



# Birds Australia Rarities Committee Unusual Record Report Form BARC#850

<b>Full Name:</b> Nikolas K. Haass (NKH)	Office Use
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<b>Address:</b> 58 Northcote Street East Brisbane QLD 4169, Australia	<b>Phone No:</b> Home: 7 3391 6364; mobile: 0424603579 <b>Fax/Email:</b> nhaass@yahoo.com
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<b>Species Name:</b> Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross (AYNA)	<b>Scientific Name:</b> <i>Thalassarche chlororhynchos</i>
Date(s) and time(s) of observation:	23 August 2014; 2:21pm
How long did you watch the bird(s)?	1 minute
First and last date of occurrence:	23 August 2014
Distance to bird:	down to 30 m

**Site Location:**  
34° 25' 24" S; 151° 03' 29" E, 15.1 km east of Wollongong harbour in 90+m shelf waters, NSW:

Data SIO, NOAA, U.S. Navy, NGA, GEBCO  
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Image © 2014 DigitalGlobe  
Google earth

<b>Habitat:</b> Neritic zone, above the continental shelf (90+m shelf waters, see above for exact location).
<b>Sighting conditions:</b> <b>Departed:</b> 07:08 returned at 15:55. <b>Sea conditions/swell:</b> a little bumpy with a low swell. <b>Weather:</b> overcast, lengthy shower of rain around the middle of the day. Good light conditions, clear visibility. See attached pictures. <b>Sea surface temperature:</b> 16.5°C inshore, 18°C at the shelf edge. <b>Wind:</b> 10 knots E.
<b>Optical aids used:</b> Leica 12x50 BA (NKH); Canon 5D mk3, Canon 400 mm, f5.6L (Duade Paton); Canon 1D Mark IV, Canon 100-400mm (Brook Whyllie)

**Were other observers present? Do any of the other observers disagree with your identification?**

Duade Paton and Brook Whyllie (see photographs), Lindsay Smith, Paul Walbridge, Heyn de Kock and other observers on the Sandra K. Nobody disagreed with the ID.

**To your knowledge, is the species seen frequently at this site?**

To date there are just two accepted records for Australia: A sight record off Wollongong, NSW 24th August 1986 (BARC#715) and a sight record off Portland, VIC on the 4th September 1994 (BARC#717), a beach-washed bird in Victoria (REID & CARTER 1988) was not accepted due to loss of the specimen (BARC#716). However, there have been further, not yet reported, sightings. One sighting from June 2011 off Wollongong has a BARC submission in preparation (Rob Hynson). It is unclear if the AYNA seen off Wollongong 26<sup>th</sup> July 2014 (co-submission to BARC#849 by Brook Whyllie) was the same or a different bird; for more detail see note below and Figures 4 & 5 in this submission).

**Did you use a field guide?**

The bird was instantly identified in the field without using a field guide. References used subsequently to prepare this report were: BROOKE, M. (2004): Albatrosses and Petrels across the World. Oxford University Press. Oxford. • BUGONI, L. & R.W. FURNESS (2009): Ageing immature Atlantic Yellow-nosed *Thalassarche chlororhynchos* and Black-browed *T. melanophris* albatrosses in wintering grounds using bill colour and moult. *Marine Ornithology* 37: 249–252. • CARLOS, C.J. (2008): A critical look at the alleged Brazilian records of the Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross *Thalassarche carteri*, with comments on mollymawk identification in Brazil (*Procellariiformes: Diomedidae*). *Revista Brasileira de Ornithologia* 16: 99-106. • ENTICOTT, J. & D. TIPLING (1997): Seabirds of the World. London. • HARRISON, P. (1983): Seabirds, an Identification Guide. Beckenham. • HARRISON, P. (1987): Seabirds of the World. A Photographic Guide. London. • HOWELL, S.N.G. (2012): Petrels, Albatrosses, and Storm-Petrels of North America: A Photographic Guide. Princeton. • DEL HOYO, J., A. ELLIOTT & J. SARGATAL (eds) (1992): Handbook of the Birds of the World. Vol. 1. - Barcelona. • MARCHANT, S. & P.J. HIGGINS (eds) (1990). Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Volume 1: Ratites to Ducks. Melbourne. • MURPHY, R.C. (1936): Oceanic birds of South America. • ONLEY, D. & P. SCOFIELD (2007): Albatrosses, Petrels & Shearwaters of the World. Princeton. • REID, T. & M. CARTER (1988): The Nominat Race of the Yellow-nosed Albatross *Diomedea chlororhynchos* in Australia. *Australian Bird Watcher* 12: 160-163. • DE ROY, T., M. JONES & J. FITTER (2009): Albatross, Their World, their Ways. CSIRO. • SHIRIHAI, H. (2007, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.): A Complete Guide to Antarctic Wildlife. London. • TICKELL, W.L.N. (2000): Albatrosses. Pica Press. Sussex.

