

IMPACTS OF THE RENA OIL SPILL ON NEW ZEALAND SEABIRDS

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The container ship *C.V. Rena* ran aground on the Astrolabe Reef 22 km off the Tauranga coast (Bay of Plenty, New Zealand) on 5 October 2011. The resulting spill of c.350 tonnes of heavy fuel oil over the following 6 weeks caused the largest oiled wildlife incident in New Zealand history, and triggered a large and complex oiled wildlife response (managed by the Massey University veterinary team and Maritime New Zealand). We summarise information obtained from over 2000 dead birds handled following the *Rena* oil spill.



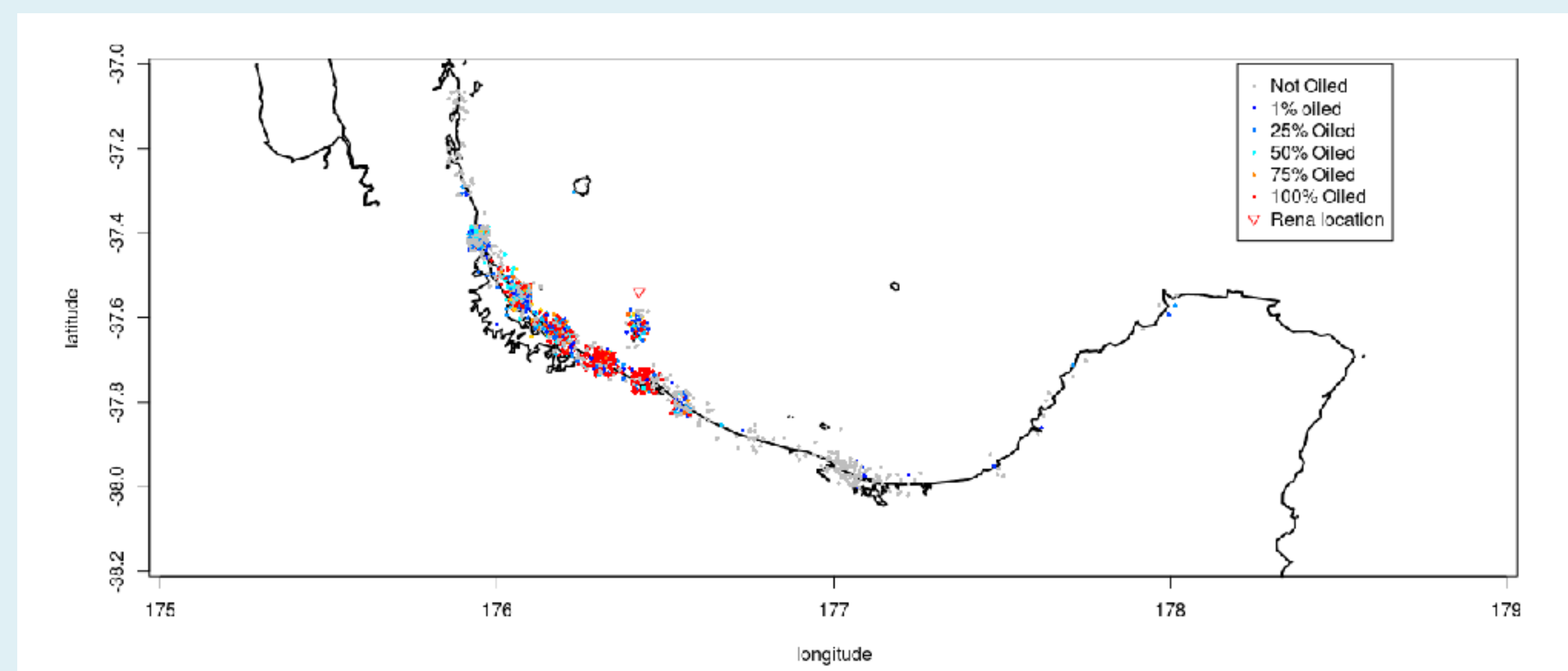
Oiled birds found dead

More than 1350 oiled seabirds of 23 species were recovered dead. The main species affected (with the number of oiled individuals recovered dead) were common diving petrel, fluttering shearwater, Buller's shearwater, little penguin, white-faced storm petrel, sooty shearwater, and little shearwater. None of these species is listed as Threatened under the New Zealand threat classification system, however, all seven taxa are listed as At Risk.



