

# Seabird ID Guide



for commercial fishers in southern Australia



Australian Government  
Australian Fisheries Management Authority

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## Acknowledgements

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OUR  
COUNTRY

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# Foreword

Seabirds have been described as an omen of good or bad luck, or even the souls of lost sailors. They have an important role in the marine environment, which in turn supports our fisheries.

Australia has one of the world's largest fishing zones and our fishing activities can interact with these animals. With AFMA and the fishing industry working together we can ensure that we can minimise the impact on these species and help to protect the environment and fisheries.

This book will help you identify the seabirds you are likely to come across while you are out at sea. Better identification and reporting of seabirds interactions to AFMA supports better management decisions.

This initiative is part of AFMA's continued focus on delivering fisheries management that ensures sustainable and profitable fisheries to produce Australian seafood now and into the future.



James Findlay  
Chief Executive Officer  
Australian Fisheries Management Authority

# Introduction

This special edition of our protected species identification guide on seabirds has been created to help fishers in the south-east of Australia identify the seabirds encountered during fishing more accurately.

All seabirds are protected species and listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. Good quality data from fishers is fundamental to ensuring that our fisheries are managed well.

As long as operators are fishing in accordance with their fishery's accredited management arrangements, it is not an offence to interact with protected species including seabirds. However, it is an offence not to report these interactions.

Operators must report all interactions with protected species, including seabirds.

An interaction is any contact fishing vessels or fishing gear has with a protected species, including contact with warp wires or being caught in a net or even a collision with a boat.

When an interaction with a protected species occurs, operators need to fill out the listed marine and threatened species form (or Wildlife reporting form) in the daily fishing logbook, or e-log, and then submit it to AFMA in the usual manner. Under agreed reporting arrangements, AFMA will report interactions to the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities on the operator's behalf, by fishery, through periodic summary reports of interactions.

For further information contact AFMA on 1300 723 621.

# Seabirds

Seabirds are facing a number of threats to the long term viability of their species with a key threat identified as incidental mortality through fishing activity (Brothers et al 1999). Seabirds recognise fishing vessels as a source of food and are therefore attracted to them (Baker and Finley 2010).

Seabirds generally take their prey from the top few metres of the water column (Harper et al 1985). Many species are scavengers—eating dead fish, squid and other marine life found floating on the surface. As scavengers, seabirds are particularly attracted to fishing vessels when bycatch and offal is discarded from the vessel (AAD 2005; Baker et al 2002).

Albatrosses, in particular, are susceptible to long-term population decline from fishing-related mortalities. They take a long time to mature (3-15 years), produce a maximum of one nestling per year, and if a partner of a pair is killed it will take a long time for the surviving individual to form new partnership (AAD 2005).

This guide contains descriptions of the species which are often seen in the fishing grounds off southern Australia. It includes species such as the shy albatross, cape petrel, flesh-footed shearwater, black-browed albatross, yellow-nosed albatross, Buller's albatross and grey-headed albatross.



# Mitigation measures

Conservation groups and the Australian community are developing a greater awareness of fisheries and the marine environment. The Australian Government is also pushing for better environmental, economic and social outcomes for fisheries. These factors lead to greater pressure for operators in fisheries to demonstrate their environmental sustainability. Additionally, the impact on any protected species, including seabirds, can lead to consumer avoidance of seafood products.

When used effectively, mitigation measures can reduce the number of seabirds injured or killed by fishing gear. Several inexpensive mitigation measures

are available to fishers and can be used to reduce impacts on seabirds.

Mitigation measures fall into three primary categories including:

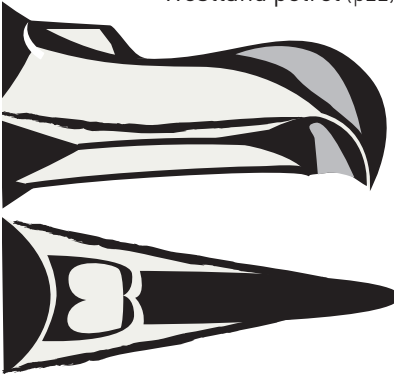
- modifications to fishing gear
- deployment of specific mitigation devices alongside fishing gear
- changes to fishing practices (e.g. offal management).

While mitigation measures are mandatory in some fisheries, anything fishers can do to minimise seabird bycatch is clearly a step in the right direction. To share your ideas with AFMA contact us on 1300 723 621.

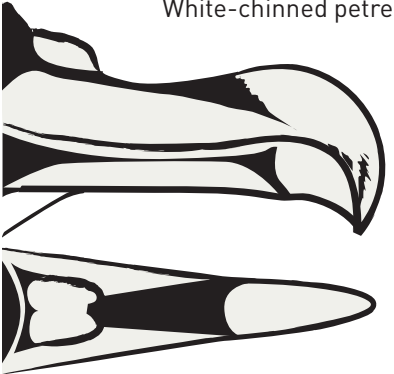


# Bill Guide

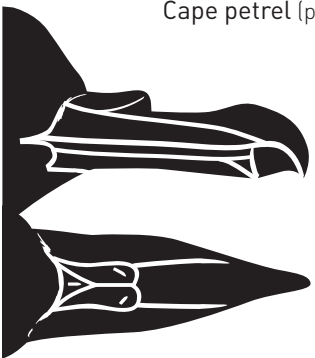
Westland petrel (p22)



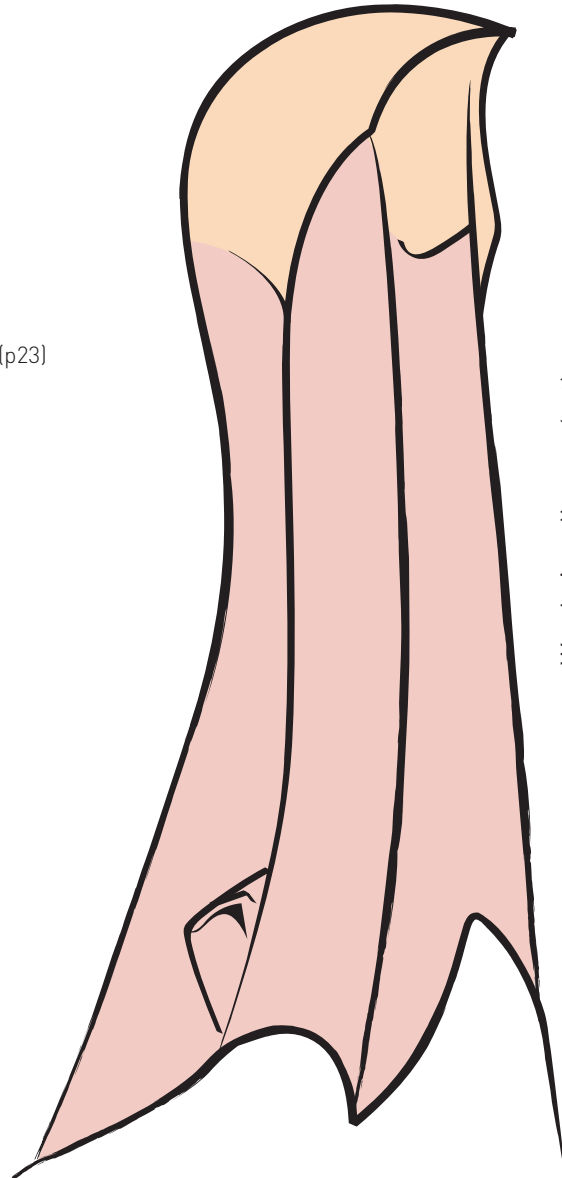
White-chinned petrel (p23)



