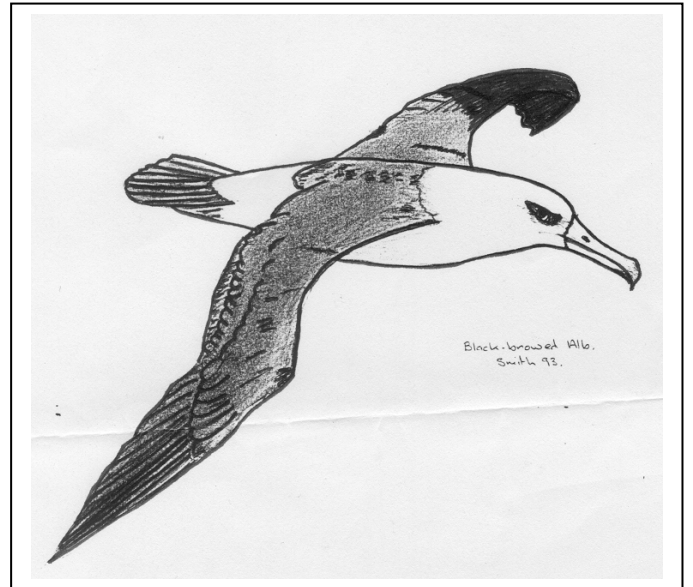


Southern Oceans
Seabird Study
Association Inc.

" Wildlife Studies "



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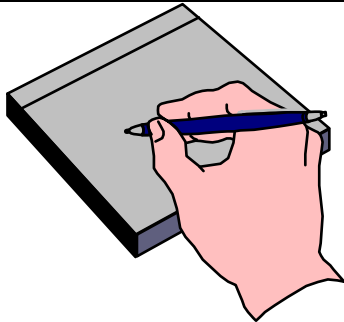
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ISSUE - No. 27

“ ALBATROSS “

NEWSLETTER JUNE 2002

Issue No. 27



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CONTENTS

Page: 2	Contents
Page: 2	A Note From The Editor
Page: 2	Wedge-tailed Shearwater at sea
Page: 2/3/4	The Five Islands Report
Page: 4	Albatross – NSWASG - Report
Page: 4	Interesting Band Recoveries
Page: 5	Our Oldest Wanderer
Page:5	Whales, Dolphins, Seals & Sea Monsters
Page:5/6	Wollongong Boat Trip Report
Page: 6	Cape Solander Whale Watch Report
Page: 6/7	“ On The Hook “ – Ross Hunter
Page: 7	Visitors To SOSSA
Page: 7	SOSSA Annual General Meeting
Page: 7	Whale Watching Tours
Page: 8	Booking Dates & Contacts - Boat Trips
Page: 9/10	Boat Trip Reports, for: Brisbane, Sydney, Wollongong, Eden, Port Fairy, Newcastle.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Like many organizations and associations we have had a great deal of difficulty in obtaining public liability insurance. For some time it appeared doubtful as to whether or not we would be able to continue to operate. Hence the delay in getting this newsletter out.

I am pleased to be able to report that at last we were successful in securing the necessary insurance cover at a greatly inflated cost and with much reduced benefits and a whole new suite of conditions.

Hopefully the majority these problems are now behind us and we can concentrate on getting back on track for the upcoming year.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater At Sea Project

This summer with the assistance of patrons of the Wollongong Pelagic trips, the SOSSA's at sea study team have been focusing their attention on the Wedge-tailed Shearwater (*Puffinus pacificus*) at sea off Wollongong and Bateman's Bay NSW Australia.

The purpose of this study is to determine the origins, age structure, flock composition and dynamics of the population occurring in our study area during the Austral spring and summer.

The birds arrive in our study area during mid August and depart in April and early May. The Wedge-tailed Shearwater breeds locally on the Five Islands Nature Reserve off Red Point (Hill 60) Port Kembla. Here, long term banding studies of the species have been undertaken since 1958 and these studies continue to this day.

