



The Albatross

SOUTHERN OCEAN
SEABIRD STUDY
ASSOCIATION INC.

Issue No. 56

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Kiama July 2015 Pelagic Trip -

The Two Boat Trial.

Points of interest:

- The "Two Boat" trial
- Juvenile Giant Petrel released.
- Shearwater 'bumps'.
- Coffs Harbour shearwaters
- Five Islands Update.

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In a first for SOSSA, two separate boats were chartered for this trip. The MV Kiama, a 34ft Steber captained by Trevor Newcombe and the MV Kato, a 37ft Steber captained by Brett Bradbury.

By using the two boats in tandem we were able to present different views of the work that SOSSA does at sea. Work which includes the capture, banding and monitoring seabird populations that occur in or pass through our local waters.

The banding team were stationed on board the MV Kiama with several visitors from France, Chile and South Australia. Our group also included several interested local people from Kiama and the Southern Highlands.

Kiama Independent Newspaper published an article in the local Kiama paper.

[http://](http://www.kiamaindependent.com.au/story/3284925/tourists-fund-bird-research-boat-trips-welcomed/)

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The MV Kiama at the continental shelf, off Kiama.

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Fauna and Marine Parks Association Inc.



Banding Recoveries

An immature Black-browed Albatross, banded on Macquarie Island, Lat: 54 Deg 30 min 0 sec South Long: 158 Deg 55 0 sec East as a chick on March 18th 2015 by the Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment Albatross and Petrel Programme.

It was recovered at sea off Kiama, six months and nine days after the initial banding date. The bird had moved a distance of 2,292km on a bearing of 341deg.



SOSSA member Darryl McKay with Black-browed Albatross 121-52361.
Photo: Brook Whyllie

The bird was banded with ABBBS band No 121-52361 and was recovered alive and well. It was released with the band at sea off Kiama on September 27th 2015.

This is our most recent recovery of a Black-browed albatross known to have been banded as chick on Macquarie Island.

Others are:

121-49213 was banded as a chick 17-03-2013 on Macquarie Island. The bird was recovered at sea off Wollongong NSW on July 7th 2013

121-49057 Banded as a chick March 2009 at Macquarie Island. This bird was recovered alive and well at sea off Wollongong July 7th 2013.

The Black-browed Albatross population on Macquarie Island is very small and consisted of only 38 breeding pairs in 1995 (Gales 1998) In 1998/99 the annual population was 45 pairs (Recovery Plan For Albatrosses and Giant Petrels, 2001).

SOSSA has recovered Black-browed Albatrosses from breeding grounds in the South Atlantic Ocean, the South Indian Ocean and New Zealand waters.

DONATIONS



Thank you to the people below for their very kind donations over \$100.

Donations are integral to allowing the continuation of the valuable work on our precious wildlife. So thanks again to:

- 2015-2016**
- MICHAEL KENNEY**
- Humane Society International**
- ROSLYN HANSON**
- ALAN & ELIZABETH ROGERS**
- ROSLYN HANSON (yes twice!)**



PELAGIC REPORTS

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

Pelagic reports will no longer be printed with the newsletter.

You will need check the reports on the web site .

Water Police Release Juvenile Giant Petrel

An endangered Southern Giant Petrel at Port Kembla, NSW

On June 5th. an immature Southern Giant Petrel was rescued from the surf by a local surfer and wildlife carer with the Wildlife Information Rescue Education Services (WIRES).

Having had little experience with seabirds Anne Marie contacted Betty of the Australian Seabird Rescue, South Coast. Betty responded immediately and collected the bird from Anne Marie at Metal Manufactures Beach, Port Kembla. Having cared for Giant Petrels previously Betty settled the bird down in the recovery aviary and contacted SOSSA for advice. The bird was then assessed for injury.