**How confident are you of your identification?**

100%

**Other details:**

The AYNA made only two passes. It was instantly identified by NKH, and photographed by DP & BW. Detailed trip report: <http://www.sossa-international.org/forum/content.php?700-Saturday-23rd-August-2014-SOSSA-PELAGIC-TRIP-WOLLONGONG-NSW-AUSTRALIA>.

**Physical Description** (see also Figures 1-4)

(1) **Number:** one individual was observed.

(2) **Age, sex:** adult

(3) **Size and shape:** small, slender mollymawk; similar in size and shape to Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross (IYNA).

(4) **Plumage colour and pattern:** Overall similar to IYNA. Differences are discussed here:

**Head & neck:** In contrast to IYNA, the bird reported here showed a full grey hood (with white forehead). The hood appeared mottled due to wear, bleach and/or moult, but still showed a clear demarcation to the white underparts.

**Eye-patch:** Most striking was the pattern of the eye-patch, which appeared in the distance like an 'upside-down triangle', somewhat reminiscent of the 'upside-up triangle' of Puffins (*Fratercula spec.*). This 'upside-down triangle' was composed of a prominent black supercilium, a dark loreal patch and a black area under the eye. The eye-patch was contrasted by a prominent white crescent at the rear bottom of the eye (often referred to as 'eye-lid'), which in turn was contrasted by the grey hood. The supercilium started almost at the base of the bill and extended back to behind the eye. The loreal patch was well defined at the top but more diffuse towards the bill. The black area under the eye appeared more defined than the adjacent loreal patch and had a clear downward tip, emphasising the 'upside-down triangle' effect.

(5) **Colour of bill, eyes and legs/feet:** The bill was black with an orange-pinkish maxillary unguis and a prominent yellow line with slightly convex sides along the culminicorn. Most importantly the base of this yellow line at the base of the culminicorn was rounded.

(6) **Calls:** None heard.

(7) **Behaviour, movements, flight pattern, feeding, interactions with other birds, comparisons with other species:** Nothing to support specific identification.

**Note:** Already on the 26<sup>th</sup> July an Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross was seen off Wollongong (see co-submission, BARC#849 by Brook Whyllie). While the bird(s) involved in the two observations certainly do not look identical (e.g. less mottled hood and shinier bill in the July bird), a number of features are very similar (Figure 5), suggesting that potentially the same individual was involved in both observations. The differences would in this case be explained by wear/bleaching (plumage) and wear (bill). Amongst the observers it was undecided if the same or two different birds were involved. We leave it to BARC to make that decision based on the two submissions.



Figure 1: Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross off Wollongong, NSW, 23 August 2014. Photograph: Brook Whylic.



