



Wild Islands of Scotland - continued from Page 1

Remarkably these wild islands have had human presence since the end of the last ice age, 8000 years ago. The islands of St Kilda have had continuous human settlement for 2000 years, up until the 1930s. Tales of hardship and human endurance abound, as well as those of violence and love. Feuding clans and banished scoundrels all amalgamate to produce the rich history and charm of the area. Standing stones, centre stage in a ceremonial landscape, storage cairns and cleits as well as the rocky remains of villages, fortifications and tombs seem to be at every turn. Such intrigue for those of us with celtic heritage, as it is here from whence our ancestors came.



Above: Greater Skua chick



Above: Arctic Tern, Fair Isle, Orkenys

There is plenty of time to explore, as the days are long this time of the year. The Faroes doesn't have any night at the moment and will remain that way until mid July. Dark seas and brooding skies, combine with the profusion of antiquity, to produce a mystical atmosphere. Everywhere you go, no matter how remote and inhospitable, there is evidence of human settlement from Neolithic through Iron Age, Medieval and on to more modern times. These settlements were constantly on the edge of survival and not surprisingly many of the islands are now uninhabited. As Carol Knott our resident archeologist says "... in this area one stone is just a stone, two stones are definitely something significant and three stones are a wall."



Above: Wild seas at Fair Isles, Orkneys



## Wandering Albatross Recovered on Lord Howe Island

Lindsay Smith

On August 30<sup>th</sup> 2010, Ian Hutton reported the discovery of a Wandering Albatross on Lord Howe Island.

Ian Kerr, Manager of the Lord Howe Marine Park DEWCC said, "The bird, was originally reported as a Pelican," and found washed ashore on the Old Settlement Beach. Upon inspection by Ian Hutton (Lord Howe Islands Resident Naturalist). The bird was found to be a "Great Albatross". Ian contacted Lindsay Smith at SOSSA for assistance in identifying the bird as either a Wandering or Royal Albatross.

From images provided, we are able to confirm that the bird is a Wandering Albatross.

Due to the decayed condition of the bird, the carcass has been buried for later retrieval.

Feathers from the bird have been collected for DNA profiling by the bird department of the Australian Museum, in an effort to determine origins of this bird.



Ian Kerr inspects beach cast Wandering Albatross on Lord Howe Island.

### 3 Day Deep Water Pelagic

#### Trips

**Beyond the Continental Shelf  
SOSSA Pelagic Adventures!**

**The MV. Banks is, unfortunately, not available for charter. Yes, we are disappointed too !!**

**We will let you know if this changes.**

**SOSSA is looking for another vessel to continue the good work of the MV Banks and her crew.**

## INJURED SOUTHERN GIANT PETREL

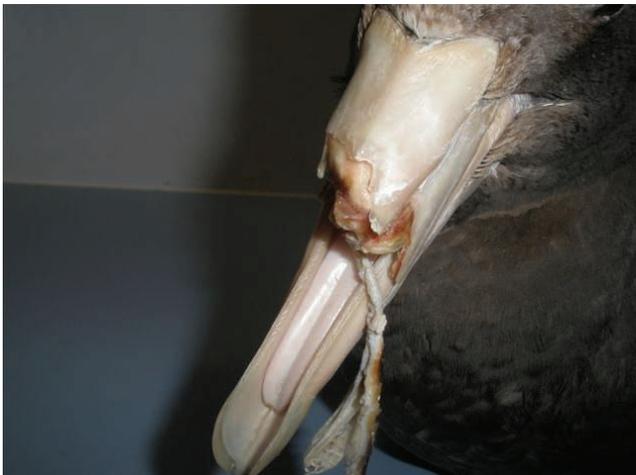
Janice and I were called out to help with an injured Southern Giant Petrel. Two "Old Blokes", their words not mine, contacted the Marine Rescue Station and asked for help! They had a "Big Brown" Albatross bird next to their boat and it was injured. What could they do to help it?

The Marine Rescue service contacted SOSSA for assistance. A quick phone call to the blokes fishing and the situation was assessed. It would have to come ashore for treatment. Colin and George managed to get bird with their small landing net and into the boat!

