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4 **At-sea activity patterns of breeding and nonbreeding white-chinned petrels**

5 ***Procellaria aequinoctialis* from South Georgia**

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12 Word count: Abstract (222) Main text (with references: 5733, without: 4511)

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14

15 **Abstract** Despite the recent burgeoning in predator tracking studies, few report on
16 seabird activity patterns, despite the potential to provide important insights into
17 foraging ecology and distribution. In the first year-round study for any small petrel, we
18 examined the activity patterns of the white-chinned petrel *Procellaria aequinoctialis*
19 based on data from combination geolocator-immersion loggers deployed on adults at
20 South Georgia. The petrels were highly nocturnal, flying for greater proportions of
21 darkness than any large procellariid studied so far, except the light-mantled albatross
22 *Phoebastria palpebrata*. Flight bout durations were short compared with other species,
23 suggesting a dominant foraging mode of small-scale searching within large prey
24 patches. When migrating, birds reduced the proportion of time on the water and
25 increased flight bout duration. Activity patterns changed seasonally: birds flew least
26 during the nonbreeding period, and most frequently during chick-rearing in order to
27 meet higher energy demands associated with provisioning offspring. The degree of
28 their response to moonlight was also stage dependent (greatest in nonbreeding, and
29 weakest in incubating birds), a trait potentially shared by other nocturnal petrels which
30 will have repercussions for feeding success and prey selection. For the white-chinned
31 petrel, which is commonly caught in longline fisheries, these results can be used to
32 identify periods when birds are most susceptible to bycatch, and therefore when use of
33 mitigation and checking for compliance is critical.

34

35 **Introduction**

36 Although seabirds are major consumers of marine resources, and often breed in
37 large accessible colonies, until the last few years, detailed information on behaviour of
38 known individuals at sea remained elusive. Recent data-logging studies have greatly
39 increased knowledge of relationships between at-sea activity patterns and species, sex,
40 breeding status, prey type, foraging strategy, and the timing and use of marine habitats
41 (Phillips et al. 2008; Wakefield et al. 2009). Despite technological advances that have
42 reduced the size, mass and cost of loggers, there have been relatively few studies of the
43 at-sea activity of smaller procellariiform species (Cтры et al. 2009; Guilford et al. 2009;
44 Landers et al *in press*; Rayner et al. 2008; Shaffer et al. 2009).

45 White-chinned petrels *Procellaria aequinoctialis* are medium-sized (1.3 kg)
46 burrow-nesting procellariiforms that breed during the austral summer on sub-Antarctic
47 islands throughout the Southern Ocean (Marchant and Higgins 1990). This wide-
48 ranging and opportunistic species is capable of exploiting all marine environments if
49 prey abundance is high (Catard et al. 2000; Phillips et al. 2006; Weimerskirch et al.
50 1999). White-chinned petrels travel by both gliding and flap-gliding flight, in contrast to
51 albatrosses, which rely to a greater extent on the wind to sustain gliding flight; this may
52 allow these petrels to travel more directly (Pennycuick 1987; Weimerskirch et al. 1999).
53 In addition, their smaller size and manoeuvrability results in relatively lower energetic
54 costs of take-off, potentially enabling them to adopt a foraging mode involving frequent
55 landings on the water (Weimerskirch et al. 2000a).

56 White-chinned petrels can reach depths up to 12m (Huin 1994), and feed on
57 euphausiids, fish and squid (Berrow et al. 2000a, Catard et al. 2000). Their diet and
58 distribution overlap considerably with several of the smaller Southern Ocean albatrosses
59 (Phillips et al. 2005). However, unlike albatrosses that actively seek and capture most
60 prey during the day throughout the year (Mackley et al. 2010; Phalan et al. 2007),

61 white-chinned petrels appear to show high nocturnal activity, e.g. 49% of feeding events
62 observed at sea by Harper (1987) were during darkness. Ship-based observations of
63 white-chinned petrels suggest that their nocturnal behaviour is not influenced in a
64 consistent way by moon phase (Delord et al. 2005; Gandini and Frere 2006; Gómez
65 Laich and Favero 2007; Moreno et al. 1996; Petersen et al. 2008a; Weimerskirch et al.
66 2000b). It might therefore be inferred that white-chinned petrels are well-adapted to
67 nocturnal foraging and able to detect their prey, including Antarctic krill *Euphausia*
68 *superba*, by sight or olfaction (Nevitt et al. 2004), independent of light levels. In
69 contrast, Barnes et al. (1997) noted a diel cycle in their behaviour consisting of a
70 midnight lull followed by increased activity peaking 2.5 hours before dawn, which
71 suggests a direct or prey-mediated response to ambient light levels.

72 During the nonbreeding period (austral winter), white-chinned petrels
73 congregate in large numbers over productive continental shelves (Phillips et al. 2006;
74 Weimerskirch et al. 1999). The South Georgia population utilises the Patagonian shelf
75 during the nonbreeding, pre-laying exodus and incubation periods, but rarely during
76 chick-rearing when they mainly forage over the South Georgia shelf and shelf-slope,
77 and around the South Orkney Islands (Berrow et al. 2000a; Phillips et al. 2006). Over
78 the Patagonian Shelf, white-chinned petrels are known to follow fishing vessels and to
79 feed on discards in large numbers (Gandini and Frere 2006; Gómez Laich and Favero
80 2007; González-Zevallos and Yorio 2006; Moreno et al. 1996). Long-line fishing for
81 Patagonian toothfish *Dissostichus eleginoides* is banned in the vicinity of South Georgia
82 and the South Orkneys during the austral summer (Phillips et al. 2006), and discards
83 will be rare in the diet of white-chinned petrels during chick-rearing.

