

Southern Ocean Seabird Study Association Inc.

" Wildlife Research "

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Editor: Lindsay E. Smith

Once again we have been very busy, so much has been happening that it is difficult to know where to start. The arrival of a longline fishing fleet to be based at Port Kembla took us a bit by surprise, consequently there has been a great deal of communication between SOSSA, AFMA (Australian Fisheries Management Authority) ETUNAMAC (East Coast Tuna Management Advisory Committee). Thankfully this communication has been very worthwhile and constructive. Our greatest fears of the interaction of Longline fishing and Seabirds, particularly Albatrosses has been somewhat elevated. Discussions between SOSSA representatives and Lobana Fisheries, (Locally based Longline fishing fleet), have indicated that this fleet is presently using several mitigating devices to reduce the by-catch of seabirds, these devices and methods appear to be working very successfully, with no reports of any birds being caught at present.

We believe that much can be gained through communication and liaison between groups such as ourselves and the fishing industry. The arrival of the Lobana Fleet at Port Kembla has given us the opportunity to work more closely with the industry. It is hoped that these lines of communication will lead to better relationships between the industry and seabird researchers. Longline liaison could prove to be very beneficial in regard to at sea distribution of birds. We have made contact with the local longline fleet and have had several discussions with them in regard to the by-catch of seabirds. We have been advised that they are adopting various mitigating devices to reduce by-catch. We have found a good ally in Mr David Broder who is currently skippering one of these boats. David is very interested in our work with sea birds and we are currently training him in the at sea identification of these seabirds. David has agreed to collect data at sea on the distribution of birds in relation to water temp etc. As David is presently operating between South East Queensland and North East Tasmania including over 200 nautical miles out to sea, the data that he is collecting will be of great value to us in determining the distribution and movement of seabirds along the east coast. Much of this information will be passed on to Tony Ashby (SOSSA Northern Regions Representative), who controls Marine habitat mapping. In addition to birds David is also noting the presence and location of marine mammals particularly cetaceans (Whales and Dolphins). Hopefully David's good work will encourage other operators to collect data on these groups, it is certainly a shot in the arm for seabird research here in Eastern Australia.

Also on a bright note, Janice and I recently visited Tony Ashby and the Brisbane Seabird Group for discussions on what is happening in Queensland. Paul Walbridge and Tony Ashby have established a good working relationship with the people from SEAWORLD and are now chartering their boat on a regular basis, for off shore trips. This is an excellent craft from which to watch for seabirds. It is a very stable and therefore comfortable vessel. I can recommend it to anyone who is interested in a seabird trip, from that part of the country. The combination of a good stable boat and an experienced seabird group, will ensure a very good introduction to the world of seabirds. For those out there that are interested, please contact Paul Walbridge of the Brisbane Group.

Note that this is a very popular trip, so book early to ensure your place.

Wandering Albatross, Great News from New Zealand;

Kath Walker and Graeme Elliott from the New Zealand Department of Conservation, have been hard at it down on Adams Island, in the Auckland Islands south of New Zealand. They have recovered 46 Wandering albatrosses with our bands breeding there. This is the largest number of our banded birds recovered on the breeding grounds. Kath and Graeme checked 6558 individuals (both legs!!), including 2210 which were not on nests at the time. What a mammoth effort.

These birds represented birds marked here off Bellambi / Malabar / Wollongong between 1962 and 1993, some of which have been re-trapped here on several occasions and some that we have not seen since they were originally banded. It's nice to know that a few are still out there. Our congratulations to Kath, Graeme and the Crew, well done!

On a sad note :

*A Wandering Albatross with a band was caught on a Longline in the Southern Ocean, details are as yet sketchy as to where and when the bird was actually caught. What we do know about this bird is. Band No.140-33298 Species: Wandering Albatross *Diomedea exulans* Race: *Chionoptra*. 1st banded on South Georgia Island as a breeding female February 22nd 1962, by United States Fish and Wildlife Service. Captured at sea off Bellambi NSW 27th July 1980. Captured at nest on South Georgia Island in January 1982. Again captured at sea off Bellambi, September 5th 1987.*

If this bird began breeding at twelve years of age then it would have been at least 45 years old at the time of its untimely death. Ed.