They rang back to say that the bird had a band on its leg and that they would give us a call on their way in. Janice alerted Mike Cannon that we would be needing his assistance shortly.



Southern Giant Petrel.  
Photo: Janice Jenkin-Smith



Southern Giant Petrel with top mandible torn off by fishing gear. Photo: Janice Jenkin-Smith.



On returning home I contacted Lisa Hardy, at the banding office in Canberra in order to find out the history of this bird and its origin. The bird was obviously a fledgling from the past season, but where had it come from to get here? Lisa was on to it, she said that it may be one of Donna Patterson-Fraser's birds, as Donna had been working on Giant Petrels near Palmer Station (US base) on the Antarctic Peninsula. The band was a standard Size 8 Aluminium band on issue from the US Fish & Wildlife Service. Lisa sent an email off to Donna. Almost intermediately, "a very short time later", a reply came though from Donna. The bird was indeed one of her fledglings and had been banded as a nestling on Hermit Island, near Palmer Station on the Antarctic Peninsula, on March 7th 2010. This chick would have left the breeding station in May 2010.

Lindsay Smith

Northern (L) Southern (R) Giant Petrels  
Photo: Rob Hynson

## Real Birds Eat Squid - Wollongong Pelagic Trips

What makes the Wollongong pelagic trip different to any other pelagic?

Many birders, from overseas and interstate, book a spot on a Wollongong pelagic trip not knowing what to expect. These people often book after hearing accounts from their traveling or birding colleagues, amazed at the numbers of birds and just how close they are!

Many birders have viewed the web site and are intrigued by the species accounts, trip reports and stunning images provided to SOSSA by our talented photographic members.

Few of these visitors are aware of the research being undertaken before their eyes. They are supporting this research by booking a space aboard the SOSSA trips.

SOSSA has been conducting this research for more than 50 years! Wollongong is the only place in the world where banding studies at sea are conducted.

Many of the first time visitors are surprised when the banding team spring into action. The

banding team have all been well trained in working with these birds. Each member of the team is given a specific task. These tasks include "Feeder", "Catcher" "Holder", "Scribe" and "Bander".

The whole procedure from capture to release takes an experienced team very little time to collect a large amount of information. Each hour in the field requires a great deal of preparation and time to process the information collected.

What do we learn from the data that we gain from each encounter?

There is much to be learned of the distribution and age structure of seabird populations, their ecology and dynamics. Migration and seasonal movements are as important to seabirds as they are to terrestrial migrants. The one factor that ties them to land is procreation.

### Longevity

Petrels and Albatrosses (*procellariidae*) are long lived birds. We know this only from birds that have been banded as chicks and recovered at a later date. There are many aspects of plumage moult in seabirds that are poorly understood.

The origins of the birds captured at Wollongong are showing that many birds return to our local waters on an annual or biannual basis. Following traditional migration routes and driven by the winds.

Possibly, in the future, we will be able to predict when the birds will arrive and how many to expect.



Banding team in action (L-R Bruce Cantel Harry Battam Peter Milburn). Photo by Daryl McKay

## Unusual visitor to our Region



Photo by Paul Partland

An unusual sighting occurred when a Leopard Seal was washed up onto a local Illawarra beach. The animal had suffered a Cookiecutter shark bite to its head.

## Short-tailed Shearwater Band Recovery

The Illawarra Mercury, on 1 September 2010, published an article by Louise Sugar about the recovery of a banded Short-tailed Shearwater, washed up in Japan.

The bird was banded, as a chick, on Montague Island, on the NSW South Coast earlier in the year. It had succumbed after flying over 8,000km on its first migratory flight.

Deaths on these migrations are not uncommon, with hundreds, sometimes thousands, being washed up on Australian shores in late spring and early summer. Short-tailed Shearwaters undertake one of the longest migratory routes of all birds, flying over 15,000km from the breeding grounds in Southern Australian waters, to as far north as Alaska and return. It is an arduous journey that only the strong and/or the lucky survive.

As difficult as their migration is, the consensus is that there are approximately 23 million Short-tailed Shearwaters, making it one of Australia's most numerous birds.

