



The Albatross

Issue No. 52

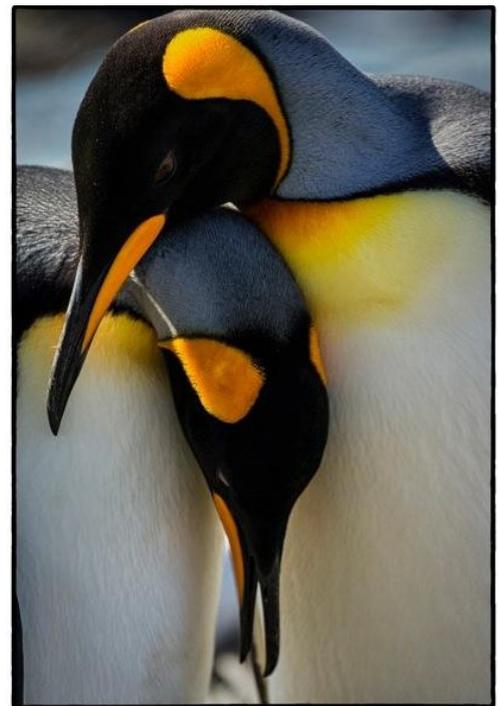
December 2013

SOUTHERN OCEAN SEABIRD STUDY ASSOCIATION INC.

Antarctic Epic Text and photos by Graham Morgan

Graham sailed from Ushuaia, Argentina to Invercargill New Zealand via Antarctic over the 2012/13 summer. The following is his observations from the voyage.

Continued on page 5.



© Graham Morgan 2013

King Penguins on Macquarie Island.

Special points of interest:

- Antarctic voyage
- Petrel with tumor
- Banding recoveries

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We headed out of Ushuaia and down the Beagle Channel on January 16, recalling the image of those leaden skies, then on into the Drake Passage. The air quickly became brisk and a comfortable swell was running, a liberating feeling though clearly not all agreed as evidenced by the prominence of post auricular "Scop" patches. Travelling side on to the westward sea sees many retire to their beds early but what a sight on deck with all nature of sea birds reveling, in what for them are ideal conditions. These are the furious fifties, albatross latitudes and watching the dynamic soaring of these hardy sea birds is a joy. I love to watch the great albatrosses



 MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY AND SAFE 2014 TO ALL SOSSA'S MEMBERS AND FRIENDS
 From the Committee and Staff at SOSSA

SOSSA is proudly supported by:



HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL
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Grey-faced Petrel - affected by a huge tumor
 Text and photo by Lindsay Smith

Australian Seabird Rescue brought in a Grey-faced Petrel which had been cast ashore after storms in February. This bird was found to have a huge tumor growing on its right upper-wing in close proximity to the carpal joint. The bird succumbed to exhaustion after battling the storm and died shortly after.



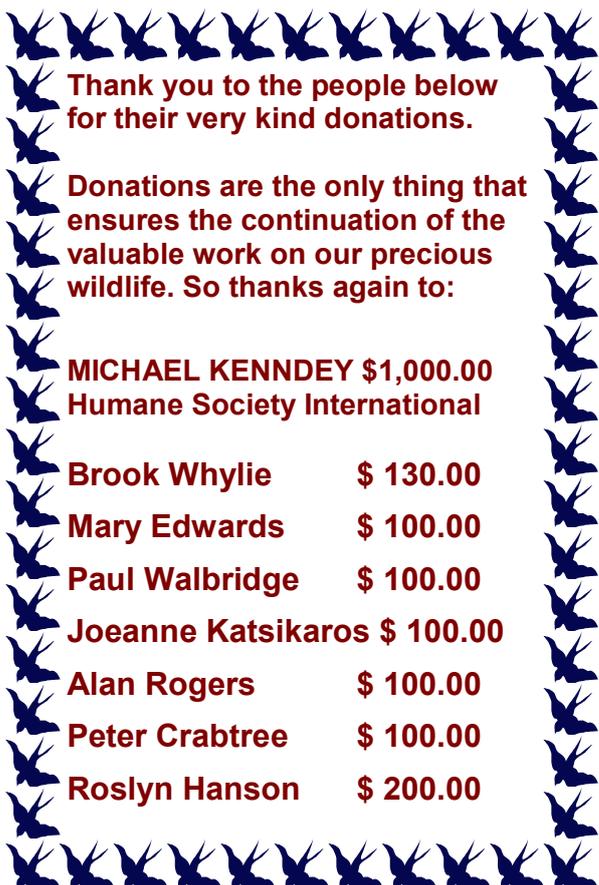
After initial discussions with Mike Cannon, SOSSA's veterinary consultant and bird specialist, the specimen was sent by courier intact to the Australian Registry of Wildlife Health at Taronga Zoo.