Arthur (Arfie) Mothersdill - A Tribute

We generally consider that 1956 was the year in which saga of the (human association) with the Bellambi Wandering Albatrosses started. But in fact it really started long beforehand. Arthur (Arfie) Mothersdill was born in 1915 and early in life was acquainted by his father with the ways of ocean fishing. In the 1920's and 1930's power boats were expensive and hard to come by so Arfie used to go several miles to sea by canoe to fish, without food, water and safety gear. One day in 1938 he happened to encounter a 30 knot westerly while some miles out and was on his way to New Zealand, (which was OK in those days as you didn't need a passport). By a combination of strength, stamina, seamanship and luck he managed to get back home and was probably the last man to do so. Nowadays the loss of 'boaties' in westerly gales is a common occurrence in local waters. As a result of this experience Arfie and his old man decided that it was time to buy a power boat, which they did, a 14 foot (4.27m) Kauri Pine clinker hull with a 4HP single cylinder 4-stroke water cooled engine, 'state of the art' pre WW2. Subsequently christened 'Mabel', this little craft and Arfie were there, fit, able and ready to go when the time came to catch Wanderers. Arfie kept Mabel in a boat shed on the beach at Bellambi Point. Thus Bellambi, a relatively minor village, achieved the distinction of the Wanderer association, above Wollongong and more significant locations. In those times there were no boat ramps, sea walls and jetties and a fair amount of skill was necessary to get a boat through the surf and rocks. But there were plenty of Wanderers. Arfie's father recalled their presence in 1912, and this is the only evidence that we have that Wanderers were in numbers at Bellambi before the birth of the sewer outfall at Malabar (in 1916).

When the birdo's came onto the scene; Doug Gibson, Alan Sefton and Dave Walsh (all of whom have passed on), all of whom had watched the Wanderers, often just a few metres off the shore and distributed along 30km of coastline, and wondered whence they came, it was only a matter of time that they and Arfie decided to try their hand at trapping and banding. The results of this experiment are now well documented history.

Today Arfie lives still at Bulli, almost 80, and not quite as fit as he was 50 years ago. Mabel should have gone to the maritime museum, but unfortunately was burnt to death by one of Arfie's philistine relations, something that Arfie still fumes over.

Birdo's tend to acknowledge the efforts of other birdo's and the contributions (often significant) of colleagues, such as Arfie, often fade from sight (in the history of the world according to birdo's) as time progresses. Without Arfie, Mabel, his sense of humour, seamanship, knowledge and participation, it is probable that the NSW Albatross Study would never have eventuated. To go to sea with Arfie was a great way to spend a field trip, and few of us are left to recall it. We and the Wanderers are now benefiting from the opportunity that Arfie gave us, and we will do our utmost to ensure that the New South Wales Albatross Study survives into the future.

Thanks Arfie.

"Shore Lines"

Many seabirds can be observed from headlands and in and around estuaries, it is not necessary to go to sea to observe several species of Terns, Shearwaters and even some Albatrosses. In addition beach washed birds are often found along beaches after storms.

It is not necessary to venture out to sea to study many of these coastal seabirds, indeed much is yet to be understood about the movements of several species. One that comes to mind is the Caspian Tern which is a regular winter visitor to the Illawarra district, yet in over ten years of observation from boat trips from Wollongong the Caspian has not be recorded at sea. The Caspian Tern also frequents inland lakes and has often been recorded breeding inland as far as Lake Eyre in central Australia. Another interesting species is the White-fronted Tern which breeds in New Zealand and many birds particularly juveniles winter in south eastern Australia and can often be observed along the coastal margins particularly headlands.

So even if your not much of a sailor you can still see and study many seabirds without ever setting foot off good old "TERRA-FIRMA" so get out there and enjoy our seabirds, I am sure you will enjoy the experience. *Ed.*

PS. Don't forget to report back!! we're all interested.

MARINE HABITAT REPORT

March 1995 - Tony Ashby

Satellite images have come to hand from David Broder, longline fisherman (Lobana Fisheries) but only in the past couple of days so comment on them will have to wait till next newsletter.

