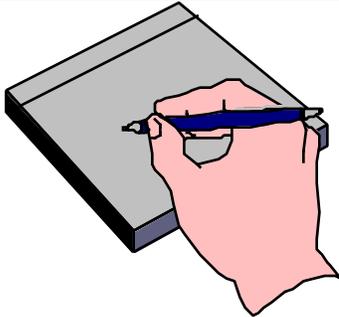


“ ALBATROSS “

NEWSLETTER ----- NOVEMBER 2000  
Issue No. 24



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## A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

In recent weeks my spirit has been lifted by the outstanding achievements of two young children.

On arrival back from the Albatross/Petrel conference in Hawaii. I was shown a project on albatrosses by Michael Beckett an 8 year old, who had asked if SOSSA could help with some information on albatrosses and what was happening to them?

We gave him what we could and left him to it.

The result of Michael's effort and enthusiasm is an outstanding message to other children of his age group to the plight of the albatrosses. Excellent work Michael !! Ed.

We hope to make it into a poster for all to share.

A phone call from Celli Lloyd, an 11 year old lad who wanted to help the albatrosses, he had **raised One hundred dollars, on his own!** He wanted us (SOSSA) to buy a "Smart Tag" (Archival Tag) to help save them. What was happening to them was "Really Sick"!

Please help!

On Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> July, we were able to take young Celli to meet some of the albatrosses off Wollongong. We were to observe Black-browed, Yellow-nosed, Gibson's and Wandering Albatrosses, Giant Petrels, Great Skuas and Prions. In all we captured 10 albatrosses 8 of which we had previously banded here, including a giant "Snowy Albatross", D.chionoptera, first banded in 1964.

I think Celli was more than a little surprised, to see how big they really are! and how old some are! Like Grandfathers!

Celli thank you for your help and dedication, We will do our best to help save the albies. Ed.

Nicholas Carlile from the NSW NP&WS has agreed to let us use his reports from his adventures from around the globe looking for the world's rarest petrels. Nicholas won a "Churchill Scholarship" to investigate the world's "Petrel Shortage". We hope to include some of his reports in this and future newsletters.

## SHORE LINES

### SOUTH AFRICA

**WORLD'S BIGGEST SEABIRD RESCUE OPERATION PROGRESSING WELL** Peter, Pamela & Percy. Dr Robert Crawford of Marine and Coastal Management announced today that Peter Penguin is swimming off Still Bay, which is approximately halfway home. If he's keeping up his average speed, he's expected to be back at Robben Island on 21 July. Percy (3rd to be released) has almost caught up with Pamela at Knysna. They are now approaching Cape Fur seal and Great White Shark territory and it would serve them well to stay way offshore. (To follow the progress of the three penguins, which are tagged with SAP Africa-sponsored satellite transmitters, visit the Avian Demography Unit's website at <http://www.uct.ac.za/>) Peter, Pam and Percy are but three of some 20 000 un-oiled penguins which had been evacuated from Dassen and Robben Islands, transported to Port Elizabeth (some 900 km away) where they were released and are now

Yesterday, a total of 64 heavily oiled penguins were removed from Dassen Island and taken to SANCCOB (Southern African Foundation for the Conservation of Coastal Birds). Today, 20 boxes of penguins left the island for the rehabilitation centre. They were transported by helicopter due to rough seas. It is estimated that less than 3 500 chicks remain on Dassen Island. SANCCOB now takes care of more than 23 000 birds. SANCCOB still needs committed volunteers - not only to help wash and feed the penguins, but also to assist with a variety of other tasks. Volunteers who are willing to work 5-hour shifts at a time, must please phone one of the following telephone numbers (021) 480 7726 / 29 / 30 / 49 between 8:00 and 19:00.

Libby Hall, rehabilitation supervisor at Taronga Zoo and one of our members, spent 2 weeks of 16+ hour days with SANCCOB in South Africa assisting in this project. Libby personally supervised the rehabilitation of over 11,000 penguins. On her return, after this massive effort, Libby herself much needed rehabilitation!

Donations: WWF-SA today presented the following with donations to cover their costs in the penguin rescue operation: Court Helicopters for evacuating the penguins from Dassen Island by helicopter; Western Cape Nature Conservation for transporting the un-oiled penguins to Port Elizabeth by road; and the Avian Demography Unit at the University of Cape Town for ringing birds prior to their release. Donations can be forwarded to: WWF Penguin Appeal, WWF-SA, PO Box 456, Stellenbosch 7599, or by direct bank transfer to ABSA Stellenbosch, Branch code 334410, Account no: 40-5178-1879.