Wedge-tailed Shearwaters are amongst the most abundant seabirds that breed in our region, yet little is known of their population structure. Hopefully our studies over the next few years will give us an insight into the structure our local population.

FIVE ISLANDS REPORT

Lindsay E Smith

Little Penguins

After a slow start the Little Penguins returned to breed on the Islands. There appears to be a significant increase in numbers breeding this season than in the past few seasons, though numbers are still well down on past years. In total this season 195 individuals were captured, of these 74 were re-traps and 121 were new non-banded birds. These were either chicks of the season (46) or birds more than one year old (75). The above birds were captured in our study sites only and are by no means the only penguins breeding on the islands.

Re-trapped birds ranged in age from 1+ years to 13+years of age.

Shearwaters

This season we were again targeting Wedge-tailed Shearwaters for study. The new moon in October

allowed us the opportunity to band a significant number of new birds and recapture many birds previously banded in our study sites on Big Island No1.

This year breeding success was down to less than 5% for the Wedge-tailed Shearwaters. This may have been due to very heavy rains which fell during early February 2002, when eggs were hatching. Burrows have a tendency to flood in many areas and small chicks may drown or die of hypothermia.

Additional to the Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, Short-tailed Shearwaters were recorded breeding in small numbers again this season. A Sooty Shearwater (*Puffinus griseus*) was also present in one of our study sites and appeared to be paired with a Short-tailed Shearwater. The birds were observed mating outside a burrow. The outcome is unknown.

LANDING DIFFICULTY 9.5

On a recent visit to Flinder's Island we planned to check on the hatching success of known eggs of the Sooty Oystercatcher and survey for the presence of other nests with eggs or chicks. As the island had recently been subjected to very high seas (6+ meters) it was expected that many nests and chicks would have been lost.

In the short time allowed we were able to determine, from feeding stations that some quite large chicks were present and they would have to be banded soon or we would miss them!

A quick trip down to Big Islands 1&2 to survey vegetation and Sooty Oystercatchers revealed the presence of a small chick on No1 and an active nest on No 2.

We had planned to leave Big Island at 1600hrs and meet Janice at the Boat Ramp at 1630hrs. Unfortunately engine problems developed and we didn't get in till 1700hrs.

This was to be the start of the problem!

On our return to H.Q. The engine was totally dismantled for repair and service. The local outboard motor dealer advised me that it would be two weeks before we could get parts from the USA!

The dilemma begins! How big are those Sooty Oystercatcher chicks? Can we wait two weeks to band them or will they fledge? Where can we

secure an outboard motor to get back out to them before they fledge beyond our reach?

As unbelievable as it may seem 10 days had passed and we still could not secure another suitable out-board motor.

Peter Wisniewski came to the rescue again. 'Would a 10 Horsepower motor do? I have a new one, which has been serviced and stored away for the past few years, you could use that, if you wish.'

Our prayers had been answered! The very next morning Damien Stanioch and I picked up the motor and brought it back to H.Q. for testing before going to sea. An initial test run and inspection revealed that everything was OK.

December 10th Stranded!

Damien and I headed out to Flinder's Island in ideal conditions; low seas and a light westerly breeze a lovely day. We powered to the island with relative ease. As we entered the gulch to land the engine lost power. We landed safely dragged the boat up above the tide and set about searching for oystercatcher chicks and nests.

After 2 hrs of searching the island our work was completed so we decided to head down to Big Islands 1&2. We had plenty of time as conditions were still good although the wind had freshened from the west .

Our plans changed rather suddenly, when the outboard motor conked out and would not restart! A hundred meters from the steep barnacle-encrusted rocks, the westerly breeze had increased to 50knts and it was impossible row against it. The wind chop had increased to over a metre and we were driven ashore. An oar exploded into fragments as we struggled to keep the boat off the walls of the cauldron of a second gulch.

It was at this time, that we discovered that we were in a very difficult and dangerous situation. We managed to get Damien ashore quickly and set about securing the boat in the centre of the boiling cauldron using anchors and ropes. The boat had been saved but not before being totally swamped.

