Eaglehawk Neck Pelagic Trip Report – 19th May 2019

**Participants:**

Allan Benson, Bill Betts, Ruth Brozek, Helen Cunningham, Karen Dick, Rich Everett, Rob Hamilton, Mike Kuhl, Steve Reynolds, Sue Taylor, 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:**

After an excellent day out the previous day, hopes were not particularly high for today’s trip, given the forecast light winds and generally calmer conditions. Inshore waters were typically quiet, other than a feeding frenzy of mixed Short-tailed and Sooty Shearwaters and Greater Crested Terns near the Hippolytes. The first inkling that the day might prove to be special were the many sightings of Soft-plumaged Petrels offshore, then the excitement of a Sooty Albatross, which whizzed past the boat briefly before disappearing just before the first berley stop. A second Sooty Albatross (initially thought to be a Light-mantled) graced us with its presence shortly afterwards, only to be topped by a Great Shearwater, which circled several times allowing for excellent views and photographs. The large number of Fairy Prions were a distraction from the few Whalebirds sighted, identified later as at least 3 Antarctic Prion, one of which was a narrow-billed form only separated from Slender-billed from photos afterwards. We were treated to another sighting of an intermediate/dark morph Soft-plumaged Petrel (possibly the same bird as yesterday), 2 Westland Petrels and, about half an hour after we’d turned back from home, a Southern Fulmar. Along with good numbers of Wandering and Royal Albatross, and many of the usual winter birds, diversity was exceptional at 40 species. A memorable day!

**Activity:**

We left port at 0715, heading straight down south, passing Cheverton Rock and circling the Hippolytes, before heading slightly south of east towards the shelf break. We reached pelagic waters at 0935 for our first berley over 339 fathoms, approx 2 km further south than yesterday’s trip. We drifted south only 375 m from our starting point, remaining at a very similar depth of 346 fathoms. At 1140 we motored north-east a short way to lay a longer slick, until we were over 405 fathoms. At 1215 we moved again slightly north-westerly and at 1240 stopped for a second berley over shallower water at 84 fathoms. At 1300 we called it a day and headed home, docking at 1510.

**Conditions:**

Unlike yesterday’s pelagic, the skies were cloudy when we left, with a very light south-westerly wind inshore. The swell was under 1 m but picked up to nearly 2 m around the Hippoloytes, and the wind remained light but swung around to the east. As we approached our berley point the wind swung around further becoming north-easterly at about 5 knots. Once in pelagic waters, the water temperature was 16°C, the swell remained at 1.5-2 m, the wind was northerly and the cloud cover persisted. By 1140 the wind had picked up to 10-15 knots and the cloud had cleared, giving us sunny skies. Conditions remained like this for the remainder of the trip, with the wind dropping away at our second berley stop and for the trip home. None seasick.

**Mammals:**

Australian/NZ Fur Seal: 10 (3) mostly on the Hippolytes.

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

Grey-backed Storm Petrel: 3 (1) pelagic.

Wandering Albatross: 3 (1) all pelagic. 1 very white older bird and 1 juvenile.

Antipodean Albatross 2 (1) 1 ssp *gibsoni* and 1 ssp *antipodensis*, both pelagic.

Southern Royal Albatross: 4 (3) all pelagic.

NORTHERN ROYAL ALBATROSS: 1 pelagic.

SOOTY ALBATROSS: 2 (1) first one right after the shelf break, second one pelagic.

Black-browed Albatross: 1 immature pelagic.

Campbell Albatross: 2 (1) pelagic.

Shy Albatross: 44 (30) 2 inshore, 12 offshore and 30 pelagic.

Buller’s Albatross: 9 (2) 2 inshore, 3 offshore, 3 pelagic, 1 inshore in the afternoon.

Southern Giant Petrel: 1 near the Hippolytes in the morning.

Northern Giant Petrel: 7 (3) 1 near Hippolytes, 1 offshore, 3 pelagic, 2 offshore in the afternoon.

Northern/Southern Giant Petrel: 1 near Hippolytes, too distant to identify.

SOUTHERN FULMAR: 1 offshore in the afternoon.

Cape Petrel: 3 (3) pelagic.

ANTARCTIC PRION: 3 (3) pelagic.

Fairy Prion: 70 (50) 10 offshore and 60 pelagic.

Grey-faced Petrel: 11 (1) 3 offshore, 7 pelagic, 1 inshore in the afternoon.

Great-winged Petrel: 7 (1) 4 offshore and 3 pelagic.

Great-winged/Grey-faced: 6 pelagic, too fast and/or distant to identify.

WHITE-HEADED PETREL: 2 (1) pelagic.

SOFT-PLUMAGED PETREL: 11 (1) 5 offshore and 6 pelagic, including 1 intermediate/dark morph.

White-chinned Petrel: 2 (2) pelagic.

WESTLAND PETREL: 2 (1) pelagic.

Sooty Shearwater: 23 (20) mostly near Hippolytes in the morning, with 1 offshore and 2 pelagic.

Short-tailed Shearwater: 66 (60) approx 60 near Hippolytes in the morning, with the rest offshore in the morning and afternoon.

GREAT SHEARWATER: 1 pelagic.

Fluttering Shearwater: 1 inshore in the afternoon.

Common Diving-petrel: 4 (1) 3 inshore and 1 offshore in the morning.

White-faced Heron: 3 (2) 1 just outside Pirate’s Bay in the morning, 2 on the Hippolytes.

Australasian Gannet: 5 (2) 1 inshore in the morning and 4 in the afternoon, including 1 immature.

Black-faced Cormorant: 33 (14) 9 inshore, 22 on Hippolytes, 2 offshore in the afternoon.

White-bellied Sea-eagle: 1 on Hippolytes.

Sooty Oystercatcher: 1 just outside Pirate’s Bay in the morning.

Masked Lapwing: 1 just outside Pirate’s Bay in the morning.

Silver Gull: 88 (50) 7 inshore in the morning, 75 around Hippolytes, 6 inshore in the afternoon.

Pacific Gull: 1 just outside Pirate’s Bay in the morning.

Kelp Gull: 35 (5) 24 inshore in the morning, 11 inshore in the afternoon.

Greater Crested Tern: 156 (40) 106 inshore in the morning, 3 offshore, 2 pelagic, 5 offshore and 40 inshore in the afternoon.

White-fronted Tern: 4 (1) 1 offshore and 3 pelagic.

Brown Skua: 2 (2) pelagic.

Peregrine Falcon: 1 duelling with the Sea-eagle above the Hippolytes in the afternoon.

MLS