BOAT TRIP REPORTS - SEABIRDS

WOLLONGONG PELAGIC SEABIRD REPORT -Phil Hansbro
BRISBANE PELAGIC SEABIRD TRIP REPORT - Paul Walbridge
PORTLAND PELAGIC SEABIRD TRIP REPORT - Mike Carte
SYDNEY PELAGIC SEABIRD TRIP REPORT - Phil Hansbro

Wollongong: March 25th 1995

Depart: 0700 Hrs Return 1600 Hrs

Conditions: 1-2 metre swell Wind 10-15 knots NE Water Temp. not recorded

Comments: The day started well with a Buller's Shearwater, Long-tailed Jaeger was also a Highlight Autumn is here, with Wilson's Storm-Petrels on the move and fresh plumage Solander's Petrels have returned. Many Artic and Pomarine Jaegers were in fine Summer plumage ready for their return trip North.

Birds.

Fairy Penguin 1 in harbour, Great-winged Petrel 20 Solander's Petrel 10+ **Buller's Shearwater 1** Flesh-footed Shearwater 50+ Wedge-tailed Shearwater 100+ Short-tailed Shearwater 10+ Fluttering Shearwater 2 Wilson's Storm-Petrel 3+ Aust Gannet 3
 Kelp Gull 3 Silver Gull 20 Artic Jaeger 10+ Pomarine Jaeger 30+ Long-tailed Jaeger 1
 Crested Tern 3.

Mammals

Common Dolphin 3

Sydney April 23rd 1995

Depart: 0600 Hrs Return: 1530 Hrs

Conditions 1 metre swell Wind 10 knots direction? Distance 28 Nautical miles.

Birds: Solander's Petrel 50+ ****Gould's Petrel 1 ?** (see note below) Wedge-tailed Shearwater 300+ Short-tailed Shearwater 25+ Flesh-footed Shearwater 50+ Fluttering Shearwater 2+ Wilson's Storm-Petrel 1 White-faced Storm-Petrel 1 Aust Gannet. Great Skua 1 Pomarine Jaeger 15+ Silver Gull 50+ White-fronted Tern 1.

Note: There appears to be some confusion over the identification of this particular bird. At this stage it is probably best to describe it as a *Cookalaria* sp. rather than Gould's Petrel. It has created a great deal of interest as it is the first sighting of a *Cookalaria* petrel reported off NSW since January 1992!! *Ed.*

Wollongong May 28th 1995

Depart :0.700 Hrs Return 16.00 Hrs

Conditions: 2 metre swell Wind 15 knots direction ? Water Temp.19.c

Comments: A total of 21 species, with a very wintry flavour, early Cape Petrels, Giant Petrels, lots of Shy Albatross and White-fronted Terns.

Birds: Black-browed Alb 20+ Yellow-nosed Alb 35+ Shy Alb 50+ Southern Giant Petrel 1 Northern Giant Petrel 1 Cape Petrel 1 Solanders Petrel 15+ Great-winged Petrel 4+ Fairy Prion 50+ Thin billed Prion 1 Sooty Shearwater 1 Fluttering Shearwater 20+ Australasian Gannet 20+ Artic Jaeger 2 Silver Gull 100+ Kelp Gull 6+ Crested Tern 10+ White-fronted Tern 20+.

Bateman's Bay June 11th 1995

Depart: 0630 Hrs Return late afternoon.

Conditions: poor with 3 metre swell and strong winds

Comments: The boat was expected to get out to 100 miles but due to poor weather we only managed 35 mile. We will attempt to go out 100 Nautical miles on future trips weather permitting.

Birds: Fairy Penguin 4 Yellow-nosed Alb 20+ Black-browed Alb 1 Solander's Petrel 20+ **Common Diving Petrel** 1 Fairy Prion 20+ White -fronted Tern 1 Crested Tern 6 Caspian Tern 1 Also Aust Gannets and Silver Gulls.

Southern Queensland / Northern New South Wales

The Brisbane pelagic seabird group arranged two trips during the second quarter of the year, these were on April 8th and May 27th. The group has been fortunate in coming to an agreement with SEAWORLD about chartering their 60 foot research vessel and both of these trips were conducted on this excellent boat. The Seaworld boat is surveyed to operate out to 50 nautical miles with 23 persons including the crew.