84 Targeting of different types of prey, from fisheries or varying marine habitats,
85 potentially requires different foraging techniques, which should be detectable by
86 analysis of activity patterns. In addition, the few studies of activity in nonbreeding

87 seabirds, which are without a central place constraint and therefore have lower energetic
88 and nutritional demands, show that they generally rest on the water for longer during
89 daylight than birds that are breeding (Mackley et al. 2010; Phillips et al. 2007). Whether
90 activity patterns of white-chinned petrels vary in the same way is unknown. The aims of
91 this study were therefore to: (1) test for stage-related differences in white-chinned petrel
92 at-sea activity; (2) examine whether activity patterns vary with habitat; (3) compare the
93 activity patterns of white-chinned petrels with those of other procellariiforms studied so
94 far; and (4) test whether activity varies with moonlight. The white-chinned petrel
95 population at South Georgia has shown a sustained long-term decline, attributable
96 largely to fisheries bycatch (Berrow et al. 2000b; Martin et al. 2009; Phillips et al.
97 2006). We therefore discuss how our results can inform bycatch mitigation efforts for
98 this threatened species.

99

100 **Materials and methods**

101 Combined geolocator-immersion data loggers attached to a plastic leg ring (total
102 mass 10.5g; <1% of adult body mass), were deployed on the tarsi of adult white-
103 chinned petrels extracted from burrows on Bird Island, South Georgia (54°00'S,
104 38°03'W) (for details see Phillips et al. 2006). Thirty-five loggers were deployed from
105 5–7 February 2003, of which twelve were recovered over the three subsequent breeding
106 seasons. Data were successfully downloaded from eleven loggers. Data from the 2003
107 nonbreeding period (February - October) and the following 2003/04 breeding season
108 (October - February) were used in the analysis. Birds were of unknown sex.

109 The data loggers measured visible light intensity every minute and tested for
110 saltwater immersion every three seconds. The maximum (truncated) light level, and
111 number of positive tests from 0 (continuously dry) to 200 (continuously wet) were
112 stored at the end of each ten minute block. The light data were processed using

113 MultiTrace (Jensen Software Systems) (see Phillips et al. 2004). Briefly, thresholds in
114 the light curves, omitting those with obvious interruptions around dawn or dusk, were
115 used to determine sunrise and sunset. Those with obvious interruptions around dawn or
116 dusk were omitted when calculating distribution, whilst, for activity data, sunrise and
117 sunset were inferred from adjacent days. Latitude was derived from day length and
118 longitude from the timing of local midday with respect to Universal Time and Julian
119 day. Latitudes were not available close to the equinoxes when day length is similar
120 across the globe. Following the approach adopted by Mackley et al. (2010), a speed
121 filter was used to highlight rapid easterly (20 kph) or westerly (12 kph) changes in
122 location (min. 1 day duration) during the nonbreeding period, which were visually
123 inspected for accuracy before designation as migrating (nonbreeding commuting)
124 periods; otherwise, birds were considered to be resident.

125 The activity data were processed automatically using scripts written in R (R
126 Development Core Team 2008) to give eight measures of activity: the proportion of
127 time spent on the water, the length of flight bouts in minutes, and the number of flight
128 bouts per hour, for both darkness and daylight, and; the proportion of the total time
129 spent on the water, and time spent in flight in each day (consecutive light and dark
130 period) that occurred during darkness. Each 10 min block was categorised as daylight or
131 darkness, from the timing of nautical twilight (derived from the light curves in Multi-
132 trace). Flight bouts were defined as a continuous sequence of dry (0) values (see Phalan
133 et al. 2007).

134 The nonbreeding period started in February for all but one bird that departed in
135 April, presumably following a successful breeding attempt. All birds began their pre-
136 laying exodus between late October and early November, returning to the colony mid-
137 to late November (Phillips et al. 2006). During the breeding period, activity data were
138 visually inspected for extended dry periods (≥ 1 day) that indicated birds were in

139 burrows. For each foraging period, only data from the first to the last complete day of
140 at-sea activity were used in the analysis. Birds spent longer periods in the burrow during
141 incubation than chick-rearing (3 - 16 days and 1 - 3 days, respectively)(Marchant and
142 Higgins 1990). Chicks hatched in late December to late January, which was apparent in
143 an immediate switch to a pattern of short visits. The first chick-rearing foraging trip
144 followed the first short stay (1-3 days) in the burrow.

145 In order to improve statistical normality flight bout durations were double log
146 transformed and number of bouts per hour were square root transformed. Proportion
147 data were either arcsin transformed or treated using a GLM with binomial error
148 structure with a logit link function. The effects of stage were modelled using mixed-
149 effects Generalised Linear Models fitted by Penalised Quasi Likelihood (Venables and
150 Ripley 2002) with individual identity treated as a random effect (Pinheiro and Bates
151 2000). In addition, a first order autoregressive term (corAR1) was used to account for
152 non-independence of errors due to temporal autocorrelation (however, due to
153 insufficient computing power - R was limited to 2Gb of memory with the windows
154 operating system - this term was not used to model flight bout duration. Comparative p-
155 values were extracted by refitting these models with different intercepts. A mixed-
156 effects linear model was used to test the relationship between the visible proportion of
157 the moon, and activity parameter during resident, pre-laying exodus and incubation
158 stages. The illuminated proportions of the moon's visible disk at noon (universal time)
159 were obtained from the Astronomical Applications Department of the United States
160 Naval Observatory (<http://aa.usno.navy.mil/data/docs/MoonFraction.html>) following
161 Phalan et al. (2007). For all other analyses using conventional tests, the activity
162 measures were averaged for each individual bird to prevent pseudo-replication. The
163 arithmetic observed mean \pm SD are reported in the tables to facilitate comparisons with
164 previous studies and the estimated mean \pm 95% confidence interval are shown in Fig 1.

