



# The Albatross

**SOUTHERN OCEAN SEABIRD STUDY ASSOCIATION INC.**

**Issue No. 48**

**December 2011**

## ALBATROSS FLIES IN TO SAVE OUR SEABIRDS

**Five Islands Nature Reserve**  
Photos: Ron Imisides and Lindsay Smith

Special points of interest:

- Containers land on Five Islands
- Heinroth's Shearwater
- Generous donations
- Antarctic Fur Seal

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### A Great Step Forward for the Five Islands Nature Reserve.

On Tuesday morning June 28th 2011 The Royal Australian Navy Air Wing stationed at HMAS Albatross, Nowra, NSW delivered two shipping containers to the Five Islands Nature Reserve. Great news! As I write this note. I can say that the basic containers are securely anchored to Big Island!

Our thanks go to the (then) Senator the Hon **John Faulkner Minister for Defence** for granting the assistance of the Royal Australian Navy to transport the two shipping containers to the Five Islands Nature Reserve.

On September 24th 2009 the letter from Mr Faulkner states:

"It is true that Defence maintains a range of unique military capabilities and on occasion these capabilities can be made available to support the civilian community, although usually on provision of full cost recovery.

*Continued on Page 6*



**SOSSA is proudly supported by:**



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Australia

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\*\*\*\*\*  
 ★ MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY AND SAFE ★  
 ★ 2012 TO ALL SOSSA'S MEMBERS AND ★  
 ★ FRIENDS ★  
 ★

*From the Committee and Staff at SOSSA*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Five Island's Fur Seal Population Increasing**

Following on from the delivery of the shipping containers to the Five Islands by HMAS ALBATROSS Sea King helicopter earlier this year, the Five Islands Nature Reserve is getting its own "Seal of approval"

In the past few years Fur-Seal numbers have been increasing along the Illawarra and south coast. Fur-Seals were regarded as an unusual occurrence in the Illawarra coastal waters. Individual animals were mostly observed at sea by fishermen or animal's hauled out on a beach or rocky headland for rest.



Photo by Raja Stephenson. Australian Fur Seals off Wollongong August 2011.

Wildlife Rescue groups are often notified of a seal floating on its back in the water and appears to be entangled in fishing net.

In the past several species of pinnipeds have been recorded from the Illawarra region. These include Australian and New Zealand Fur-Seals, Sub-Antarctic Fur-Seals and Leopard Seals.

\*\*\*\*\*



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Photo: Justine White

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## Sighting of Heinroth's Shearwater (*Puffinus heinrothi*) in the Solomon Islands

By Steve Anyon-Smith 30 June 2011

Solomon Islands' Western Province is a fascinating and beautiful location. One of its jewels is Marovo Lagoon - the largest saltwater lagoon in the world. The diving, snorkelling, fishing and birdwatching in this region are sensational.

I first visited the Solomons in 2010 and could not wait to return. One region of particular interest to me is the south-eastern tip of Western Province. This area is exposed to ocean winds and swells and my brief visit in June 2010 encouraged me to believe that, in the right conditions, seabirds might be possible, along with the abundant noddies, boobies and frigatebirds I had already seen.

Ngatokae Island (sometimes spelt "Gatokae") is the last large island in the chain. A few kilometres seawards from Gatokae is the uninhabited Mbulo Island and about a kilometre further to sea is the small island named Kicha. Between these two islands is a deep channel that is used by very large schools of pelagic fish - mainly yellow-fin and skip-jack tuna at the time of our visit. These feed on massive schools of bait-fish.

On June 9 my friend Max De Boos and I arranged to go game fishing with Ronsy Piko from Ropiko Lodge, our hosts on Gatokae. We went to sea in the pre-dawn blackness with Ronsy somehow failing to hit anything on our path through the coral bommies that fringe his anchorage.

Sea swells of up to four metres and frequent rain squalls provided perfect conditions for seabirds and the production of our dinner!

By first light the first of several massive flocks of birds could be seen over the feeding schools of tuna. There were many hundreds and possibly thousands of black and brown noddies, black-naped and white terns, brown boobies and lesser frigatebirds. Small numbers of Wedge-tailed Shearwaters, perhaps up to ten or so, fed around the edges of these flocks.