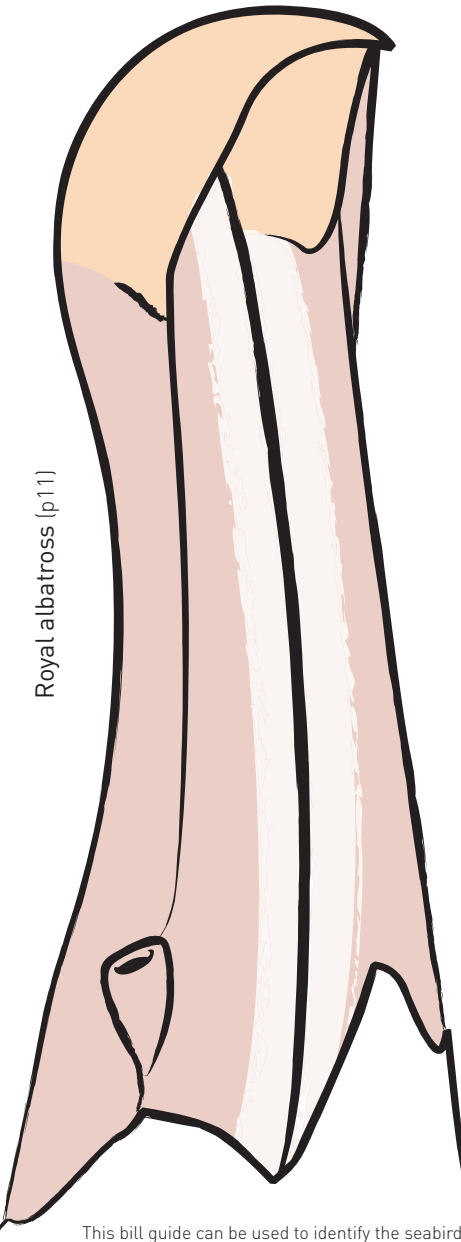
Cape petrel (p20)



After Simpson & Day (1995), inside front and back cover  
After Slater (1970), p189-197



Wandering albatross (p12)

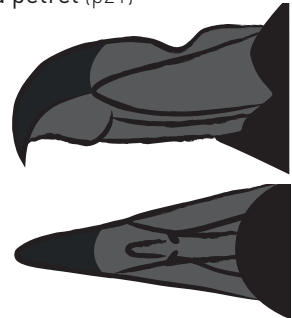


Royal albatross (p11)

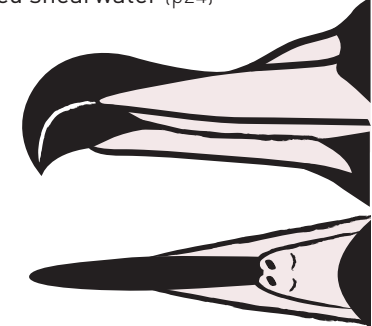
# Bill Guide

After Simpson & Day (1995), inside front and back cover  
After Slater (1970), p189-197

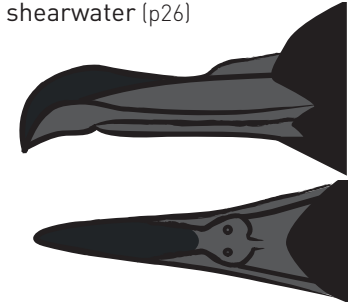
Great-winged petrel (p21)



Flesh-footed shearwater (p24)



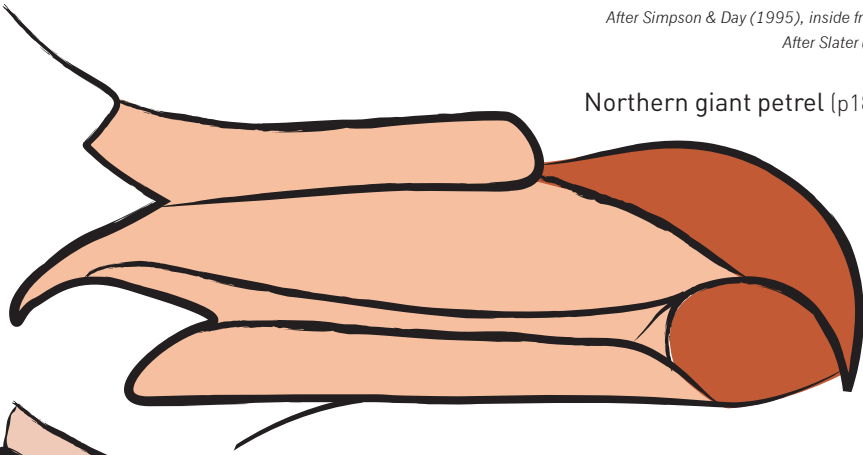
Wedge-tailed shearwater (p26)



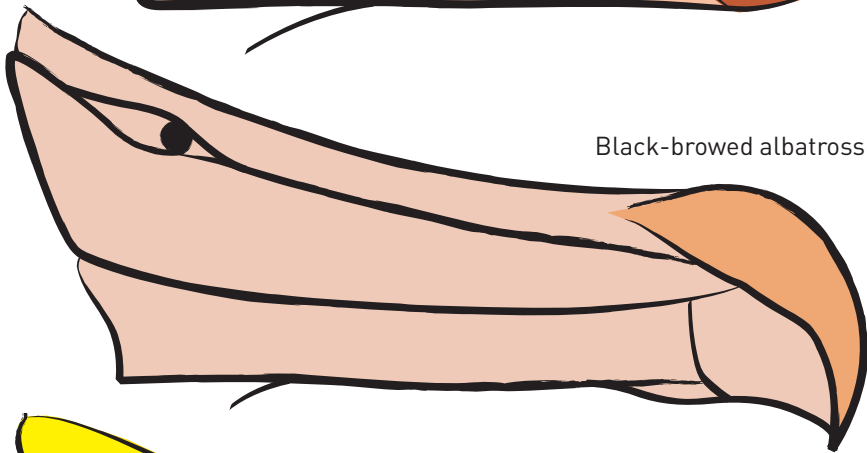
## Bill Guide

After Simpson & Day (1995), inside front and back cover  
After Slater (1970), p189-197

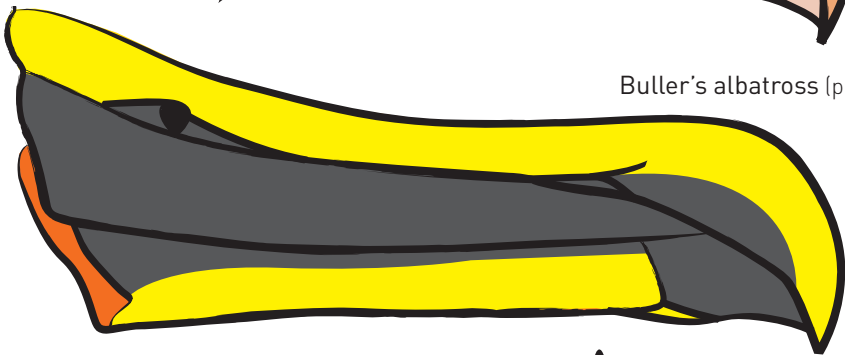
Northern giant petrel (p18,19)



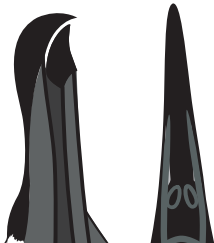
Black-browed albatross (p13)