165 Given the large number of comparisons, the threshold for statistical significance was set
166 to $P < 0.01$.

167

168 **Results**

169 Immersion data were available from eleven birds during the nonbreeding phase, ten
170 during the pre-laying exodus, six during incubation (20 trips) and three during chick-
171 rearing (8 trips). The distributions for 10 of the 11 birds in this study (the other logger
172 was not retrieved until December 2005) are presented in Phillips et al. (2006). All
173 eleven white-chinned petrels initially went to the Patagonian Shelf from South Georgia
174 for the nonbreeding period. In mid-winter (May - June), three birds moved to the
175 Humboldt Current west of South America, of which one returned directly to South
176 Georgia and the other two via the Patagonian Shelf. These movements typically
177 occurred as rapid and sustained periods of flight (mean: 1 day, range: 1-2 days),
178 hereafter termed 'migration'. During their pre-laying exodus, all ten birds travelled to
179 the Patagonian Shelf to forage (mean: 18 days, range 7-28 days). Similarly, most
180 foraging trips during incubation (mean: 8 days, range: 2-16 days) were to the
181 Patagonian Shelf, whereas chick-rearing birds feed in Antarctic waters south of the
182 Polar Front, and in the southern Scotia Sea in particular (mean 4.5 days, range: 2-8
183 days).

184

185 **Individual variability**

186 During the resident phase of the nonbreeding period, variation was consistently higher
187 between than within individuals (One-way ANOVA for each activity measure: $F_{(10,2513-9595)} = 3.95 - 17.75$, $P < 0.001$) whereas behaviour was more fixed during migration
188 (One-way ANOVA for each activity measure: $F_{(9-10,14-156)} = 0.97-2.32$, $P = 0.509-0.073$). Behaviour during the breeding period was generally invariant between
190

191 individuals for all three stages (One-way ANOVA for each activity measure, pre-laying
192 exodus: $F_{(9,168-629)} = 0.60-2.13$, $P = 0.797-0.025$; incubation: $F_{(5,156-159)} = 0.76-2.37$, $P =$
193 $0.437-0.042$; chick-rearing $F_{(2,31-313)} = 0.15-1.82$, $P = 0.858-0.178$). However, there
194 were exceptions: during the pre-laying exodus both the number and length of flight
195 bouts during daylight differed significantly between individuals ($F_{(9,172)} = 2.69$, $P =$
196 0.006 and $F_{(9,1271)} = 4.50$, $P < 0.001$, respectively); during incubation flight bout length
197 during darkness and daylight differed between individuals ($F_{(5,529)} = 3.86$, $P = 0.002$ and
198 $F_{(5,1226)} = 8.96$, $P < 0.001$ respectively) as did the number of flight bouts per hour during
199 daylight ($F_{(5,159)} = 16.98$, $P < 0.001$). Additionally, during chick-rearing, the proportion
200 of flight that was at night showed a near significant difference between individuals
201 ($F_{(2,34)} = 5.12$, $P = 0.011$).

202

203 **Comparison of breeding stages and nonbreeding phases**

204 During the resident phase of the nonbreeding period, birds spent significantly more time
205 on the water than during any stage during daylight and, with the exception of migration,
206 also darkness (Fig. 1a). The proportion of total time in flight that occurred during
207 darkness was greatest for resident nonbreeders, and a similar trend was apparent in the
208 proportion of total time on the water that occurred during darkness, for both
209 nonbreeding phases, i.e. resident and migrating (Fig. 1b). This probably reflected the
210 longer nights during winter, as the smallest values occurred during the incubation
211 period, coinciding with the shortest mid-summer nights. Flight bouts were longest when
212 migrating, and shortest when resident, during both daylight and darkness (Fig. 1c).
213 Resident birds showed the least frequent flight bouts during daylight, and there was a
214 similar overall trend apparent during darkness (Fig. 1d). The proportions of time spent
215 on the water decreased as the breeding season progressed; hence, chick-rearing birds

216 rested for the shortest periods (Fig.1a). The lack of statistical significance despite this
217 clear trend is presumably related to the low sample size.

218

219 **Ocean sector**

220 For three birds that moved from the Patagonian Shelf to the Humboldt Current during
221 the nonbreeding period, there were no significant differences in their resident activity
222 patterns (Table 1).

223

224 **Illuminated moon**

225 There were no significant differences between stages in the range of values of the
226 illuminated proportion of the moon's disc experienced (Fig. 2). However, as the
227 migration and chick-rearing activity data did not include a complete lunar cycle, these
228 were not included in the illuminated moon analysis. The influence of moon phase was
229 greatest during the resident nonbreeding period. In contrast fewer activity measures
230 varied with illuminated moon during the pre-laying exodus and fewer still during
231 incubation (Table 2). All nocturnal measures of activity were affected during the
232 resident period: birds spent a lower proportion of time on the water, and showed more
233 frequent and longer bouts of flight as the illuminated moon increased. Furthermore, the
234 duration of flight bouts during daylight increased. Flight bout durations and the
235 proportion of time spent on the water during daylight increased with illuminated moon
236 during the pre-laying exodus. During the pre-laying exodus the proportion of time on
237 the water that occurred in darkness decreased, whereas the proportion of time spent in
238 flight increased, with an increase in the illuminated moon. During incubation, only one
239 measure of activity varied with illuminated moon: birds reduced the proportion of time
240 spent on the water during darkness as the proportion of illuminated moon increased.