A very small shearwater was seen a couple of hundred meters distant. Our boatman had never seen the primary purpose of his day change so fast. Follow that bird - THAT ONE THERE! Ronsy, Max and I soon had definitive views of Heinroth's Shearwater. It obligingly gave us an excellent look at its white underwing patches; economical flying style, quite unlike any small shearwater of my experience, which rarely saw it very far from the sea's surface; and its very small size which could

Continued on page 4



Heinroth's Shearwater - Photo: Hadoram Shirihai

Heinroth's Shearwater *Puffinus heinrothi*, during the 'Bismarck Archipelago (PNG) Tubenoses Expedition 2003' when this species and the Beck's Petrel *Pseudobulweria becki* were rediscovered to science (Shirihai 2004, 2008; Tubenoses Project, H. Shirihai © Copyright images).

Sighting of Heinroth's Shearwater (*Puffinus heinrothi*) in the Solomon Islands continued from page 3.

readily be judged relative to the nearby Wedge-tails. We never saw two birds at the same time, but as we kept moving around the tuna schools (which covered about one square kilometre of sea!!) THE BIRD was seen several times, so there may have been more than one. It tended not to get involved at the centre of the feeding activity of the other birds. This made it easier to follow.

We returned to this same area on June 11 (having run out of fish....) and the Heinroth's was in the same place, so I suspect it may occur here regularly.

This area is reasonably accessible. There are scheduled flights to Gatokae from Honiara with Solomon Airways. The airstrip is walking distance from Ropiko Lodge, or else they can meet you in one of their boats. The cost of boat hire is equivalent to the cost of the fuel you use, maybe 20 litres, plus about \$A20 for the hire. Food and accommodation at the lodge is excellent and also very

inexpensive. There are a range of endemic and other birds very close to the lodge and its grounds. There is no hunting of birds, mammals and crustaceans in this area as the locals are all Seventh Day Adventists. And if you decide to go to Gatokae you may wish to ask someone to catch you a few lobsters and mud crabs. We did, and they did....Anyone interested in a copy of my 2010 trip report to the Solomons, and the 2011 report, once it is written, can contact me at : [steveas@tpg.com.au](mailto:steveas@tpg.com.au)

The editor would like to thank Hadoram Shirihai/Tubenoses Project to permit the use of his images from the Bismarck Archipelago (PNG) Tubenoses Expedition 2003.

#### References

- Shirihai, H. 2004. Voyage of discovery. *Bird-watch* 143: 36-39.  
 - Shirihai, H. 2008. Rediscovery of Beck's Petrel *Pseudobulweria becki*, and other observations of tubenoses from the Bismarck archipelago, Papua New Guinea. *Bull. Brit. Orn. Cl.* 128: 3-16.

### Regular Eden pelagics come to an end

Helen Buckingham of Freedom Charters, which ran the Eden pelagics four times a year, has advised that they will no longer be running regular pelagic trips. She posted the following on Birding-Aus,

"Due to 3 late cancellations in the last two days we have been forced to cancel this Sunday's Eden Pelagic Birdwatching Trip. Our numbers went from 10 to 7 in 2 days and this is not enough to run the trip. This has been a continuing problem with these trips as people feel after booking months in advance that it is ok to pull out in the last week. This may be ok for them but it affects the other bird-watchers as well as ourselves as we often find ourselves going out without full boat hire being paid.

For this reason I will no longer be taking the bookings for the Eden Pelagic Trips. The boat will always be available for hire should someone wish to take the reigns and organise the numbers but Freedom Charters will no longer be offering this service.

I apologise to the people who have always been there and honoured their bookings rain, hail or shine and for the times when inclement weather has prevented us from going out and they have been there and had to go home.

Helen and Richard Buckingham - Freedom Charters"

This is unfortunate, as many don't have the opportunity to organise enough people to charter a vessel and therefore miss out on the chance to do a pelagic. SOSSA experiences the same inconsiderate behaviour on a regular basis, which is unfair on the operator and other participants. We'd like to thank every one who does the right thing.

### Wonderful Donation by MMP Industrial

MMP Industrial have kindly donated the paint to do a much needed paint repair on the Island boat "Little Penguin", in addition the donation will be of great benefit to the marking of our seabird projects. Marking the seabirds is a tool to prevent us catching the birds again thus reducing any possibly disturbance or stress on the birds.



