

Motuora grey-faced petrel monitoring: 2009

Trip details: A small team this year- Jacqueline (J. Beggs), Cheryl (C. Gillbanks) and I (R. Gardner-Gee) visited Motuora 0945 to 1600 30 May 2008 to count grey-faced petrel burrows in fixed monitoring plots. I stayed on to check diving petrel artificial colony overnight (monitoring aimed at detecting return of transferred diving petrel chicks fledged from Motuora in 2007 & 2008) and to complete the burrow check on 31 May (0900 to 1400).

Results: Two interesting observations this year- First, there is now a distinct increase in burrow activity at Big North and Big South established plots but still little sign of change anywhere else. However, there were a number of very freshly dug burrows along the western (Home Bay) side of the island (including three just outside our plots!) and Deane and Andrea commented that they had noticed more night activity (birds flying around and calling from the air) over the house and western side of the island this year. Second, on Saturday night I heard a lot of calls coming from the southern end of the island. As our 2005 survey didn't locate many burrows down that end of the island I was intrigued so set off to explore the next day and found 12 burrows at the tip of the Pah site- either we had missed these in 2005 or they have established since then.

As for the diving petrels, I got clear calls from a diving petrel on the ground below the artificial colony on Saturday night, and when I checked the vicinity in daylight on Sunday, I found an area with three grey-faced petrel burrows and several smaller (diving petrel sized) burrows too. Sunday night I again heard a diving petrel calling from the ground in the same area. Diving petrels lay in August, so it will be a few more months before we know if we have breeding pairs - but things are definitely looking hopeful.

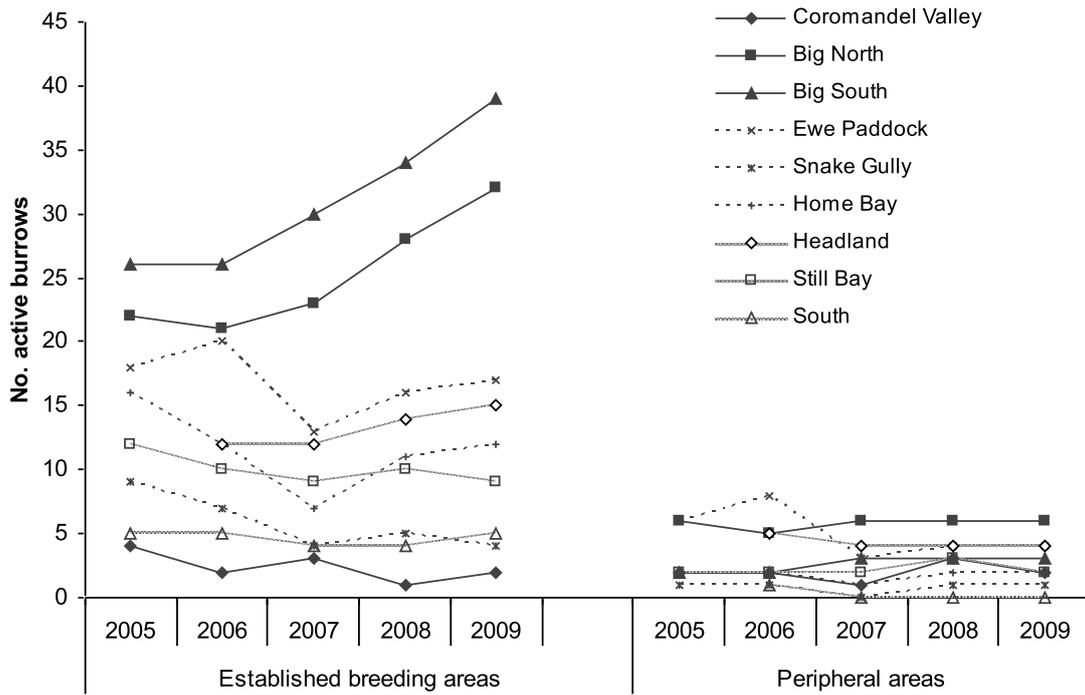


Figure 1: May grey-faced petrel burrow activity recorded in fixed plots at established breeding areas and adjacent peripheral breeding areas on Motuora, 2005-2009.