Professor Les Underhill Director: Avian Demography Unit Department of Statistical Sciences University of Cape Town Rondebosch 7701 South Africa Phone +27 21 650 3227 Fax +27 21 650 3434 Web <http://www.uct.ac.za/depts/stats/adu/>

## International News

For those interested in seabirds and/or endangered species.—Ellen Paul, Executive Director, The Ornithological Council [Mailto:epaul@dclink.com](mailto:epaul@dclink.com)  
Ornithological Council Website:  
<http://www.nmnh.si.edu/BIRDNET> “Providing Scientific Information about Birds”

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Final Rule To list the Short-tailed Albatross as Endangered in the United States Agency: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior. ACTION: Final rule.

SUMMARY: Under the authority of the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended, we, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), extend endangered status for the Short-tailed Albatross

within the United States. As a result of an administrative error in the original listing, the Short-tailed Albatross is currently listed as endangered throughout its range except in the United States. Short-tailed Albatrosses range throughout the North Pacific Ocean and north into the Bering Sea during the nonbreeding season. Breeding colonies are limited to two Japanese islands, Torishima and Minami-kojima.

Originally numbering in the millions, the current worldwide population of breeding age birds is approximately 600 individuals and the worldwide total population is approximately 1,200 individuals. There are no breeding populations of Short-tailed Albatrosses in the United States, but several individuals have been regularly observed during the breeding season on Midway Atoll in the northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

Current threats to the species include destruction of breeding habitat by volcanic eruption or mud or land slides caused by monsoon rains, and demographic or genetic vulnerability due to low population size and limited breeding distribution. Longline fisheries, plastic ingestion, contaminants, and airplane strikes may also be factors affecting the species' conservation. This rule implements the federal protection and recovery provisions provided by the act for individuals when they occur in the United States.

DATES: This rule is effective August 30, 2000.—Ronald I. Orenstein Phone: (905) 820-7886 International Wildlife Coalition Fax/Modem: (905) 569-0116 1825 Shady Creek Court Mississauga, Ontario, Canada L5L 3W2 <mailto:ornstn@home.com>

Report of the recent International Meeting to draft an Albatross and Petrel Agreement for the Southern Hemisphere, held in Hobart, Australia, 10-14 July, along with the text of the draft Agreement, may be found at: [www.biodiversity.environment.gov.au/wildlife/conventions/intro.html](http://www.biodiversity.environment.gov.au/wildlife/conventions/intro.html) John Cooper Coordinator BirdLife International Seabird Conservation Program.

## Report to Petrel Heads

Nicholas Carlile

G'day, I'm sending this from a hotel on Waikiki beach in Hawaii having sat in a conference room for the last 4 days and listened to (and presented) research papers on the state of the petrel group of seabirds. This has included everything from the breeding biology of the less known species to the massive losses of some species to such activities as longlineing and drift net fishing. It has been both inspiring and sobering to see how the state of the worlds seabirds are fairing. The good news is that since the early 90's, when the effects of long line fishing were being first reported, there has been a big turn-around by many of the big fishing nations.

Zealand area have started really cranking up their fishing efforts and have not even thought about the effects this might have on the seabirds of the world, particularly the bigger seabirds like albatross group and the smaller night feeding petrels. It has been amazing that some species still manage to hang on!

David Priddel (my boss) and I presented our papers on the work we have done on Gould's petrel and the response was very positive, even overwhelming. It seems that we have been one of the few projects where we have done some good science on determining what the causes for the petrels decline was and documented it. With this information we have applied it to management actions and have obtained such a great result in a fairly short time.

To top it off some of our techniques in nest box development and translocation have not been used elsewhere. We have given other researchers new ways of trying to deal with their problems. Hey we feel great about this! and hope that it will encourage others to take our ideas for the benefit of other seabird species. It has been a bit of a shock coming to the culture that is the USA. Everything is so expensive! Much of the foods are so sweet! It took Dave and I a good whole day to find a decent cup of tea..that really produced a few stress levels! Now we carry tea bags in our pockets where ever we go. It has also been a little unreal being almost entirely in a hotel and not venturing outside the grounds. That will all change on Saturday as we fly out with about 20 other conference participants to Midway Atoll, part of the Hawaiian chain of islands but 1200 miles (1950km) from the main islands. Here we are going to check out a place where all three of the northern hemisphere species of Albatross breed. One of these is the Short-tailed Albatross who's world population is only about 250 breeding pairs. In fact this endangered species is so close to the edge that if only 4 are accidentally caught in fishing lines in the whole of the North-West Pacific fishing zone in any one year, it closes the industry down (3000 boats and US \$300,000,000 industry). Needless to say it is a very serious concern. The other birds will include the Laysans Albatross (140,000 birds on the one island) which nests on all the spare land available that hasn't got a building on it. This includes runways, roads and in gardens. That will have to be seen to be believed! The people here have been so helpful and the work so exciting that I feel so inspired to get into the job of looking after the birds in our part of the world.