Steve McCourt of Seaworld Marine Operations is co-ordinating our trips has indicated that under certain conditions it may be possible to venture further out. This is being checked out but at this time nothing definite has been decided. If in fact we can operate out to say 90 Nautical miles then we will be able to visit the offshore Queensland and Britannia Seamounts. All of the Wedge-tailed and Flesh-footed Shearwaters have departed for the season leaving mostly Crested Terns to occupy the continental shelf. A few juvenile Aust Gannets were about in the first week of June and adults were observed in the Southport Seaway. Since then there has been an increase in the number of Gannets, White-fronted Terns and Fairy prions have observed off the Seaway in late June.

Brisbane Pelagic Seabird Trips

Paul Walbridge - April 8th 1995

This first trip out from Southport was characterised by a large number of Shearwaters and Terns that were encouraged to follow the boat. The birds were mainly Wedge-tailed Shearwaters. A highlight was 3 Streaked Shearwaters that followed for long periods offering excellent views. The trip ventured out to 87 kms in moderate seas which only served to underline the capabilities of the Sea world vessel.

Brisbane Birds Report: April 8th 1995 Wedge-tailed Shearwater, 1300+ Flesh-footed Shearwater 2, Fluttering Shearwater 9, Streaked Shearwater 3, Tahiti Petrel 11, Wilsons Storm-Petrel 1, Pomarine Jaeger 5, Silver Gull 20, Crested Tern 20 Common Tern 3

May 27th 1995

This trip did not have the highlights of the April trip and only Silver Gulls and Crested Terns could be encouraged to follow the boat. Notwithstanding this. problem one interesting observation was a Whistling Kite that followed the boat to 16 Kilometres to sea.

Birds: Solander's Petrel 1, Fluttering Shearwater 1 Aust Gannet 3 Caspian Tern 1, Lesser Crested Tern 1, Gull billed Tern 2, Crested Tern 40, Common Tern 4, Kelp Gull 1

***The Kelp Gull sighted on this trip was in it's third winter and created some excitement as the Kelp Gull is regarded as rare in Queensland. *Ed.*

Boat Trip Information or Bookings:

Phil Hansbro. (SOSSA)
56 David Street
TURNER. CANBERRA. ACT. 2612
AUSTRALIA

Contact Numbers:

Phone: 06- 249 3091 - Work
Private: 06- 249 8234
Fax: 06- 249 4891- Work

E-mail: hansbro@rsbs-CENTRAL.ANU.EDU.AU

Brisbane Trip Information or Bookings:

Paul Walbridge..(SOSSA)
135 Lytton Road
East Brisbane QLD 4169

Contact Number

Phone: 07-391 8839

SOSSA's COMMITMENT TO QUALITY

As part of SOSSA's commitment to the gathering of quality data in a standard format SOSSA is developing Standard Data Sheets and Standard procedures for the collection of information in regard to seabird biology and morphology. These standards and procedures are designed to be user friendly, in an effort to ensure their greater acceptance and use. For more information please contact SOSSA Head Quarters.

Albatross Report from North East Pacific Ocean

Jack Finney

Port Townsend Washington State

USA

I recently made a trip to California (S.F. area) and spotted a Laysan Albatross (not commonly seen in this area) Position 43 12 N 124 48 W near cape Blanco off the Oregon coast January 22 1995 at 1530 (Time Zone 7D + 8)

Wind SE 25Knts, Partly cloudy

Following Albatross spotted on trip to Adak in Feb, March 1995

March 9th Black footed Albatross 52 40 N 171 00 W

March 10th Laysan Albatross 52 40N 173 00W

March 10th Laysan Albatross 52 50 N 172 40 W

March 10 th Laysan Albatross 52 52 N 172 32 W

Thank you Jack it's nice to get a few records from up your neck of the oceans.

SANDRA " K "

Caris Bit

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

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

Hump-backed whales two moving up the coast off Hill 60, Port Kembla, May 14th 1995.

Saturday 13th May 1995, 10-15 False killer whales off Bellambi reef.

Sea Turtle sp ? possibly Hawks bill turtle 40 cm dia and mottled in colour in Wollongong Harbour at approximately 1400 Hrs

1994-1995 A. G. M. REPORT - 24TH JUNE 1995

Members will find enclosed

VISITORS TO THE SOSSA HILTON

David Broder. Yes another one of those that likes a nip or a bottle!! But he's is a nice chap.

Dr Lu is coming soon to stay with us at the SOSSA Hilton. Dr Lu is a cephalopod expert from the Museum in Melbourne. We are looking forward to learning a great deal from him about the cuttlefish.

