

Yellow nosed Albatross

Geelneusmalmok

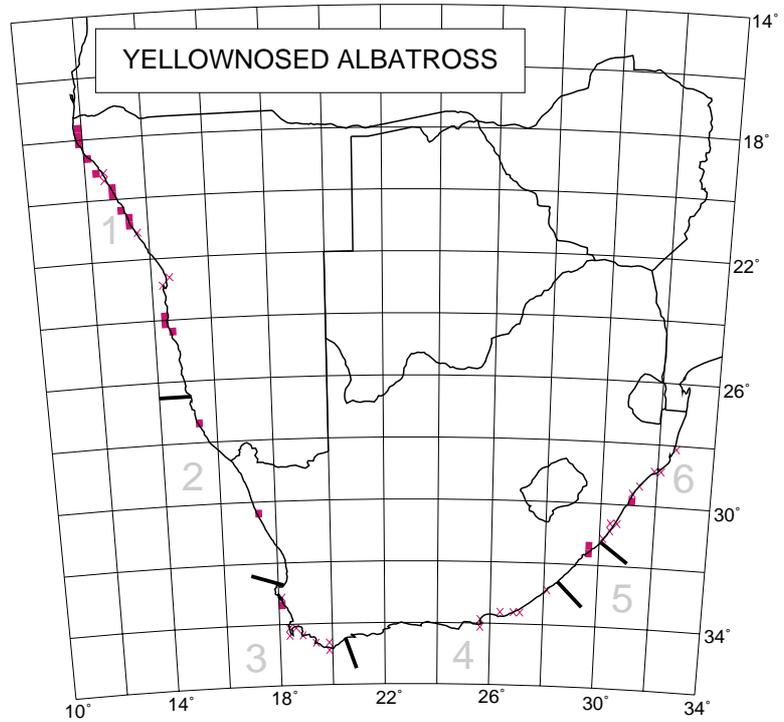
Diomedea chlororhynchos

The Yellow nosed Albatross is a fairly common nonbreeding visitor, occurring in all coastal regions. It favours more northerly latitudes than other albatrosses, ranging from Angola to Mozambique, and is the most abundant albatross off northern Namibia and KwaZulu-Natal (Brooke 1981; Brooke *et al.* 1981). Adults of the two subspecies can be distinguished in the field; the nominate race has a grey-washed head and *D. c. bassi* has a white head (Brooke *et al.* 1980b). The nominate race occurs predominantly off the west coast, whereas *bassi* is found off the south and east coasts, with an area of overlap between Cape Point (3418AD) and Cape Agulhas (3420CC).

It breeds annually at temperate and subantarctic islands in the South Atlantic and Indian oceans during the austral summer. Nonbreeding birds disperse to New Zealand in the east and to South America in the west. Both nominate birds from Gough and the Tristan islands (c. 21 000 breeding pairs), and *bassi* from southern Indian Ocean islands (48 000 breeding pairs), occur off southern Africa. Amsterdam Island birds appear to move eastward to Australian waters (Marchant & Higgins 1990).

It occurs in oceanic waters more frequently than other mollymauks, but is present in larger numbers over productive shelf waters. It takes more fish than do other albatrosses, often feeding with Cory's Shearwater *Calonectris diomedea* on epipelagic fish such as Saury *Scorpaenopsis saurus* (Ryan & Rose 1989). It is attracted to trawlers, but seldom in large numbers, except off northern Namibia, where other albatrosses are less abundant. As the smallest of the mollymauks, it remains on the periphery of dense feeding groups, using its agility in the air to snatch scraps before larger species can reach them.

It is more abundant during winter, but seasonality is not pronounced off the western Cape Province because not all birds return to the colonies each summer to breed, and it is possible that breeding birds visit during incubation. Occurrence off KwaZulu-Natal is more seasonal, with most records from late winter (July–September). Birds ringed as chicks on Nightingale Island, Tristan group, in 1938 were recovered as



Recorded in 44 grid cells, 1.0%
 Total number of records: 99
 Mean reporting rate for range: 1.0%

first-year birds primarily off southern Angola, with only a few from Namibia (Hagen 1952). Recoveries of adults ringed at Nightingale Island in 1964 have nearly all been from Namibian waters (Morant 1977; SAFRING).

As with other albatrosses, there is a history of targeted and incidental capture by commercial fisheries. Populations at Tristan da Cunha, and to a lesser extent Nightingale Island, have been reduced by human predation on the breeding grounds, but the Yellow nosed Albatross is now fully protected and the affected populations are recovering.

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