Dave and I have spent many nights up late (drinking tea, of course) and working out what we can do when we get back to Australia. This whole experience has been so enriching and I can't believe that I am only 5 days into my 3 months of travels.

We are doing workshops for the next 2 days on

Tree Island and knowing that many of the other islands off the NSW coast need some special attention.

Yours in petrels Nicholas

#### FIVE ISLANDS REPORT Paul Mooney NSWP&WS

On-ground action has commenced in the restoration of the vegetation of the Five Islands with NPWS, SOSSA, the Coomaditchie United Aboriginal Corporation and local volunteer bush regenerators taking on the job. Initial assessment by NPWS and Michael Jarman SOSSA marked suitable locations for ongoing works, where regeneration can be done through much of the year without interfering with breeding birds.

Before any regeneration work started photo reference points were established at twelve sites on Big Island #1 and #2, with photos taken for baseline records. As this regeneration project is unique in many ways, trialing different methods will be an important part of the project. As each method is used and monitored at the reference points, we will be able to refine the techniques to that which best suits these particular environments.

To date, these techniques have included spraying with "Round Up" (Herbicide), direct planting of pigface (*Carpobrotus glaucescens*) into cleared and sprayed areas, covering kikuyu with tarpaulins, consolidation of good patches by hand weeding and spraying vegetation with salt water. As plant material becomes large enough, shading out of kikuyu through shrubby plant growth will be added to this program.

The salt water spraying concept came from looking at vegetation on south facing parts of the islands, more exposed to storm conditions. In these areas pigface, NZ spinach and Salt water couch do well until the less exposed plateau where kikuyu is again dominant. Spraying is concentrating on these "ecotone" areas to assess whether kikuyu will be eliminated while other salt tolerant natives survive. pH and salinity levels are being measured to determine any impacts on soil.

Two patches on Flinders Island have also been cleared of bitou, totalling less than 10% of the island. Bitou around remnant Correa and Westringia have been cleared and a few seedlings have germinated under the Correa since the clearing. Cleared areas have also been planted with pigface and NZ spinach, soil from below Westringia shrubs have been deposited in these areas also.

A herbarium for the islands' plants is being developed to assist volunteers with plant identification. Cuttings and seeds of several species have been collected and potted up. The stand of remnant acacia on Big Island was cleared of Bitou

With birds soon returning to the islands, work will concentrate on the plateau of Big Island #1 dealing mainly with the kikuyu and hopefully re-planting with some of the original shrubby species.

Paul Mooney NSW NPWS.

#### INTERESTING BAND RECOVERIES

##### Our oldest known Albatross NSWASG

**Wandering Albatross** band number 140 39664. Origins unknown, first banded at Malabar N.S.W. by S.G. (Bill) Lane of the NSW Albatross Study Group on August 29<sup>th</sup> 1959. Band No 140-02457. Recovered at Bellambi NSW by D.J.Gibson 31<sup>st</sup> July 1960, 31<sup>st</sup> July 1965 (Band replaced with 140-25169), 19<sup>th</sup> July 1969, 26<sup>th</sup> June 1971, 30<sup>th</sup> July 1978, 18<sup>th</sup> July 1979, 16<sup>th</sup> July 1983, 13<sup>th</sup> August 1983.

Recovered at Bellambi, by Harry Battam NSWASG (SOSSA) 16<sup>th</sup> August 1989 (Band replaced with 140- 39664), 20<sup>th</sup> August 1989, 12<sup>th</sup> August 1991, 30<sup>th</sup> July 1994, 11<sup>th</sup> August 1995, 12<sup>th</sup> July 1997, 21<sup>st</sup> July 1997, 12<sup>th</sup> July 1998, 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1998, July 9<sup>th</sup> 2000 41 years, after initial banding date.

When this bird was initially captured the Gibson Plumage Index (GPI) had not been invented. However the bird was captured the following year on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 1960, it had a GPI of 9 out of a possible 21 points. 40 years later it's GPI was 18. This would suggest that its current age is close to 50.