See PDF for Grey-faced Petrel Results on the web-site. <http://www.sossa-international.org/Multimedia/Specimen%20Detail%20Report%20Grey-faced%20Petrel.pdf>

Gould's Petrel and a Black-winged Petrel were also collected off local beaches around the same time and are now housed in the Australian museum.

Many thanks to the team at Taronga for their help with this bird.

DONATIONS



Thank you to the people below for their very kind donations.

Donations are the only thing that ensures the continuation of the valuable work on our precious wildlife. So thanks again to:

MICHAEL KENNDEY \$1,000.00
 Humane Society International

Brook Whyllie \$ 130.00

Mary Edwards \$ 100.00

Paul Walbridge \$ 100.00

Joanne Katsikaros \$ 100.00

Alan Rogers \$ 100.00

Peter Crabtree \$ 100.00

Roslyn Hanson \$ 200.00

PELAGIC REPORTS

******* Please note *******

Pelagic reports will no longer be printed with the newsletter.

You will need check the reports on the web site .

Band Recoveries

Over the past 20 years the NSWASG / SOSSA banding team have been banding Black-browed Albatrosses. Both currently recognised species of Black-browed Albatross, the Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris* and Campbell Island Albatross or New Zealand Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche impavida* of all ages are captured and banded / ringed using bands supplied by the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme.



The purpose of capturing both species of Black-browed Albatrosses is an attempt to find distinguishing characteristics. That is, characteristics that may enable us to identify juvenile and immature birds of these species at sea. This would assist in the separation of the two very similar species from shortly after fledging through to adult.

A number of birds identified during this study had been banded as chicks at the Isles of the Kerguelen Archipelago French Antarctic Territory in the South Indian Ocean.



Double banded Black-browed Albatross.
Photo Darryl McKay.

Photo by Tobias Hayshi – Wollongong
Note Geo-locator fitted to left leg.

In the past any birds captured by the SOSSA team that were fitted with French bands were also fitted with an Australian band. The purpose of fitting an additional Australian band was to alert the French researchers to the fact that this particular bird had been re-captured in Australian waters.

A Black-browed Albatross photographed off Wollongong on 7th of July 2013 was one such bird identified. The Black-browed albatross, a female, was first banded as a chick on March 24th 2000 at Isles Kerguelen, a French territory in the South Indian Ocean, by French researchers.

The bird, originally banded with metal band No CF36997 is now 13 years old and successfully fledged a chick last season.

A new GLS was fitted in December 2012. She has been tracked by French researchers for the past four years using several tracking devices.

This past season Dr Henri Wiemerschirch CNRS and his team have deployed 300 GLS units on Black-browed Albatross. A fantastic effort! We look forward to seeing a few more of the French tagged birds off Wollongong.

Band Recoveries continued

Black-browed Albatross - 24th & 25th August 2013

Another Black-browed Albatross banded by the French researchers at Kerguelen has been photographed and captured by the SOSSA banding team at sea off Wollongong on both August 24th and 25th 2013.

The bird was fitted with a readable darvic band inscribed F49.

This particular bird too has an interesting history. It was first banded as a chick by the French team on Kerguelen in 1996. Now, at 17 years of age, she and her partner successfully fledge a chick last season.