Reference  
Shirihai, H. *A Complete Guide to Antarctic Wildlife*, A&C Black Publishers, London, 2007



Short-tailed Shearwater off Wollongong NSW.  
Photo: Brook Whyllie

## 2009-2010 Wedge-tailed Shearwater Report Mutton Bird Island Nature Reserve Coffs Harbour NSW

By Narelle Swanson

The feature that stood out this season was the increased rat sightings, denuding of commelina burrow areas and soil erosion before egg laying. There was an almost total loss of breeding in all but the previously baited area of the western end and patches on the east end of mixed vegetation and deeper soil. Chicks raised were not all destined to fledge as lack of feed resulted in many underweight and underdeveloped birds.



Rats. Photo by Steven Vaughan

The season started normally with the first two birds found on 9th of August. Mating was observed on 18<sup>th</sup> September, then on 20<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> October. Usually there are few birds, mid November but on the 15<sup>th</sup> November, we were surprised have to collected females with eggs, the earliest we have ever recorded. On 29<sup>th</sup> November it appeared that egg laying was completed. Inspection of burrows that could be accessed from the path, we found eaten eggs and a rapid loss of eggs, some within 24 hours of laying.

Hatching started 12<sup>th</sup> January or earlier, although there were still two adults on eggs on 22<sup>nd</sup> January. Chick and egg losses were noted throughout January, with more up to a week old chicks than usual found dead. During a survey of one metre from the path edge (centre of the island) in January, we estimated there were originally 119 burrows

Of which 18 remained, three containing eggs, resulting in two possible fledglings.

The weights of the adults up till January remained average, then declined with just a couple of nights of very heavy males. The oldest birds recovered this season were two in their 29th year, banded as chicks. Their breeding status was not determined. Analysis of banding and recovery data from 1997 to 2009 shows a decline in bird numbers and survival, which matches our visit observations.

There were not many chicks to feed and fewer adults around February to March. The intervals between chicks feeds was extended. This and smaller feeds, resulted in slower development and some chicks starved to death. To facilitate monitoring of eggs and chicks, we secured over 20 damaged burrows with boards. Eggs mostly survived in burrows, with just one rodent hole that was covered, the short and multiple entrances burrows did not. Of the twenty burrows monitored with chicks from January to fledging, 8 had died at down stage, 8 died or were unviable at feather stage and 4 were developed sufficiently to fledge.

Continued Page 9.



Bare burrow areas mid-southern slopes, Mutton Bird Island, January 2010.

Again this season, birds started to fledge early. One almost fully feathered chick was found, on the 11th of April, when the first stranding was collected. Most birds fledged around the 20th to 22nd of April.

For each of our 79 visits this season, we recorded details of vegetation and sighting of other animals. This season we heard penguin calls on 23rd December, there was also a report from the public of penguin sightings at the far eastern end of the island.

The prime vegetation associated with shearwater burrows is *Commelina*. Rats were easily photographed in shearwater burrow entrances where they have eaten out all the *Commelina*. There were visible bare areas and exposed burrows by the 25th October 2009. There was heavy rainfall at the end of October and again in November. All burrow areas that were stripped of vegetation cover were washed out and collapsed. A lot of top soil from the upper slopes was lost into the sea or piled at the rock edge. On 5th January, summer grass was growing in these piles and silt in the rock pools could still be seen.

The increase in rat sightings this season was not surprising, as most of the island, from the top landing to the Eastern end, has not been baited for rodents for two seasons. Sightings started from our first visit on 9th August. From 20th September, we started to record multiple sightings and monitored the spread of grazing and exposed burrows. On 15th December, two of our volunteers dedicated time to just looking for rats from the path. In 70 minutes they counted 33 rodents.

Together with egg predation, the increase in rodents throughout the year continues to change and remove vegetation at critical times for the burrows and survival of chicks. On Muttonbird Island, most areas that were once highly productive, produced few chicks and other vegetation is replacing the *Commelina*. It now seems like we are simply documenting the final demise of this island as a breeding place for seabirds.