Aluminium boats change shape remarkably in rough seas, particularly when full of water and being pounded against rocks! The fuel tank and

safety gear were floating around in the boat. These were gathered up and along with all our fresh water tossed ashore to Damien.

The outboard motor was hoisted ashore and I quickly bailed as much water as possible out of the boat as it bucked and banged in the raging surge! Using the swell of the in-coming tide I somehow managed to get the boat up on the rocks and secure it!

Exhausted we huddled in the shelter of a small cave to survey our predicament. It could be some time before we are rescued! Our radio and mobile phone had gone under water and were no longer working, so we were unable to contact anyone to alert them of our situation. We could have set off an emergency flare to alert all and sundry of our predicament but this was decided against, as at this stage we were in no real danger, we were simply stranded without a working outboard motor. Although we would need assistance to get back to shore and safety there was no need for a full-scale emergency response

Our fluoro- yellow and green boat perched up on the island stood out like a sore thumb and could be seen from shore only 5 kilometers away.

Port Kembla is a busy shipping port and Damien was soon able to draw the attention of a Pilot vessel heading out to an awaiting ship. The Pilot came to our assistance but was not able to pick us up off the island due to the very rough conditions and shallow water. They instead radioed police for assistance, who in turn contacted the Volunteer Coast Guard flotilla commander, Richard Coulstock, who quickly dispatched a boat and crew to our rescue.

With great skill they easily picked us off the island onto the safety of their much larger vessel.

ALBATROSS - NSWASG Report

We are hoping for an improvement in albatross numbers off Wollongong and Bateman's Bay this season. Due, we believe, to unusually warm waters (26° c) at our study sites last winter very few albatrosses were banded.

May 25th 2002: The albatross season has arrived, with the birds appearing in small

numbers. Indian yellow-nosed, Campbell, Black-browed, Buller's (adults and immatures) White-capped, Shy. And Gibson's Albatrosses were all present. Both Northern and Southern Giant Petrels were among the other species of seabirds observed on the Wollongong Pelagic Boat Trip 25th May 2002.

Species banded on 25th May 2002.

Southern Giant Petrel (an immature bird of the year in all new brown plumage), White-capped Albatross, Gibson's Albatross and Campbell Albatross.

INTERESTING BAND RECOVERIES

Indian Yellow Nosed Albatross Band No 121 38608 first banded at sea off Wollongong NSW 8th July 1997. Recovered alive at Amsterdam Is. South Indian Ocean 1st December 2000 by French biologists.

Indian Yellow Nosed Albatross Band No.120 65541 first banded at sea off Tomakin NSW Latitude 35 51 03s Longitude 150 14 32e on 09 07 2000. Recovered alive at Amsterdam Is. South Indian Ocean 21st September 2001 Latitude 37 51 0 s Longitude 77 29 0 e by French biologists. **6302km** distant, bearing 244 degrees

Southern Giant Petrel *Macronetes giganteus*. Band No 696 Banded at Harmony Point, Nelson Is. Sth Shetland Group, Lat 62deg 18mins S Longitude 59deg 10mins W on 27 02 2001 by **Argentine Banding Scheme**. Recovered by Bruce Cantle. June 06th 2002, at North Burrewarra Point Tomakin NSW, Lat: 35 49 55s Longitude: 150 14 6sec E, **8789km** from natal colony at a bearing of 204 degrees.

Recovery of our oldest Wandering Albatross.

John Cooper Chief Research Officer, Avian Demography Unit University of Cape Town, South Africa, reports finding two old male Snowy albatrosses *Diomedea chionoptera* at Prince Edward Island in the South Indian Ocean, on December 18-19th 2001

Both these birds had been banded in 1959-1960 off Bellambi / Wollongong by Dough Gibson of

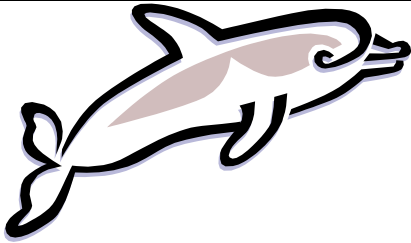
the New South Wales Albatross Study Group. They are now known to be 41+years old. And currently **the oldest birds recorded for the South African and Australian Bird Banding schemes.**

Other Old Birds.

