

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Light-mantled sooty albatross: pp 30-31.



LIGHT-MANTLED SOOTY ALBATROSS

Family Diomedidae

Species *Phoebastria palpebrata*

Common name Light-mantled Sooty Albatross

Status Circumpolar

Abundance Uncommon

Size 800 mm - 900 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm)

Breeding islands close to New Zealand Auckland Islands, Antipodes Island, Campbell Island and Macquarie Island.

Breeding months October to June.

Range worldwide The southern oceans from the south of New Zealand southwards.

New Zealand range Not seen in northern New Zealand waters but occasionally seen in waters to the south of the South Island.

Description – mature bird

Head and throat Sooty-brown. **Upperwings** Dark grey. **Nape to rump** Ash-grey.

Underwing Greyish-brown. **Underparts** Greyish-brown. **Bill** Black, with fleshy blue line on mandible groove. **Eye** Semi-circle of white at rear of eye.

Conspicuous features

- Differs from the Sooty Albatross by lighter tonings on mantle and back.
- Its overall brownish colouring separates it from other albatrosses.

Where to find

Foveaux Strait – There is a small chance of seeing one here and around Stewart Island. P367.

General Not common in New Zealand waters. “Beach wrecked” birds on North Island beaches indicate that it feeds in seas well to the north but birds are seldom seen close to land. The Sooty Albatross (*Phoebetria fusca*) also occasionally turns up among “beach wrecked” birds.

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.