

Southern Oceans Seabird Study Association Inc.

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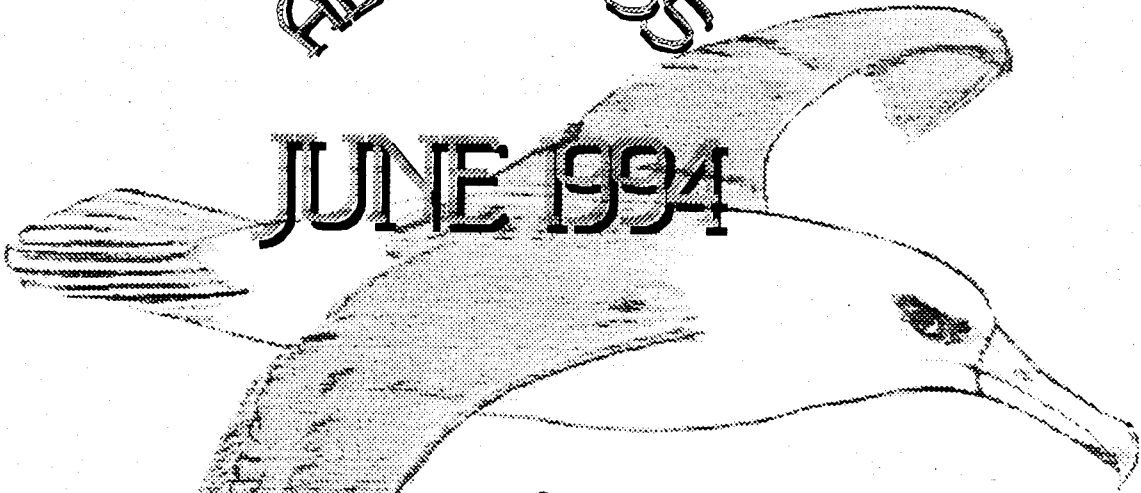
Lindsay & Janice

Harry: 042-211126 (Work)

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ALBATROSS

JUNE 1994



No. 3

Editor: Lindsay E. Smith

**ATTENTION: THIS AND ALL FUTURE NEWSLETTERS WILL NOW BE NAMED
" ALBATROSS "**

Hi again,

Due to popular demand or otherwise, we have assumed it is safe to circulate another newsletter! (We know one should never assume!!), well we did and sent it anyway!! (we have had only ONE complaint from the November issue, and that was typo error, so we have to blame the editor).

Although it has been the off season for Albatrosses here at Wollongong, the team at HQ. has been very busy indeed.

SOSSA: (Southern Oceans Seabird Study Association).

Over the past few months members of the founding committee (see constitution) have managed to put together **the constitution**, (the bulk of this work was done by Janice and Harry). Thank you for the tremendous effort !!Ed. The name of the association as decided by the committee is called "Southern Oceans Seabird Study Association" (SOSSA. for short). This association will be a non-profit organisation and will be applying to become a charitable organisation, (We live in hope!!!).Ed.

What is SOSSA ???

Over past years, members of the NSWASG have become involved in many projects, that whilst dealing with seabirds in general are not specifically related to Albatrosses. For this reason it was decided that we should form a new association that would enable us to do further research into these associated fields. It is planned that many of these associated studies will be taken up by others interested in seabirds and their biology, thus enabling greater understanding of these little known birds.

SOSSA will be responsible for the setting up, implementation and management of these associated studies. SOSSA will develop standards and procedures for the collection of data sets. These will apply to all studies undertaken by SOSSA.

Over the past 30 years, the by-catch of seabirds by the fishing industry has decimated the world wide populations of many seabirds to a point where several species are now seriously endangered. Drift netting and longline fishing have been particularly devastating, being directly responsible for the loss of millions of birds world wide. Drift netting has since been banned, though much damage has already been done. Longline fishing is on the increase with many nations joining the fray and showing scant regard for the seabird by-catch, (much of this is done on the high seas beyond the reach of individual countries laws).