SOSSA's oldest known Wedge-tailed Shearwater (*Puffinus pacificus*).

January 26th 2002:. Whilst capturing and banding Wedge-tailed shearwaters at sea off Wollongong Dr. Mike Double re-trapped our oldest known WTSW. The bird had been originally banded as a nestling by SG Lane at the Five Islands Nature Reserve on April 17th 1981. Making it 21+years old.

WHALES, DOLPHINS SEALS AND OTHER SEA MONSTERS



November 25th 2001 off Wollongong the presence large numbers of Risso's Dolphins .

From the Trap Reef 20km from shore to beyond to Continental shelf (approx 35km distant), several hundred in small pods of 5-7 animals were seen

Ross Hunter reported seeing large numbers of Risso's Dolphins off the Southern Canyons area south of Botany Bay. On Saturday December 22nd the pod was spread over a large area and contained more than 100 animals.

It is interesting to note that no Risso's Dolphins were seen off Wollongong on December 22nd. This may indicate that the same pod or herd of animals had remained in the Wollongong–Sydney region for the past month. Ed.

Wollongong Boat Trip January 26th 2002.

Small pods of Risso's and Common Dolphins were observed in 75-80 fathoms and a small pod of Bottle-nosed Dolphins just outside Wollongong harbour. Large numbers of Pygmy Killer whales in small (5-7) and large pods (10-30) animals over a kilometre radius were recorded in 180 fathoms, water temperature 24.3C.

25th May, 2002 SOSSA PELAGIC TRIP, WOLLONGONG,

Report prepared by: P.J. Milburn.

Departed: 07:20 returned at approx. 16:30. Sea conditions: 1.5 to 2.0m S. Swell: S 2 to 3m. Weather: Mostly overcast with occasional showers but also substantial sunny periods. Temperature range: 15.8 to 19.3°C. Barometric pressure: 1024 HPa rising.

Wind: SSW 10 to 15 kts at first, rising to 15 to 20 kts, veering to SSE 15 kts later. Sea surface temperature: 18.6 to 19.4°C.

Primary chumming location S 34° 37' - E 151° 11'.

Summary:

For nearly two weeks prior to this trip cold southerly winds had buffeted the coast as a result of a deep low-pressure system located south of Tasmania. Mercifully, a high-pressure system had moved far enough to the east for the storms to abate. A chilly southerly breeze under a leaden sky reminded us that winter had arrived early.

The weather closed during the morning and, yet again, in a rising southerly we punched out into the sea. After buffeting through a couple of rain squalls the wind veered slightly to the east and eased somewhat. The conditions were tough and the skipper, Carl Loves did an excellent job using the engine to hold the boat into to the sea while we were chumming.

We were less than 100 metres from the breakwater when an adult Black-browed Albatross circled the boat. This set the tone of the day with albatrosses in view for the whole time that we were at sea. Due to the weather conditions we were compelled to run south and so took the opportunity to look at some of the "Five Islands" group. The islands and their birds were soon forgotten when several Campbell Albatross and a Southern Giant Petrel were observed close to the boat. Continuing out to sea, we soon encountered a number of prion species including several Antarctic prions and a Slender-billed prion less than 5NM out. At about the 55-fathom mark, a good current line was encountered and a number of new species for the day were encountered. These included a magnificent male Gibson's Albatross, a group of Wilson's Storm Petrels that included a possible White-bellied Storm-Petrel, a couple of Cape Petrels and no fewer than 5 White-capped Albatross. At this point, the weather closed in and we enjoyed some refreshing showers of rain, which served to wash off some of the salt at least! We continued our voyage into deeper water but after the rain squalls the number of birds seemed to have diminished. The first Brown Skua of the

