

Biodiversity

Grey-faced Petrel / Ōi / Titi (*Pterodroma gouldi*)



DESCRIPTION

Ōi, also known as grey-faced petrels, titi, or northern muttonbirds, are large, dark seabirds with long, narrow wings. Their plumage is predominantly dark black-brown, with occasional paler brown worn feathers. The base of their bill and throat are grey or buff-white. Ōi have a body length of 42-45 cm and weigh around 550 grams.

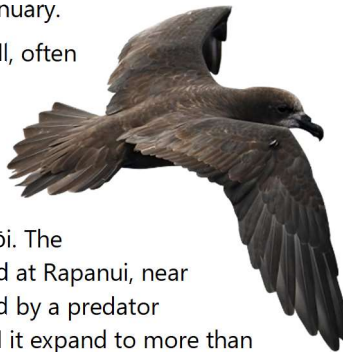
These seabirds spend most of their lives at sea but must return to land to breed. They nest in burrows underground and raise one chick per year. The disturbance and enrichment of soils by burrowing seabirds creates the Critically Endangered ecosystem of Seabird Burrowed Soils which support a range of threatened plants and animals. Ōi are known for their powerful flight and distinctive high-pitched whistles and low moans. Listen to their distinctive call by scanning the code.



DISTRIBUTION, BREEDING AND FEEDING

Ōi primarily breed around northern New Zealand, including on islands and a few mainland headlands, extending as far south as Taranaki on the west coast. They begin pairing up and looking for nests in April/May, and this is when birds can be heard calling over coastal areas at night. Eggs are laid from late June to early July. Both parents share incubation duties, and chicks fledge from early December to the end of January.

At sea, they feed on squid, small fish, and krill, often traveling far offshore.



ŌI IN TARANAKI

The coastal cliffs and islands in the Taranaki region provide suitable habitat for Ōi. The largest mainland colony in Taranaki is located at Rapanui, near Tongapōrutu. This colony has been protected by a predator exclusion fence since 2003, which has helped it expand to more than



150 burrows within the fenced perimeter. The Rapanui Grey-faced Petrel Trust protect this colony through ongoing predator control and native planting. Burrows have also been detected in forested coastal areas as far south as Ōkato, and more are likely to appear as predator control efforts increase.



WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP

- Trap predators on your property or join a local predator control group working near the coast
- Keep dogs leashed around nesting areas.
- Be a responsible cat owner - keep your pet indoors at night particularly from April to January

CONSERVATION

Ōi are native to New Zealand and are not currently threatened. However, this species is mainly confined to predator-free offshore islands, with few colonies occurring on the mainland due to various land-based threats.

THREATS

The main threats to Ōi include predation by introduced mammals like stoats, rats, cats, and wild pigs. They can also be dug out of their burrows by dogs. Ōi rely on scrub and forested areas to nest, so protecting and enhancing areas of coastal forest helps to maintain mainland populations of this species.

QUICK FACTS

- Ōi are protected by the Wildlife Act (1953), which is administered by the Department of Conservation (DOC).
- They nest in underground burrows, similar to kiwi, which can be more than two metres long!
- Chicks are left on their own in the burrow from a very young age, making them particularly vulnerable to predators.