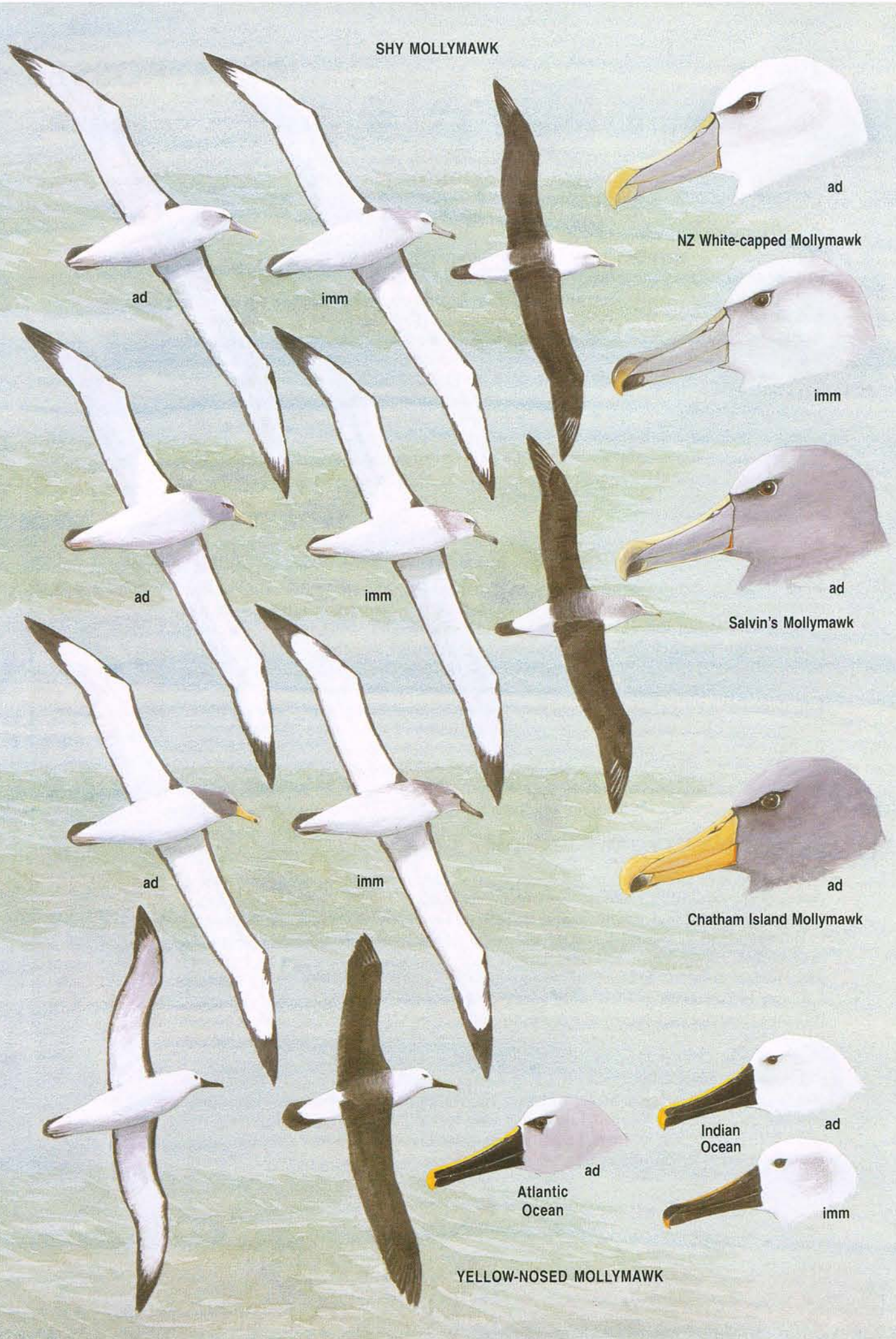


Huge ('albatrosses') or very large ('mollymawks') seabirds with long narrow wings and short tail. Long heavy hooked bill covered with horny plates, nostrils in small tubes on the sides near the base. Most are dark above and mainly white below. Pattern of upperwing, underwing, head and bill are distinctive. In flight, soar gracefully on stiffly held wings, and only rarely flap. Clumsy on ground; legs and webbed feet set well back. Generally oceanic; occasionally seen near land. Many follow ships or gather around fishing boats. Silent at sea except when fighting over food. Loud bleats, croaks, whines and cackles at breeding colonies, and elaborate displays accompanied by bill-clapping and calls. Lay 1 large white egg in shallow bowl or on top of pedestal constructed of vegetation and mud. Long incubation period and extremely long fledging period (7–11 months for full breeding cycle). Sexes alike but males larger. Juveniles generally distinctive for several years.

