



Seabird identification guide

A guide to seabirds commonly rescued in New South Wales

Acknowledgement of Country

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

This resource may contain images, or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.



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Contents

Introduction	4
Measuring seabird dimensions	4
Bird anatomy	5
Bill outlines	6
Tube-nosed (<i>Procellariiformes</i>)	9
Shy albatross (<i>Thalassarche cauta</i>)	10
Southern giant petrel (<i>Macronectes giganteus</i>)	11
Northern giant petrel (<i>Macronectes halli</i>)	12
Wedge-tailed shearwater (<i>Ardenna pacifica</i>)	13
Short-tailed shearwater (<i>Ardenna tenuirostris</i>)	14
Sooty shearwater (<i>Ardenna grisea</i>)	15
Flesh-footed shearwater (<i>Ardenna carneipes</i>)	16
Fluttering shearwater (<i>Puffinus gavia</i>)	17
Hutton's shearwater (<i>Puffinus huttoni</i>)	18
Little shearwater (<i>Puffinus assimilis</i>)	19
Gould's petrel (<i>Pterodroma leucoptera</i>)	20
White-faced storm-petrel (<i>Pelagodroma marina</i>)	21
Fairy prion (<i>Pachyptila turtur</i>)	22
Penguin (<i>Sphenisciformes</i>)	23
Little penguin (<i>Eudyptula minor</i>)	24
Terns and gulls (<i>Charadriiformes</i>)	25
Crested tern (<i>Thalasseus bergii</i>)	26
Sooty tern (<i>Onychoprion fuscatus</i>)	27
Common tern (<i>Sterna hirundo</i>)	28
Little tern (<i>Sternula albifrons</i>)	29
Silver gull (<i>Larus novaehollandiae</i>)	30
Pacific gull (<i>Larus pacificus</i>)	31
Cormorants, pelican and gannets (<i>Pelecaniformes</i>)	32
Little black cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax sulcirostris</i>)	33
Great cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax carbo</i>)	34
Little pied cormorant (<i>Microcarbo melanoleucos</i>)	35
Pied cormorant (<i>Phalacrocorax varius</i>)	36
Australasian gannet (<i>Morus serrator</i>)	37
Australian pelican (<i>Pelicanus conspicillatus</i>)	38
Further information	39
References	39

Introduction

This booklet was created to help the wildlife rehabilitation sector identify seabirds rescued in New South Wales. The species chosen are those most often rescued by wildlife organisations who are licensed under the NSW *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* and provide rescue data to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. This publication was made possible thanks to funding provided by the Marine Estate Management Strategy.






Distribution maps

-  Landmass of Australia
-  Species or species habitat likely to occur
-  Species or species habitat may occur

Bill outlines

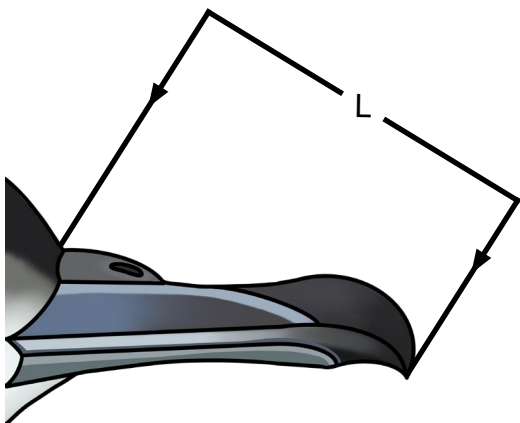
The bill outlines are approximate only, as individuals vary. The outlines are based on the median for each species unless sex is specified.

Symbols and codes

-  This icon indicates bill length
-  This icon indicates wing or flipper length
-  This icon indicates weight measurements
-  This icon indicates female.
-  This icon indicates male.

Measuring seabird dimensions

(a) Seabird bill length



(b) Penguin bill length and depth

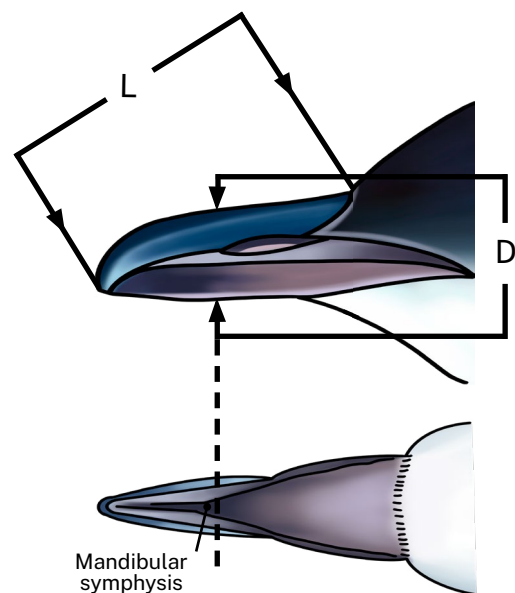


Figure 1 (a) Measure bill length (L) in all seabirds from the base to the longest edge of the bill end. (b) Measure bill depth (D) in penguins from just behind the mandibular symphysis.