Before being weighed and measured the bird, a recently fledged juvenile, appeared to be very tired and hungry. Weighing just 2.6 kg she was well below the normal weight of an average female (3.8 kg)

Once settled into her confines, the little bird was put on a on a rich diet, being fed a mixture of steak and coarse minced chicken. She was also offered whole Pilchards and Red-spot Whiting. These she rejected, literally throwing them away. The bird consumed almost a kilo of food a day during two feeding sessions and she soon gained weight. With rest and some exercise she soon recovered condition. After five days in care, with a clean bill of health, she was escorted back to sea off Port Kembla by the local Water Police.

She was released into the company of another Giant Petrel (species not determined) and a Black-browed Albatross. She was last seen fighting for possession of a recently moribund Giant Cuttlefish. "Mimmi" named after M.M Beach. (Metal Manufacturers) from where she was originally rescued five days earlier.

We tagged her with her very own individual stainless steel identity bracelet. Inscribed. Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme, Band. No 132 08605. Hopefully this is not the last we hear of her. Local television station WIN Television and the Illawarra Mercury reported the good news of the birds release.

Thank you to all who assisted in this successful rescue of an endangered Giant Petrel.

Special thanks go to our local Water Police at Port Kembla for assistance with this release.

Every individual is important to an endangered population or species.



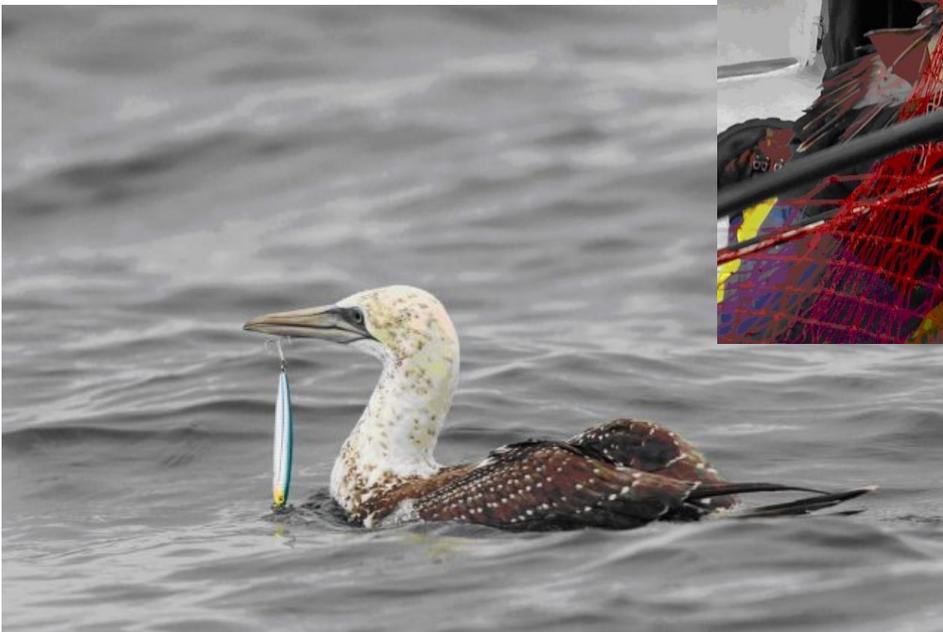
Gannet Rescued - Kiama

By Lindsay E. Smith

Sunday 23rd August 2015

Kayak rider Rob Rixon phoned Brett on the MV Kato reporting an injured Australasian Gannet with a fishing lure in its beak and the bird was entangled in the braided fishing line!

Fortunately for the poor bird, we were able to capture it and remove the lure and fishing line. The bird was checked for injuries before being released at sea.



Above: Darryl with the Gannet after capture.

Left: The Gannet, with lure, prior to capture.

White-headed Petrel Forced Inland

A White-headed Petrel *Pterodroma lessoni* was forced inland on the first day of a torrential rain event, which inundated the NSW South Coast with 350 mm in 48 hours! It was found inland on a river bank, well away from the sea, on January 4th 2016 at Narrengela on the South Coast of NSW. Lat: 36 06 25 S 149 53 48E.

