



Agreement on the Conservation
of Albatrosses and Petrels

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The world's largest drone-based albatross counts: island-wide estimates of Antipodean Albatross at Adams and Antipodes Islands

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SUMMARY

The Antipodean Albatross is a species of high concern as both of its main breeding sites, Antipodes Island and Adams Island, have declined substantially (37-53% since mid-2000s), leading to the listing of Antipodes Island population as an ACAP High Priority Population. While both breeding sites are subject to intensive annual monitoring at study and index areas (10-15% of the overall populations), whole island estimates date back decades (1994-1996 for Antipodes Island, 1997 for Adams Island). To fill this gap and corroborate that declines observed at the study/index areas are representative of overall trends, full island counts were completed at both islands during 2024 and 2025 using ground searches and an array of drones. For Adams Island (3,936 ha), 65% of habitat was covered in 2024, and 59% was covered in 2025, with 24% covered in both years. For Antipodes Island (1,546 ha), 77% of habitat was covered in 2024 and 99% was covered in 2025. All drone operations were combined with extensive ground counts to account for both occupancy and phenology-related error. The Adams Island population was estimated at 4,130 (3,904-4,361) breeding pairs in 2024 and 4,865 (4,793-4,929) breeding pairs in 2025. The Antipodes Island population was estimated at 3,383 (3,182-3,585) breeding pairs in 2024 and 3,546 (3,048-4,044) breeding pairs in 2025. For both islands, these results underscore that declines observed at study/index areas indeed mirror trends across the entire island. Additionally, for both, whole-island estimates obtained through extrapolation from study/index areas were within ~10% of new whole-island estimates, further underscoring the high representativeness. Compared to previous whole-island counts that were completed using ground and vantage point counts only, drone-based counts were more accurate and precise and were obtained more quickly, underscoring the potential of this technology to obtain whole-island estimates of dispersed breeders such as *Diomedea* albatrosses.

1. FIELD REPORTS

- **Adams Island 2023/24:** Elliott G, Walker K, Rexer-Huber K, Tinnemans J, Long J, Sagar R, Osborne J, Parker, G. 2024. Gibson's wandering albatross: demography, satellite tracking and census. Conservation Services Programme, Department of Conservation, Wellington, New Zealand. 33 p. [Auckland Islands seabird research 2023/24: csp reports.](#)
- **Adams Island 2024/25:** Elliott G, Walker K, Rexer-Huber K, Tinnemans J, Anja McDonald, Tristan Rawlence, Parker, G. 2025. Gibson's wandering albatross: drone-based population estimate, demography and at-sea distribution. Conservation Services Programme, Department of Conservation, Wellington, New Zealand. 33 p. [Auckland Islands seabird research 2024/25: csp reports.](#)
- **Antipodes Island 2023/24:** Rexer-Huber K., Whitehead E., Parker G.C., Patterson, E., Walker K., Welch, J., Elliott G. 2024. Antipodean wandering albatrosses and white-chinned petrels 2024. Conservation Services Programme, Department of Conservation, Wellington, New Zealand. 29 p. [Antipodes Island seabird research 2023/24: csp reports.](#)
- **Antipodes Island 2024/25:** Rexer-Huber K., Whitehead E., Walker K., Elliott G. 2025. Antipodean wandering albatrosses and white-chinned petrels 2025. POP2022-10 Conservation Services Programme, Department of Conservation, Wellington, New Zealand. 28 p. [Antipodes Island seabird research 2024/25: csp reports.](#)