How Can You Help SOSSA???

As a member of SOSSA you can help in many ways. First by becoming a member and filling in the application form at the back of the newsletter, so we can learn something about you. We can then possibly suggest something that suits your ability. We need all sorts of help. We have been told we should seek HELP!!!! (some one suggested "PSYCHIATRIC"!!!!). You can help by getting involved and showing your support.

In this newsletter you will find a **membership form** (the pink one), should you consider joining **SOSSA**. With the fees that apply depending on individual situations. Should you decide **not** to join SOSSA, we will send "THE BOYS" around for the donation, (Just Joking).

This association will be the umbrella for many studies, one of which will be the **Albatross Studies**, presently being conducted by NSWASG, (New South Wales Albatross Study Group). In addition to the above study the NSWASG has been conducting studies into the following projects:

Kelp Gull Study

Cuttlefish Study

Crested Tern Study

Fairy Penguin Study

Native Fish Study

Sooty Oystercatcher Study

Shearwater Study

Storm Petrel Study

Pelican Study

Frog Study

AND MORE TO COME:

BIOLOGY - Lee Astheimer Bill Buttemer have been very busy with their paid work at the University of Wollongong, hopefully we can get them going again soon, as we have a lot of important seabird work for them to do. We also have **PJ. Milburn** who has applied himself to a secret task for us. We will let you know what it is when we know the answers. (so we all have to be patient).

From Harry (Our Fearless?? Leader??)

SOSSA. A vision and a philosophy

Perhaps amateur ornithologists could be stereotyped as twitchers and data collectors, people who for various reasons accumulate lots of records of such things as birds with band numbers or a personal list of sightings.

Professionals also collect these things and many others. The main difference is that most professionals have a clear objective of what they are about, why their data was collected and how it is to be used. Generally they publish the results of their work.

Amateurs often do not plan their projects in a way that gives adequate consideration to their resources, data quality and commitment. Often also their objectives, apart from having fun, are not clear.

SOSSA is an attempt, we hope a successful one, to involve amateurs in well planned projects and provide the necessary support and encouragement to get results published, and still have fun doing it. Our vision is lots of quality papers from SOSSA, and in this century. Even more in the next.

Cuttlefish Project

This involves a lot of people in collecting, identifying, counting, measuring and documenting cuttlefish bones that are washed up on Australian beaches. We are still in the planning stage, and as the task is huge and complex sound planning is essential.

As with any project sound management of logistics is essential for success. The major tasks that we must undertake include:

- Ability to identify what is found with a minimum of difficulty. We have acquired the assistance of Dr C.C. Lu of the Museum of Victoria and with his help will prepare a cuttlebone identification guide for use by bone/data collectors.
- Preparation of standard procedures and documents for counting, sampling, and recording data.
- Identify potential workers and their level of commitment.
- Have beaches surveyed regularly from as many diverse locations as possible.
- Have the number of cuttlebones washed up identified and counted for each beach surveyed and a representative sample of each species either measured or collected for later measurement.
- Manage transport of lots of cuttlebones around the country.
- Ensure that bones from earlier counts are not recounted.
- Have "odd" bones returned for identification.
- Keep regular contact and dialogue with collectors and maintain their interest.
- Store the data collected.
- Keep the study going for 2 years.

The objective of this project is to estimate with some level of sanity the biomass of cuttlefish available to seabirds in Australian waters. We plan to involve people currently counting beach-washed seabirds for the RAOU survey. The RAOU have given us their blessing. When we are comfortable with the preparation we will go.

New Zealand recoveries of Wandering Albatross

From their three recent trips (1991, 1993, 1994) to the Auckland Islands, mostly Adams Is., the New Zealanders have recovered 66 Wanderers with Australian bands. Judging by the number of Auckland Is. Wanderers that we encounter, they still have a lot to find. To find these 66, they have checked around 7500 birds, some effort!