Painting 'Little Penguin'



Current condition of 'Little Penguin'

After the birds have been measured and released they don't hesitate to come back to us so the short term marking allows us to select an unmarked bird.

Thank you once again to MMP Industries at Mulgrave for your very generous donation. It is indeed very much appreciated by the SOSSA Team.



A marked Wandering Albatross from a SOSSA research trip.  
Photo: Brook Whyllie

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\*\*\*\*\*

**Albatross flies in to save our Seabirds.** Continued from page 1.

As your request is on behalf of a community based not-for-profit organisation, I am prepared to approve, in principle Navy assistance to transport two shipping containers by Helicopter from Port Kembla to Five Islands Nature Reserve and a waiver of the full cost recovery provision, subject to further consultation between yourself and Navy.”

These shipping containers provided and installed by the stewards of the Five Islands Nature Reserve NP&WS are to replace the now dismantled hut which was initially installed in 1988 by the NP&WS to provide a base to study the Silver Gull population breeding on the reserve. Since 1992 SOSSA has maintained the old hut and in 1995 with the assistance of the NP&WS extended and upgraded it and named it the Consett Davis Hut.

SOSSA has conducted long term studies of seabirds and shorebirds breeding on the islands since 1958 and has used the hut as its base to study birds on all of the Five Islands Group. The old hut and we expect the new ones, are essential for this research as volunteers must spend long hours on the islands over a period of days. Access to shelter and basic accommodation facilities ensures this work will continue into the future. It will also provide a base for starting the process of removing the non-native vegetation which has accounted for the deaths of many penguins, shearwaters and other species over the years.

To the Royal Australian Navy, NSW NP&WS, to all personnel and to SOSSA members who assisted in this project. I extend a personal thank you.

On behalf of the members of the community I extend a grateful thank you to the NP&WS for your efforts to facilitate the rehabilitation of this important seabird breeding site and burgeoning seal colony. While visiting SOSSA to film the Albatrosses in 1997, Sir David Attenborough described the Five Islands Nature Reserve as



“**the Jewel in the Crown of the Illawarra**” (television interview) It is hoped that the installation of the containers will encourage further interest in the management and biodiversity of these remarkable islands.

Lindsay E. Smith. OAM. (SOSSA – President)



**DONATIONS**

**Thank you to the people below for their very kind donations.**

**Donations are the only thing that ensures the continuation of the valuable work on our precious wildlife. So thanks again to:**

**2011 - 2012**

- Humane Society International**
- Michael Kennedy                    \$500.00**
- Roslyn Hanson                        \$150.00**
- Tess Brickhill                         \$200.00**
- Simon Cotter                         \$100.00**
- Graeme Phipps & Debra Coulson                    \$100.00**



## Unusual Visitors to our Region

### Sub-Antarctic Fur Seal

On June 1<sup>st</sup> 2011 SOSSA received a call from WIRES volunteers to advise that a baby Fur Seal had hauled out on Coniston beach, one of our local (dogs off leash) beaches. Could we offer any advice or assistance? I advised that they should notify the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NP&WS) of the animal's presence on the beach, the Seal be monitored for a period of 24hrs and an exclusion zone of 30-40 metres be set up. The seal was lying in bushes behind the dunes and away from the beach. It was later transported to Taronga Wildlife Clinic by Illawarra NP&WS personnel.

The Seal was taken into care by the Taronga Wildlife Clinic on June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Initial examination

revealed the animal to be in very poor condition (as would be expected), it being well away from its usual range. It was approximately 18 months old and weighed only 10kg. Under the watchful eyes of Taronga's head vet Larry Vogelnest and his team, it took four weeks to recover and is now looking like a perfectly healthy young seal.

Unfortunately, due to quarantine agreements the animal can neither be released, nor returned to the Sub-Antarctic. Now known as "Franklin", this very lucky seal will remain in captivity at the zoo with other seals.



Image supplied by Taronga Wildlife Clinic.

## Band Recoveries

**Band No: CF 37919**

Readable bands White E85 and T106  
Indian-yellow-nosed Albatross sp. No. 89.  
*Thalassarche carteri*.

Captured at sea east of Wollongong NSW  
Lat 34 25 00s Long 151 00 00e May 28<sup>th</sup>  
2011. Released alive and well with 3 bands.

