

BECK'S PETREL

What are they called?

Scientific:

Pseudobulweria becki

Other English: Becks Petrel

French: Petrel de Beck

Bislama:

Vernacular (local name):

A little bit about them:

These are large sea birds that are often encountered far offshore, flying alone. They have been seen on the seas of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu around Efate, however they are only known to breed in Papua New Guinea.

The gathering of a group will usually indicate that they are breeding near by, although very little is known about their burrows and nesting.

The population of mature adults is still thought to be less than 250.

In the coasts, they prey on crabs (crustaceans) while out at sea, they feed on squid and octopus.

What do they look like?

Beck's Petrels can grow up to 29 cm long, and have wingspans of 70 - 76 cm.

Their bodies and wings are blackish brown while their belly is white. The bill and the tail are black, short and rounded.

The feathers under their wings can range from dark to pale grey, often with a central line of white feathers under the wings.



Source: Birdlife Pacific, 2012

Did you know?

- There were just two known individuals in 1929.
- Though more have been found, they are still one of the rarest birds in the world!



Source: Kirk Zufelt

Beck's Petrels are classified as Critically Endangered (CR) on the IUCN Red List.

Why are they threatened?

- The small chicks and eggs are preyed on by introduced pigs, cats, dogs, rats and mice.
- Disturbance to breeding sites through clearing and development in nesting habitat.
- Seabirds, and Petrels in particular, consume plastics floating in the ocean. They die from either intestinal blockages or poisoning.

What do they do for us?

- Seabird droppings, known as guano, left on their roosting sites provides important nutrients to plants on their nesting island. Studies have shown that the plants on islands with seabirds grow taller and faster than those on islands without seabirds.
- Petrels are top predators of fish, mollusc and crustacean species, maintaining the health of ecosystems.

What can we do for them?

- ✓ Identify nesting and breeding sites and take conservation measures to protect them.
- ✓ Castrate and spay pet cats and dogs to reduce feral animals preying on adults, chicks and eggs.
- ✓ Reduce using plastics, especially single-use plastics, and ensure rubbish is disposed of responsibly.

Want to know more?

- ❖ Check out their Profile in the book: ***Birds of Melanesia*** by Guy Dutton
- ❖ Visit: www.iucnredlist.org