241

242 **Discussion**

243 Our study is unusual in that it is the first to provide comprehensive coverage of at-sea
244 activity patterns throughout the annual cycle of any procellariid other than the large
245 albatrosses. The relatively low logger recovery rate was attributed to the initial
246 deployment on a high proportion of prospecting birds, consequent low burrow fidelity,
247 and breeding deferral in subsequent seasons (Phillips et al. 2006). The logger load (<1%
248 of body mass) was considerably less than that (c. 3%) at which effects on bird
249 behaviour generally become apparent (Phillips et al. 2003). It is unlikely therefore that
250 the behaviour of these individuals was compromised by the loggers and presumably, the
251 activity patterns are typical of the species.

252

253 **Changes in white-chinned petrel activity patterns**

254 Breeding stage and nonbreeding phase

255 Like Southern Ocean albatrosses, the at-sea activity of white-chinned petrels
256 was highly influenced by the degree of central place constraint (Mackley et al. 2010;
257 Phalan et al. 2007). During the resident phase of the nonbreeding period, when birds are
258 unconstrained and energetic demand is lowest, the petrels spent the highest proportion
259 of time on the water, and exhibited the fewest and shortest flight bouts during daylight,
260 with a similar trend apparent during darkness. Constraints increase across the breeding
261 stages and are highest when provisioning chicks (Shaffer et al. 2003). That the
262 proportion of time spent on the water decreased and flight bout duration tended to
263 increase as the breeding season progressed presumably reflects a significant ecological
264 effect.

265 White-chinned petrels replace their primary feathers sequentially during the
266 nonbreeding period (Marchant and Higgins 1990). This may alter their flight ability and
267 thereby activity patterns, particularly if several primaries are shed simultaneously

268 (Bridge 2006). However, because this species is highly dependent upon its aerial agility
269 in order to capture prey it appears that, as in albatrosses (Mackley et al. 2010), their
270 moult sequence may be adapted to have minimal impact on flight, certainly there was
271 no evidence for a prolonged period of flightlessness. Furthermore, effects on activity
272 may be minimal because at this time of year energetic expenditure is in any case
273 relatively low.

274 During the resident nonbreeding phase, white-chinned petrels exhibited similar
275 levels of activity during darkness and daylight: the mean proportion of time spent on the
276 water was 62% and 61%, flight bout durations were 63 and 67 mins, and the number of
277 flight bouts per hour were 0.32 and 0.30, respectively. This demonstrates the aptitude of
278 this petrel for diurnal and nocturnal foraging. However, birds increased effort
279 (expressed as flight) further during daylight in response to the increased energetic
280 demands of migration or breeding. Similarly, Weimerskirch et al. (2000b) observed that
281 attendance of petrels at fishing vessels increased with daylight during the breeding
282 period. This tendency to increase diurnal activity mirrors that of Southern Ocean
283 albatrosses, for which aerial detection and capture of prey is limited during darkness by
284 low light-levels (Mackley et al. 2010; Phalan et al. 2007). It seems therefore that there
285 are periods of darkness during which even this nocturnal species is limited by ambient
286 light levels (also see Barnes et al. 1997). Under such circumstances, white-chinned
287 petrels may nevertheless continue to forage whilst resting on the water by surface-
288 seizing crustaceans and squid (Harper 1987) utilising the sit-and-wait method described
289 for albatrosses (Catry et al. 2004; Weimerskirch et al. 1997).

290 Mean flight bout lengths (excluding migration) were relatively short compared
291 to other procellariiforms (Table 4), during both daylight (67-85 mins) and darkness (62-
292 77 mins), which suggests white-chinned petrels consistently use confined searches in
293 areas of high prey abundance (Weimerskirch et al. 1997). The longer mean flight bout

294 durations recorded during breeding may result from increasing the search radius around
295 prey patches, as well as the long commutes between the breeding colony and foraging
296 areas (Berrow et al. 2000a; Phillips et al. 2006). In addition, high individual variability
297 in measures of flight during breeding stages may reflect individual differences in
298 distribution (Phillips et al. 2006).

299 During migration, the petrels reduced proportions of time spent on the water by
300 51-76%, and increased flight bout durations by 1.6-1.8 times relative to resident phases.
301 This increased effort is in accordance with previous satellite tracks of their rapid long-
302 distance movements (Catard et al. 2000; Weimerskirch et al. 1999). The gliding and
303 flap-gliding flight of white-chinned petrels increases their metabolic rate (Pennycuik
304 1987). Therefore, the limited between-individual variation in behaviour during this
305 phase would suggest that the petrels were working at or close to their energetic maxima.

306

307 Foraging location and environmental heterogeneity

308 White-chinned petrels forage widely across the Southern Ocean,
309 opportunistically exploiting patches of high prey abundance (Catard et al. 2000). The
310 apparent consistency in activity patterns of nonbreeding individuals utilising both the
311 Patagonian Shelf (open shelf) and Humboldt Current (shelf-slope) suggest that either
312 their prey were similar, or, perhaps more likely, that different prey types could be
313 exploited with equal success in these two habitats using typical foraging behaviour.

314

315 **Comparison with other procellariiforms**

316 Nocturnal activity

317 Our results indicate that white-chinned petrels are more nocturnally active than
318 Southern Ocean albatross species for which activity patterns are available (Tables 3, 4),
319 with the exception of nonbreeding light-mantled albatross (Mackley et al. 2010). This

320 difference was greatest during the chick-rearing period, when white-chinned petrels
321 spent only 28% of darkness on the water, and least during the resident nonbreeding
322 phase (see Table 3).