Buller's albatross (p14)



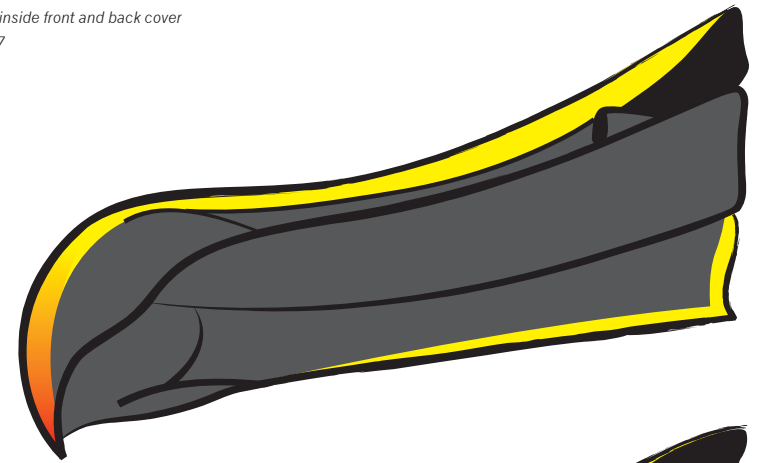
Short-tailed shearwater (p25)



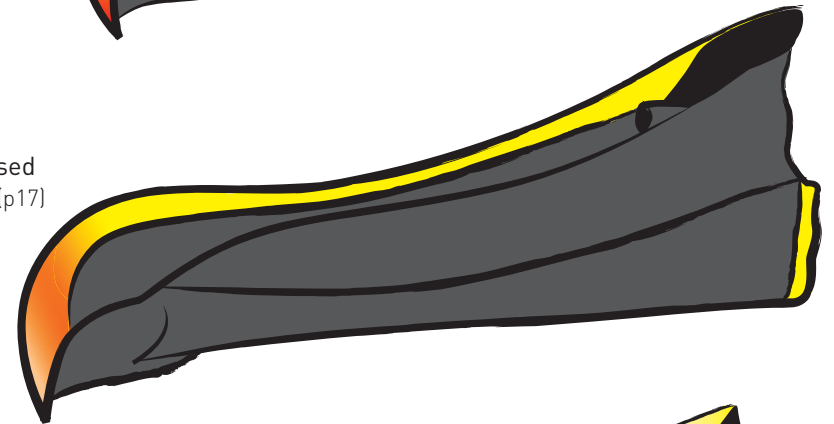
## Bill Guide

After Simpson & Day (1995), inside front and back cover  
After Slater (1970), p189-197

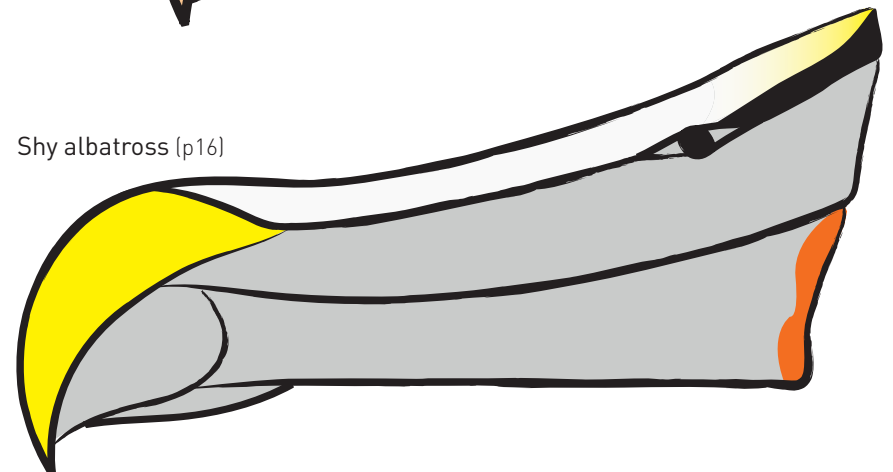
Grey-headed albatross (p15)



Yellow-nosed albatross (p17)

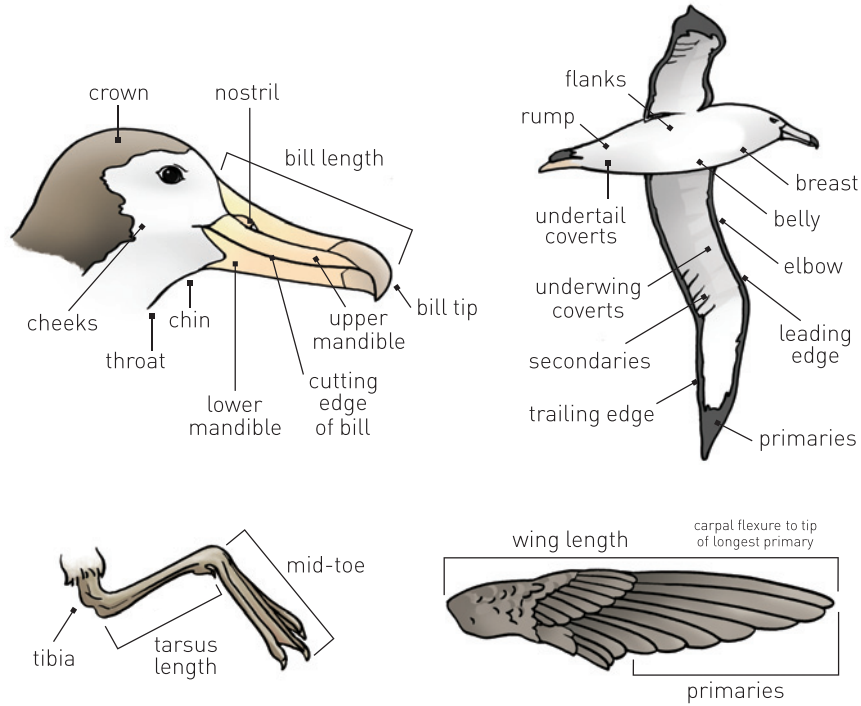


Shy albatross (p16)



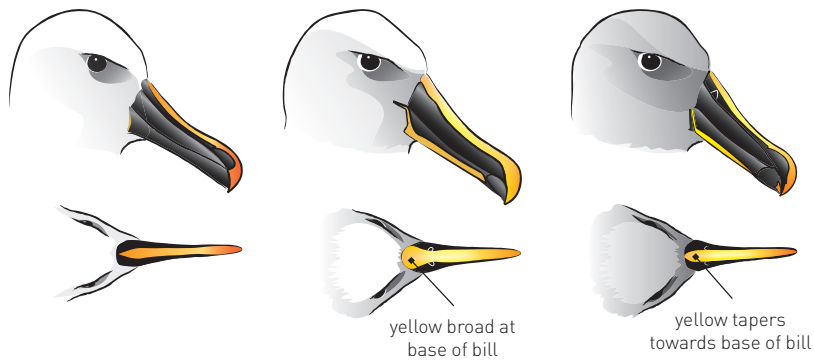
This bill guide can be used to identify the seabird through bill size. The colours of the bills are indicative for adults, juvenile colour can vary greatly.

