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

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Black-browed mollymawk (albatross): pp 23-24.



BLACK-BROWED MOLLYMAWK

(Black-browed Mollymawk (*Thalassarche melanophrys*), Campbell Mollymawk (*T. impavida*))

Family Diomedidae

Species *Thalassarche melanophrys*

Common name Black-browed Mollymawk (*T. melanophrys*), Campbell Mollymawk (*T. impavida*)

Status Black-browed Mollymawk (*T. melanophrys*) – circumpolar, New Zealand Black-browed Mollymawk (*T. impavida*), endemic

Abundance Common in northern waters

Size 750 - 900 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm)

Species Two species are recognised. They are the Black-browed Mollymawk (*T. melanophrys*) and the Campbell Black-browed Mollymawk (*T. impavida*).

Breeding islands close to New Zealand Black-browed Mollymawk (*T. melanophrys*) breeds on Snares, Antipodes and Campbell Islands. Campbell Black-browed Mollymawk (*T. impavida*) breeds on Campbell Island.

Breeding months August until April.

Range worldwide Through the southern oceans to the Tropic of Capricorn.

New Zealand range In waters around New Zealand. Seen in northern waters such as the Hauraki Gulf and coastal Northland, in winter months. Usually keeps well out to sea.

Description – mature bird

Head White with a black triangle in front of and around eye. **Upperwings and back** Black. **Neck and rump** White. **Underwings** White with heavy black to leading edges, wing tips and a lesser black trailing edge. **Underparts** White. **Tail** Grey with black tip. **Bill** Bright yellow with pink tip. **Eye** Honey-coloured with surround of elongated black.

Description – immature bird

Has a variety of feather patterns often showing black on the neck and wider areas of black under the wings.

Conspicuous features of Black-browed Mollymawks

- The Black-browed Mollymawk (*T. melanophrys*) has about 50% of the white underwing edged heavily with black.
- The Campbell Black-browed Mollymawk (*T. impavida*) has about 40% of the white underwing edged heavily with black.
- Black-browed Mollymawk has a longer black brow behind the eye than the Campbell Mollymawk. Also it has darker eye. The Campbell Mollymawk's eye is yellow.
- The Black-browed (*T. melanophrys*) has a yellowish-orange bill and the Campbell Mollymawk (*T. impavida*) has a deep orange bill.

Where to find – North Island

North Auckland – Waters towards Little Barrier. P 289.

Tauranga – Waters towards White Island. P. 322.

Wellington – Cook Strait.

Where to find – South Island and Stewart Island

North Canterbury – Kaikoura. P. 345.

Foveaux Strait – In deeper waters. 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.