323 Comparable studies of smaller procellariiform species are limited to a tropical
324 shearwater and a gadfly petrel; both spent similar proportions of daylight on the water,
325 but their nocturnal activity was notably different from white-chinned petrels (Table 3).
326 Nonbreeding wedge-tailed shearwaters *Puffinus pacificus* spent a higher proportion of
327 darkness on the water, probably preferring to maximise efficiency by foraging in
328 association with tunas that pursue prey during daylight (Catry et al. 2009). Cook's
329 petrels from two distant colonies in New Zealand generally forage far from their
330 colonies in either subtropical (Little Barrier Island), or highly productive subtropical
331 convergence waters (Codfish Island) (Rayner et al. 2008). Birds feeding chicks from
332 these colonies spent a greater (40%), or lower proportion (20%) of time on the water at
333 night, respectively, than white-chinned petrels (28%). These species are therefore
334 similarly nocturnal, with the differences in activity most probably related to differences
335 in the type and abundance of prey they exploit (Rayner et al. 2008).

336 For all stages (except migration) the proportions of time spent on the water by
337 white-chinned petrels during daylight and darkness differed by only 1.3-7.4%. This lack
338 of variability is in contrast to albatrosses, where the differences varied from 16.8%
339 (resident phase light-mantled albatrosses) to 76.2% (post-brood grey-headed albatrosses
340 *Thalassarche chrysostoma*), representing the nocturnal and diurnal extremes of the
341 Southern Ocean species and stages (Table 3). Their greater flexibility in the timing of
342 activity means that resident nonbreeding white-chinned petrels rest on the water, or at
343 least do not actively pursue prey, for a greater proportion of daylight (61%) than any
344 albatross (33-59%, (Mackley et al. 2010; this study). The closest value (59%) for the

345 wandering albatross *Diomedea exulans* may not reflect rest *per se* but the longer time
346 required for handling and digestion of larger prey (Mackley et al. 2010).

347

348 Flight

349 White-chinned petrels migrate for shorter distances between South Georgia and
350 their wintering areas (the Patagonian Shelf and Humboldt Current) than sympatric
351 albatrosses (Phillips et al. 2008). These transits are also more rapid, completed within 1-
352 2 days (Phillips et al. 2006; this study) probably due to a combination of their direct
353 flap-gliding flight and bouts that are longer, during both day and night (108 and 114
354 mins), than all but wandering albatrosses (114 and 121 mins (Mackley et al. 2010). This
355 suggests that they are able to sustain long periods of fast, direct flight in order to
356 minimise the time spent in areas of lower prey availability.

357 Mixed feeding flocks in the Southern Ocean are dominated by white-chinned
358 petrels and black-browed albatrosses (Nevitt et al. 2004), which have comparably short
359 durations of flight during daylight, indicative of prey searching over small spatial scales
360 (Mackley et al. 2010; Phalan et al. 2007; Weimerskirch and Guionnet 2002).

361 Differences between these species at night (Table 4) probably result from their
362 nocturnal visual acuity, with black-browed albatrosses switching to prey searching
363 predominantly by olfaction, with consequently longer flight bouts (Mackley et al.
364 2010). White-chinned petrels also have highly developed olfaction, important in the
365 initial detection of prey patches (Nevitt et al. 2004) but are presumably not restricted to
366 locating individual prey items by olfaction alone, given the consistency in flight bout
367 durations between day and night.

368

369 **Effect of illuminated moon on activity**

370 In our study we used the proportion of illuminated moon as a proxy for
371 nocturnal light levels, although we were of course unable to account for the effects of
372 variation in cloud cover. Nevertheless, changes in some measures of activity with this
373 proxy were highly significant, suggesting that the confounding effect of cloud cover
374 was slight. The effects on activity were stage dependent; all nocturnal activity measures
375 were affected during the resident nonbreeding period, whereas effects were fewer, and
376 more variable as the breeding period progressed. On moonlit nights, increased aerial
377 activity indicated higher foraging effort, probably as prey became harder to detect or
378 capture because they remained at depth. White-chinned petrels are constrained by their
379 maximum dive depth (12m; Huin 1994) and therefore lunar periodicity in the diel
380 vertical migrations of their prey may alter foraging success, as recorded for immature
381 Galápagos fur seals *Arctocephalus galapagoensis* (Horning and Trillmich 1999).
382 Possibly as a consequence of poorer nocturnal foraging success, the petrels increased
383 aerial searches during daylight, particularly during the pre-laying exodus. This may
384 reflect opportunistic exploitation of a seasonally available prey source, for example,
385 juvenile squid *Martialia hyadesi* (Rodhouse et al. 1992), which may coincide with both
386 the timing and dispersal pattern of the pre-laying exodus (Phillips et al. 2006). During
387 incubation, nocturnal illumination had limited influence on activity and it was not found
388 to affect distance travelled by white-chinned petrels at night in a previous study
389 (Weimerskirch et al. 1999). It is probable that increased energy demands as the breeding
390 period progresses require consistent increases in effort regardless of moonlight.

391 This stage-dependent plasticity in activity may have caused the disparities in
392 past studies that have examined behavioural responses of white-chinned petrels to
393 various measures of moonlight: those that were of nonbreeding or immature white-
394 chinned petrels recorded significant effects (Moreno et al. 1996; Petersen et al. 2008a),
395 whereas those that occurred during the breeding period (Delord et al. 2005;

396 Weimerskirch et al. 2000b), or were based on long-term averages (Gandini and Frere
397 2006; Gómez Laich and Favero 2007) found no significant or consistent correlates. It is
398 possible that artificial lighting is sufficient, regardless of moon phase, for breeding
399 petrels to increase foraging effort around fishing vessels (Barnes et al. 1997), thereby
400 masking any response to natural conditions. Stage-dependent responses to moonlight
401 could be clarified by data on the activity patterns of grey petrels *Procellaria cinerea*,
402 which share common attributes but breed during the austral winter, potentially
403 explaining why in the austral summer, grey but not white-chinned petrels respond to
404 illuminated moon (Delord et al. 2005).

