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VANUATU ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE SOCIETY

Threatened Species Factsheet No. 8

COLLARED PETREL

What are they called?

Scientific:
Pterodroma brevipes;
P. brevipes magnificens
English: White-winged Petrel
French: Pètrel à collier
Bislama:
Vernacular (Local name):
Tekerkark (Tanna)

A little bit about them:

These are medium-sized seabirds that spend most of their time out at sea on their own.

They are known to breed in burrows on Vanua Lava and Tanna's hill and mountain regions. Their range on other islands is not well known but historically they have have been recorded in Aneityum and in Fiji and the Cook Islands. It is not known if Collared Petrels still breed in Aneityum.
Their diet is composed of squid, octopus and fish. They may also prey on small crabs when they are near the shore.

What do they look like?

Collared petrels can grow up to 30 cm and have wingspans of 70 cm. Their upper back feathers are dark, with dark markings on their wings over mostly grey feathers. They have distinctive white throats and foreheads with black heads and back of the neck.

The populations in Vanua Lava and Tanna are thought to be subspecies and their belly colour varies from dark grey in the north (with a slightly longer tail also) to variable and often pale in the south.

Source: Kirk Zufelt

Did you know?

- They make a variety of voice calls, including kek-kek-kek whistles, longer cher-cher sounds and low moaning.

Source: Kirk Zufelt

Collared Petrels are classified as Vulnerable (VU) 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.

Want to know more?

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

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 sea birds 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.

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