

Short-tailed Shearwater

Puffinus tenuirostris

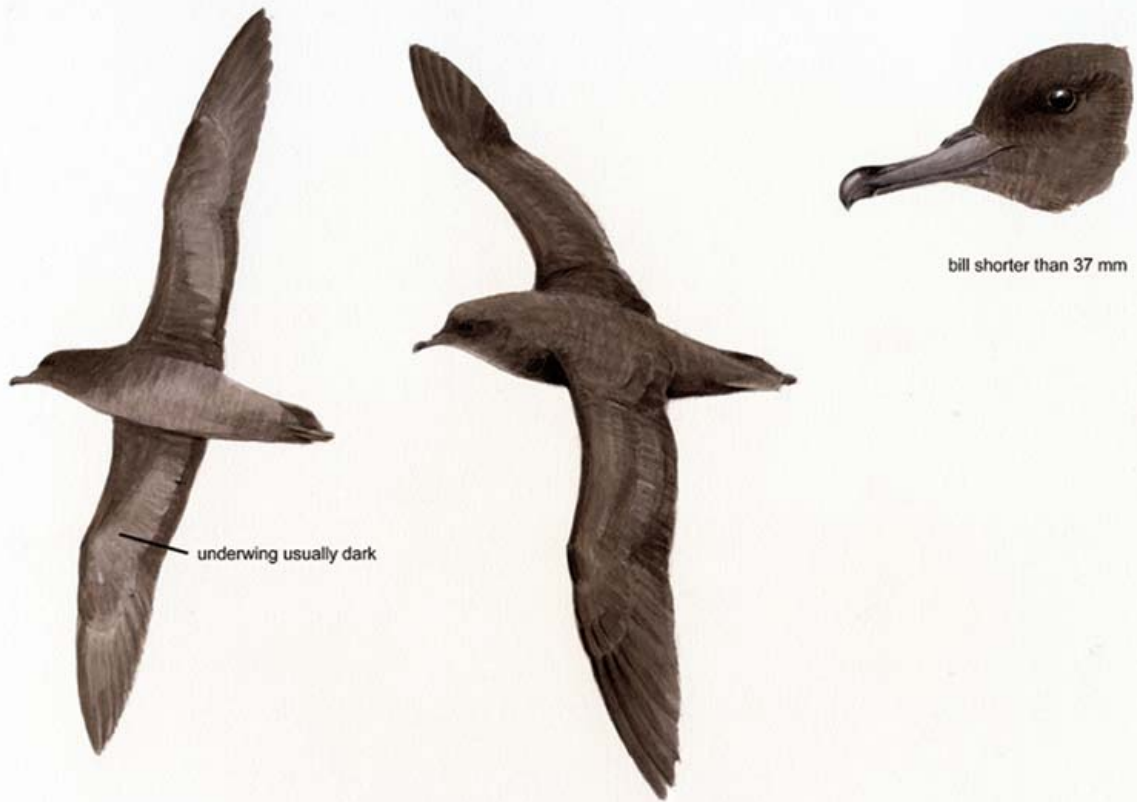


Illustration by Derek Onley

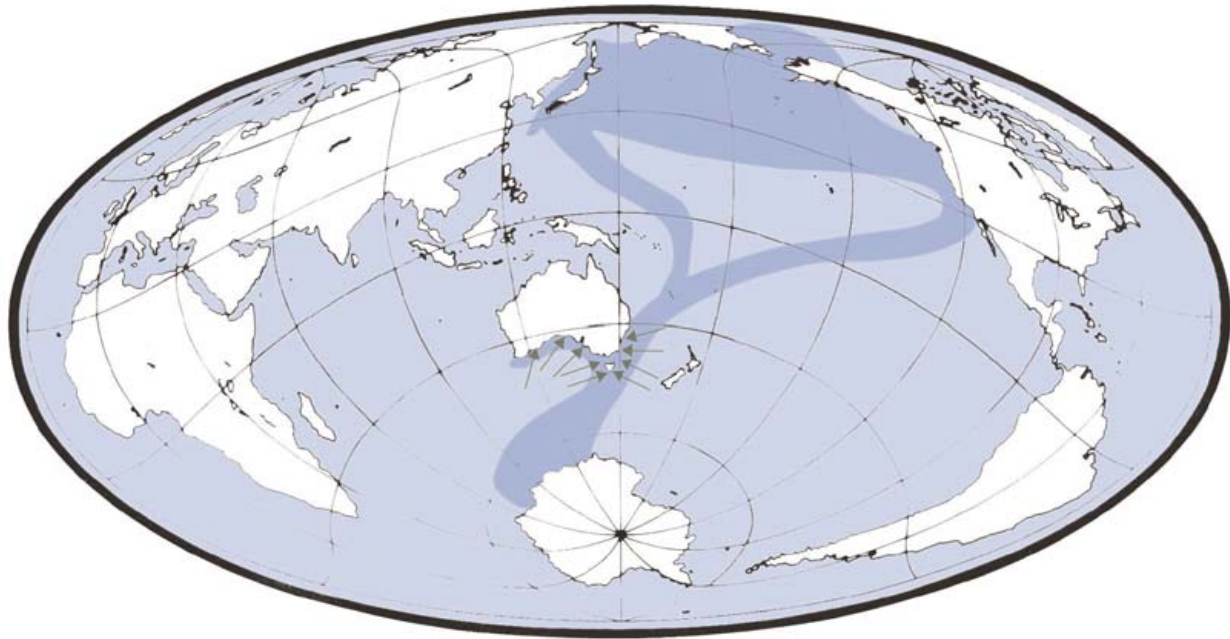
IUCN THREAT STATUS: lower risk – least concern

Identification:

WINGSPAN: 95 cm **LENGTH:** 42 cm **BILL:** 29-35 mm

Medium-sized, blackish-brown shearwater with narrow stiff-looking wings and shortish tail. Underwing usually dark, very rarely paler. Bill thin and dark grey. Fast gliding flight with brief bursts of rapid wingbeats. Slightly smaller but very similar to Sooty Shearwater, usually distinguishable by dark underwing. Measure bill! Flesh-footed Shearwater (not included here) is broader winged and has a pale dark-tipped bill. See also dark Wedge-tailed Shearwater, Spectacled, Black, White-chinned and Westland Petrels.





Range and Population :

In summer and autumn, ranges south of Australia to 65°S and through the South Indian Ocean west to 60°E. In winter, most migrate to the North Pacific. Breeds on many islands off Australia, especially off the southeast coast; including Tasmania (6.8 million pairs) Victoria (2.2 million pairs); New South Wales (24,000 pairs). Numbers apparently stable or increasing². Total population estimate: 23 million.

Ecology:

Breeds annually, November-April in burrows on offshore islands. Feeds on small fish, cephalopods and crustacea (mostly euphausiids and amphipods) seized from surface or from dives to 20m². Sometimes feeds around trawlers.

Threats:

An estimated 100,000±10,000 per year were killed in North Pacific drift net fisheries 1978-92¹. No recent data are available on mortality in Australian or North Pacific fisheries.

Conservation:

The North Pacific high-seas gill net fisheries are now closed. Human harvesting of young birds continues on islands off Tasmania, where 220,000 birds were harvested in 1994³. Detailed information on demography available from a long-term (since 1947) monitoring programme on Fisher Island, Tasmania, and from other islands in Bass Strait.

References:

1. De Gange *et al.* (1993).
2. Marchant and Higgins (1990).
3. Warham (1996)