# Identifying Features of Albatross



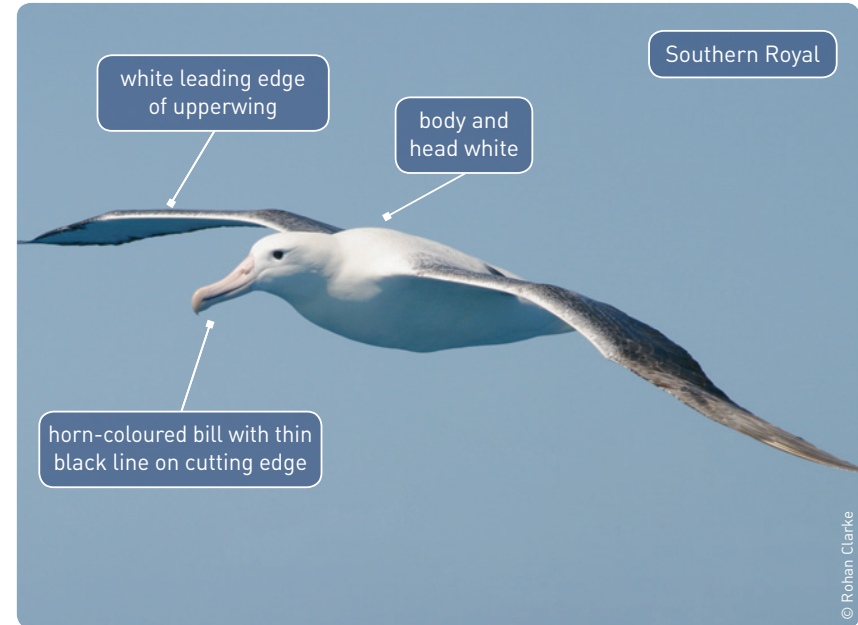
After Onley & Bartle (1999), p19

Yellow-nosed albatross (p17)    Buller's albatross (p14)    Grey-headed albatross (p15)



After Onley & Bartle (1999), p35

# Royal Albatross



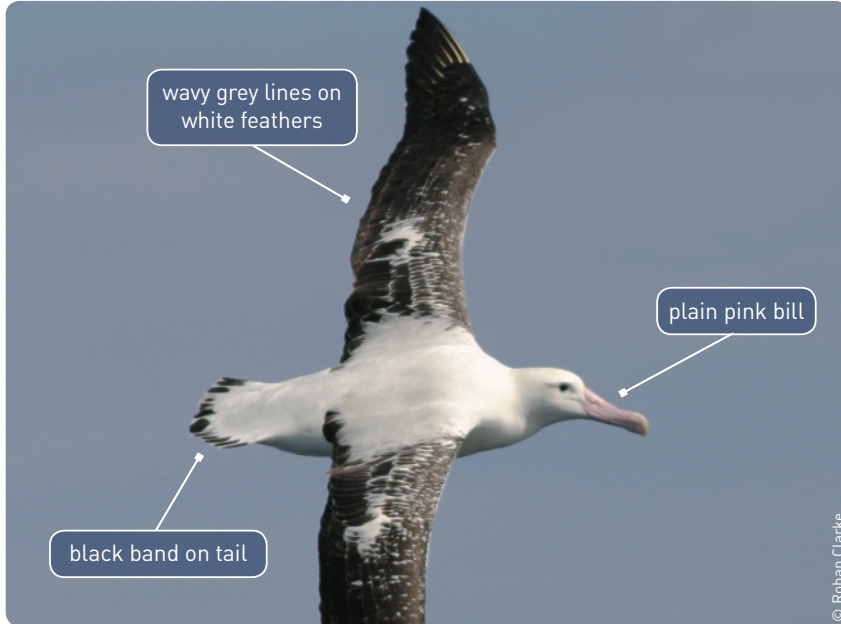
**Royal albatross (Southern/Northern)**  
*Diomedea epomophora/sandfordi*  
 CAAB No: 40040005/40040012



- Very large birds
- Horn-coloured bills with a thin black line on the cutting edge
- Body, head and tail are white with variable dark spots on the crown, back and tip of tail
- No black band on tip of tail
- Southern, upperwing gets whiter with age
- Northern, wing has a black leading edge with all black undersurface
- Length: 110 - 120cm, Wingspan: 320 - 340cm
- Similar species: Wandering and Amsterdam albatrosses



## Wandering Albatross



**Wandering albatross**  
*Diomedea exulans*

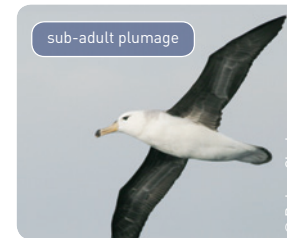
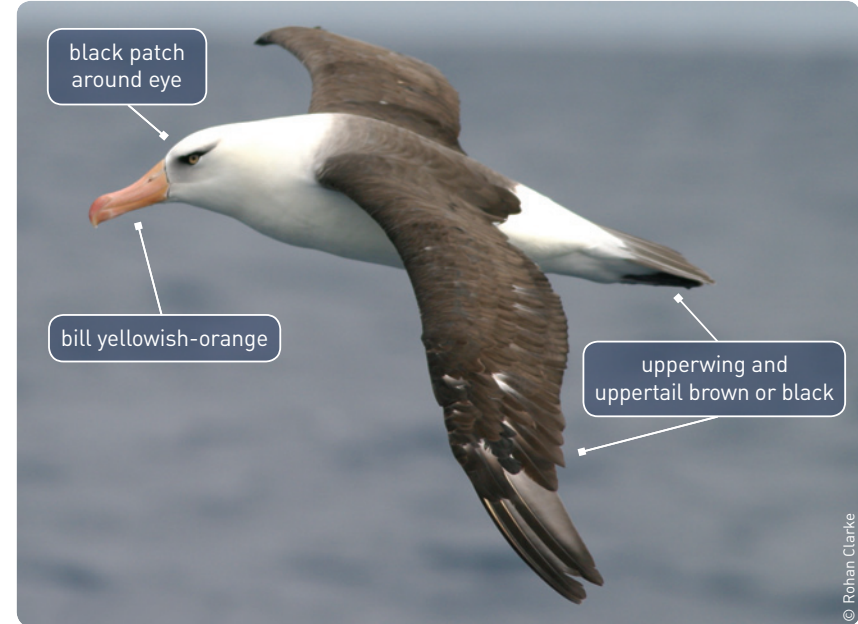
CAAB No: 40040006



- Plain pink bill
- Plumage variable: become whiter with age; most retain brown crowns and a few dark tail feathers
- Even the palest birds usually have fine, grey, wavy lines on the white feathers
- Black band on tip of tail
- Juveniles are dark brown with white face, throat and underwing
- Length: 110 - 120cm, Wingspan: 320 - 340cm
- Similar species: Royal and Amsterdam albatrosses



