

# New South Wales Albatross Study Group

P.O. BOX 142 UNANDERRA, NSW, 2526

NSWASG  
JULY 1993

NEWSLETTER

Editor: Lindsay E. Smith

"WELL FOLKS,"

THIS IS OUR FIRST ALBATROSS & CUTTLEFISH NEWSLETTER.

The N.S.W. ALBATROSS STUDY GROUP has been active for 35 years, so it is about time we put out a newsletter.

As many of you would be aware we have distributed a questionnaire asking for information on Cuttlefish, through local dive shops. We have received some replies already and urge the divers amongst us to "HELP".

Any information on the Cuttlefish is of value to enable us to more fully understand their biology and its relationship to the movements of the Albatross in our part of the world.

We take this opportunity to thank the following Dive shops for their support in distributing the questionnaires; UNITED DIVERS WOLLONGONG, ILLAWARRA AQUA CENTRE WINDANG, COASTWIDE DIVING SERVICES SHELLHARBOUR AND PADI DIVE CENTRE SHELLHARBOUR. Also to the following people for their responses; GREG SANGER, ALAN PARKINSON, DONNA APPLEBY, MARTIN ELDRIDGE & MARK MAYHEW.

\*KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK\*.

Alan Parkinson (Fisher person), advised that some smaller Albatrosses (Mollymawks), Black-browed Albatross, Yellow-nosed Albatross began arriving locally, in early May, right on time. The numbers appear to be lower than in previous years.

The numbers of the New Zealand Black-browed Albatross in particular are unusually low this season. This species often arrive locally in late-April-early-May.

Alan also advised that the Cuttlefish are quite plentiful this season and there are some quite large ones about, some over 1 metre long and up to 15 Kilo's in weight. They have been very active in the area around the South Coast of Kiama and the Five Islands.

The Cuttlefish were already active the first (2) weeks of June and were taking a lot of fish from long lines. Then just as suddenly as they started, they stopped taking the fish in the (3rd) third week of June. They began rising (dying) in the first week of July.

The Dolphins have begun appearing in reasonable numbers. A pod of 40-50 Common Dolphins were observed about (5-6) five to six miles off Kiama on 29-06-93, and again off Bass Point on the 30-06-93. A pod of 8-10 Bottle-nose Dolphins were observed just off Shellharbour in the bay on 30-06-93, these appeared to be feeding on Cuttlefish.

Mark Mayhew reports from Clovelly that he has witnessed a pair of Cuttlefish in the act of mating, which is great news, for we now know that breeding takes place in late June- though we still don't know how long the breeding season lasts.

We know the Cuttlefish lay their eggs in caves, (stuck to the roof). We need to know where else they nest? At what depths?, How many eggs are laid?, What is the gestation period? etc. Are cuttlefish sedentary?, - Territorial?, Do they migrate?. We need answers to all these questions and many more, so please keep an eye out for Cuttlefish behaviour. Some local divers have advised that some large Cuttlefish have been aggressive in late June, being particularly attracted to blue or yellow face masks. Is this just curiosity???, or part of the breeding cycle?.

The water temperature has been COLD!! 14°-16°c since early June. (Information from the Water Board and local divers). So it would appear that it is not just a case of cold water killing the Cuttlefish, as we had previously suspected. [BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD!!] with more input required.

Harry and I (Lindsay that is) have been out in the boat (3)three times so far this season, (Janice had to work!!)!! Someone has to work to pay for the boat fuel!!!THANKS JANICE!! Armed with suet-(kidney fat) supplied by "BING" the local butcher at Farmborough Road, Unanderra. We have been attempting to catch the Black-browed Albatrosses. We met with little success, we have managed to catch and band (2)two so far. We have also managed to catch (1)one Southern Giant Petrel and(3)three Wandering Albatrosses. The (3)three Wanders caught to date had all been caught and banded by us in previous years.

- 1/ Band No.140-39687. 1st banded off Wollongong 91-08-19  
Recovered, 93-06-25 (Auckland Island - Female)
- 2/ Band No.140-38868. 1st banded off Wollongong 71-07-04  
Recovered, 78-07-30 Bellambi (Antipodes Island - Male?)  
" 84-08-11 Wollongong  
" 87-07-25 Wollongong  
" 91-08-19 Wollongong  
" 92-08-15 Wollongong  
" 92-08-27 Wollongong  
" 93-07-03 Wollongong
- 3/ Band No.140-39878. 1st banded off Bellambi 59-08-29  
Recovered on 14 occasions since, including 93-07-93

ON THE INTERNATIONAL FRONT;

JOHN COOPER from the PERCY FITZPATRICK INSTITUTE of AFRICAN ORNITHOLOGY, UNIVERSITY of CAPE TOWN. Advised that during 1993 breeding season, they recovered (3)three of our banded birds breeding on Marion Island in the South Indian Ocean. One of these was banded at Bellambi by Doug Gibson in 1958 and known to be at least 34.5 years old and represents a longevity record for Australia and possibly for the species world wide.

The New Zealand connection - KATH WALKER & GRAEME ELLIOTT at the NEW ZEALAND DEPARTMENT of CONSERVATION has returned from Adam's Island- Auckland Islands Group, and advises during the 1993 breeding season, they checked (3,858) three thousand eight hundred & fifty eight birds and found(24)twenty four NZ banded birds, (34) thirty four Australian banded birds.\*\*\*\*\*GREAT NEWS\*\*\*\*\* Talk about the "Trans-Tasman Series" WE WIN AGAIN!! Well at least we hope the albatrosses win.

**\*\*CONGRATULATIONS\*\***

To Kath, Graeme and their crew, Keep up the good work!!.

We are indeed fortunate this season as we have a 'Very Special Visitor" arriving from "BRISTOL-ENGLAND" MR PETER PRINCE from THE BRITISH ANTARCTIC SURVEY GROUP. He will be spending (2)two weeks with us, to teach us about the moult cycle in the Albatrosses. Then he's heading off to Tasmania to catch up with NIGEL BROTHERS -TASMANIAN WILDLIFE SERVICE.

Peter Prince has been working on Albatrosses at South Georgia in the South Atlantic Ocean, with The British Antarctic Survey. He has written many papers on Albatrosses and is a world authority on their feather and moult regime. Peter is used to catching Albatrosses at their nest, on "TERRA-FIRMA". " We all known about Terra-Firma?, The more firmer the less terror!. He is looking forward to the challenge of catching them on the open ocean with a net and a fast 14ft boat. We are looking forward to meeting Peter and thanks to his boss JOHN CROXALL for sending him to help us . It is a great feeling to know that the rest of the world is recognising the work done by the local group.

**\*\*Please turn over for the last important page!\*\***

WELL FOLKS THAT'S THE NEWS TO DATE, PLEASE KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!

"THE WORLD IS WATCHING".

\*PLEASE ADVISE US IF YOUR ADDRESS IS NOT CORRECT OR CHANGED!!

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WE WILL TRY TO GET ANOTHER NEWSLETTER OUT IN THE NEXT 35 YEARS

"THE RED PEN IS NEARLY OUT OF INK."

\*\*\*\*\*HOPEFULLY SOON WE WILL BE DOING SOME FUNDRAISING TO SAVE THE ALBATROSSES, ANY DONATIONS WILL BE APPRECIATED\*\*\*\*\*

Regards and thanks from

Harry, Lindsay & Janice

P.S. Perhaps you have something to contribute, some of your ?? valuable information for the next newsletter. If so we would like to hear it.