The majority of these birds appear to no longer visit Bellambi. This is very interesting as we have another group that are regular visitors. We are now re-examining past attendance patterns.

We are still trying to come up with a grand unified theory to explain the behaviour of Wanderers that visit NSW, including some mystifying patterns from back to the early 1960's. This lot appears to have answered some questions but as ever has posed some new ones.

The latest news is that 3 Aussie bands were found on Antipodean Wanderers. We do not yet have details.

Wandering Albatross, Will be here visiting Wollongong soon!!!

***** **NEWS FLASH** *****

Great News from New Zealand:

Gerry Clark and his crew have arrived back safely from their expedition to the Antipodes Islands. The expedition was a great success, adding tremendously to our knowledge of this little known colony of Wandering Albatrosses (*Diomedea e. antipodensis*). The data collected by all members of the expedition is of great value to us and other members of the scientific community. It will greatly enhance our ability to separate these birds from those that occur at the Auckland Is, further south (*Diomedea e gibsoni*).

Our congratulations and many thanks are extended to the Department of Conservation New Zealand, Gerry Clark, Jacinda Amey, Gus McAlister, (Members of the expedition) and all who participated in bringing this expedition to fruition. We understand they might be going again next year.

Particular thanks are extended to Col Loughheed for the great photographs and video tapes he provided. **Congratulations team on a job well done!**

(The Trans-Tasman Series continues !!!) **Ed**

New Zealand Dept of Conservation Kath Walker was so impressed with our newsletter, she phoned us from NZ to say she felt it was such a good idea she may start a newsletter in New Zealand, won't that be great!. We hope we are on their mailing list?.

We have received some interesting recoveries from New Zealand.

Hopefully Graham Elliott and Kath Walker will be visiting SOSSA HQ, in late July (to be confirmed).

News From South Georgia

Peter Prince reports that things did not go well down there at all this season. No Krill. Many birds abandoned breeding this year, details still to come.

1995 THE WORLDS INAUGURAL ALBATROSS CONFERENCE TO BE HELD IN TASMANIA?, (Organised by The Antarctic Division), AUGUST?-SEPTEMBER----- DATES YET TO BE CONFIRMED.

In the next Newsletter hopefully we will be able to give you more information and possibly costs. If you are interested in an invitation, Please contact us with your name and address so that we can pass it on to the organisers of the conference. Because they have obviously been busy with heads down and tails up organising this major project, (The Albatross Conference). Is possibly why we haven't heard much from Tasmania.

NEW RECRUITS:

We are fortunate to have some extra hands to be **bitten** this season. **Paul Boyer** and his lovely wife **Sylvia**, have offered their services. Paul is an entertainer, who has written many songs. He can even sing!!!!. The Albatross song called "The Wanderer". The whale song called "The Ultimate Price", are just a couple, there are more!. Paul will possibly be attending the 1995 Conference in Tasmania to perform his songs?? He may even have his CD produced by then?????? (if he still has fingers to play his guitar) and the money to get there, (perhaps a small fee or donations could apply, to help get him there)!!. Paul & Sylvia have introduced us to their good friend Ziggy who just happens to be an electrician. **Ziggy** has offered his valuable time to install the wiring for our fish tanks. **Every little bit helps!!**. **Thanks Ziggy**. Thanks to **John and Leanne Maher** for their time and efforts with photographing the Albatrosses and the long hours put in here at HQ photographing the native fish for the SOSSA's photographic library, **at this stage** it has been all at their own expense. **We have some great photo's now, thank you John & Leanne.**

DONATIONS:

BILL LANE A PENSIONER FIRST TO DONATE MONEY \$10-00.(His cheque will be framed). Thank you Bill for your support.

Thanks to **John and Leanne Maher** for their very kind donation of two new pairs of Binoculars to be used for a raffle to raise some money for SOSSA.