Unfortunately due to flooded rivers it was impossible to get the bird into critical care for almost a week. Although Sue and Laurie tried their utmost to save the bird, it later died. The specimen was sent to the Australian Museum.



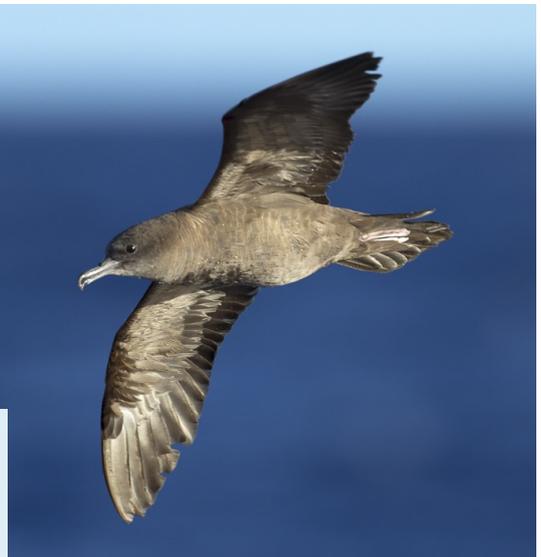
Above: White-headed Petrel.
Photo: Sue

Shearwater abdominal bumps – eggs or something more sinister? Text and photos by Rob Hyson

On the March 2015 2-day south-east Queensland seamount pelagic, I photographed both a Wedge-tailed Shearwater and a Flesh-footed Shearwater exhibiting noticeable bumps in their lower abdomen. Interestingly, the first photos of Mascarene Petrel taken at sea also shows a similar bump and the authors believed this represented an egg bump. They theorised that the Mascarene Petrel photographed was about to lay an egg. As such, their photo revealed important information about the breeding cycle of this critically endangered species. Interestingly, the date the Mascarene Petrel was photographed with an egg bump was more than a month later than the end of the egg laying period. Was this really an egg bump?

The bumps in the lower abdomen of the Mascarene Petrel in their photo look similar to both the Wedge-tailed and Flesh-footed Shearwaters' bumps in my photos. However, both species of shearwaters would be finishing their breeding cycles at this time of year. As with many seabirds, both species of shearwaters have highly synchronised breeding cycles. They both lay eggs at the end of November and would not be about to lay an egg 4 months after the end of their short laying period.

If the bumps in the two shearwater photos are not due to eggs, what is causing them, and can we be sure that the bumps exhibited in the Mascarene Petrel photos are necessarily due to an egg? Ingested plastic that has become lodged inside the digestive track of a bird could cause such bumps. Many seabirds have large amount of plastics inside them due to ingestion so this is a reasonable alternative explanation for these bumps. Another alternative explanation for these bumps is that they are caused by a disease state such as a tumour or an enlarged organ. The only conclusive ways to determine the cause of these bumps would be to examine a live bird using radiographs and ultrasound examination or to perform a post-mortem on a dead bird. This coming season our SOSSA banders will be keeping a close eye on shearwaters with the hope of uncovering the mystery of these interesting belly bumps.



Above: Wedge-tailed Shearwater.

Left: Flesh-footed Shearwater

Thumpers Burrow

Text and photos by Narelle Swanson

The story of Thumpers burrow is a story about a Wedge-tailed Shearwater chick that was raised on Muttonbird Island, Coffs Harbour in 2003.

Burrows around the raised walkway at the western end of the island have been a good location for our recapture and monitoring of shearwater adults and chicks, as it was easily accessible to us but unlikely that burrows would be damaged by other visitors.

2002-2003 Season

The female parent 16257231 wasn't captured at egg laying but is presumed to have laid about the 28th November. On 30 November 2002 male 16257216 (M16) weighed 440g and was incubating the egg. The burrow on the southern side of the walkway was later to be identified as Thumpers Burrow. The male was with the chick on 18th January 2003. The chick weighed 36g and M16 just 320g. Two nights later the chick was alone and appeared not to have been fed as it was 31g. Then on 24th January it weighed 72g and 100g on the 27th.