winter was observed in about 75 fathoms of water and the appearance of the first Solander's Petrel indicated that we had passed to the east of the continental shelf. The sea conditions were too uncomfortable to drift, so we elected to stay under power and hold the boat stationary into the sea. Setting up a trail of chum our hopes were held out for a rare visitor from southern waters. A newly fledged Shy Albatross and a female Gibson's Albatross were amongst the first new birds to join us. The next excitement arrived in the form of a third year Buller's Albatross which dropped casually into the middle of the burgeoning albatross throng. While still discussing the nuances of identifying this bird, a shout of "what's this?" drew our attention to a long-winged petrel flying down wind straight at the boat. To everyone's amazement it was a pale morph Herald petrel that gave great but typically brief views. We continued to accumulate an impressive flock of seabirds, in the form of Wilson's Storm-Petrels, Fairy Prions, assorted Giant Petrels and Albatrosses, including another third year Buller's Albatross. On the return trip we observed an adult Buller's Albatross and a dark-headed bird that may well have been a Pacific Albatross. Winter has clearly arrived with a rush of cold air, it almost seemed that we had seen as many albatross in one day as we had seen during the whole of the last very quiet winter. I have never seen so many third year albatross in one day. Despite this the rarity of the day was an autumn visitor from the tropics, namely a Herald Petrel.

25 species of seabird identified outside the breakwater.
Mammals, None recorded.

Future Trips

All Pelagic Trips from NSW are operated at no profit to the organisers being operated as group boat charters for the benefit of all who wish to join us. If you would like to join one of these trips please contact us as below:

To make a booking on the SOSSA Wollongong Pelagic Trips that depart on the 4th Saturday of each month.

Contact: SOSSA: Phone 02 4271 6004. Email: sossa@ozemail.com.au

CAPE SOLANDER WHALE WATCH AND OTHER SNIPPETS.

Geoff Ross NSW NP&WS:

Two Southern right whales reported at Cape Solander and north of Sydney in early June.

Pygmy Sperm-whale. (Kogia)

A 1.7 metre long Pygmy sperm was found stranded at Umima north of Sydney, 5th June 2002. The animal was injured with several deep wounds along its back. Rescuers managed to return it into the water.

Strandings of Kogia or Pygmy Sperm Whale have been reported four times in the last two years in the waters off Sydney and Wollongong. This appears to be a high incidence, as this is a little known species, with only several recorded strandings in Australia and New Zealand.

This animal is very rarely observed in our waters, possibly due to it's small size and inconspicuous habits and nature. Ed.

The Ross Hunter Report

Broad - bill Charters

Ross Hunter reports seeing large numbers of Risso's Dolphins (*Grampus griseus*) off the Southern Canyons area south of Botany Bay. On Saturday December 22nd the pod was spread over a large area and contained more than 100 animals. Ross also reports that there were a number of Sooty Terns about and remarked that he couldn't recall seeing them off Sydney before.

The last stragglers of the Hump-backed whale migration went south in late October. A single large Sperm Whale was observed off Brown's Mountain (sea mount) off Sydney during mid December.

Note: A large Sperm whale was observed off Wollongong In 1100 meters on 22 June 2002. Pers obs. Ed.

VISITORS to SOSSA

Antonio Salvadorie and his wife Mary.

Antonio was instrumental in establishing the inaugural Wollongong boat trips in 1984 After going to sea with local fishermen and discovering a great variety of seabirds off the coast.

NEW MEMBERS

Greg Anderson
Jeffrey Hay
Ian McAllan
Melanie Blanch
David Page

Graeme O'Connor
David Mitford
Toni Salvadori
Ben White

NEXT SOSSA MEETING

held at HQ.
10 Jenkins Street - Unanderra. NSW.
We only supply the Coffee or Tea!!!
Next will be

SOSSA'S A G M GUEST SPEAKER

Michael Jarman

Michael is currently working with the National Parks & Wildlife Service, Mike has some slides to show us of his study on the Little Tern and Shorebird Recovery Project on the South Coast of N.S.W.