Banded as a first year or older 23/12/1999 at  
Amsterdam Island Terres Australes Et Antarc-  
tiques France. South Indian Ocean.  
Lat 37 41 00s Long 77 31 00<sup>e</sup>

Breeder on Amsterdam Island since  
2004/2005.

Banded by CNRS (French banding scheme)  
The bird was at least 11years 5 months and 5  
days old. It had moved a distance of 6,439  
Kms with a bearing of 111 degrees.

**Band No 140-37348**

**Wandering albatross** *Diomedea exulans*  
First banded off Malabar (Sydney) By S.G  
(Bill) Lane (now deceased).

August 19<sup>th</sup> 1972 age 1+ No measurements  
taken. Gibson Plumage Index. Back (4)  
Head (3) Wing (3) Tail (1) Total (11)

Recaptured August 29<sup>th</sup> 1976 by S.G. (Bill)  
Lane at Malabar aged 5+ years. No meas-  
urements taken. **G.P.I.** Back (4VH) Head  
(3) Wing (3) Tail (2) Total (12)

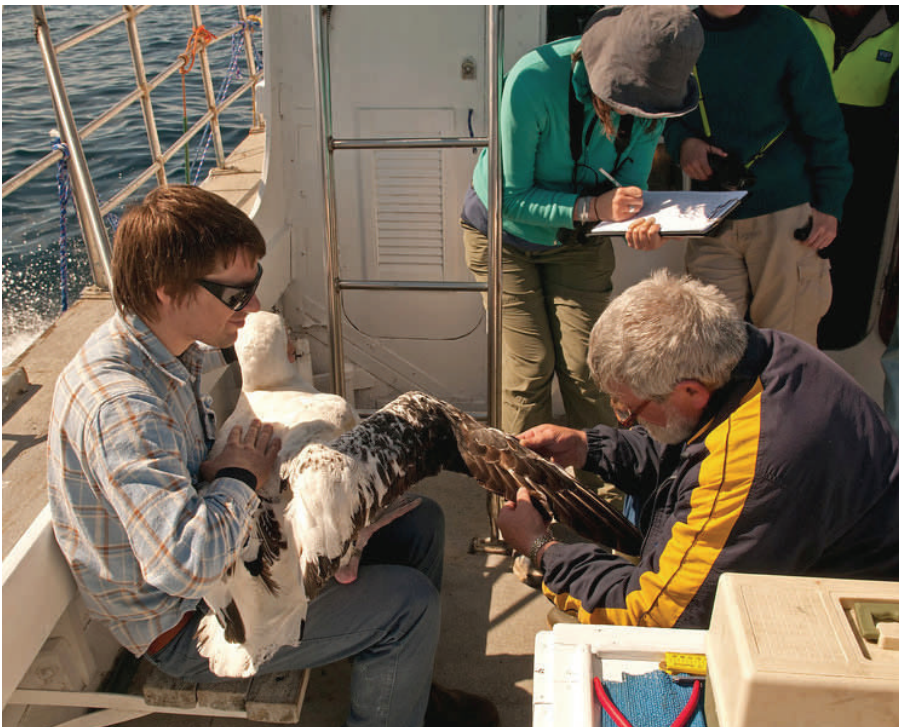
Recaptured August 5<sup>th</sup> 1978. By S.G (Bill)  
Lane. At Malabar. 7+ years. No measure-  
ments taken. **G.P.I** Back (4H) Head (3)  
Wing (3.5) Tail (2.5) Total(13)

Recaptured September 6<sup>th</sup> 1993 by Harry  
Battam at Bellambi 21+Years **G.P.I** Back  
(4H) Head (3.5) Wing (3) Tail (2.5) Total  
(13) Culmen: 157.

Recaptured August 21<sup>st</sup>  
1997 by SOSSA at Bellambi  
25 years+. **G.P.I.** Back (4H)  
Head (3) Wing (3) Tail (2.5)  
Total (12.5) Culmen 157.

Recaptured September 3<sup>rd</sup>  
2011 by SOSSA, off Wollon-  
gong. This Wandering  
Albatross is 39+ years!

**G.P.I** Back (5VH), Head  
(5P) Wing (4) Tail (3) Total  
(17) Culmen 157.4 Bill Base  
57.6 Bill Min 38.4 Bill Un-  
guis 40.0 Mid Toe 158.1  
Tarsus 119.4 Wing 595W  
Primary molt ( R)




L.R Paul Bruty with bird, Linda Cohan and  
Lindsay Smith. Photo: Nick Edards



## SOSSA's new website

**Southern Oceans Seabird Study Association Inc. (SOSSA)** Remember Me?



Home Forum What's New?