Also many thanks to **Grant & Leonie Young and Family** from **GEO the Australasian Magazine** for their donation of filters, once again for the "Fish Project". They are nice guys, aren't they!!! (The fish told us, bubble, bubble and gravel or is it grove!!!!!!!).

Alan & Margaret Parkinson have made an **outstanding donation**. They have donated their **12 ft Dingy with motor**, to work on the Five Islands. A small boat like this we can haul up onto the beach. Thank you ever so much. Alan has also given us a supply of shark livers which assists us with the capture of the small albatrosses, (the livers work extremely well!!!), (48 Mollymawks in 3 Days), 28 of which were Yellow-nosed Albatross, **a feat never before accomplished by the NSWASG**. Thank you Alan and Margaret.

Support from Sponsors:

In reply to our call for assistance, we have been successful in gaining assistance from a number of people and organisations. For which we are very grateful, we take this opportunity to thank the following, for their assistance and support.

Crabber Electrical Services?

On Behalf of Crabber Electrical services, **Bert Agostine**, also known as "**Uncle Bert**". Donated materials towards the installation of the lighting for the native fish research, presently being undertaken by SOSSA. (Lindsay and Janice) in conjunction with (Mick Gregory) from the University Of Wollongong, (Mark McGrouther and Sally Reader), The Australian Museum Fish Department, who are assisting in identification and stowage of specimens. Thank you Uncle Bert and Uncle Les your support has been most generous.

Paul's Photographics:

Paul and Gino have been helpful again as usual in the supply of our photographic needs with film and Hi8 video tape. Paul is at present approaching Kodak Aust, again on our behalf, in an effort to gain assistance from them. Here is where we found John & Leanne Maher, or should we say they found us and they are both extremely keen. Isn't that great!!!!.

BCH PRINTING Paul Beckett, T-Shirts - Fleecy lined tops or (Sloppy Joe's) +

printing. The NSWASG has once again besieged Paul, (harassed even). This time in a different guise. Enter **SOSSA** we are looking to Paul to get us some prices for, you guessed it, all of the above in limited numbers though, depending on cost.

John Boness: As many of you will already know, John is our Nuts & Bolts man a gopher extraordinaire and part time pistol shooter. Once again John has proven his weight in gold or is it "GLASS"!! As he has turned his hand to repairing "Fish Tanks". What can we say???. Thank you once again for your most valuable assistance. Versatile body isn't he???. Johnno is so valuable that he was elected **Treasurer for SOSSA**. We told him he won't have much to do as SOSSA has no money!! (yet).

Don Harkness: (Builder extraordinaire) has offered to make the cupboards for our fish tanks, hopefully before the open day of the fish display here at HQ, which will be early August, possibly Saturday the 6th at 2.00 pm. Anyone needing carpentry jobs done please phone us here on 042-716004 and we can put you in contact with Don, (when he's finished the cupboards here that is!). Ed.

OPEN DAY: of the fish display here at HQ, which will be **early August, possibly Saturday the 6th at 2.00 pm. (Wine & Cheese???)**. Awaiting confirmation donations gleefully accepted. If you are interested in coming along then please contact us closer to the date for a conformation of date and time, (Just in case you didn't receive an invitation).

Campbell Island Black browed Albatross:

Once again, this year we will attempting to catch the New Zealand Black-browed Albatross (*Diomedea melanophris impavida*). The Wollongong boat trips have been reporting very few melanophris sp. In recent weeks, it's still early yet. Numbers on the increase last week June 11th-13th one Impavida caught and marked.

THE WOLLONGONG BOAT TRIP REPORT - MAY 1994

The May boat trip ran on the 22nd and was generally fairly quiet with some nice surprises. The trip began with ~20 Albatrosses almost straight away, to the South near the Five Islands. We went over to have a closer look, on the way we observed 3 Fairy Penguins. The albatrosses were all Black-brows no *impavida* were observed.