We continued to monitor this chick's weight and the surprise came about two weeks later, on 12th February when it weighed a whopping 360g. This is as heavy as a normal adult, hence the nickname Thumper. Weighed every four or five days, the maximum weight recorded was 515g on 19th March. Over the next 20 days Thumpers weight kept dropping till on 9th April it was again 360g. Then presumably both parents made one last visit. On the 13th weight had increased to 400g and on 17th 450g. From then the weight steadily declined and on 27th April it was again 360g and the bird had lost all its down feathers. Thumper then waited another two nights and was sitting at the burrow entrance ready to fly at 330g on 29th April 2003.

Right: Thumper on 5th February 2003.

Subsequent History of Thumpers Burrow.

2003-2004 Season.

After sheltering Thumper for some 101 days, the original burrow which was oriented north south was still intact the next season. From August burrows and birds were monitored every four or five nights. The female was found with another male in the burrow on 5th September. Male M16 must have arrived late. On 12th September both Thumpers parents were together again in the same burrow. They continued to occupy the burrow and both were in the burrow for egg laying on the 27th November. The female had not laid and was 450g. The next night with the egg laid she was 380g. The burrow was empty on inspection in January.

2004-2005 Season

This was a good season for food with many birds and there was competition for burrows. Thumpers parents were together in the burrow early on the 6th and 7th of September 2004. This was their only occupation. Pair Male 16257806 female 1625707 had found the burrow to their liking on the 28th August, the male had occupied the burrow on 3rd September. Both were frequently found in the burrow. The female was found to have laid on the 25th November, last captured 2 nights later on the 27th at 330g. The egg did not survive.



2005-2006 Season

A couple of early birds occupied the burrow in August over a couple of nights. Male M16 arrived on 30th August, but was only captured on the surface outside the burrow. The female was not captured till 23rd October and then only outside the burrow. Obviously arriving too late to breed that season and the burrow lost. The burrow occupancy was not as simple as one pair of birds taking over the burrow. There were five males and four females recorded using the burrow. There was also a deviation from the entrance in an east west direction.

A male 16245166 present from 1st to 8th November had in previous seasons been captured about 2 or 3 metres away on the north side of the walkway with female 16245089 (F89) in 2003. The female (F89) was found for the first time that season in the burrow ready to lay on 26th November 2005. The egg was found cold and deserted on 3rd December. That was the end of Thumpers burrow and the relationship of Thumpers parents, as the original female has not been recaptured since.

2006-2007 season

Female F89 was still in the area.

2008-2009 season

Three seasons later male M16 reappeared back in the same area now with female F89. The new burrow entrance was almost the same place as Thumpers burrow. On 18th January 2009 female F89 was found with Canon, a chick named after the camera brand. On 19th January Canon was 70g. The male M16 was found with the chick on 1st February. The maximum weight recorded for Canon was 540g on 10th March and last weighed at 360g on 5th April 2009.

2009-2010 season

Both M16 and F89 were again found pre egg laying suggesting a continuing partnership.

2010-2011 season

Both found but on separate occasions this season. How long this relationship lasted is unknown. Reduced research visits has meant less opportunity to recapture birds.



Thumper on 12th February 2003.

2013

The last recapture of M16 was November 2013, interestingly weighing only 350g.

2015

Young shearwaters first return to the island four to six season after fledging and are often found in about the same area as the natal burrow. Thumper surprised us on 19th August 2015, 13 seasons since fledging. It weighed 360g and was found on the surface on the north side of the walkway, about 10 metres from the natal burrow site.

On 21st September 2015 we notice a couple of birds digging a new burrow. Thumper had a partner. Judging by weight, it looks like Thumper could be a female. The chances that Thumpers new burrow will survive a full season is doubtful, it is in poor soil, lots of stone and has grass vegetation. However it will be easy to monitor, which we will try to do.

