continue to visit the burrows during late May and June.

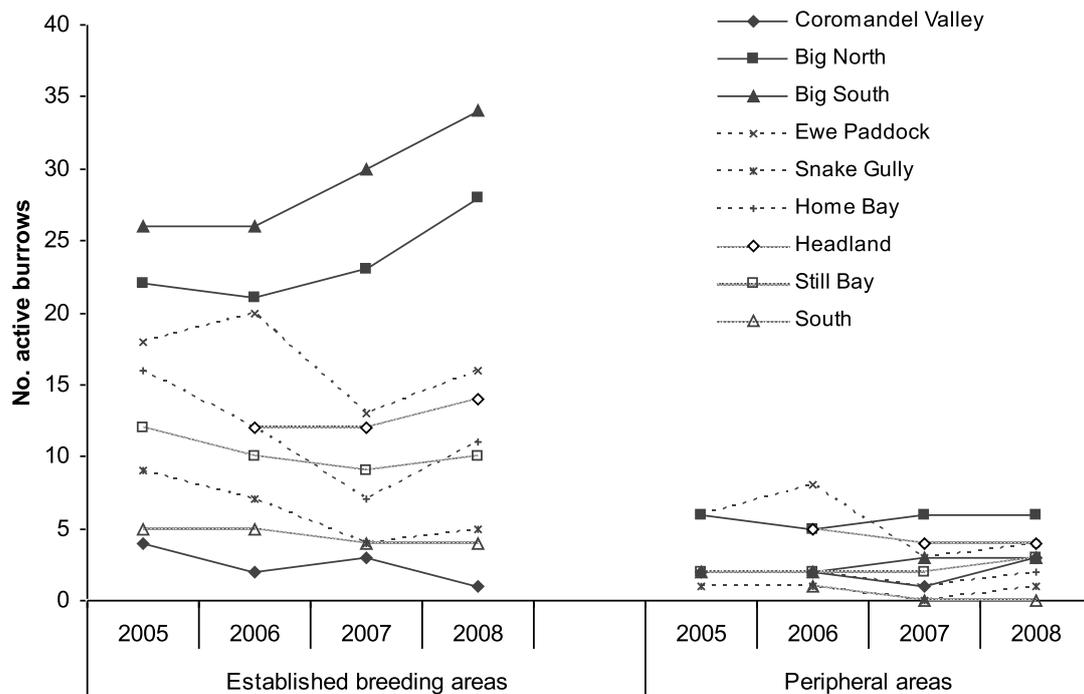


Figure 1: May burrow activity recorded in fixed plots at established breeding areas and adjacent peripheral areas with low burrow density.