Underdeveloped Chick, 4th April 2010.  
Photo: John Wallis



## SOUTHERN OCEAN SEABIRD STUDY ASSOCIATION INC.

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### Newsletter Contributions

All are invited to contribute to our newsletter 'Albatross'. We do prefer electronic copies of any material. Send it by email to

[sossa@tpg.com.au](mailto:sossa@tpg.com.au)

Alternatively mail it to us on a disk, which we will return.

We're on the web!  
[www.sossa-international.org](http://www.sossa-international.org)

## New Members...

Michael Jefferis  
Brian Russell  
Caroline Lawrence  
John Farrell  
Neil Briscoe  
Sarah McCarthy  
Fiona Vaughan  
Jason Estep  
Fiona McDuike  
Ted Buerger  
Rob Morris  
Linda Cohen.

### NEXT SOSSA MEETING

**26<sup>th</sup> February**  
(Saturday) **SOSSA 2011**  
**held at HQ. – 6.30 pm**  
**10 Jenkins Street - Unanderra.**  
**NSW.**

**We only supply the Coffee or Tea!!!**

### NEW CONTACT FOR EDEN PELAGIC TRIPS

Helen Buckingham

### FREEDOM CHARTERS

[fishing@freedomcharters.com.au](mailto:fishing@freedomcharters.com.au)

## WOLLONGONG PELAGIC BOAT TRIP DIARY DATES 2011

**\*Addition Dates will be added to the Website**

January	<b>NO TRIP</b>
26th February (Saturday)	WOLLONGONG
26th March (Saturday)	WOLLONGONG
23rd April (Saturday)	WOLLONGONG
28th May (Saturday)	WOLLONGONG
25th June (Saturday)	WOLLONGONG
16th July (Saturday)	WOLLONGONG
<b>WIRES Group</b>	
23rd July (Saturday)	WOLLONGONG
27th August (Saturday)	WOLLONGONG
27th August (Saturday)	
<b>SOSSA AGM – 6.30pm</b>	
28th August (Sunday)	WOLLONGONG
24th September (Saturday)	WOLLONGONG
22nd October (Saturday)	WOLLONGONG
23rd October (Sunday)	WOLLONGONG
26th November (Saturday)	WOLLONGONG
17th December (Saturday)	WOLLONGONG

**(December Trip will be the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday not the usual 4<sup>th</sup> due to Christmas)**

### NEW 2011 PRICES

**Members \$ 80.00**

**Visitors \$ 100.00 Australia Dollars**

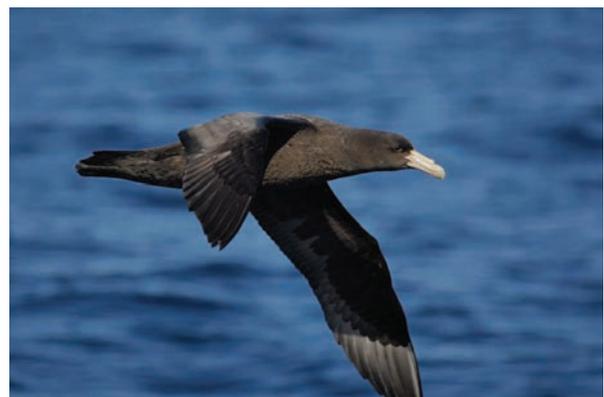
**Note: Some trips are strictly for research and will have limited numbers!**

## SOSSA's newsletter—The Albatross

The aim is to publish the Albatross four times a year (roughly Jan, Apr, Jul & Oct), this though is dependant upon submissions.

The editor welcomes (is desperate for!) articles from members and friends on issues relating to pelagic seabirding, seabird research and marine conservation. Please advise the editor if you intend to submit an article and submit the piece at least two weeks before the start of a publication month. Thank you!

To save SOSSA postage costs and receive 'The Albatross' as a colourful pdf or web file then please send your email address and current membership number to :  
[sossa@tpg.com.au](mailto:sossa@tpg.com.au)



Southern Giant Petrel in flight off Wollongong.  
Photo: Brook Whyllie

### Please help...

SOSSA membership fees remain unchanged even though costs have increased greatly across the board. We would really appreciate any donations from those whom may be able to afford it.

Thanks again for your support!!