Black-browed Albatross, banded F49, off Wollongong 24th August 2013. Photo Brook Whylic

Antipodean Albatross - 28th July 2013

An Antipodean Albatross with a yellow darvic band 030 Band No 140-50372. First banded as an Antipodean Albatross on April 16th 2000 at sea off Mossy Point NSW.

Lat: 36 00 11 s Longitude 151 50 00e.
By P.J. Milburn

Re-trapped on Adams Island, one of New Zealand's Sub-Antarctic islands Latitude: 50.50.00s
Longitude: 166 05.00e.

New Zealand researchers fitted a yellow readable darvic band on February 2nd 2003 as part of their on-going studies of the Antipodean albatrosses. The bird has not been seen on the breeding grounds since that time.

New Zealand researcher Kath Walker, who banded the bird, was pleased to see the image of the bird looking so well, 10 years on since their last encounter!

A photograph of this bird can be found on the top right of page 8.

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barrel in behind the ship coming so close that the glistening drip of salt on their beak tip is clearly visible. It's a longer crossing than usual as we are headed west with our first sight of Antarctica in the Gerlache Straight, the place where most trips finish. The temperature has dropped, a mist descended and the first iceberg many miles astern as, surrounded by black volcanic cliffs, we approach the dark waters of the Lemaire Channel. All the albatross except the Light-mantled Sooty have been left behind. Petrels and skuas now dominate, along with prions, fulmars and terns. We continue westward stopping at Pleaneau and Petermann Islands to enjoy the wildlife and in particular the antics of Gentoos and Adelie Penguins. It's been a good year for the Gentoos with many birds feeding two rapidly growing chicks.

We are amongst the pack ice now and it is alive, with a will of its own, as we discover to our detriment later. On the edge of the pack come seals and whales with Crab Eater Seals and Minke Whales being the most common. Of course, there are many other sightings including Fin Whales, Humpbacks and Orcas as well as the mysterious and rare Ross Seal. There aren't lots of species down here but what is lacking in variety is compensated for by the enormous number of critters. Life in the freezer is tough and evolution has only come up with a limited

number of successful designs Humans not being one of them.

The wind is beginning to howl through the ships spars and the sea foaming as we head on to Detaille Island where we make a rough and ready landing. Here, until recently, is a long deserted outpost of the British Antarctic survey. It is currently being restored and a Post Office has reopened. Mrs Morgan has bought stamps and postcards and sent them to herself. Peter I Ø is the next stop and a rare one at that. We use helicopters to get us ashore and now number amongst the 600 or so people that have ever set foot on the island. The first landing here was only in 1929. The choppers land us on a snow plateau about 200m above a black volcanic beach and on this particular spot it is very likely that no other human has been as all landings until now have been restricted to the rocky shores.

On through the Belingshausen and Amundsen Seas enjoying sightings of all pelagic creatures. The birds, whales, penguins and seals are magnificent in their indifference to us and the harsh conditions. A blizzard and minus 10° is just another day at the office for them.

Continued on page 6.



Gentoo Penguins

© Graham Morgan 2013



Lemaire Channel, Antarctica

© Graham Morgan 2013

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The Ross Sea is our objective and that "living ice" has developed a bad attitude. The calm is eerie and the multi year ice, strengthened by pressure ridges is blocking our entry, we are unwelcome trespassers here. We continue to push through the outskirts of the sea ice searching for an entry point, moving forward painfully slowly, at a speed that grandpa would ride his push bike. The satellite ice charts prove to be less than reliable and our goal of entering the Ross Sea is slipping away. It will be time that beats us. Another thousand nautical miles further on than planned we are granted tenuous entry and commence grinding south through the pack. The ice is still thick multi year ice but graciously allows us to inch forward. Ice conditions improve overnight and the thick 3 metre multi year ice gives way to more navigable 1 metre annual ice. It is another three days before the ship is released from this icy grip, breaking through the final shards into the open waters of the Ross Sea. It's "Happy Hour" tonight and the bar is well attended. It will be another 36 hours before we arrive at Ross Island following a similar course to polar icons such as Scott and Shackleton. I'm alone and rugged up on deck, thinking about those intrepid souls and am pleased to be on a small ship deep in Antarctic waters.

