

 <p>Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels</p>	<p>Seventh Meeting of the Population and Conservation Status Working Group</p> <p><i>Edinburgh, United Kingdom, 18 - 19 May 2023</i></p> <p>Southern Buller's Albatross population study highlights declines in adults survival</p> <p><i>David Thompson, Paul Sagar, Karen Middlemiss, Graeme Taylor, Igor Debski, Johannes H. Fischer</i></p>
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SUMMARY

Southern Buller's Albatross (*Thalassarche bulleri bulleri*) are endemic to Aotearoa New Zealand, breeding only at the Snares (Tine Heke) and Solander (Hautere) Islands. The species has been monitored closely at traditional study sites on the Snares between 1969 and 2022.

In 2020 and 2022, monitoring of Southern Buller's Albatross on the Snares consisted of counts of breeding birds (using similar methods at similar time of year as previous counts) to assess trends and mark-recapture efforts to estimate demographic rates.

In 2020, the full island count of North East Island was incomplete due to adverse weather conditions, but the total of 5164 breeding pairs recorded in the surveyed areas mirrored the 5305 pairs estimated in 2014 in the same areas. This result indicates that the increase of the breeding population observed 1969-2002 has not continued. However, breeding pairs in two of the three traditional study sites did continue to increase. Overall, results suggest that the North East island breeding population is undergoing annual variations.

Estimates of annual adult breeder survival continued to decline. Specifically, estimates were <0.9 in 2020-22, which was concerningly low and contrasted with estimates prior to 2012 (>0.95).

Next to counts and mark-recapture efforts, 50 geolocators were deployed on breeding birds, of which 31 were retrieved in 2022. Twelve trail cameras were also deployed at breeding colonies in 2022. Data from these deployments are yet to be analysed, but may shed light on the species' complicated population dynamics.

Regardless, the decline in adult breeder survival is concerning and potentially contrasts with the counts of breeding pairs at the study sites. Continued and increased monitoring as well as satellite tracking of Southern Buller's Albatross to clarify its population status and bycatch risk is considered a priority. As such, a more comprehensive monitoring and tracking project is planned over 2024-26.

Attachment: Thompson, D., and Sager, P. 2022. Population studies of southern Buller's Albatross on The Snares. Report for POP2019-04 for the Department of Conservation. Wellington, NIWA. 20 pp. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/conservation-services-programme/csp-reports/202122/population-studies-of-southern-bullers-albatross-on-the-snares/>

Attachment: Thompson, D., and Sager, P. 2020. Population studies of southern Buller's Albatross on The Snares | Tine Heke. Wellington, Department of Conservation. 24 p. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/conservation-services-programme/csp-reports/201920/southern-bullers-albatross-snares-tini-heke-population-project-2019-20/>

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