Bird anatomy

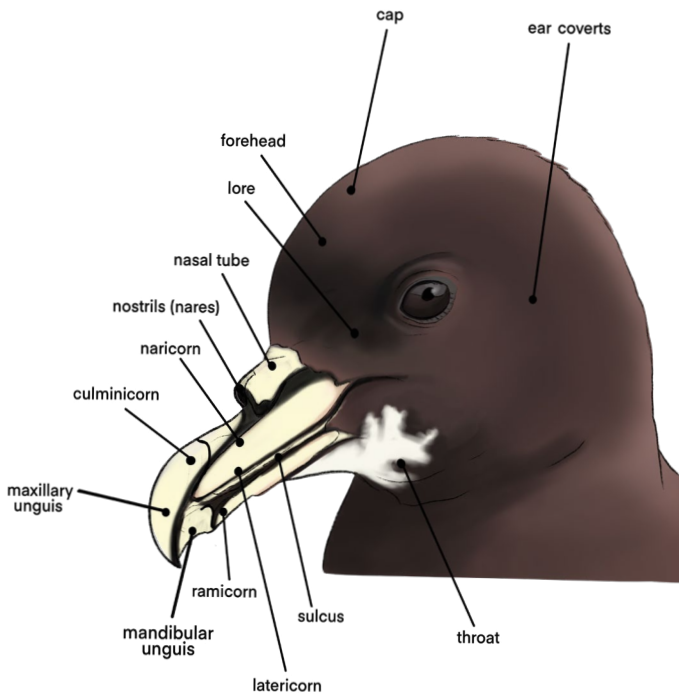


Figure 2 Head and face features

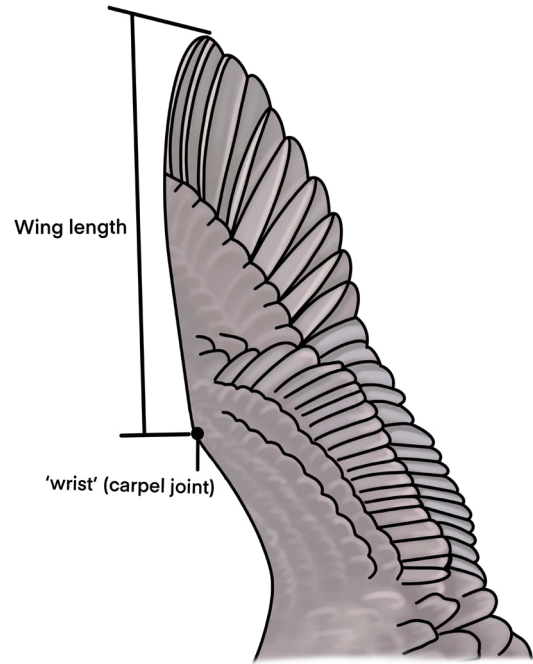


Figure 3 Wing features