Arriving at Cape Evans and Scott's "Terra Nova" Hut in another blizzard, it's cold, minus 31° with wind chill and I'm wearing everything I have with me. The constant light reminds me that it's still mid summer. This is a shivering wilderness where penguins and seals thrive, little wonder it was the last continent to

be explored. I can't help but think how artificial our presence is here, we need to bring everything with us, nothing is a given in these latitudes.

Antarctica is the only place on earth where the first human dwellings are still in existence and we visit Shackleton's Hut at Cape Royds and Scotts Discovery Hut at Hut Point. Shackleton's is the most atmospheric and a moving experience with

memories of courage, endurance, tragedy and incredible achievement. Also at Cape Royds is the worlds southernmost penguin colony and you'd be forgiven if you guessed they were Emperors, forgiven but wrong. At 77° 33' south is a bustling Adelie Penguin colony.

We see the great ice barrier, the Ross Ice Shelf, fronted by an 800 km wall of floating ice the size of N.S.W attached to the mainland and rising 50 metres above the ocean. The scale is difficult to comprehend as another 200m of this ice wall lies below the surface. We are nearly 78° south and it's always bright, not sunny but bright, the Sun remains up and with so much daylight the pressure of time is virtually absent. My body clock is seriously messed up but being immersed in the deep silence of Antarctica is an experience like no other I know of.

Northward back across the Ross Sea, through the pack ice and into the wild Southern Ocean with Macquarie Island our next objective, it will take us more than a week to get there. The barometer has been dropping for the last few hours. No, the barometer is in free fall and seems to have hit bottom at 955. In Australia anything below 970 is classified as a cyclone. The clouds are piling up and visibility has dropped, the seas have become peaky and the common rooms of the ship are deserted. Everything between the sky and the sea is now white

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 from swirling snow and spray. Waves crash over the bow and fill the fore-deck, heavy spray is driving up another 15 metres over the top of the bridge and wind is now gusting to 70 knots. We are side on to a 12 metre swell with some much larger waves. It's a force 11 gale and whilst it might be mid morning it's bed time for this little black duck. Forecast is for seven more days of this atrocious weather, such joy! Mrs Morgan has firmly stated never again but she always says that. I have reassured her in that it's only another 4000 nautical miles. Sadly, the forecast was correct and it's been a pig of a crossing and I can't wait for Macquarie Island and some time ashore with the wildlife not to mention a little shelter. We are days behind time because of this foul weather. With howling winds and seething walls of water closing out the sky our tiny ship is dwarfed by the elements. It's a levelling experience.

With ice still in sight, albatross have begun to appear and the first I see is a Light Mantled Sooty. It's warmer now with the temperature only a few



Gentoo Penguins at Pleneau Island

© Graham Morgan 2013

degrees below zero but the wind chill makes it feel far colder. It's been a heavy ice year and without choppers we would have failed to achieve many of our objectives. Even so we were unable to reach Cape Adare which houses the largest Adelie Penguin colony in Antarctica. I guess I'll have to come back for that one. After eight days of getting beaten up in the Southern Ocean we arrive at Macquarie Island, always an amazing destination. The weather is good and we land at the ABARE Base, Sandy Bay and we are also lucky enough to visit Lusitania Bay. The latter two house enormous colonies of penguins and the interactions with these creatures is very close and

moving. The days are much shorter now with the sun setting around 10.00pm, the seas have settled and the next stop is the port of Bluff in New Zealand. Approaching the Campbell rise, a few hundred nautical miles south of Bluff, Wandering and Shy Albatross are our constant companions. By the time we arrive in Bluff we will have sailed around 12,000 km.



Scott's Terra Nova Hut

© Graham Morgan 2013

Banding recoveries in the 21st century

Text and photos by Brook Whyllie

Bird banding for scientific purposes has been carried out since the late 19th century. Metal bands, with numbers and an address, were standard, but required the bird to be in the hand to read the number. Banding recoveries have remained largely unchanged since this time, however in the early 2000's plastic bands (Darvic bands, after the brand name of the manufacturer) became more widely used.