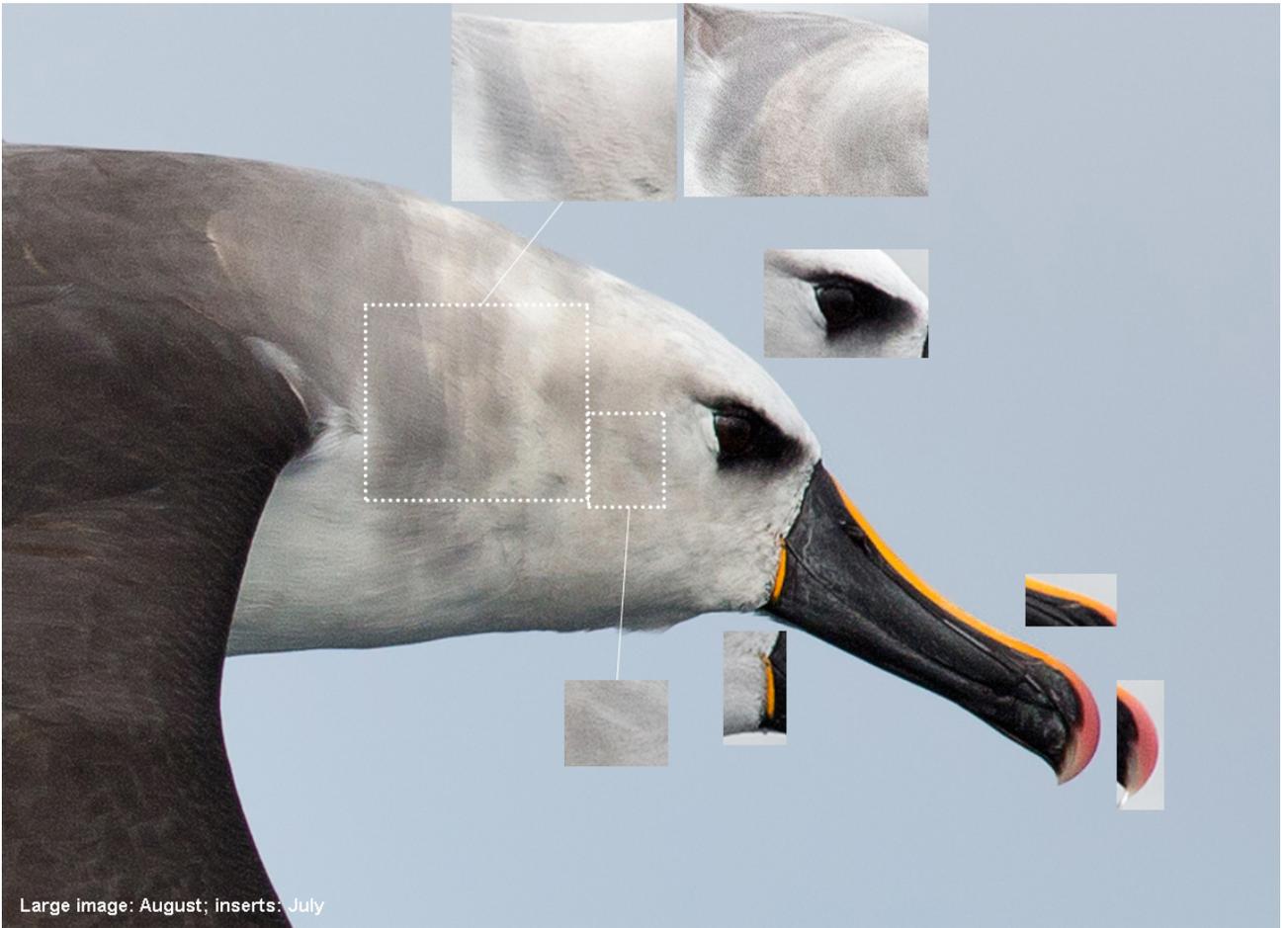
Figure 2: Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross off Wollongong, NSW, 23 August 2014. Photograph: Duade Paton.



Figure 3: Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross off Wollongong, NSW, 23 August 2014. Photograph: Duade Paton.



Figure 4 (cropped from Figures 1 & 2 for appreciation of details): Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross off Wollongong, NSW, 23 August 2014. Photograph: Duade Paton.



Large image: August; inserts: July

Figure 5: Comparison of the Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross from the July Wollongong pelagic (top panel) and August Wollongong pelagic (bottom panel, with inserts from the July bird). Photographs: Duade Paton.