About SOSSA Membership Pelagic Trips Wollongong Newsletters Contacts Member's Galleries Links Advanced Search

Home Welcome to SOSSA

**Welcome to SOSSA**


If this is your first visit, be sure to check out the [FAQ](#) by clicking the link above. You may have to [register](#) before you can post; click the register link above to proceed. To start viewing messages, select the forum that you want to visit from the selection below.

Registration to this forum is free! We do insist that you abide by the rules and policies detailed in the [forum rules](#).

**Sections**

- SOSSA News
- SOSSA Projects
- Pelagic Reports Wollongong
- Pelagic Reports Southport
- SOSSA Video
- Other News

**Welcome to SOSSA**




SOSSA is a wildlife conservation and research organisation. Its members are dedicated amateurs and professionals who share a common interest and concern for the marine environment and the wildlife of the Southern Oceans.

SOSSA organises regular pelagic trips from [Wollongong, NSW](#) and [Southport, QLD](#) so both members and visitors can view some of the spectacular marine life that occurs off Australia's coast.

Join [SOSSA](#) and support seabird conservation.

**Slideshow**



**Calendar**

December 2011

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

**Welcome to the new-look SOSSA website**

Published on 03-07-2011 09:59 PM

Welcome to SOSSA's new website and we have now added a forum with photo hosting capabilities. You can find the forum here. To post on the forums, please register. It's free and you don't need to be a SOSSA member. Anyone who has an interest in pelagic birding can join the online SOSSA pelagic community. We would like to thank Mike Double for all his efforts in running the old website and also Richard Hall for all the work he has done in setting up the new one.

SOSSA's new website went online in July this year. The site is more user friendly and easier to maintain than the old site and adds a forum where anyone can register and discuss all aspects of seabirds. Currently we have over 50 users registered for the forum and the website is visited over 2,000 times per month, which is fantastic.

Work is still being carried out on the site, we have placed more than 160 trip reports/trip species lists for Wollongong trips from the past 13 years online, as well as 20 trip reports from Southport, Queensland, so don't forget to visit the site and get involved.

Any comments or suggestions, please email [admin@sossa-international.org](mailto:admin@sossa-international.org)

Again, thanks to Mike Double for maintaining the old site and Richard Hall for developing the new one.



A photo from a recent thread on the website, a picture of the first Stejneger's Petrel sighted in Australia. Photo: Paul Wallbridge



## New Members...

Robert Griffin  
Grant Penrhyn  
Simon Cotter  
Dena Paris  
Graeme Phipps  
Debra Coulson  
Trevor Bullock  
Julia Veltrop

## SOUTHERN OCEAN SEABIRD STUDY ASSOCIATION INC.

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### NEXT SOSSA MEETING

**25<sup>th</sup> February 2012**  
(Saturday)

held at HQ. – 6.30 pm  
10 Jenkins Street - Unanderra.  
NSW.

We only supply the Coffee or  
Tea!!!

### 2012 PRICES

**Members \$ 80.00**

**Visitors \$ 100.00**

**Australia Dollars**

**Note: Some trips are  
strictly for research and  
will have limited num-  
bers!**

## WOLLONGONG PELAGIC BOAT TRIP DIARY DATES 2012

**\*Addition Dates will be added to the  
Website**

28th January (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**  
25th February (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**  
24th March (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**  
28th April (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**  
26th May (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**  
23rd June (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**  
28th July (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**  
25th August (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**

### 25th August (Saturday) SOSSA AGM – 6.30pm HQ

26th August (Sunday) **WOLLONGONG**  
22nd September (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**  
27th October (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**  
28th October (Sunday) **WOLLONGONG**  
24th November (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**  
15th December (Saturday) **WOLLONGONG**

**(December Trip will be the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday not  
the usual 4<sup>th</sup> due to Christmas)**

## 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@tpg.com.au](mailto:sossa@tpg.com.au)

Alternatively mail it to us on a disk, which we will return.