YELLOW-NOSED MOLLYMAWK *Diomedea chlororhynchos* **Uncommon visitor**

75 cm, 2.5 kg. Small slender mollymawk. Adult has white head with small dark eye patch, sometimes with grey cheeks; neck, underparts and rump white; back, upperwings and tail black; underwings white with black tips and thin clear-cut black margins, wider on leading than trailing edge. *Bill slender (117 mm), black with yellow ridge deepening to reddish orange at the tip.* Immature similar but eye patch smaller; hindneck is washed grey; leading margin of underwing is broader and less clear-cut; *bill completely black.* **Habitat:** Breeds on islands in South Atlantic and South Indian Oceans. Ranges widely through warm subantarctic and subtropical waters, and a few regularly reach the Tasman Sea, Hauraki Gulf and Bay of Plenty, mostly in winter. [Sp 13]



ALBATROSSES

Diomedidae

14 species, 11 with breeding restricted to the Southern Hemisphere and 3 in the North Pacific.* In the New Zealand region, 10 species have been recorded including 2 endemic species and 5 other breeding species.

identifying beach-wrecked specimens, but at sea the head colour and pattern of black on the wings is also important to note.

Albatrosses and mollymawks (the common name in New Zealand for smaller albatrosses) are a clearly defined group of very large seabirds belonging to the tube-nosed petrel order (Procellariiformes). Although they are among the largest of all flying birds, albatrosses are noted for their perfection of soaring flight behind boats and among the tempestuous seas of the southern oceans. In strong winds, they wheel effortlessly on very long, narrow and stiffly held wings for hours, but in almost calm conditions they have a flapping flight and more usually rest on the surface until the wind picks up. Their webbed feet are used for swimming and as rudders in flight, especially when coming in to land.

They nest in loose colonies, mainly on uninhabited and often inaccessible islands of the southern oceans. At their breeding grounds they have an elaborate series of displays accompanied by neighs, groans, baahs, wails, croaks, cackles, and bill-snapping and clapping. All species lay 1 white egg, usually in a shallow depression on top of a pedestal ('chimney pot') made of vegetation and mud. Incubation takes 66–83 days. Nestlings are downy and take many months to reach flying age. With this long breeding cycle, some species can nest only every second year if they have bred successfully.

Albatrosses have long bills with a strongly hooked tip and small, raised tubular nostrils on either side near the base. The shape and colour of the bill plates can be useful in

Albatrosses feed mainly on various squids, fish and offal, on or close to the surface. Some species are readily attracted to boats and follow them for hours, occasionally alighting to pick up scraps cast overboard or food disturbed in the wake. Some are especially attracted to fishing boats, and in recent years several species have suffered high mortality from being drowned in trawl nets or after

taking baited fish-hooks on tuna long-lines. Research is under way to develop new methods to reduce seabird by-catch problems. **Reading:** Harrison, P. 1987. *Seabirds of the World: a photographic guide*. London: Christopher Helm. Harrison, P. 1988. *Seabirds: an identification guide*.

London: Christopher Helm. Murphy, R.C. 1936. *Oceanic Birds of South America*. New York: MacMillan. Serventy, D.L. et al. 1971. *The Handbook of Australian Sea-birds*. Sydney: Reed. Warham, J. 1990. *The Petrels: their ecology and breeding systems*. London: Academic Press.

13. YELLOW-NOSED MOLLYMAWK

Diomedea chlororhynchos **Plate 4**

Size: 75 cm, 2.5 kg
Geographical variation: Two subspecies: *chlororhynchos* in the South Atlantic, and *carteri* in the South Indian Ocean. Most Yellow-nosed Albatrosses seen in New Zealand waters are *carteri*, but the nominate subspecies has been recorded three times.
Distribution: Breed on islands in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans between 37 and 47°S and range through the South Atlantic and South Indian Oceans and east to southern Australia and New Zealand. Both adults and juveniles have recently become regular winter visitors to warm coastal waters off eastern Northland, the Hauraki Gulf and the Bay of Plenty, where they often loosely associate with Australasian Gannets. They are occasionally reported off

the South Island, especially at Tasman Bay and Kaikoura. South Atlantic birds prospected on Middle Sister Island, Chathams in 1975, 1976 and 1996. Indian Ocean birds bred on The Pyramid, Chathams, 1998–2000.
Feeding: Diet has not been studied in New Zealand, but elsewhere it is mainly fish and squid, with some fish scavenged from fishing boats. Prey is mainly seized on the surface, but birds occasionally plunge or dive for food.
In the hand: The nominate subspecies has a prominent black triangle around and in front of the eye, and the culmen broadens behind the nares and is rounded, not pointed, at the base.
Reading: Latham, P.C. 1980. *Notornis* 27: 393–394. Robertson, C.J.R. 1975. *Notornis* 22: 342–344.