405

406 **Fisheries and conservation**

407 Given the propensity of white-chinned petrels to forage in association with fisheries on
408 the Patagonian Shelf (Gómez Laich and Favero 2007; Phillips et al. 2006), it cannot be
409 assumed that the activity patterns observed during the nonbreeding, pre-laying exodus
410 and incubation periods are entirely natural foraging (note that this is not the case during
411 chick-rearing, when there is little overlap with fishing vessels). Nevertheless, tracking
412 of individual black-browed albatrosses, which are similarly attracted to fisheries, found
413 they spent surprisingly little time in association with fishing vessels (Petersen et al.
414 2008b), and the same may be true of many white-chinned petrels.

415 Incidental mortality of white-chinned petrels is disproportionately high, to a
416 large extent related to their high levels of nocturnal activity (Delord et al. 2005). The
417 success of night setting may be improved by avoiding moonlit nights during the
418 nonbreeding period, and by use of additional mitigation measures during the breeding
419 period. These are also the times when monitoring of compliance by fisheries observers
420 is particularly important. During the chick-rearing period, when nocturnal activity is
421 high, nights are short, and birds are actively foraging for their chicks as well as for self-

422 maintenance, seasonal closures in petrel foraging areas will continue to be the most
423 effective solution.

424

425 **Acknowledgements** This research represents a contribution to the British Antarctic
426 Survey Ecosystems Programme. We are very grateful to the many field workers for
427 their help with deploying and retrieving data loggers, and to J. P. Croxall for supporting
428 the procellariiform research at Bird Island.

429

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555

556 **Table 1.** Comparison of activity patterns (mean \pm SD) for the three white-chinned
 557 petrels that divided their nonbreeding period (austral winter) between the Patagonian
 558 Shelf and Humboldt Current. The remaining eight tracked birds stayed within the
 559 Patagonian Shelf.

	Patagonian Shelf	Humboldt Current	Test statistic
% darkness wet	51.0 \pm 11.2	50.7 \pm 4.4	$t_2 = 0.04, P = 0.973$
% daylight wet	54.5 \pm 13.4	58.1 \pm 5.7	$t_2 = 0.54, P = 0.644$
% wet by darkness	43.0 \pm 3.3	49.6 \pm 3.8	$t_2 = 1.99, P = 0.185$
% dry by darkness	45.8 \pm 4.9	58.4 \pm 1.8	$t_2 = 4.27, P = 0.051$
Flight bout duration in darkness (mins.)	65.0 \pm 3.4	66.1 \pm 7.2	$t_2 = 0.63, P = 0.595$
Flight bout duration in daylight (mins.)	72.7 \pm 4.7	80.0 \pm 2.2	$t_2 = 3.66, P = 0.067$
Number flight bouts /h darkness	0.34 \pm 0.05	0.39 \pm 0.04	$t_2 = 1.04, P = 0.407$
Number flight bouts /h daylight	0.29 \pm 0.07	0.27 \pm 0.01	$t_2 = 0.50, P = 0.669$

560

561 **Table 2.** Relationships between the illuminated fraction of the moon's visible disk and
 562 white-chinned petrel activity patterns during the resident nonbreeding phase, pre-laying
 563 exodus and incubation stages. The significance of regressions are indicated by *** =
 564 $P < 0.001$, *italics* = $P > 0.01$.

	Resident (N=11, T=11)		Pre-laying exodus (N=10, T=10)		Incubation (N=6, T=20)	
	<i>t</i> -value	<i>P</i> -value	<i>t</i> -value	<i>P</i> -value	<i>t</i> -value	<i>P</i> -value
% darkness wet	-12.31	***	1.59	<i>0.114</i>	-0.09	<i>0.927</i>
% daylight wet	-0.60	<i>0.550</i>	6.74	***	2.38	<i>0.019</i>
% wet by darkness	-9.45	***	-4.22	***	-4.04	***
% dry by darkness	9.72	***	4.24	***	1.39	<i>0.165</i>
Flight bout duration in darkness (mins)	8.74	***	-0.31	<i>0.758</i>	-0.23	<i>0.818</i>
Flight bout duration in daylight (mins)	2.52	***	-6.08	***	-1.12	<i>0.263</i>
Number flight bouts /h darkness	9.64	***	1.99	<i>0.048</i>	0.71	<i>0.480</i>
Number flight bouts /h daylight	0.08	<i>0.937</i>	0.29	<i>0.776</i>	0.05	<i>0.961</i>

565 N = number of birds tracked
 566 T = number of trips
 567

568 **Table 3.** Comparison of activity patterns of Procellariiformes by species and breeding
569 stage, as measured by: the percentage of time spent on the water during darkness or
570 daylight, and the percentage of total time on the water, or in flight per day (consecutive
571 light and dark period) that occurred in darkness. Values taken, or adapted from (1)
572 Mackley et al. 2010, (2) Catry et al. 2009, (3) Rayner et al. 2008 (LBI = Little Barrier
573 Island, CDF = Codfish Island), (4) Phalan et al. 2007, (5) Weimerskirch and Guionnet
574 2002, (6) Hedd et al. 2001, (7) González-Solís et al. 2002. All values are observed mean
575 \pm SD, with the exception of (7), which is the observed *median*. Values for white-
576 chinned petrels are in **bold**.

