

CHAMBERS, S. 2009.

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

Arun Books, Orewa, New Zealand.

Grey-headed mollymawk (albatross): pp 27-28.



GREY-HEADED MOLLYMAWK

Family Diomedidae

Species *Thalassarche chrysostoma*

Common name Grey-headed Mollymawk

Status Circumpolar

Abundance Common

Size 800 – 900 mm (cf sparrow 145 mm)

Breeding islands close to New Zealand Campbell and Macquarie Islands.

Breeding months September to May.

Range worldwide Ranges around the southern oceans to about the 30th parallel which equals the north of New Zealand's North Island.

New Zealand range Regarded as a bird of open waters but can be seen in coastal

waters around New Zealand in winter months and especially in Cook Strait.

Description – mature bird

Head Grey. **Upperwings and back** Black. **Rump** White. **Underparts** White. **Tail** Grey and black tipped. **Bill** Black, edged with bright yellow above and below, and tipped with pink.

Conspicuous features

- Dark grey head. Head is similar to Buller's Mollymawk but lacks its white crown.
- Underwing shows more white than Black-browed but less than Buller's. The leading underwing edge shows a wider belt of black than the trailing black edge which is fairly narrow.
- Can be mistaken here for Buller's Mollymawk and Salvin's Mollymawk.

Where to find – North Island

Wellington – Cook Strait in winter.

Where to find – Stewart Island

Foveaux Strait – Around Stewart Island in summer months. Solitary birds can be seen with Shy Mollymawks south-east of Oban during January, February and March. 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.