

Motuora grey-faced petrel monitoring: 2010

Date: 29 May (1000 departure Sandspit) to 30 May (1600 departure from Motuora)

Participants: Jacqueline Beggs, Sue Bodmer, Liz Norquay, Kevin Hawkins, Robin Gardner-Gee

Trip details: On arrival we split into two teams and checked the fixed monitoring plots for active burrows 1200 to 1600. After dusk (1800-1900) KH & RGG visited the diving petrel colony for an hour and played diving petrel calls while walking around the monitoring tracks. JB, SB and LN (along with rangers Dean Williams and Andrea Ravenscroft) war-whooped at Headlands site 1800-1900 and banded all birds caught. KH & RGG joined banding party at 1930 and we all moved to Big South and continued banding there, before moving again to the proposed Pycroft colony site. Petrel activity was lower after c. 2100 and we finished banding c. 2200. On Sunday 30 May RGG & KB completed burrow check and recounted the Big North established plot. KH cleared gorse from the Coromandel Valley monitoring plot.

Results:

Grey faced petrel burrow count: Once again, strong growth at the largest colony (Big South) but also increases at established colonies at Still Bay and Ewe Paddock (Figure 1).

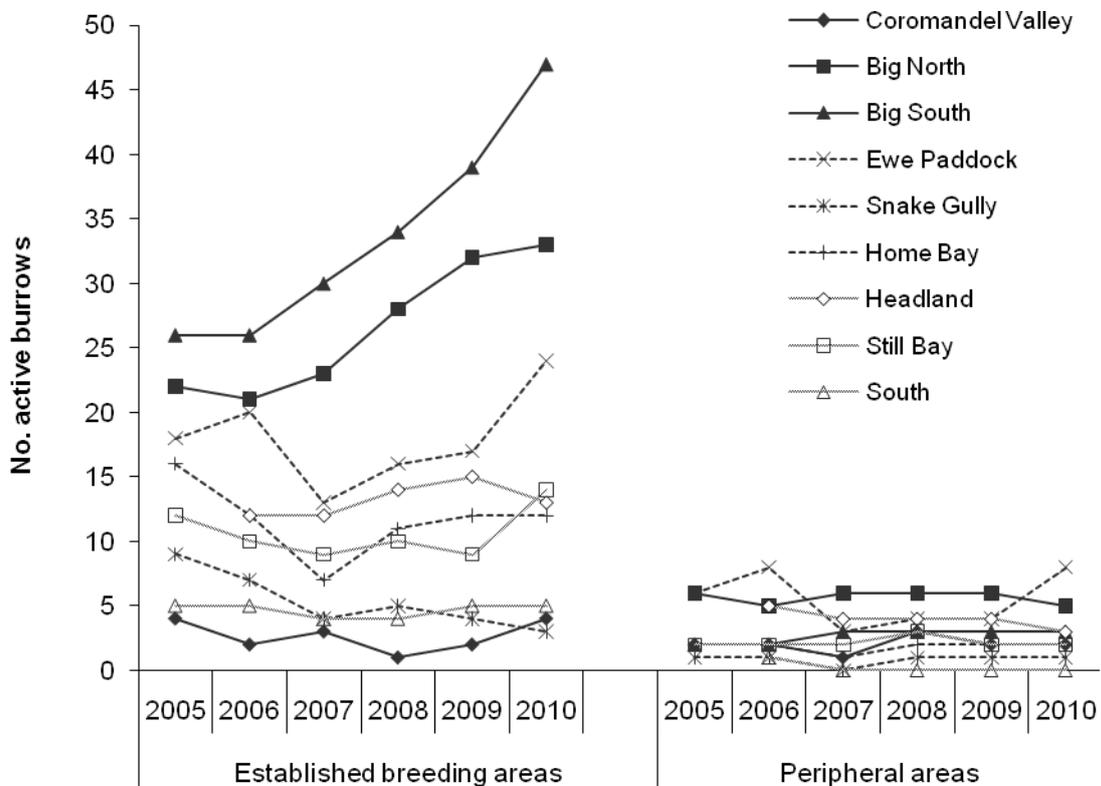


Figure 1: May grey-faced petrel burrow activity recorded in fixed plots at established breeding areas and adjacent peripheral breeding areas on Motuora, 2005-2010.

Grey faced petrel banding: 24 grey-faced petrels banded. In addition feather samples and bill measures were taken from first 10 birds caught (for Hayley Lawrence's post-doctoral research).

Diving petrel monitoring: No responses detected from the ground but several male diving petrel calls were heard from overhead.

Comments:

It is heartening to see the ongoing increases in grey-faced petrel activity, and also satisfying to get the banding underway again after several years without any banding trips. As for the diving petrels, it was disappointing that we did not detect any birds on the ground. Diving petrels return to their colonies March onwards to establish burrows, pair and mate, and last year we were hearing diving petrels calling from the ground by late May. However, on this trip we were only out for one evening so we might have missed diving petrels that are visiting the area. Hopefully we will pick up signs of breeding activity on later trips.