We then proceeded out to the shelf, odd Kelp Gulls of varying ages and distant Fluttering Shearwaters were observed on route. The first Yellow-nosed Albatrosses were soon sighted, these generally replaced the Black-brows as we went further out. Over the shelf we saw the first of 2 Southern Skuas, which were a highlight. Only 2 very distant Solander's petrels were seen at the furthest point out. The boat was also joined by a Short-tailed Shearwater. A very distant great albatross remained unidentified.

1-2 hours after returning back over the shelf, we were joined by a first winter White-fronted Tern from New Zealand and a second Southern Skua. A Fluttering Shearwater also joined the crowd giving unusually good views. A short time later the highlight of the trip arrived a first-winter Pacific Gull, which followed the boat for 10 minutes. The Pacific Gull is a New South Wales rarity and the earliest record for Wollongong. Just before returning to the harbour a distant but fairly obvious Arctic Skua flew over the wake followed by another, not-so-obvious skua which was probably a Pomarine Skua. The only other bird of interest we saw was an adult Kelp Gull with leg rings (orange/red left, metal/blue right). This bird banded on Bass Is, in the Five Islands Group NSW December 16th 1990 by L.E. Smith Ed.

BIRDS RECORDED

Yellow-nosed Albatross 50+, Black-browed Albatross 50+, (no *impavida*), great albatross sp. 1, Fluttering Shearwater 30+, Little Penguin 3, White-fronted Tern 1 (first-winter), Crested Tern 15+, Solander's Petrel 2, Southern Skua 2, Arctic Skua 1, possible Pomarine Skua 1, Pacific Gull 1 (first-winter, description bird, earliest on record for Wollongong), Kelp Gull 6+ all ages

If you would like to join one or more of these boat trips, please get in touch with me at the above address and phone number. The Sandra "K" goes out on the 4th Sunday of every month and departs from Wollongong harbour at 7.00 am. The boat returns between 4.00-5.00 pm and costs between \$40-50 dollars Australian per person depending on numbers. We strongly advise that you take sea-sickness pills and you bring your own refreshments.

See you there.

Phil Hansbro.

Boat Trip Information or Bookings:

Phil Hansbro. (S.O.S.S.A)
2/20 Sexton Street
COOK. CANBERRA. ACT. 2614
AUSTRALIA

Contact Numbers:

Phone: 06- 249 2850 - Work
International: +616-06- 249 2850 - Work
Private: 06- 253 2954
Fax: 06- 249 0313 - Work

Tony Ashby - (Mapping)

A recent development for SOSSA has been the consideration of marine habitats in the Tasman Sea off the coast of NSW. The traditional method of describing marine habits in this area has been to divide the marine environment into 3 categories, namely inshore waters continental shelf waters and pelagic waters. It is for the pelagic category that additional habits have been proposed. This information coming from regular maps produced by the Hydrographic Section of the Royal Australian Navy. These maps show movements of such features as the Tasman Front, warm core eddies, cold water incursions, Bass Strait Waters and the coastal current.

It is proposed that these dynamic features can at various times be described as habitats for cold water and warm water birds. The movement of water about these features can under certain conditions boost bio-productivity which attracts pelagic fish and pelagic seabirds. There is also a suspicion that discharge from rivers of Northern NSW into the coastal current could also have some affect on the abundance and diversity of seabirds. It is our intention to monitor these features in the future and attempt to relate the location of these features with the appearance of a particular seabird. Some very early analysis of records since 1985 has shown that there could be a direct relationship between Great-winged Petrels and warm core eddies whilst there is a distinct inverse relationship for White-headed Petrels which appears to avoid these features. Further investigation of these possible relationships will be carried out in the future and it is hoped to obtain more widespread records, particularly out to sea.

BRISBANE BOAT TRIP REPORT -

Leader: - Paul Wallbridge

The following information on the trip out from Brisbane, 14th May 1994, was supplied by Paul Wallbridge and Ron Dowling. The regular pelagic trips out from Brisbane have in the past been poor for both species diversity and abundance. It is suspected that this is related to the draught in South/East Queensland which has just broken after two years.