The editor welcomes (is desperate for!) articles from members and friends on issues relating to pelagic seabirding, seabird research and marine conservation. Please advise the editor if you intend to submit an article and submit the piece at least two weeks before the start of a publication month. Thank you!

To save SOSSA postage costs and receive 'The Albatross' as a colourful pdf or web file then please send your email address and current membership number to : [sossa@tpg.com.au](mailto:sossa@tpg.com.au)

## SOSSA's newsletter—The Albatross



A Sea Eagle seen on a recent SOSSA pelagic off Wollongong. Photo: Brook Whyllie

### Please help...

SOSSA membership fees remain unchanged even though costs have increased greatly across the board. We would really appreciate any donations from those whom may be able to afford it.

Thanks again for your support!!

We're on the web!  
[www.sossa-international.org](http://www.sossa-international.org)

# SOSSA - Pelagic Trip Data - 2011

Fax: 02 4272 4 PO Box 142 Unanderra NSW 2526

email: SOSSA@tpg.com.au

Speno	Species	Brisbane	Eden	Port Stephens	Sydney		Wollongong								
		Oct	Jul	Nov	Oct	Nov	25Jun	30Jul	3Sep	23Sep	24Sep	22Oct	23Oct	25Oct	29Oct
5	Little Penguin, <i>Eudyptula minor</i>										2	1	1	2	
929	Southern Giant Petrel, <i>Macronectes giganteus</i>						1								
937	Northern Giant Petrel, <i>Macronectes halli</i>				1				2		1			1	
984	Cape Petrel, <i>Daption capense</i>				2		1		2		2	2	1	2	2
75	Great-winged Petrel, <i>Pterodroma macroptera</i>			10	16	20			2		2	2	1	2	1
77	White-headed Petrel, <i>Pterodroma lessonii</i>								1						
971	Providence Petrel, <i>Pterodroma solandri</i>	37	7	2	25	10	1	2+	5		4	2	3	4	1
920	Tahiti Petrel, <i>Pseudobulweria rostrata</i>	9													
918	Cook's Petrel, <i>Pterodroma cooki</i>					1									
78	Gould's Petrel, <i>Pterodroma leucoptera</i>			1											
	Prion, <i>Pachyptila Spp.</i>						1								
83	Fairy Prion, <i>Pachyptila turtur</i>		46					1							
942	Slender-billed Prion, <i>Pachyptila belcheri</i>		2												
917	Black Petrel, <i>Procellaria parkinsoni</i>			3											
69	Wedge-tailed Shearwater, <i>Puffinus pacificus</i>	121	1	1200	350	2000			50+	50+	50+	50+	150+	50+	300+
975	Buller's Shearwater, <i>Puffinus bulleri</i>					1									
72	Flesh-footed Shearwater, <i>Puffinus carneipes</i>	5		40	18	6							4		3
771	Great Shearwater, <i>Puffinus gravis</i>			1											
70	Sooty Shearwater, <i>Puffinus griseus</i>			1	1	3									6
71	Short-tailed Shearwater, <i>Puffinus tenuirostris</i>			150	150	1500					100'S	100'S	100+	100'S	100'S
68	Fluttering Shearwater, <i>Puffinus gavia</i>			1	14	4	present	present	30+	30+	40+	40+	1000+	40+	30+
913	Hutton's Shearwater, <i>Puffinus huttoni</i>			1	16	3					4	4	4	4	4
	Fluttering/Hutton's Shearwater		4	3											
86	Wandering Albatross, <i>Diomedea exulans</i>		1					2	20+		4	4	4	4	4
846	Antipodean Albatross, <i>Diomedea antipodensis</i>								5+				1		1
847	Gibson's Albatross, <i>Diomedea gibsoni</i>				8	2					2			2	
88	Black-browed Albatross, <i>Thalassarche melanophrys</i>		1		4	3	10+	5+	40+	40+	4+	6	6	4+	4+
859	Campbell Albatross, <i>Thalassarche impavida</i>		2			1	10+		8+		2		1	2	1
91	Shy Albatross, <i>Thalassarche cauta</i>		55			8	5+	1+	3		1	3		1	1
861	White-capped Albatross, <i>Thalassarche steadi</i>								5		2		1	2	2
862	Salvin's Albatross, <i>Thalassarche salvini</i>		6		1				1						
864	Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross, <i>Thalassarche carteri</i>				2		150+	14+	8		6			6	