It is quite possible that Thumper has been breeding over the last six or seven seasons, but outside our regular capture zone. Most adults appear to keep returning to the same location, only shifting a couple of metres because of competition for burrow space, but the situation may

be changing. In the last two seasons there have been examples of adults being captured 20 metres away from the past locations. Over the last 15 breeding seasons we have observed very low breeding success and a decline in the number of burrows due to rodent activity on the island. As a consequence, there are now fewer adults and they may be forced to move to find partners.

This story has been pieced together from a review of observations, records and the collective recapture data for individual birds over sixteen breeding seasons. What it shows is that Wedge-tailed Shearwaters are not mated for life. Burrows are not used exclusively by one pair of birds, even within a breeding season. Quality burrows survive for maybe three seasons, with several pairs of birds contributing to the digging.

P.S. Canons contemporary Pig Face turned up last season maybe there will be more to this story in the future.



Thumper - 24 April 2003

Five Islands Nature Reserve - Seabird Habitat Restoration on Big Island

NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service are currently conducting follow up aerial spraying of weeds on Big Island, the largest island in the Five Islands group off Port Kembla, NSW.

A team of volunteers. "Friends of the Five Islands" have begun planting in the recently sprayed area, in an effort to establish habitat in which seabirds can breed. Numbers of seabirds breeding on the Five Islands have significantly declined over the past 50 years.



A series of photos showing a Wedge-tailed Shearwater chick entangled by Kikuyu Grass. Photos: L. Smith

This decline is thought to be due largely to problems caused by exotic weeds and the arrival and colonisation of species of birds not previously known to breed on the Five Islands.





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ASSOCIATION INC.

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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.

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

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

New Members...

John Dun
Allan Richardson
John Usher
Tony Bischoff

NEXT SOSSA MEETING

27th August 2016 AGM
6.30 pm Saturday
held at HQ
Plus Sausage Sizzle
10 Jenkins Street - Unanderra.
NSW.
We only supply the Coffee or Tea!!!

PELAGIC TRIP

PRICES 2016

Current price is:

Members: \$130

Visitors: \$130

Australian Dollars

Price is subject to change.

BOOKING NOTE:
Please be sure to add your contact phone/mobile number, plus the names of any additional passengers.

Thank You.

WOLLONGONG/KIAMA PELAGIC BOAT TRIP DIARY DATES 2016

**** Please Book Early As Trips Fill

Up Very Quickly ****

23rd April (Saturday) KIAMA 7.30am-4.00pm
28th May (Saturday) KIAMA 7.30am-4.00pm
25th June (Sunday) KIAMA 7.30am-4.00pm
23rd July (Saturday) KIAMA 7.30am-4.00pm
27th August (Sat.) KIAMA 7.30am-4.00pm
27th August (Sat.) SOSSA AGM – 6.30pm
28th August (Sunday) KIAMA 7.30am-4.00pm
24th September (Sat.) KIAMA 7.30am-4.00pm
29th September (Thursday) KIAMA TBC
7.30am-4.00pm Bird Tours SA MV Kiama ?
17th October (Monday) KIAMA TBC
7.30am-4.00pm Inala Nature Tours MV Kato?
18th October (Tuesday) KIAMA TBC
7.30am-4.00pm Eagle-Eye Tours
22nd October (Sat.) KIAMA 7.30am-4.00pm
23rd October (Sun.) KIAMA 7.30am-4.00pm
26th November (Sat.) KIAMA 7.30am-4.00pm
27th November (Sun.) KIAMA 7.30am-4.00pm
17th December (Sat.) KIAMA 7.30am-4.00pm
*Addition Dates will be added to the

Website

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

SOSSA's newsletter—The Albatross

Due to circumstances beyond our control, Issue 56 of *The Albatross* has been delayed. The editors apologise for the inconvenience.

The next edition will be available in May.

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!!