

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Chatham Island (albatross): pp 26-27.



CHATHAM ISLAND MOLLYMAWK

Family Diomedidae

Species *Thalassarche eremita*

Common name Chatham Island Mollymawk

Status Endemic

Abundance Uncommon

Size 900 mm – 1000 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm)

Breeding islands close to New Zealand Pyramid Rock at Chatham Islands.

Breeding months September to April.

Range worldwide Wanders from Chatham Islands eastwards towards South America.

New Zealand range Around the Chatham Islands and westwards to eastern New Zealand.

Description – mature bird

Head and neck Dark grey with dark patch through eye. **Upperwings and back** Grey-black back merging into darker black wings. **Rump** White. **Underparts** White. **Underwings** White, thinly edged with black and with dark primary tips, showing more black than on either the Shy or Salvins. **Tail** White, tipped with a broad band of dark grey. **Bill** Bright yellow, with black patch at end of lower

mandible.

Conspicuous features

- Head and neck are all over dark grey.
- Bill is bright yellow with black tip to lower mandible and this separates it from both the Shy and Salvins.

Conspicuous characteristic

- Seldom seen away from the Chatham Islands.

Where to find – South Island

Kaikoura – Birds are regularly recorded from here. P. 345.

Otago – Taiaroa Heads. Occasional sightings are made from near the Royal Albatross colony. P. 361.

South Otago – Sometimes seen from Nugget Point. P. 362.

Chatham Islands – Pyramid Rock and around the Chathams Islands is the most reliable place to see this bird.

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 *Phoebastria*, 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.