#### AMSTERDAM AND ANTIPODEAN ALBATROSSES

In issue No22 of the Albatross newsletter we presented information on the possible occurrence of the Amsterdam Albatross *Diomedea amsterdamensis* in Australian seas.

Identification was based largely on the presence of a dark cutting edge to the tomlia and a dark suffusion in the superior unguicorn.

The plumage characteristics of both Amsterdam and Antipodean Albatrosses are remarkably similar, as are the measurements of both species.

Photographs of the suspect birds from Wollongong and Sydney were shown to Henri Weimerskirch at the Albatross conference in Hawaii, He agreed that the birds in question did appear to be immature Amsterdam Albatrosses and that they (the French biologists working on Amsterdam Island) may have

New Zealand biologists working on Antipodes Island during the 1999-2000 breeding season were asked to look for birds with dark cutting edges to the bill. Alan Wiltshire of the NZ Dept of Conservation was able to photograph several birds both adults and fledglings which had dark cutting edges and dark suffusion in the superior unguis. These birds in the hand are indeterminable from *D. amsterdamensis*. This indicates that it would not be possible to positively identify immature *D.amsterdamensis* at sea or in the hand away from Amsterdam Island. It would appear that these species may be more closely related than first thought, perhaps DNA studies may provide the answer. Ed.

#### 2<sup>ND</sup> INTERNATIONAL WORLD ALBATROSS CONFERENCE HAWAII 8-14<sup>th</sup> MAY 2000 We got there with a little help of our friends

We arrived in Hawaii at 2.00 am on the Monday for the Second International Albatross Conference to begin at 9.00 am (in jet-lag coma). Excited to be there as we (Janice & Lindsay had not planned on attending (due to lack of funds!) At the last minute, one of our very special members, (Colleen), insisted we must be there and immediately sent us a cheque. We are so grateful to her for her enormous generosity!!!  
THANK YOU COLLEEN xxxx

After five days of full on conference , presentations & talks and catching up with colleagues we left to return home on the Friday evening 11.30 PM.

It has been suggested that the next World Albatross & Petrel conference be held in South America in 2003. Every three years would make things a little less hectic.

With the inclusion of other Petrels in this Second International Albatross Conference, there was so much additional, often highly technical information presented that it was difficult to absorb this wealth of information much of which has been gathered over the past FIVE years.

#### Whales, Dolphins Seals and other Sea Monsters

Hump-backed Whales moved along the Illawarra

On the Saturday July 22<sup>nd</sup> a large pod of Sperm Whales was encountered in 600 fathoms off Wollongong 8 individuals, thought to be females were observed on the surface with others seen spouting in the distance. This is the largest number of Sperm Whales I have observed together in the Illawarra

On Sunday July 23<sup>rd</sup> A large lone Southern Right Whale was seen heading north in 25 fathoms just off Wollongong. Later in the afternoon we encountered a very large pod (500+ or more) of Common Dolphins spread over a front of half a kilometre. As we headed north many animals came to ride our bow-wave giving all on board a great thrill! and those with cameras an excellent opportunity for photographs.

### VISITORS to SOSSA

Dr Gary Nunn gave us a week of his time 4<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> August to have a look at our albatrosses. Gary has been working on the taxonomy of Albatrosses for many years, using DNA sequencing to determine the number of species currently recognised.

Though whilst he was here it wasn't all work and no play, he did manage to have some leisure time bird watching and experiencing first hand the difficulties of identification of albatrosses at sea.

Also on many occasions searching (unsuccessfully) for the elusive Pilot Bird. (Usually it is no problem), but these birds were definitely avoiding Gary. However, he did manage to see many other interesting birds while here in Wollongong and a good time was had by all!

### DATES OF NEXT TRIPS FOR YOUR DIARY

#### BOOKINGS INFORMATION FOR BOAT TRIPS For 2001 Regular Trips

SANDRA "K"

SEABIRDBIRD WATCHING BOAT TRIPS

#### NEXT YEAR 2001 - BOAT TRIP DATES

27<sup>th</sup> JANUARY., 24<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 24<sup>th</sup> MARCH, 28<sup>th</sup> APRIL, 26<sup>th</sup> MAY, 23<sup>rd</sup> JUNE, 28<sup>th</sup> JULY 25<sup>th</sup> AUGUST, 22<sup>nd</sup> SEPTEMBER, 27<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER, 24<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER.

Book early !!!