The list of birds for the day which is an improvement on pervious trips is shown below:

White-tailed Tropic bird -4

Short-tailed Shearwater - 300+

Common Noddy - 50-100

Wilson's Storm-petrel - 2

Crested Tern

Carls Bit

Whales, (cetaceans fish birds etc). Boat trips other than seabird trips.

Carl at P.O.Box 148 Fairy Meadow N.S.W. 2519 or Mobile Ph: -018-423555

With the Sandra "K", Carl and Matt have agreed to assist in the capture of the **little buggers**, (Mollymawks), the Black-browed, Yellow-nosed and Shy Albatrosses!:

They have been perfecting the technique of entangling the birds in fishing lines, (usually the lines of their paying Game Fishing cliental) oops! No Tuna as yet, the BOYS from Marulan may not have caught any fish, but did get a good lesson in identifying Albatrosses. Sorry lads better luck next time. With Carl's assistance the NSWASG managed to catch and mark 88 Mollymawk's in 4 days. He even caught a Yellow-Nosed and a Black-browed Albatross with French bands, wee wee! **Ed.**

Small numbers of **Hump-backed Whales** are beginning to move up the coast, several small groups of Common Dolphins are also being seen on boat trips.

Articles:

We have been very fortunate this year, in that we have had a fair deal of exposure in the press. There have been a number of good articles published, in regard to our work. If you missed any of these, copies are available by contacting us here at NSWASG. Head Quarters, (also known as home). Harry's second home.

From the Editor:

The reference to Native Fish Survey. This work is being carried out by SOSSA in conjunction with the University of Wollongong and The Australian Museum. It is the first detailed study of its type to be conducted in the Illawarra district. Local aquarium supplier (Lot's of Bubbles), under the management of Jeff and Yvette Tomes is assisting in housing of specimens, and information on water quality, disease etc. Thanks for your help, GUYS it is greatly appreciated!.

You might notice this newsletter is a bit light-hearted in parts, but we have been told by Iris, that she likes these fun bits. We want you to see that we are serious, but, we can still have fun!!!!!!

*****PLEASE NOTE *****

SOSSA NOW HAS A FAX NUMBER, (BUT STILL WAITING FOR A FAX MACHINE!!!!!!)
So don't send us a fax yet, well you could try in a couple of weeks as we may get a lend of one, just temporarily, Any offers????

SOSSA - FAX: 042- 724626

NEXT SOSSA MEETING TO BE HELD ON: 23rd JULY 1994. 7.30 PM
AT: 10 JENKINS STREET. UNANDERRA - VIA WOLLONGONG.

THE NEXT NEWSLETTER TO BE SENT IN SEPTEMBER (We hope).

NSWASG - WISH LIST

- 1- **PHOTOCOPIER** (still waiting)
2. **FACSIMILE MACHINE** (still waiting)
3. **CELLULAR PHONE.** Thanks Janice once again, (she said it's just on loan), that's what she thinks, I know how to get her to let us use it!!!) actually we have a couple of times, once when we had boat trouble on the Five Islands, (Just ask Paul Boyer!).
4. **NEW BOAT COMPLETE WITH MOTORS**
(As Betty the Beat-up Boat was Born in 1976 and has had a hard 17 years - she looks like a patchwork quilt, with all the repairs we could nearly have built a new one!!)

Thanks to Alan and Margaret we now have a craft with which to work on the Five islands, however this unfortunately is not suitable for chasing albatrosses on the open ocean.
5. **LASER PRINTER** (still waiting)
6. **LAP TOP COMPUTER** (still waiting)
7. **SPRING BALANCES FOR WEIGHING** Thanks Harry, but more needed.
8. **NEW VIDEO CAMERA** (The Editor broke the Canon we used to use).
9. **MONEY.**
(Contrary to peoples belief. We are a self funded group and do not receive any Government Grants).