

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

Birds of New Zealand - Locality Guide. 3rd edn.

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Bullers mollymawk (albatross): pp 29-30.



### BULLERS MOLLYMAWK

**Family** Diomedidae

**Species** *Thalassarche bulleri*

**Common name** Bullers Mollymawk

**Status** Endemic

**Abundance** Common

**Size** 750 mm – 800 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, larger than Yellow-nosed and smaller than Shy Mollymawk)

**Subspecies** Two subspecies are recognised. They are Northern Bullers Mollymawk (*T. b. platei*) and Southern Bullers Mollymawk (*T. b. bulleri*).

**Breeding islands close to New Zealand** Northern Bullers Mollymawk (*T. b. platei*) Three Kings Islands and Chatham Islands. Southern Bullers Mollymawk (*T. b. bulleri*) Snares Island and Solander Island.

**Breeding months** Northern Bullers Mollymawk (*T. b. platei*) October to June. Southern Bullers Mollymawk (*T. b. bulleri*) January to October.

**Range worldwide** Restricted to seas from around New Zealand to South America.

**New Zealand range** Northern Bullers Mollymawk (*T. b. platei*) out of the breeding season it is seen right around New Zealand. In particular it is seen around Stewart Island and Foveaux Strait and up the east coast to Hawke Bay.

Southern Buller's Mollusc-eater (*T. b. bulleri*) ranges around southern seas of the South Island. Often seen close to land.

### **Description – mature bird**

**Head** Grey, with a silvery grey cap on Northern Buller's and silvery white cap on Southern Buller's. Has a dark patch through upper eye. **Upperwings and back** Black wings connecting a blackish grey back. **Rump** White. **Underwings** White, with a cleanly defined thickish black leading edge and a thin black trailing edge. **Underparts** White. **Tail** White, with broad dark grey tip. **Bill** Black-sided with bright yellow edges to top and bottom. The bill of Northern Buller's Mollusc-eater is slightly heavier.

### **Conspicuous features**

- A handsome bird when sitting on the water.
- Smaller on the water when compared with the Grey-headed and the Shy.
- Bill similar to Grey-headed with bright yellow edges and black sides.
- Generally similar to the Grey-headed Mollusc-eater but has the distinctive silvery white or silvery grey crown.

### **Where to find – South Island**

**Wellington** – Cook Strait Grey headed birds seen here are probably Buller's and not Grey-headed.

**North Canterbury** – Kaikoura Regularly seen from sea bird excursions. P. 345.

**Otago Peninsula** – Tairaroa Seen from distantly from Tairaroa Heads in rough weather. P. 361.

**Otago Peninsula** – Cape Saunders Often seen from land here. P. 361.

**Southland** – Curio Bay Sometimes seen from land here. P. 364.

**Southland** – Bluff Regularly seen out to sea after January. P. 365.

### **Where to find – Stewart Island**

**Foveaux Strait** – Regularly seen out from Half Moon Bay in deeper water but seldom before January. P. 367.

**Ackers Point** – A telescope set up here in windy weather can spot both Buller's and Shy Mollusc-eaters. Watch for the birds behind incoming fishing boats. P. 367.

## **ALBATROSSES**

### **From Page 19**

“Albatrosses, Petrels and Shearwaters of the World”, by Derek Onley and Paul Scofield (2007), lists 13 species and subspecies of albatross for New Zealand waters. These are likely to be seen if the time of year is right for that species. This makes New Zealand an important seabird venue.

**Note about names** In New Zealand the species of albatross which have white backs, the Wandering Albatross and the Royal Albatross, are called albatrosses. The other species and subspecies in the family Diomedidae, all with black upperwings and black backs, are called mollymawks. The Sooty and Light-mantled Sooty Albatrosses, in the genus *Phoebetria*, retain the name albatross.

**Mainland nesting sites** Only one species of albatross, the Northern Royal Albatross (*Diomedea sanfordi*), nests on mainland New Zealand. All the other species nest on offshore islands from the Chatham Islands south to the Campbell Islands.

**“Beach-wrecked” birds** Birds collected by members from the Ornithological Society of New Zealand over many years, indicate that all the albatrosses listed here are found in waters right around New Zealand. Auckland west coast beaches, for example, have provided dead birds of all listed species.

Although these birds range widely, they are only in northern waters during the winter months. Generally they do not come close to the shoreline, but during rough weather, Wandering Albatrosses have been known to enter Auckland Harbour near Rangitoto Island, and are recorded in Wellington Harbour. The southern waters, from Cook Strait south, provide the best opportunities to view these birds as they are closer to the breeding grounds.

**Note** Permission is required from the Department of Conservation to visit most of the seabird nesting islands.

**Seabird places and excursions ideas** Seabird excursions and land-based seabird sighting place are recorded in the back of the book – Sandspit excursions, P 289; Kaikoura excursions, P 345; land sites, P 376.