Hope you can join us

**3.00 pm Sunday
25 th AUGUST 2002**

held at HQ.
10 Jenkins Street - Unanderra. NSW.
We only supply the Coffee or Tea!!!

SAUSAGE SIZZLE BBQ

AFTER THE MEETING,
SO YOU ALL WOULD BE ABLE TO GET
HOME AT A REASONABLE HOUR !!!



MEMBERS IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND

The Annual General Meeting

PLEASE SIGN & RETURN YOUR
PROXY VOTE FORM

ALSO YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED
2002 to 2003 Memberships are due
MEMBERSHIP FORMS

**WHALE AND SEA MONSTER WATCHING
TRIPS**



The MV 'Sandra K' leaves Wollongong Harbour every month on the fourth Saturday at 7.00 am & returns about 4.00pm.

Spend a full day watching whales, dolphins, albatrosses, seabirds & other creatures.

Booking contacts

SOSSA	02 4271 6004 sossa@ozemail.com.au
Peter Milburn	02 6249 4326(W) peter.milburn@anu.edu.au
Captain Carl Loves	0427 423 500 fishing@wollongong.starway.net.au

Depending on numbers, there is often a Sunday trip as well and cost could be a little higher if less than 15 people.

Boat trips may be cancelled or postponed if weather is bad.

Additional research and/or private game fishing charter trips regularly depart.

Places are often available. Contact Captain Carl Loves for details.

SANDRA "K"

SEABIRD WATCHING BOAT TRIPS



WOLLONGONG BOAT TRIP SCHEDULE

DATES OF NEXT TRIPS FOR YOUR DIARY

Tentative 2002 dates

27 & 28 July 2002 24 August 2002
 28 & 29 September 2002 26,27,31 October 2002
 16 & 23 November 2002 28 December 2002

can be contacted on randrbaxter@yahoo.com or on 49 540212.

Regards
 Richard Baxter - Newcastle

BOAT TRIPS AT OTHER AUSTRALIAN LOCATIONS	
Sydney Tony Palliser	02 9900 1678 (W) 02 9411 5272 (H) mobile 0416 095 875 tonyp@bigpond.net.au
Brisbane Paul Walbridge	07 3391 8839 prion@powerup.com.au
Port Fairy Mike Carter	03 9787 7136 pterodroma@bigpond.com
Perth Frank O'Connor	08 9386 5694 foconnor@iinet.net.au
Eden Barbara Jones	02 6495 7390 dbjones@acr.net.au
Newcastle Richard Baxter	02 4959 0212 mobile 0412 540 212 randrbaxter@yahoo.com

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

All are invited to contribute to our newsletter 'Albatross'. We do prefer electronic copies of any material. send it by email to sossa@ozemail.com.au
 Alternatively mail it to us on a disk, which we will return.

NEXT NEWSLETTER September 2002

(providing there are no major hold ups)

Due to the fact that the membership fees are still unchanged, though SOSSA's cost have increased greatly across the board. We would really appreciate that little bit extra with your donation from those whom may be able to afford it.

Thanks again for your support!!

DONATIONS Of \$2.00 and OVER TO SOSSA ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE!!

Pelagic trip reports are available at
<http://users.bigpond.net.au/palliser>
<http://www.sossa-international.org>



OVER NIGHT PELAGIC TRIP

For interested people, I am planning to hold an overnight pelagic from Newcastle on the weekend of the 16-17 Nov 2002.

We will leave from Swansea (as usual). We will go about 60-70km offshore and spend the night with all our lights on hoping for a few Prions, Storm Petrels etc to land on the boat.

Our target bird will be Salvin's Prion.