## Black-browed Albatross



**Black-browed albatross**  
*Thalassarche melanophrys*

CAAB No: 40040007

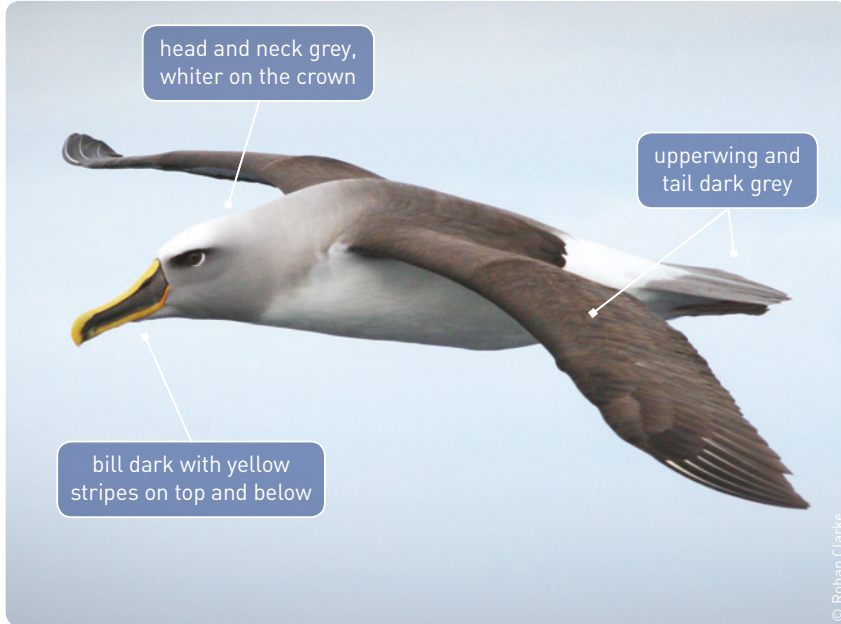


- Bill yellowish-orange
- Head white with black eyes and patch around eyes
- Underwing white with wide black margins
- Length: 85 - 90cm, Wingspan: 220 - 230cm
- Similar species: Grey-headed, Buller's, New Zealand Campbell and Yellow nosed albatrosses





## Buller's Albatross



**Buller's albatross**  
*Thalassarche bulleri*

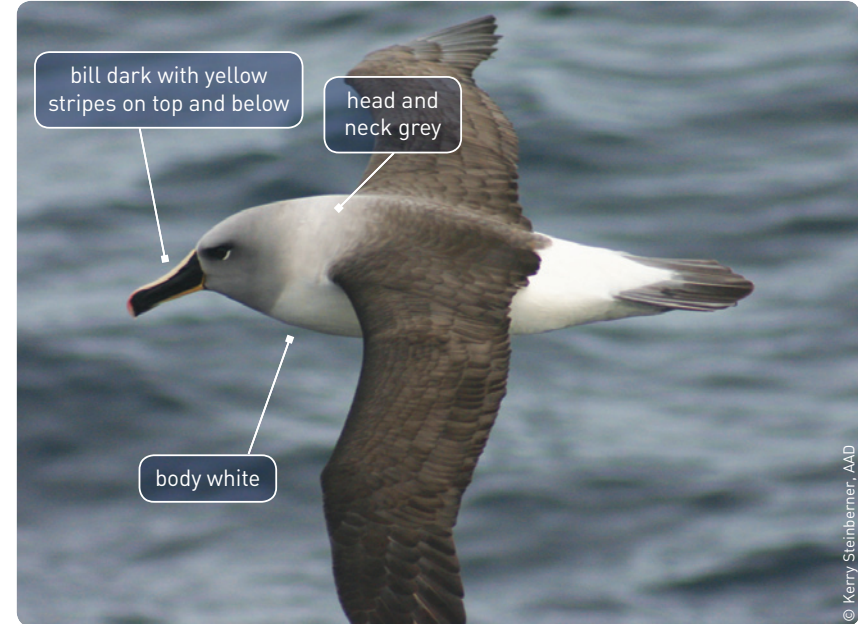
CAAB No: 40040001



- Bill dark with yellow stripes on top and below
- Broad yellow stripe on top of bill, rounded at base
- Head and neck grey, whiter on the crown
- Body white
- Upperwing and uppertail dark grey-brown
- Underwing white with clear black margins
- Length: 75 - 80cm, Wingspan: 205 - 215cm
- Similar species: Grey-headed, Salvin's and Yellow-nosed albatrosses



## Grey-headed Albatross



**Grey-headed albatross**  
*Thalassarche chrysostoma*

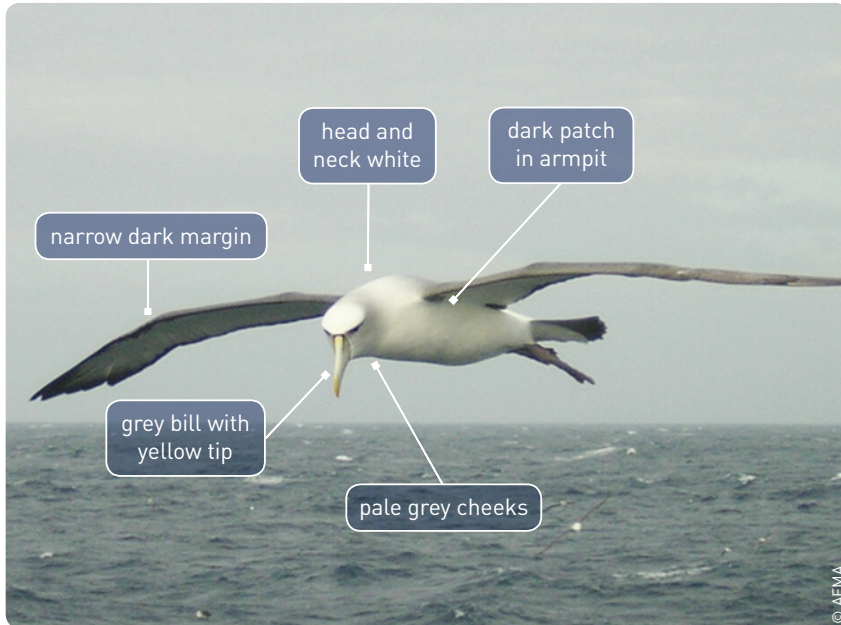
CAAB No: 40040004



- Bill dark with yellow stripes on top and below
- Stripe on top of bill tapers towards the base
- Head and neck grey no white cap
- Body white
- Upperwing and uppertail dark grey-brown
- Underwing white with smudgy black margins
- Length: 80 - 85cm, Wingspan: 215 - 225cm
- Similar species: Buller's, Yellow-nosed and Black-browed albatrosses



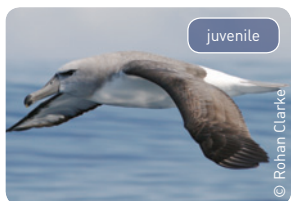
## Shy Albatross



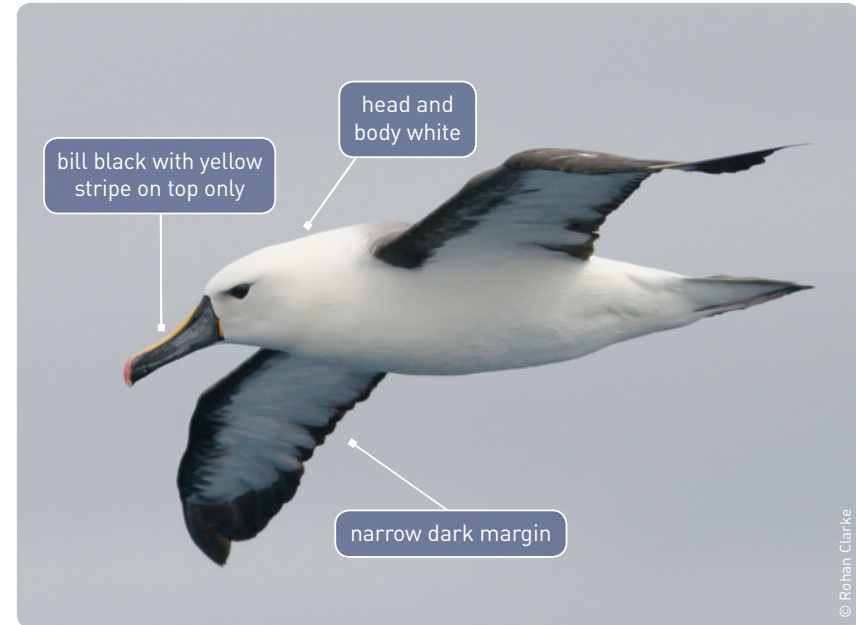
**Shy albatross**  
*Thalassarche cauta*  
CAAB No: 40040002