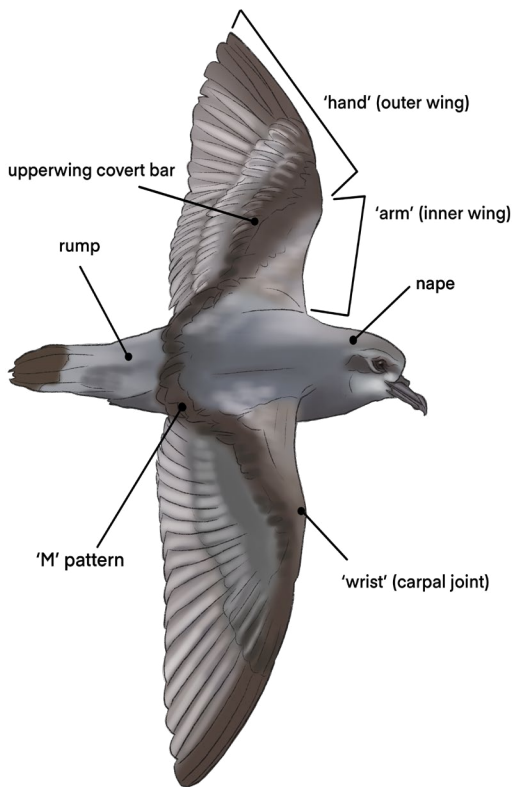


Figure 4 Dorsal side features

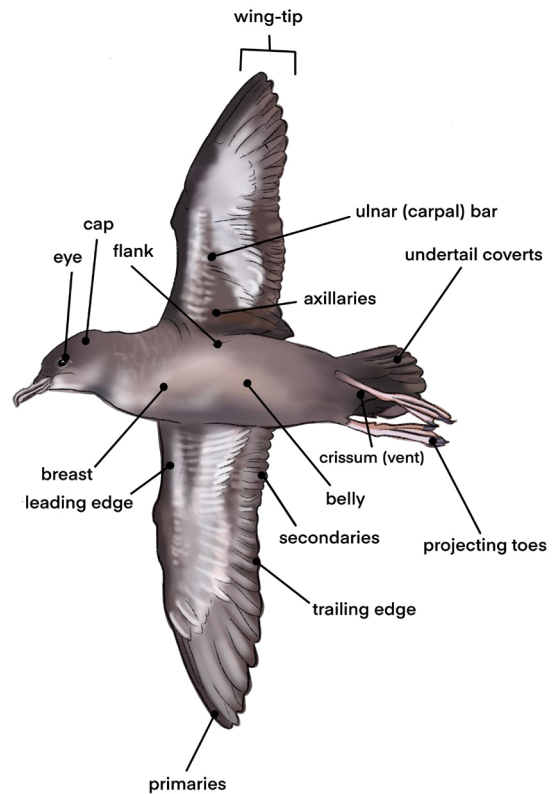
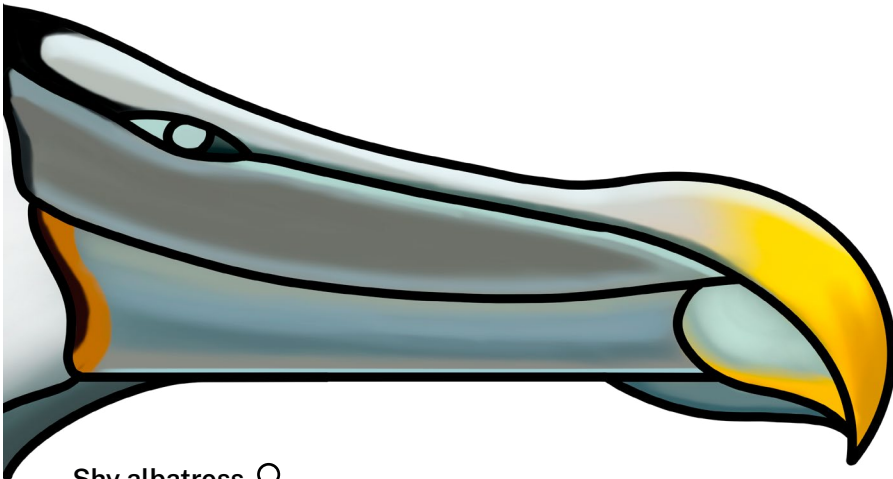
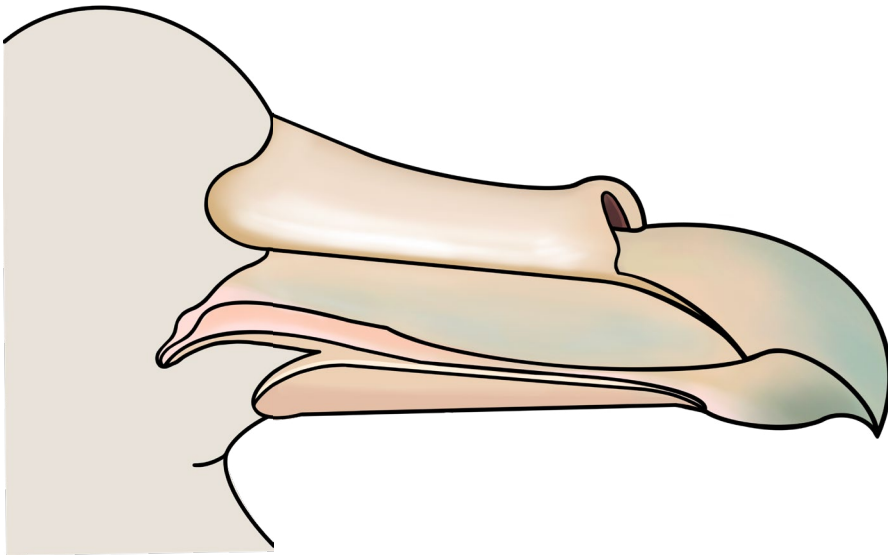


