

LARGE MORTALITY OF SHORT-TAILED SHEARWATERS *Puffinus tenuirostris* IN AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND SEAS IN OCTOBER 2000

IRYNEJ SKIRA

Nature Conservation Branch, Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment,
PO Box 44, Hobart, Tasmania 7001

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A major mortality of Short-tailed Shearwaters *Puffinus tenuirostris* occurred in October and November 2000 as the birds returned to their breeding colonies in southern Australia. Beachwashed birds were found along the east coast of Australia, from 400 kilometres north of Brisbane to southern Tasmania, and west to New Zealand. Autopsies showed that the most likely cause of death was starvation. This lack of food was probably due to large-scale variation in water currents as the major mortality coincided with unusually warm east coast Australian sea surface temperatures. Such large mortalities are natural irregular occurrences among Short-tailed Shearwaters, but their impact on the population is difficult to gauge.