Darvic bands have the advantage of being readable without the bird in hand. For albatrosses there are large, 3 field, multi-coloured darvic's now being used, with a metal band on the other leg. These are required as the darvic bands are not as durable as metal bands.

Darvic bands, as well as being more easily read, are also more easily photographed. This has the advantage of being able to record the birds plumage, as well as the band number. There have also been a number of times where bands have not been noticed until examining photos after the event.

These advantages have been shown in a number of recent trips where the banded bird was not able to be captured, yet photographs managed to record the identity of the bird, proving the value of researchers use of darvic bands.



Above: An Antipodean Albatross, 030, which was photographed off Wollongong July 2013. It was not recaptured.



Above: A Black-browed Albatross, '856', which was banded on Macquarie Island. Photographed off Wollongong, August 2013. It was not recaptured.

Left: Antipodean Albatross, '958', taken from Ulladulla in July 2009. This bird was not recaptured either.



Another Green Turtle in Lake Illawarra - a testament to a much cleaner waterway

The recent capture of a very healthy immature female Green Turtle at Lake Illawarra on Saturday August 10th 2013 is a clear indication of the improved water quality of the lake in the past 30+? years. The permanent opening of the lakes entrance has allowed tidal flow and with it, improved growth of the sea grasses.

This is the second recovery of a healthy Green Turtle from the lake in the past months. See previous article in Newsletter No 51.

Another Green Turtle was caught and released back into the lake in 2012.

Many people remain unaware of the presence of marine turtles in estuaries and bays along the south east coast of NSW.

Over the past decades SOSSA its members and associated groups have recorded many marine turtles including Green, Hawksbill, Logger-head and Flat-backed Turtles from Wollongong in the north to Narooma on the south coast of NSW.

Green Turtles are the most frequently encountered species is being reported from estuaries and beaches.

Hawksbill, Logger-head and Flat-backed Turtles have been recovered only from beaches (Sick or injured) or sighted at sea.

Measurements, of this latest Green Turtle:
Weight 12.37kg. Carapace 48cm long by 46cm wide. Flipper overall 28cm.

Masked Booby off Wollongong - November 2013

One of the highlights of the November 2013 SOSSA trip was a juvenile Masked Booby. Masked Booby's are uncommon off Wollongong, with this sighting being only the 2nd on SOSSA Wollongong trips, the first being in May 2003.



Photos: Brook Whylic

The following day, 24th November 2013, Port Stephens also had a juvenile Masked Booby sighting.

To complete the records from SOSSA trips, there was also a sighting of an adult Masked Booby on the April 2007 Ulladulla *M.V. Banks* trip.



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SEABIRD STUDY
ASSOCIATION INC.**

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New Members...

**Dr Harvey Perkins
Pauline & Mark Duncan
Robert King
Leo Berzins
Roef Mulder
Penny Beaver
Stuart Meredith**

NEXT SOSSA MEETING

22nd March 2014

**held at HQ. – 6.30 pm
10 Jenkins Street - Unanderra,
NSW.**

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

PELAGIC TRIP PRICES 2013

Members \$ 80.00

Visitors \$ 100.00

Australian Dollars

**Note: Some trips are
strictly for research and
will have limited num-
bers!**

WOLLONGONG PELAGIC BOAT TRIP DIARY DATES 2014

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

25th January (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**
22nd February (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**
22nd March (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**
25th April (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**
24th May (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**
28th June (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**
26th July (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**
23rd August (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**

23rd August (Saturday)

SOSSA AGM – 6.30pm

24th August (Sunday) **WOLLONGONG**
27th September (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**
25th October (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**
26th October (Sunday) **WOLLONGONG**
22nd November (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**
20th December (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**

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

SOSSA's newsletter—The Albatross

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

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

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

We're on the web!
www.sossa-international.org



A Black Petrel being banded on the November 2013 SOSSA pelagic trip. 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!!