Seabirds recovered dead from Bay of Plenty beaches following the grounding of *C.V. Rena*, showing numbers and percent of each species recorded as having oil on their plumage.

Species	Total	Uniled	Oiled	% oiled
Little penguin <i>Eudyptula minor</i>	112	22	90	80
Wandering albatross <i>Diomedea exulans</i>	1	0	1	100
White-capped mollymawk <i>Thalassarche cauta steadi</i>	1	0	1	100
Chatham Island mollymawk <i>T. eremita</i>	1	1	0	0
Northern giant petrel <i>Macronectes halli</i>	3	0	3	100
Cape petrel <i>Daption capense</i>	5	3	2	40
Grey-faced petrel <i>Pterodroma macroptera gouldi</i>	5	3	2	40
White-headed petrel <i>Pt. lessonii</i>	1	1	0	0
Mottled petrel <i>Pt. inexpectata</i>	3	2	1	33
Blue petrel <i>Halobaena caerulea</i>	23	11	12	52
Antarctic prion <i>Pachyptila desolata</i>	7	2	5	71
Fairy prion <i>P. turtur</i>	16	6	10	63
Prion sp. <i>Pachyptila sp.</i>	3	3	0	0
White-chinned petrel <i>Procellaria aequinoctialis</i>	2	2	0	0
Buller's shearwater <i>Puffinus bulleri</i>	222	66	156	70
Flesh-footed shearwater <i>P. carneipes</i>	69	64	5	7
Sooty shearwater <i>P. griseus</i>	211	171	40	19
Fluttering shearwater <i>P. gavia</i>	270	30	240	89
Little shearwater <i>P. assimilis</i>	21	1	20	95
White-faced storm petrel <i>Pelagodroma marina</i>	80	22	58	73
Common diving petrel <i>Pelecanoides urinatrix</i>	880	177	703	80
Red-tailed tropicbird <i>Phaethon rubricauda</i>	1	0	1	100
Australasian gannet <i>Morus serrator</i>	34	30	4	12
Little shag <i>Phalacrocorax melanoleucos</i>	2	2	0	0
Black shag <i>P. carbo</i>	2	2	0	0
Pied shag <i>P. varius</i>	15	12	3	20
Little black shag <i>P. sulcirostris</i>	3	3	0	0
Spotted shag <i>Stictocorbo punctatus</i>	5	3	2	40
Shag sp. (Phalacrocoracidae)	2	1	1	50
Southern black-backed gull <i>Larus dominicanus</i>	7	5	2	29
Red-billed gull <i>L. novaehollandiae scopulinus</i>	8	6	2	25
White-fronted tern <i>Sterna striata</i>	1	1	0	0
Total	2016	652	1364	68



Common seabirds that were not found oiled in large numbers included grey-faced petrel, flesh-footed shearwater, Australasian gannet, pied shag; little shag, southern black-backed gull, red-billed gull and white-fronted tern.

Causes of mortality unrelated to oil

Large numbers of uniled seabirds of a few species were also recovered dead on Bay of Plenty beaches following the *Rena* grounding. These included 177 common diving petrels, 171 sooty shearwaters, 66 Buller's shearwaters, 64 flesh-footed shearwaters, 30 fluttering shearwaters, 22 little penguins and 22 white-faced storm petrels. Many of these birds were in poor condition and had probably starved. However, most of the uniled flesh-footed shearwaters were in good body condition and had apparently been killed as a result of interactions with recreational fishers.



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