- Adults have a pale grey bill with a light yellow tip often with a dark smudge on the tip of the lower mandible
- Underparts white, underwing white with narrow dark margin and dark thumbprint under arm
- Juveniles have dark grey bills with blackish tips, grey necks and heads with whitish caps and a greyish collar
- Length: 95 - 105cm, Wingspan: 250 - 260cm
- Similar species: White-capped Chatham Island and Salvin's albatrosses



## Yellow-nosed Albatross



**Yellow-nosed albatross (Atlantic/Indian Ocean)**  
*Thalassarche chlororhynchos/carteri*  
CAAB No: 40040003/40040014



- Black bill with yellow stripe on top only
- Black patch in front of eyes
- Body white, upperwing and uppertail grey-brown
- Underwing white with narrow black margins
- Atlantic Ocean bird has light grey head and neck which becomes whiter as feathers wear
- Indian Ocean bird has white head
- Length: 70 - 80cm, Wingspan: 200 - 210cm
- Similar species: Buller's, Grey-headed, Salvin's and Black-browed albatrosses





## Northern (Hall's) Giant Petrel



**Northern (Hall's) giant petrel**  
*Macronectes halli*

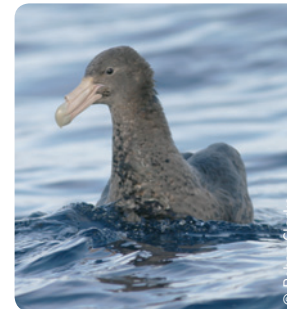
CAAB No: 40041008



- Large, straw-coloured bill, tipped reddish-pink or orange with a large single nostril-tube on top
- Adults have a dark crown, whitish face and throat
- Eyes pale grey
- Immature birds are a sooty-brown colour with dark brown eyes
- Much larger than other petrels and similar in size to a small albatross
- Length: 85 - 95cm, Wingspan: 160 - 200cm
- Similar species: Southern giant petrel and Sooty albatross



## Southern Giant Petrel

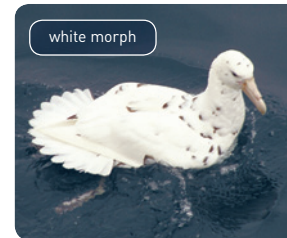


**Southern giant petrel**  
*Macronectes giganteus*

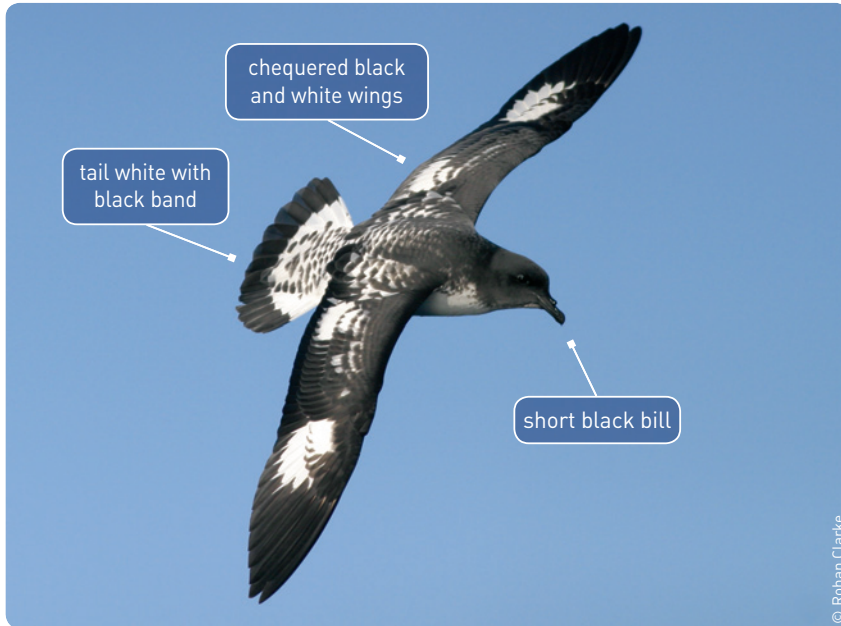
CAAB No: 40041007



- Largest petrel
- Large straw-coloured bill, greenish tip with a large single nostril-tube on top
- Adults are grey-brown with head, neck and breast mottled whitish
- Eyes pale grey
- Juveniles blackish-brown, with dark brown eyes
- 3% of the population are white with some dark feathers
- Length: 85 - 90cm, Wingspan: 190 - 200cm
- Similar species: Northern giant petrel and Sooty albatross



## Cape Petrel

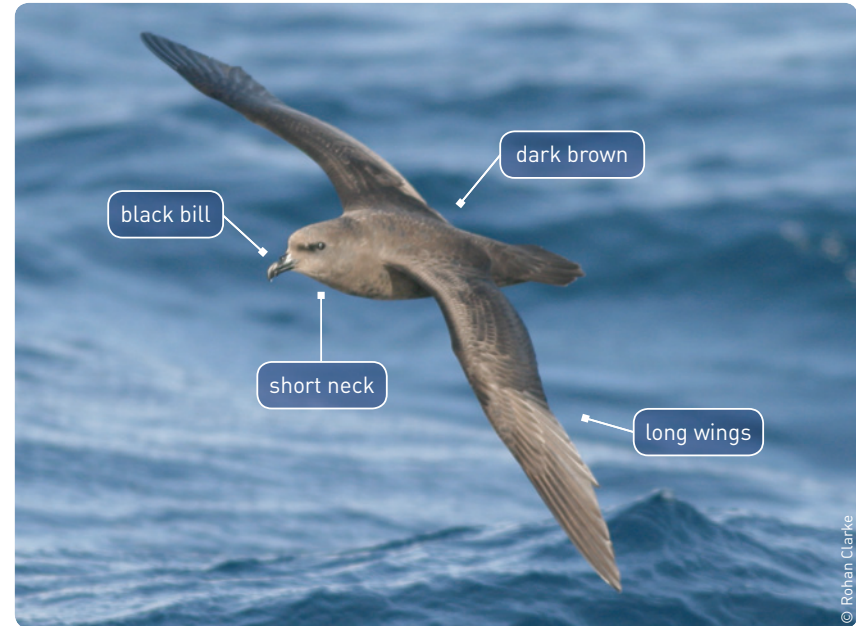


**Cape petrel**  
*Daption capense*  
CAAB No: 40041003



- Black and white petrel
- Bill black and short
- White underwings with narrow black margins
- Back wings and rump chequered black and white
- Tail white with a black band at the end
- Length: 35 - 40cm, Wingspan: 85 - 90cm
- Similar species: Antarctic petrel

## Great-winged Petrel



**Great-winged petrel**  
*Pterodroma macroptera*  
CAAB No: 40041031



- Large, dark brown petrel
- Often with a pale patch around the black bill
- Short neck
- Long wings
- Can be confused with White-chinned petrel, but identifiable by bill colour
- Length: 40 - 45cm, Wingspan: 95 - 100cm
- Similar species: Sooty and Short-tailed shearwaters, White-chinned and Providence petrels