We have about 4 vacancies at this stage and I have not worked out a price as yet. If interested I

RAOU#	Species	Brisbane						Eagle Hawk Neck	Eden			Newcastle	Port Fairy						Sydney			WOLLONGONG									
		Jan-02	Feb-02	Mar-02	Apr-02	May-02	Jun-02	Sep-01	Sep-01	Mar-02	Mar-02	Jun-01	Dec-01	Mar-02	Apr-02	5May-02	26May-02	Jun-02	Sep-01	Jun-02	Sep-01	Oct-01	Nov-01	Dec-01	Jan-02	Feb-02	Mar-02	Apr-02	May-02	Jun-02	
92	Sooty Albatross, <i>Phoebastria Fusc a</i>													1	2																
63	Wilson's Storm Petrel, <i>Oceanites oceanicu s</i>				6	4	5			6	4	50-80		2	16	8	1	35	7		1	6	3	3	3			2	4	160+	1
64	Grey-backed Storm Petrel, <i>Nereis garrodi a</i>							1					1	7	3		5	3													
65	White-faced Storm Petrel, <i>Pelagodroma marin a</i>									3	1	1			35	4				1				6							
66	Black-bellied Storm Petrel, <i>Fregetta tropic a</i>							1																							
107	Red-tailed Tropicbird, <i>Phaethon rubricaud a</i>																												2		
108	White-tailed Tropicbird, <i>Phaethon lepturu s</i>			1																											
104	Australasian Gannet, <i>Morus serrato r</i>							20	15	40		8	200	50	120	30	140	c300	210	22	35+	5	6	1							
102	Brown Booby, <i>Sula leucogaster</i>																							1							
100	Little Pied Cormorant, <i>Phalacrocorax melanoleuco s</i>									2					1		4		3					2				1	1	4	
98	Black-faced Cormorant, <i>Phalacrocorax fuscesen s</i>							7	2	80		1	9	7	2	2	3														
99	Pied Cormorant, <i>Phalacrocorax variu s</i>				3															1							1	1			
97	Little black Cormorant, <i>Phalacrocorax sulcirostri s</i>					1							1								2	46									
96	Great Cormorant, <i>Phalacrocorax carb o</i>								20	12			1							1	1	2		2				1			
106	Australian Pelican, <i>Pelicanus conspicillatu s</i>									2										4	3	1	2	5	2	2	2			1	5
980	Great Skua, <i>Catharacta sku a</i>									1		1			1					3	4	4								3	1
979	South Polar Skua, <i>Catharacta maccormicki</i>					2									1																
945	Pomarine Jaeger, <i>Stercorarius pomarinu s</i>	7	5	1	1					12	10				1																
128	Arctic Jaeger, <i>Stercorarius parasiticu s</i>				1			1		1																					
933	Long-tailed Jaeger, <i>Stercorarius longicaud a</i>										2-3		1	2																	
126	Pacific Gull, <i>Larus pacificus</i>							2	4	2		1				3	1														
981	Kelp Gull, <i>Larus dominicanu s</i>							16				10	6	6	15	14	2	6	3												
125	Silver Gull, <i>Larus novaehollandia e</i>		2	46	202	29	20	65	present	present		60	25	53	c60	45	33	25	100+	commor	34	27	26	42	1	45	40+	88	850+	435+	
111	Caspian Tern, <i>Sterna caspia</i>																														
115	Crested Tern, <i>Sterna bergi i</i>	42	9	40	54	21	62	6	present	10	22	36	24	33	c25	450	c440	130	58	35+	31	40+	18	18	4	10	11	41	25	17	
114	White-fronted Tern, <i>Sterna striat a</i>														1		1														
953	Common Tern, <i>Sterna hirund o</i>				2	1															1	4									
952	Arctic Tern, <i>Sterna paradisae a</i>																			1		2									
120	Sooty Tern, <i>Sterna fuscata</i>	8	2																				2								
122	Common Noddy, <i>Anous stolidu s</i>			1		10																									
124	Black Noddy, <i>Anous minutu s</i>					2																									
982	Grey Ternlet, <i>Procelsterna cerule a</i>											1																	1		
972	White Tern, <i>Gygis alb a</i>				1	3																							1		

NOTE: Due to the large number of trips summarised here it has been necessary to use a relatively small font to have them fit two pages. If you would like a copy printed on A3, or an electronic copy please ask.