**Note** Additional Research and or Game Fishing Private Charter Trips depart on a regular basis with the

### Wollongong Trip Bookings:

Illawarra Boat Charter. Ph: 0427- 423 500

SEABIRDS, WHALE WATCHING or FISHING

Captain. Carl Loves (SOSSA) (Sandra K)

Mobile: 61-427-423 500-International

PO Box. 148 Fairy Meadow NSW 2519

Email: Bookings for Sandra K:

[fishing@wollongong.starway.net.au](mailto:fishing@wollongong.starway.net.au)

### Wollongong Bookings

#### Other Contacts and or information

Peter Milburn (SOSSA)

Email: [Peter.Milburn@anu.edu.au](mailto:Peter.Milburn@anu.edu.au)

Phone: 61 2 6249 4326-w Fax: 61 2 6249 4326

GPO. Box 334 Canberra. ACT. 0200

or

SOSSA

Email: [sossa@ozemail.com.au](mailto:sossa@ozemail.com.au)

Phone: 61 2 4271 6004

Fax: 61 2 4272 4626

PO. Box. 142. Unanderra. NSW. 2526

Or

Tony Palliser (SOSSA) Ph hm..02-9411 5272

Ph mb..... 0416 095875 fx wk.. 02-9900 1669

Email: Bookings for [palliser@oracle.com](mailto:palliser@oracle.com) (work)

**Sydney: Trip Bookings: Ph wk.. 02-9900 1678**

**Tony Palliser (SOSSA) Ph hm..02--9411 5272**

Ph mb..... 0416 095875 fx wk.. 02-9900 1669

Email: Bookings for [palliser@bigpond.net.au](mailto:palliser@bigpond.net.au)

Pelagic Reports On Home Page Website Address:

<http://users.bigpond.net.au/palliser>

**Brisbane Trip Bookings: Ph: 07 3391 8839**

**Paul Walbridge.** (SOSSA) Fax: 07 3391 8839

135 Lytton Road East Brisbane QLD 4169

Email: Bookings: [prion@powerup.com.au](mailto:prion@powerup.com.au)

**Portland Trip Bookings: Ph: 03- 9787 7136**

**Mike Carter.** (SOSSA)

30 Canadian Bay Road Mt. Eliza VIC 3930

**Busselton Information: Ph: 089 7553 263**

Ross Payton.(SOSSA)

P.O. Box 410 Dunsborough. W.A. 6281

**Perth Information: Ph: 08-9386 5694- H**

**Frank O'Connor.**(SOSSA) Ph: 08-9167 1445- W

8c Hardy Road, Nedlands. W.A. 6009

Email: Bookings for

Perth:[foconnor@iinet.net.au](mailto:foconnor@iinet.net.au)

**Eden Information: Ph: (02) 6495 7390**

Barbara Jones Email Bookings for Eden

**NEW MEMBERS**

Roger McGovern, Mike Double, David Koffel, Lili Mustakov, Malcolm Mackenzie, Ross Silcock + 1 additional member, Michael Hunter & Penny Hunter, Terri Baxter.

**NEXT SOSSA MEETING**

**25<sup>th</sup> November 2000**

**Christmas Meeting**

**NOTE: 6.00pm Sausage Sizzle.**

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

Held at HQ.

10 Jenkins Street - Unanderra. NSW.

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The **AMG** (6<sup>th</sup> August 2000)

**WAS A SUCCESS, THE SLIDE PRESENTATION & TALK ON THE LITTLE TERNS OF BOTANY BAY WAS INDEED INTERESTING, THANK YOU TH GEOFF ROSS (NSW-NP&WS). LINDSAY SMITH ALSO DID A BRIEF SLIDE SHOW ON OUR WORK & HISTORY OF THE FIVE ISLAND.**

**THE FINANCIAL MEMBERS WILL SEE ENCLOSED**

**A CONDENSED VERSION OF THE ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT.**

**IF ANY MEMBERS REQUIRE THE FULL 4 PAGE STATEMENT PLEASE LET JANICE KNOW AND A FULL COPY WILL BE FORWARDED TO YOU.**

**STOP PRESS**

We apologise for the delay with this current newsletter as we have been waiting for the fliers, which you will find enclosed (GREEN sheet).

**ALBATROSSES**

By W.L.N. TICKELL

Lance has had this well presented book published on albatrosses which can be purchased through Andrew Isles Natural History Books in Victoria. The address is on the bottom of the green sheet.

**GOOD VALUE AT \$130 + p&h.**

Unfortunately we have not had a chance to review this book as it has been sent from Pica Press England via sea-mail, though we did see the transparency's

while at the conference in Hawaii and they we terrific.

(Well worth adding to your library!!)