

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Shy mollymawk (albatross): pp 24-25.



### SHY MOLLYMAWK

**Family** Diomedidae

**Species** *Thalassarche cauta*

**Common name** Shy Mollymawk (a name it is said to have acquired because of its habit of being shy about gliding behind ships)

**Other name** White-capped Mollymawk

**Status** Endemic

**Abundance** Common in southern waters

**Size** 900 mm - 1000 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm, smaller than a Royal Albatross but larger than Bullers Mollymawk)

**Breeding islands close to New Zealand** Auckland Island and Antipodes Island.

**Breeding months** September to April.

**Range worldwide** Ranges to South Africa between the 40th to the 55th parallel.

**New Zealand range** Ranges around New Zealand and west to Australia and into the Indian Ocean.

#### **Description – mature bird**

**Head** White, with a black shadow in front of eye. Sometimes grey mottling

on cheeks. **Upperwing** Black. **Back** Grey-black back, merging into darker grey. **Underwings** White with thin black edging and black primary tips. **Neck and rump** White. **Underparts** White. **Tail** White, tipped with a broad band of dark grey. **Bill** Grey with yellowish top and tip.

#### **Conspicuous features**

- Look for whitish head cap. (Some birds may have greyish cheeks.)
- Underwing is clean white with narrow black edges.
- Length of wing appears longer than other mollymawks.

#### **Conspicuous characteristics**

- Has a habit of coming in behind fishing boats and looking for fish scraps.
- Will alight on the water and feed.

#### **Where to find – North Island**

Recorded from “beach wrecks” along much of the coastline in particular on west coast beaches.

#### **Where to find – South Island**

**Wellington** – Cook Strait from Cook Strait ferry.

**Otago Peninsula** – Cape Saunders. P. 361.

**Otago Peninsula** – Taiaroa Heads from the car park. P. 361.

**Southland** – Bluff from Stirling Hill near Bluff township. P. 365.

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

**Foveaux Strait** – A common species in these waters. It comes in close to Half Moon Bay on Stewart Island often following boats into the port. Good views can be had from Ackers Point on the south arm of Half Moon Bay. 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 *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.