SPONSORS & OUTSTANDING DONATIONS

Thank you to these people, it helps pay the bills!!!

A special thank you to Grant Young from GEO.

210 GEO Magazines (FREE) to post one to each of our members, what a great donation, and they are also going to assist us with the postage of the magazines to the members.

Unfortunately we can only send them to the current 94-95 members and any new members that may join before 1st of July as we are hoping to take some copies to the Albatross conference in Tasmania.

Rory McGuinnes is the photographer who kindly gave us permission to use his photographs, we sent them to GEO for a selection for the article in this current GEO magazine which the members have received. Much to our surprise Geo made it the cover story and not only did Rory take that photograph and others inside, he then donated the payment for the use of photographs back to SOSSA's donations Fund. So, Rory thanks heaps, you are not only talented you are very generous and we do appreciate your kindness. For those who don't know Rory also produces some amazing films,

Rory & Rebecca are "Clown Fish Film Company".

Taxidermy by Damian Gannets and Jaeger for workshop displays (Wonderful donation for the teaching projects). What can we say your just great mate!!!

Geoff Longford came down to film frogs on 16 mm film for GEO.

Key Batteries for the donation of one battery for "Miss Molly" Peter Andera's boat which the boys have been working on to be used to catch this years Molly's and Wandering Albatross.

**ANH Magazine, (now called Nature Australia) the current issue,
Has a story about the Wandering Albatross, written by our Harry Battam,
it's really worth reading if you get the chance.**

1995-1996 MEMBERSHIP FEES DUE 1ST JULY 95 (Green Form).

With your 95-96 memberships you will receive a **free SOSSA badge**. If you want extra badges the price is \$6.50 Aust. each, form HQ. Thank you for your support. Any member not financial by the end of September will be removed from the mailing list.

NEXT NEWSLETTER

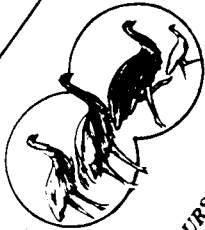
Hopefully will be out early October.
Till then Keep Well & Be Happy.

If you have something to add to the newsletter, then please post or fax it. Better still on disk using Word for Windows (I will return your disk), this would save Janice lots of typing. ☺

ENCLOSED

1. GEO magazine to current members only.
- SOSSA Financial statement for 94-95 for members.
- A badge if you have paid your fees.
- Your membership card if you have paid your fees.
- To members minutes from the AGM
- Membership form in case you have lost the one from the March newsletter.

EMU TOURS



SOME SPECIAL TOURS FOR 1995/96
with Richard Jordan and Christine Wilder

"AROUND AUSTRALIA IN 80 DAYS" max \$6690
(or choose any season, eg Cairns/Darwin or Darwin/Perth)
A unique tour of the continent includes Daintree Lawn Hill, Kakadu, the Kimberley to south-west WA, Flinders Range, Kangaroo Is. and 4 RAOU bird observations.

"A WEEK IN THE WEST" 8 days \$830
11-18 November 1995
A leisurely way to see Pilliga SF in Western NSW and Currawinya NP in S. Queensland. Fully-accommodated in lodge, shepherds' quarters and country pub.

"BIRD WEEK AT BAREN GROUNDS" 6 days \$590
20-26 November 1995
Join Emu Tours and Baren Grounds Bird Observatory for a week of the best South Coast birding. Fully-accommodated. Includes Wollongong pelagic trip. A great bird list is assured.

"A BUSH CHRISTMAS" 7 days \$790
7-13 December 1995
A festive season with a difference. Three nights each fully-accommodated at Baren Grounds Bird Observatory and Gipsy Point Lodge. The atmosphere will be one of relaxed enjoyment with excellent cuisine.

"SNOWY RIVER AND ALPINE MEADOW" 7 days \$590
18-29 Feb 1996
A short camping trip to explore the fine scenery and good birding from Kosciuszko NP to the Snowy River. Fully-accommodated with expert local guides. Please contact Jenny Brouns (06) 288 7802 for further details.

"COG GOES BIRDING IN NEW ZEALAND" 10 days \$890
5-14 April 1996
Fully-accommodated with expert local guides. Please contact Jenny Brouns (06) 288 7802 for further details.

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