577

Species and stage	Number of birds tracked	% darkness on water	% daylight on water	% water by darkness	% flight by darkness
Migration (nonbreeding commuting)					
white-chinned petrel	11	30.5 \pm 24.1	14.6 \pm 10.4	48.4 \pm 24.2	33.4 \pm 12.4
wandering albatross ¹	15	58.6 \pm 13.3	34.2 \pm 12.6	54.5 \pm 12.7	
light-mantled albatross ¹	2	44.1 \pm 26.2	24.6 \pm 2.6	64.3 \pm 21.3	
black-browed albatross ¹	25	60.1 \pm 7.8	17.9 \pm 5.1	76.8 \pm 6.1	
grey-headed albatross ¹	7	72.9 \pm 10.3	11.3 \pm 5.0	82.8 \pm 10.6	
Nonbreeding: resident					
white-chinned petrel	11	61.8 \pm 7.1	60.5 \pm 4.2	50.5 \pm 2.3	48.4 \pm 5.6
wandering albatross ¹	18	77.5 \pm 6.0	58.5 \pm 9.4	54.1 \pm 5.1	
light-mantled albatross ¹	11	59.1 \pm 9.0	42.3 \pm 8.6	59.4 \pm 11.0	
black-browed albatross ¹	25	83.6 \pm 5.6	50.8 \pm 6.9	65.2 \pm 3.5	
grey-headed albatross ¹	8	74.2 \pm 5.7	32.7 \pm 5.5	70.5 \pm 4.0	
wedge-tailed shearwater ²	9	85.5 \pm 3.9	56.5 \pm 6.0		
Pre-laying exodus					
white-chinned petrel	10	42.6 \pm 5.2	36.3 \pm 9.4	40.7 \pm 7.7	32.9 \pm 5.3
wedge-tailed shearwater ²	1	31.2 \pm 18.2	56.6 \pm 1.4		
Incubation					
white-chinned petrel	6	36.2 \pm 7.0	32.3 \pm 5.8	33.5 \pm 6.6	26.7 \pm 3.9
wandering albatross ⁴	14	80.2 \pm 11.4	39.8 \pm 11.1	57.2 \pm 6.3	
shy albatross ⁶	4	79.8 \pm 12.2	30.8 \pm 11.1		
grey-headed albatross ⁴	19	78.0 \pm 17.2	27.0 \pm 12.0	50.3 \pm 19.0	
giant petrel: pelagic trip ⁷	11	47	39		
giant petrel: coastal trip ⁷	4	3	18		
Chick-rearing					
white-chinned petrel	3	28.2 \pm 5.7	20.8 \pm 5.2	36.7 \pm 10.0	27.0 \pm 5.9
wandering albatross ⁴	17	71.1 \pm 18.6	32.5 \pm 12.7	73.3 \pm 7.8	
light-mantled albatross ⁴	3	57.5 \pm 9.3	21.6 \pm 6.5	55.9 \pm 8.6	
black-browed albatross ⁴	12	70.0 \pm 6.2	21.1 \pm 7.5	68.4 \pm 6.3	
black-browed albatross ⁵	6	67.7	23.9	70.0	22.3
grey-headed albatross ⁴	4	90.5 \pm 4.0	14.3 \pm 6.2	81.4 \pm 7.0	
grey-headed albatross ⁵	4	61.9	15.1	74.8	21.9
Indian yellow-nosed albatross ⁵	4	83.3	30.0	58.6	9.8

Cook's petrel (LBI) ³	7	40.0 ± 14.4	23.7 ± 10.7
Cook's petrel (CDF) ³	10	20.0 ± 11.3	18.4 ± 8.7

578

579 **Table 4.** Comparison of flight bout durations (means \pm SD) between white-chinned
 580 petrels and Southern Ocean albatrosses during the nonbreeding period. Values for
 581 white-chinned petrels are in **bold**; the albatross data are taken from Mackley et al. 2010.