Figure 5 Ventral side features

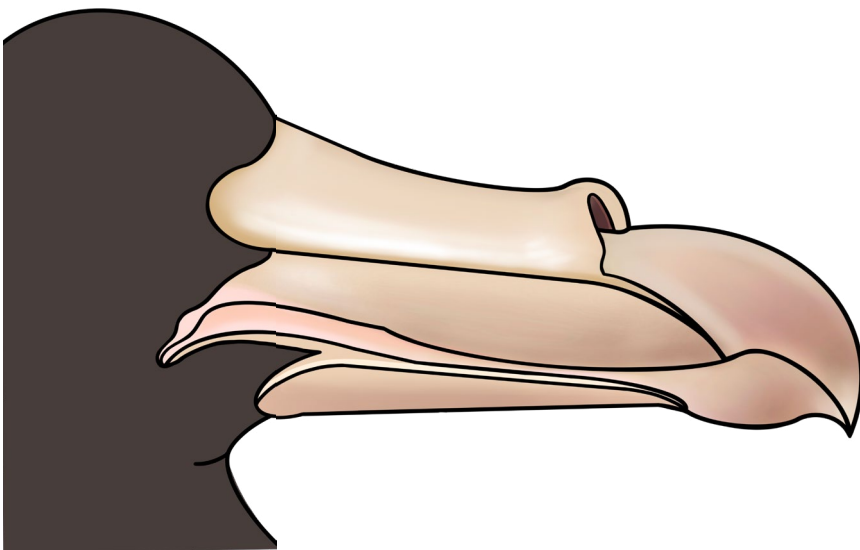
Bill outlines



Shy albatross ♀



Southern giant petrel ♀



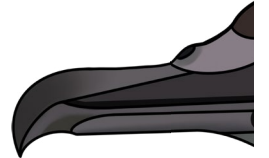
Northern giant petrel ♀



Wedge-tailed shearwater



Short-tailed shearwater



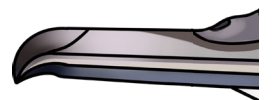
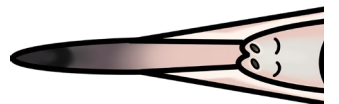
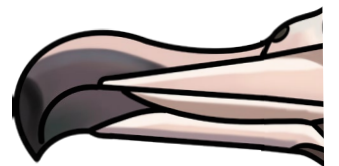
Sooty shearwater