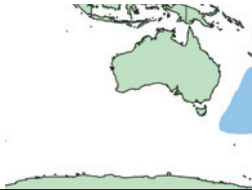


## Westland Petrel



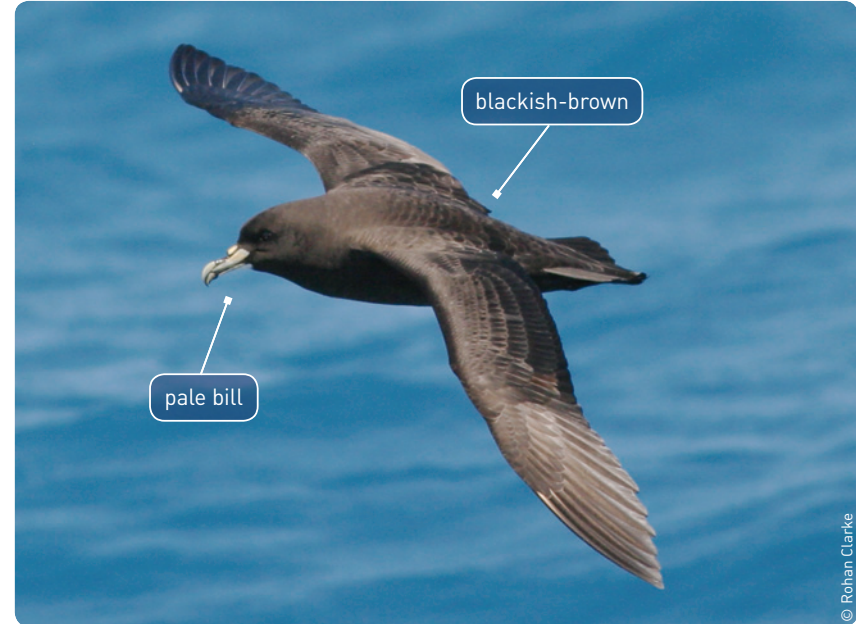
**Westland petrel**  
*Procellaria westlandica*

CAAB No: 40041021



- Bill whitish to yellow horn with dark ridge and cutting edge and dark tip
- Very similar to the Black petrel but larger, longer billed, short necked with broader wings
- Dark legs and black feet
- Is sometimes confused with the White-chinned petrel: White-chinned petrel has a pale, not a black tip to bill
- Length: 50 - 55cm, Wingspan: 135 - 140cm
- Similar species: White-chinned, Black and Great-winged petrels and Flesh-footed shearwater

## White-chinned Petrel



**White-chinned petrel**  
*Procellaria aequinoctialis*

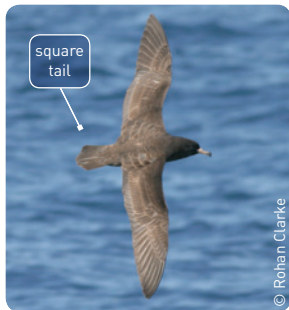
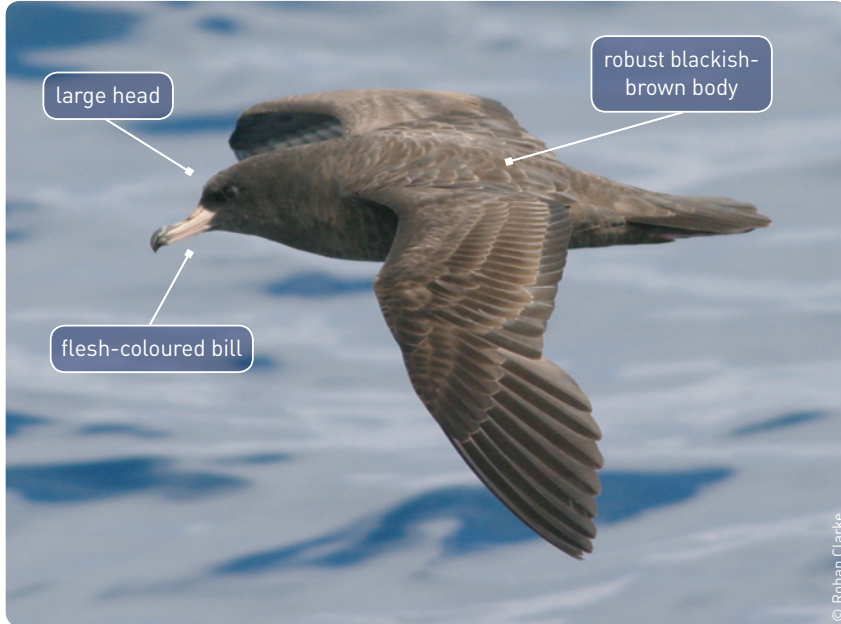
CAAB No: 40041018



- Large blackish-brown petrel with pale bill and in some birds a small white patch on the chin
- Longish pale bill can be whitish, bluish, yellowish or greenish with a strongly hooked tip
- Underwing brown
- Black feet
- Can be confused with Great-winged petrel, but distinguishable by bill colour
- Length: 50 - 55cm, Wingspan: 135 - 140cm
- Similar species: Westland and Black petrels and Flesh-footed shearwater



## Flesh-footed Shearwater



### Flesh-footed shearwater

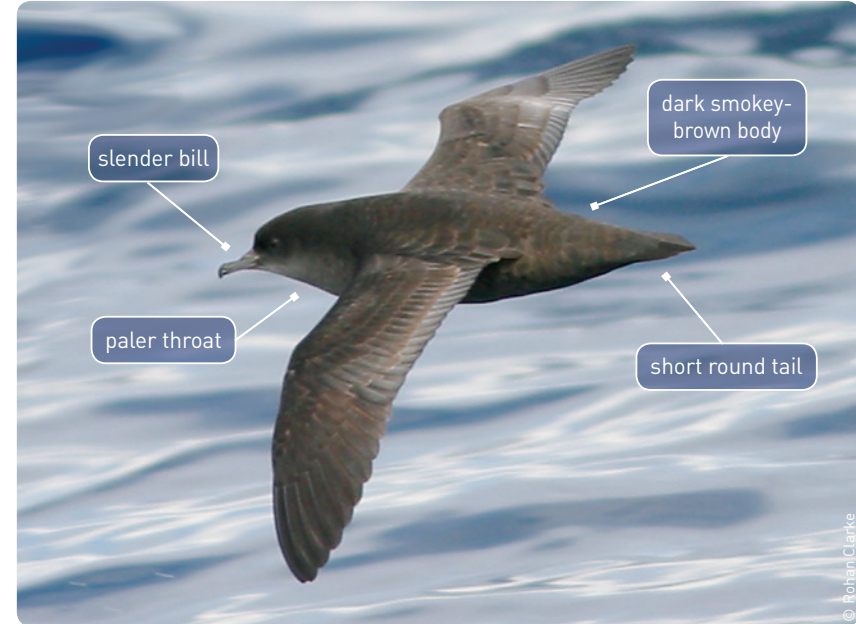
*Puffinus carneipes*

CAAB No: 40041038



- Large, pale, flesh-coloured bill with blackish tip
- Large head on a robust blackish-brown body
- Brown underwing
- Tail short, either square or weakly wedge-shaped
- Legs and feet pale pink
- Length: 40 - 45cm, Wingspan: 100 - 110cm
- Similar species: Wedge-tailed shearwater, White-chinned, Westland and Parkinson's petrels