582

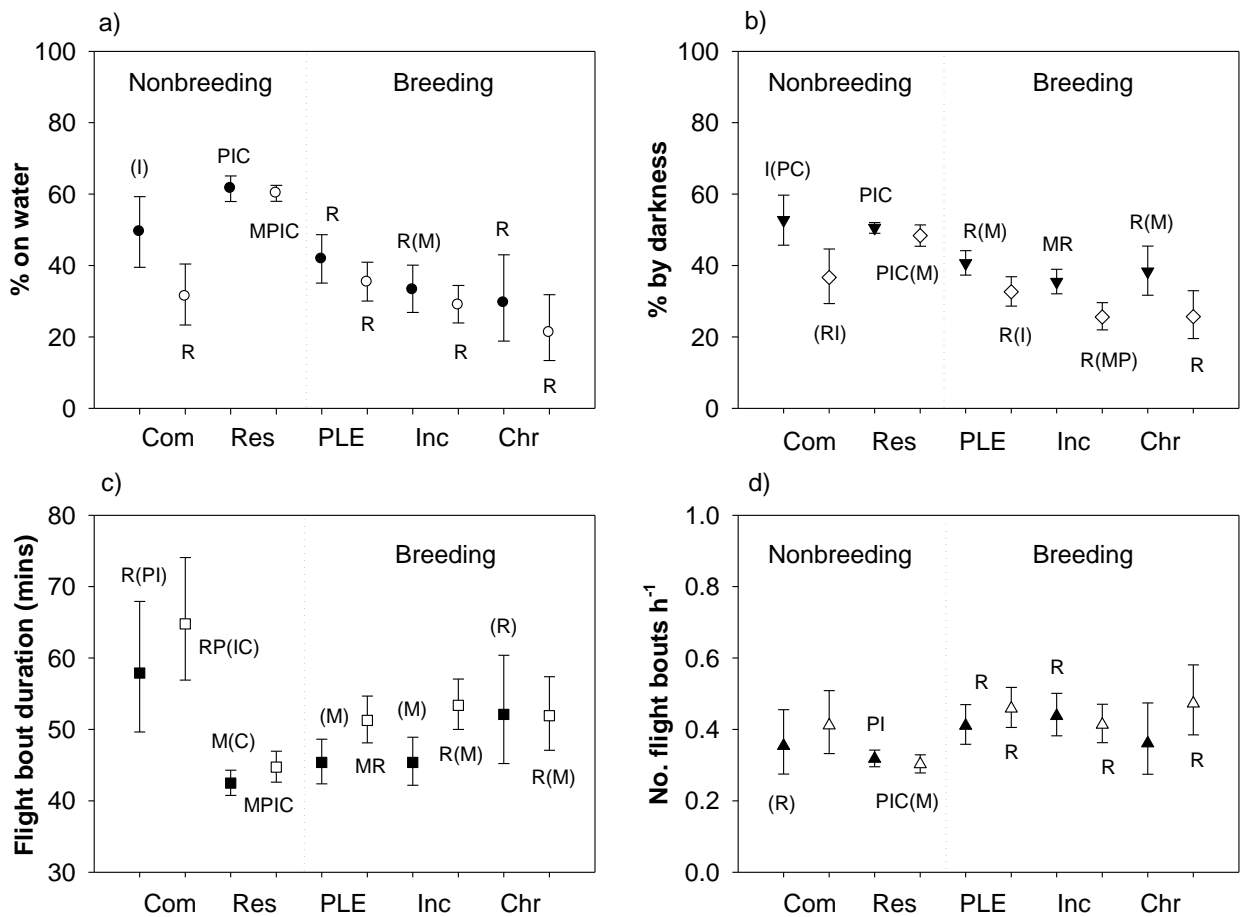
Species and stage	Number of birds tracked	Flight bout duration darkness (mins)	Flight bout duration daylight (mins)
Migration (nonbreeding commuting)			
white-chinned petrel	11	113.6 \pm 66.5	107.4 \pm 37.6
wandering albatross	15	120.6 \pm 18.5	114.4 \pm 18.4
light-mantled albatross	2	89.6 \pm 4.5	73.6 \pm 4.5
black-browed albatross	25	109.8 \pm 20.6	100.9 \pm 12.3
grey-headed albatross	7	86.2 \pm 13.9	97.7 \pm 10.2
Nonbreeding: resident			
white-chinned petrel	11	62.5 \pm 7.0	66.8 \pm 9.2
wandering albatross	18	87.6 \pm 10.7	84.3 \pm 11.0
light-mantled albatross	11	74.6 \pm 5.2	76.1 \pm 6.4
black-browed albatross	25	78.6 \pm 8.7	63.7 \pm 6.5
grey-headed albatross	8	72.4 \pm 13.2	70.2 \pm 7.6

583

584

585 **Fig. 1** Comparison of activity patterns (estimated mean \pm 95% CI) of white-chinned
 586 petrels during different stages of the breeding and nonbreeding periods: migration
 587 (Mig), resident (Res), pre-laying exodus (PLE), incubation (Inc) and chick-rearing
 588 (Chr): a) percentage of time spent on the water during darkness (\bullet) and daylight (\circ); b)
 589 percentage of total time on the water (\blacktriangledown) or in flight (\diamond) per day that occurred in
 590 darkness; c) flight bout durations (mins) during darkness (\blacksquare) and daylight (\square); and, d)
 591 number of flight bouts per hour during darkness (\blacktriangle) and daylight (\triangle). Small letters (M,
 592 R, P, I and C, respectively) indicate mean values that differ significantly (without
 593 brackets $P < 0.001$, with brackets $P \leq 0.01$)

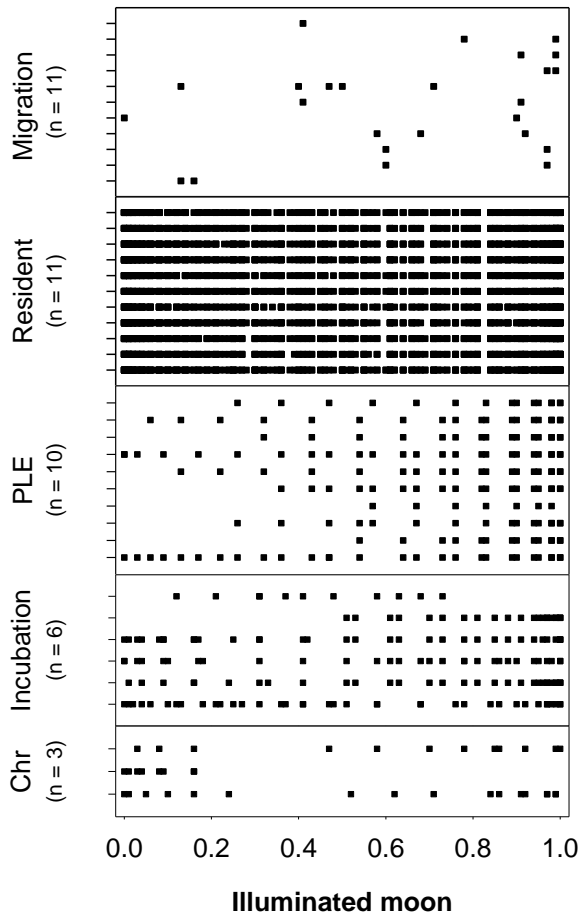
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596

597

598 **Fig. 2** The illuminated proportions of the moon experienced by individual white-
599 chinned petrels during migration, resident, pre-laying exodus (PLE), incubation and
600 chick-rearing (Chr) stages. Each datapoint represents a different day.



601