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VANUATU ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE SOCIETY

Threatened Species Factsheet No. 9

WHITE - NECKED PETREL

What are they called?

Scientific:
Pterodroma cervicalis &
Pterodroma occulta

Common English:
White-naped Petrel or Vanuatu Petrel *(subspecies)*

French: Pétrel à col blanc

Bislama:

Vernacular (local name):

A little bit about them:

These are large sea birds that are native to Vanuatu and closely related to shearwaters. They fly higher than most other petrels with wings bowed and angled.

The nest in crevices in rocky outcrops, up to 300m-600m altitude. The Vanautu subspecies is only known to breed in Vanua Lava in Vanuatu.

They feed mainly on fish, cephalopods and crustaceans which includes squid, octopus and crab.

What do they look like?

White necked petrels are large seabirds, growing up to 43cm with a wingspan of 1m. They have a clear white collar the whole way around their throat and neck, a dark head and grey upper parts and wings. Their bellies are white with some colouring under the wings.

When fully spread, a dark "M" marking becomes visible extending from one wing-tip to the other across the back.

Source: Kirk Zufelt

Did you know?

- They only return to land after dark to nest.
- Unlike other seabirds, White-Necked Petrels rarely follow ships.

Source: Kirk Zufelt

White - Necked 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 introduced goats, 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 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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