## Short-tailed Shearwater



### Short-tailed shearwater

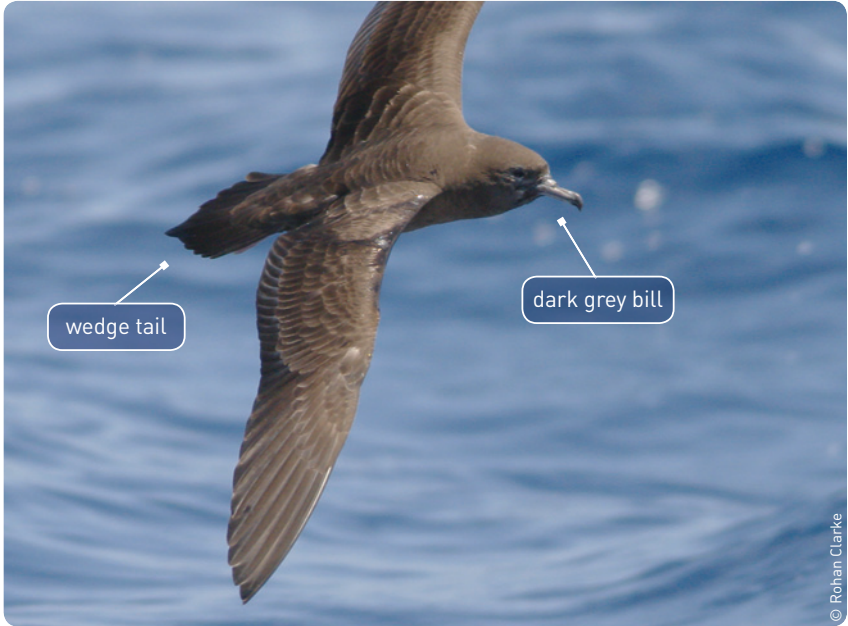
*Puffinus tenuirostris*

CAAB No: 40041047



- Also known as the "muttonbird"
- Bill slender and shorter than 3.5cm
- Dark smoky-brown with a paler throat
- Some have whitish underwing
- Tail short and rounded
- Often seen in huge groups of tens of thousands
- Length: 40 - 45cm, Wingspan: 95 - 100cm
- Similar species: Sooty, Flesh-footed and Wedge-tailed shearwaters

# Wedge-tailed Shearwater



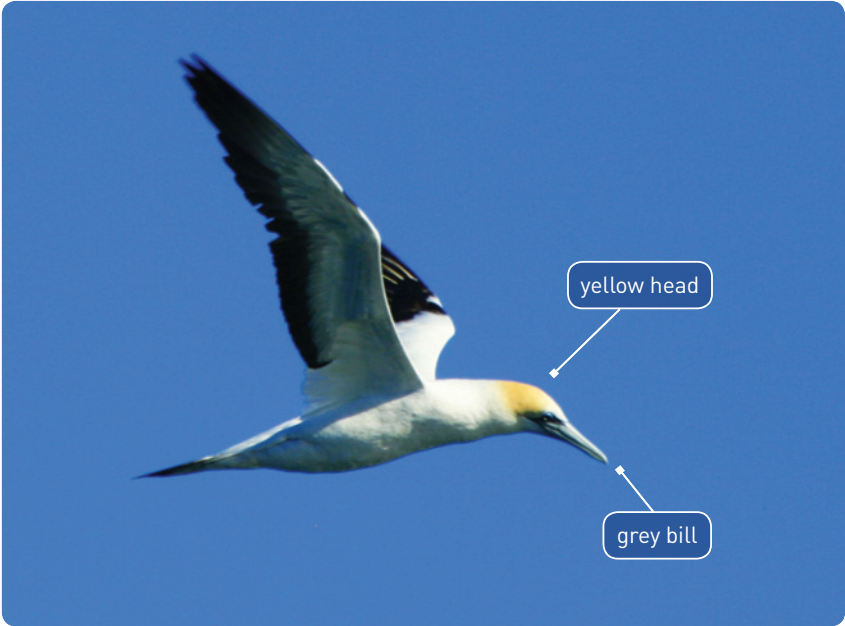
**Wedge-tailed shearwater**  
*Puffinus pacificus*

CAAB No: 40041045



- Also known as the "muttonbird"
- Bill usually dark grey, some can have a pale horn colour with a black tip
- Has broad wings and flies close to the water
- Longish wedge-shaped tail, looks pointed in flight
- Feet flesh-coloured and do not extend beyond the tail in flight
- Length: 40 - 45cm, Wingspan: 100 - 105cm
- Similar species: Flesh-footed shearwater

# Australasian Gannet



**Australasian gannet**  
*Morus serrator*

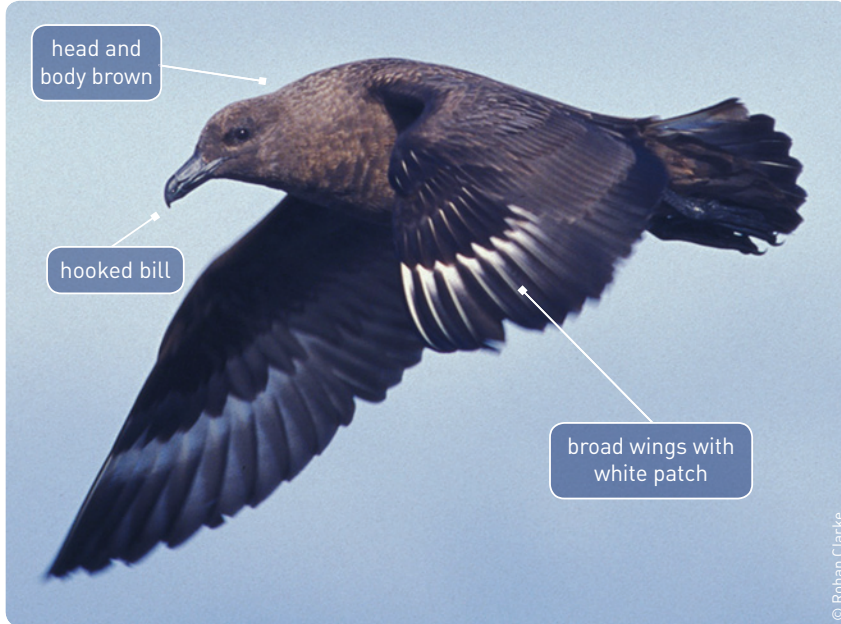
CAAB No: 40047002  
FAO Code: MVR



- Straight-billed birds that dive into the sea
- Head yellow with grey bill
- Adult body white
- Short black stripe in centre of throat
- Black feathers on wings at tips and trailing edges, and in central tail
- Black feet, green on toes
- Juvenile mottled grey-brown
- Length: 80 - 85cm, Wingspan: 165 - 175cm



## Brown Skua



**Brown skua**  
*Catharacta antarctica*

CAAB No: 40128903



- Similar in shape to a stout brown gull with a large hooked black bill
- Head and body uniformly coloured ranging from dark brown to light brown with pale flecking
- Wings broad with a large white patch on underwing near primaries
- Juveniles are darker brown, sometimes mottled with smaller white wing patches
- Length: 52-64 cm, Wingspan: 126-160 cm
- Similar species: South Polar skua



## References

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Protected species?

# Don't get caught just report!

As long as operators are fishing in accordance with their fishery's management arrangements, it is not an offence to interact with a protected species even if the animal dies. However, it is an offence NOT to report these interactions. All you need to do is fill out the appropriate section in your logbook and then submit it to AFMA.

- 1. Report any sightings, collisions or catch of protected species.**
- 2. Fill in wildlife form in your logbook.**
- 3. Submit this form to AFMA.**

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