Speno	Species	Wollongong							
		JUL10	28AUG10	29AUG10	SEP10	17OCT10	23OCT10	27NOV10	
128	Arctic Jaeger, <i>Stercorarius parasiticus</i>								4+
933	Long-tailed Jaeger, <i>Stercorarius longicauda</i>								1+
981	Kelp Gull, <i>Larus dominicanus</i>	10+	8	5	5	5	5	5	3
125	Silver Gull, <i>Larus novaehollandiae</i>	200+	200+	200+	200+	200+	200+	200+	40+
115	Crested Tern, <i>Sterna bergii</i>	5	15	15	20+	20+	20+	20+	1+
114	White-fronted Tern, <i>Sterna striata</i>	3	yes	30+	1	1	1	1	
952	Arctic Tern, <i>Sterna paradisaea</i>		2	2					

# SOSSA - Pelagic Trip data - 2010

Fax: 02 427 PO Box 142 Unanderra NSW 2526

email: SOSSA@tpg.com.au

Speno	Species	Brisbane				Port Stephens			Sydney					
		Jul10	Aug10	Sep10	Oct10	Jul10	Sep10	Oct10	Jun10	Jul10	Aug10	Sep10	Oct10	Nov10
5	Little Penguin, <i>Eudyptula minor</i>						1	1			1		2	2
79	Giant Petrel, <i>Macronectes</i> Spp.						1							
929	Southern Giant Petrel, <i>Macronectes giganteus</i>									1	2	1		
937	Northern Giant Petrel, <i>Macronectes halli</i>						1		2+	1	3	2		
984	Cape Petrel, <i>Daption capense</i>			1		7	1	5	2	8	2	3	3	
75	Great-winged Petrel, <i>Pterodroma macroptera</i>					1	1	25	4			6	4	50
77	White-headed Petrel, <i>Pterodroma lessonii</i>							1				1		
971	Providence Petrel, <i>Pterodroma solandri</i>	30	8	127		60	3	4	2	15	6	30	3	6
920	Tahiti Petrel, <i>Pseudobulweria rostrata</i>		5											
922	Kermadec Petrel, <i>Pterodroma neglecta</i>			1										
919	Mottled Petrel, <i>Pterodroma inexpectata</i>				1									
84	Antarctic Prion, <i>Pachyptila desolata</i>								1+	1				
942	Slender-billed Prion, <i>Pachyptila belcheri</i>								1+					
1111	Prion, <i>Pachyptila</i> Spp.						1							
83	Fairy Prion, <i>Pachyptila turtur</i>	10				150			1+	85	8			
917	Black Petrel, <i>Procellaria parkinsoni</i>				1			2						
69	Wedge-tailed Shearwater, <i>Puffinus pacificus</i>		189	333	110		500	150				360	180	90
72	Flesh-footed Shearwater, <i>Puffinus carneipes</i>			10	2		1	40						15
70	Sooty Shearwater, <i>Puffinus griseus</i>												1	2
71	Short-tailed Shearwater, <i>Puffinus tenuirostris</i>				41	1		10000+	2				10000+	500
68	Fluttering Shearwater, <i>Puffinus gavia</i>	19					1		1+	140	18	20	35	9
913	Hutton's Shearwater, <i>Puffinus huttoni</i>		11	5			5	1		2	6	40	15	
1111	Fluttering/Hutton's Shearwater					4	15	4				200	50	
67	Little Shearwater, <i>Puffinus assimilis</i>												2	
86	Wandering Albatross, <i>Diomedea exulans</i>					2	2	20		1	10		1	
846	Antipodean Albatross, <i>Diomedea antipodensis</i>												1	
847	Gibson's Albatross, <i>Diomedea gibsoni</i>					3	1		1	6		11	1	1
88	Black-browed Albatross, <i>Thalassarche melanophrys</i>	1				20	10		present	16	35+	16	13	2
859	Campbell Albatross, <i>Thalassarche impavida</i>								present	2	5+		1	
931	Buller's Albatross, <i>Thalassarche bulleri</i>								2+		4	1	1	
91	Shy Albatross, <i>Thalassarche cauta</i>					3	2	1	1+	8	8	8	6	