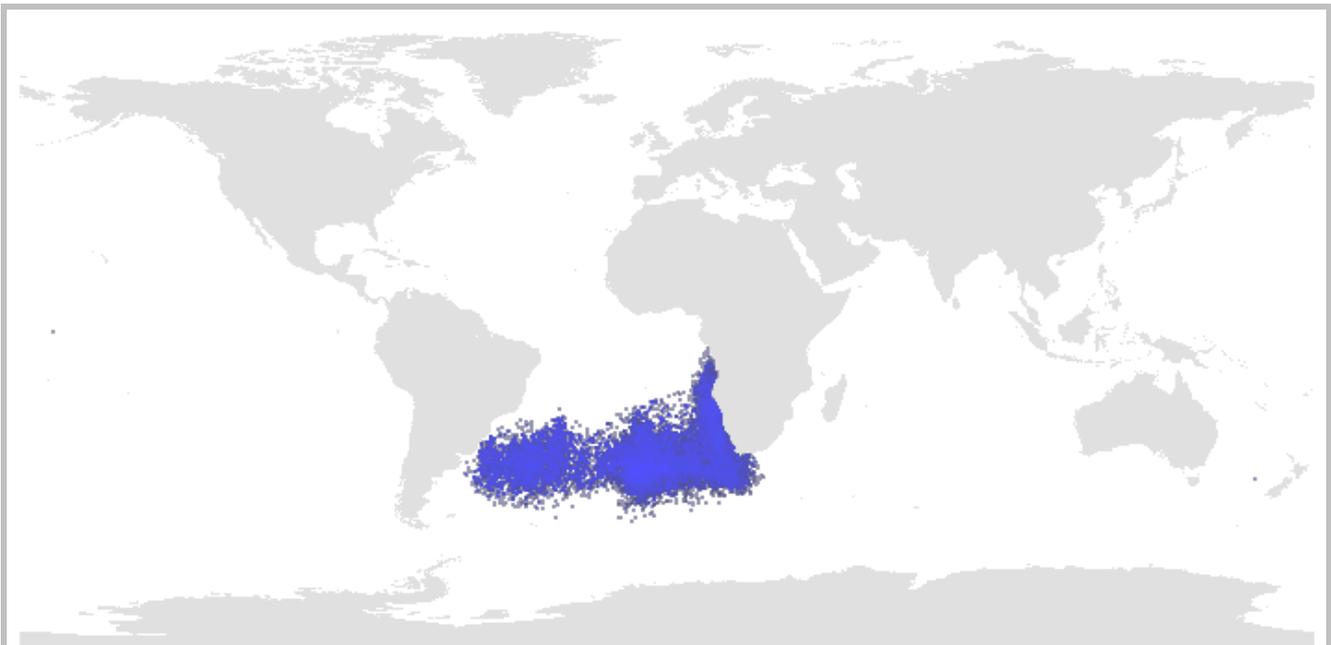


Figure 6: Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross tracks. Source: BirdLife International, Seabird Tracking Database (<http://www.seabirdtracking.org/dataset.php>)

**Other species seen:**

Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans* 9; Antipodean (Gibson's) Albatross *D. antipodensis gibsoni* 2, Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris* 30+; Campbell Albatross *Th. impavida* 6; Shy/White-capped Albatross *Th. cauta cauta/steady* 8+ (at least one adult *cauta* with a yellow base to the culminicorn and several fresh-plumaged juv. *steady*); Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross *Th. carteri* 8; Buller's Albatross *Th. bulleri* 3. Of note were 16+ Pygmy Killer Whales *Feresa attenuata*. For a detailed trip report including all species seen see: <http://www.sossa-international.org/forum/content.php?700-Saturday-23rd-August-2014-SOSSA-PELAGIC-TRIP-WOLLONGONG-NSW-AUSTRALIA>.

**Other species with which you think it might be confused and how these were eliminated?**

Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross: Grey usually confined to ear coverts and cheeks (most pronounced in adult males). Eye-patch usually much smaller and less triangular. Yellow line on culminicorn usually narrower, its sides straighter and, most importantly, its base at the base of culminicorn is usually pointed. All other mollymawks were easily ruled out by combination of underwing pattern and bill coloration.

**Was the description written from notes and/or sketches made** (tick box):

during the observation or;  shortly after the observation or;  from memory;  with the aid of the photographs;  with the aid of measurements

**Please indicate supportive evidence available.**

Was the bird:  photographed,  taped or  video taped? If yes to any of these, by whom? Duade Paton

**What experience have you had with the species in question?**

NKH has extensive experience with seabirds having been pelagic trip leader on many trips off of New South Wales, Tasmania, California, New Jersey/New York and Delaware/Maryland and having participated on many pelagic trips off of North Carolina, Galapagos, Queensland, New Zealand and the Sub-Antarctic. NKH has been an active member in the Rare Birds Committees of New Jersey (USA), Hessen and Schleswig-Holstein (both Germany). Following IOC 4.3, NKH has seen 17 albatross species around the world and 15 in Australia. Although NKH has never seen an AYNA before, he is very familiar with IYNA from many observations off Sydney and Wollongong (NSW), Southport (QLD), Port MacDonnell (SA), Eaglehawk Neck (TAS) and Rottnest Island (WA).

Signature:

Date: 9<sup>th</sup> December 2014