Eaglehawk Neck Pelagic Trip Report – 18th May 2019

**Participants:**

Allan Benson, Bill Betts, Rich Everett, Rob Hamilton, JJ Harrison, Mike Kuhl, Andi Magnusson, Steve Reynolds, Sue Taylor, Peter Vaughan and Els Wakefield. (Paul Brooks, the trip organiser, was unable to attend, with Mona Loofs-Samorzewski managing the trip on the day and compiling this report.)

**Boat:**

The Pauletta, skippered by John Males, with deckhand Adam Mackintosh.

**Notes:**

Pretty pleasant conditions all day, starting sunny with little wind and a low swell but clouding over with wind and swell increasing enough to bring the birds but never so much as to become unpleasant. Other than several Common Diving Petrel, the trip out to the shelf was pretty quiet, which changed dramatically once we reached pelagic waters. Good numbers of Fairy Prion had us looking out for Whalebirds, without any luck all day. The highlight was Southern Fulmar, a lifer for some, originally thought to be repeat visits of a single bird but later identified from photos as two different individuals (thanks Peter). Westland Petrel was another highlight, but the bird of the day was the absolutely stunning intermediate/dark morph Soft-plumaged Petrel, not a commonly seen bird! At 33 species, diversity was high and included 2 Northern Royal Albatross and a range of Wandering-type Albatrosses.

**Activity:**

We left port at 0730 due to a slight bungle with the start time, and headed straight down to the Hippolytes, circling Cheverton Rock and motoring around just east of the Hippolytes to check out what was on the rocks. We then went directly east until we reached the shelf break at 0935 at 234 fathoms. Over the course of the morning we drifted northeast, reaching a depth of 420 fathoms, until 1248 when we called it a day and headed back home, docking in port at 1500.

**Conditions:**

Skies were sunny and blue when we left, with areas of thin, high cloud around the horizon. Inshore waters had a low swell under 1 m, and a light south-westerly wind, which dropped away offshore. As we approached our berley point the wind increased a little and swung south-easterly freshening to 8-10 knots. During the berley stop the wind picked up to 20 knots, and the south-westerly swell increased to approx 1.5 m. Cloud cover increased until it was fairly solid by the time we left. Water temperature out wide was 16.4°C, which was about 1°C warmer than inshore. None seasick.

**Mammals:**

Australian/NZ Fur Seal: 13 (6). 7 on or around Cheverton Rock and the Hippolytes in the morning, 1 pelagic, 5 offshore in the afternoon.

**Birds (IOC v 8.1 – max at one time in brackets):**

Wilson’s Storm Petrel: 4 (1) pelagic.

Grey-backed Storm Petrel: 50 (15) pelagic.

Wandering Albatross: 1 adult pelagic.

Antipodean Albatross ssp *gibsoni*: 3 (1) 2 adult and 1 immature pelagic.

NORTHERN ROYAL ALBATROSS: 2 (1) pelagic.

Campbell Albatross: 2 (1) pelagic.

Shy Albatross: 47 (28) with 2 inshore, 10 offshore, 28 around the boat in pelagic waters, then 5 offshore and 2 inshore in the afternoon.

Buller’s Albatross: 9 (4) 5 offshore, 2 pelagic, 1 offshore and 1 inshore in the afternoon.

Northern Giant Petrel: 8 (5) 5 pelagic and another 3 offshore in the afternoon, of a variety of ages.

SOUTHERN FULMAR: 2 (1) originally thought to be repeat visits of a single bird, careful scrutiny of photos (thanks Peter Vaughan) showed there to be 2 different individuals in pelagic waters.

Cape Petrel: 8 (7) pelagic, 7 *australe* and 1 *capense*.

Fairy Prion: 11 (30) 15 offshore, 85 pelagic.

Grey-faced Petrel: 22 (2) pelagic.

Great-winged Petrel: 12 (2) pelagic.

WHITE-HEADED PETREL: 1 pelagic.

SOFT-PLUMAGED PETREL: 8 (1) 1 offshore, the rest pelagic, including 1 dark/intermediate morph bird. Several repeat visits raise the possibility that there was more than one individual.

White-chinned Petrel: 2 (2) pelagic.

WESTLAND PETREL: 1 pelagic.

Sooty Shearwater: 7 (3) 1 offshore, 2 pelagic, 4 offshore in the afternoon

Short-tailed Shearwater: 20 (2) 8 inshore, 3 offshore, 2 pelagic, 6 offshore and 1 inshore in the afternoon.

Common Diving-petrel: 28 (3) 27 offshore in the morning, 1 offshore in the afternoon.

Australasian Gannet: 34 (6) 28 inshore, 1 immature in pelagic waters, 5 offshore in the afternoon.

Black-faced Cormorant: 49 (30) all inshore.

White-bellied Sea-eagle: 1 on Cheverton Rock.

Sooty Oystercatcher: 2 just outside Pirate’s Bay in the morning.

Masked Lapwing: 5 just outside Pirate’s Bay in the morning.

Silver Gull: 158 (80) 146 inshore in the morning, 12 offshore in the afternoon.

Pacific Gull: 3 (2) 1 inshore and 2 on Cheverton Rock.

Kelp Gull: 45 (15) 31 inshore in the morning, 8 offshore and 6 inshore in the afternoon.

Greater Crested Tern: 233 (80) 56 inshore in the morning, 6 offshore, 3 pelagic, 80 offshore in the afternoon, 88 inshore in the afternoon (two mixed flocks in a feeding frenzy).

White-fronted Tern: 4 (2) 1 inshore, 1 offshore, 2 pelagic.

Peregrine Falcon: 1 on the Hippolytes in the morning.

Forest Raven: 1 on the Hippolytes in the morning.

MLS