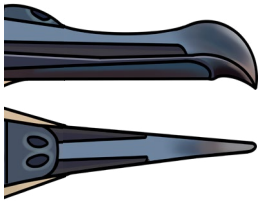


Flesh-footed shearwater

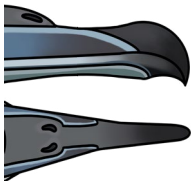


Fluttering shearwater





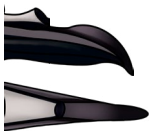
Hutton's shearwater



Little shearwater



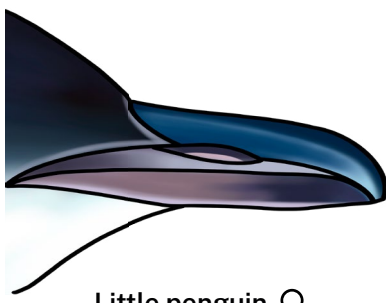
Gould's petrel



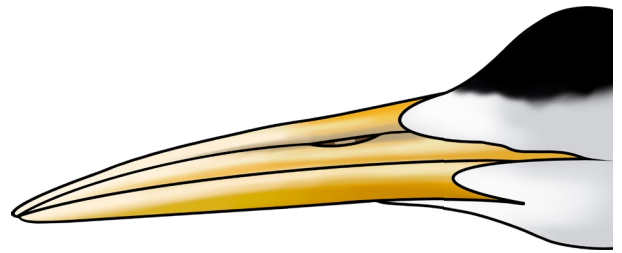
White-faced storm-petrel



Fairy prion



Little penguin ♀



Crested tern



Sooty tern



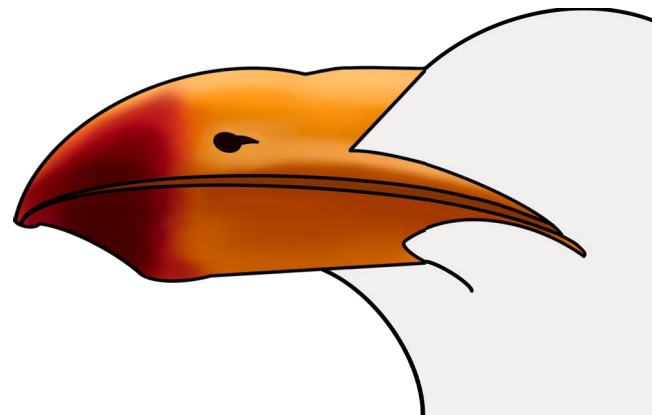
Common tern



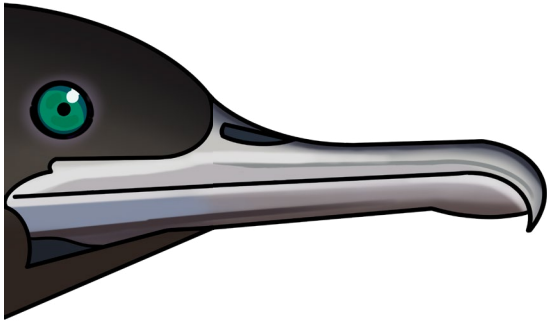
Little tern



Silver gull



Pacific gull



Little black cormorant



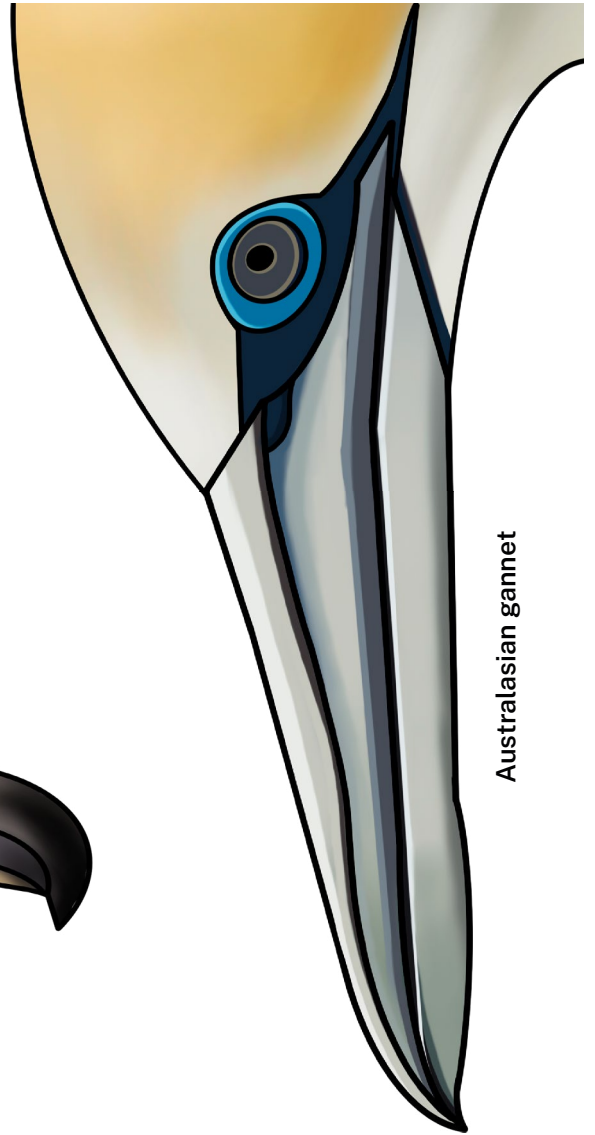
Great cormorant



Little pied cormorant



Pied cormorant



Australasian gannet

Tube-nosed (*Procellariiformes*)



Shy albatross (*Thalassarche cauta*)



Photo: Penny E Beaver

Similar species

White-capped albatross; these are found in NSW waters. The 2 species are difficult to distinguish. There is a subtle difference between the adults: white-capped albatross have a bill colour that is more subdued and there is slightly more grey contrasting on the face. Non-adults are difficult to distinguish.

Identification

Adults have white underwings with narrow black margins and a distinctive black tab at the pre-axillary notch ('armpit'). Bill is grey with a yellow tip. They have a black eye patch, yellow at the base of the bill, dark grey tail feathers and upper wing. Subadults are similar to adults except the bill tip is black and yellow; yellow develops as they age. Juveniles have a grey bill with black tip and a grey head.



Distribution and breeding

Endemic to 3 breeding locations in Tasmania: Albatross Island, Mewstone and Pedra Branca. Common inshore and offshore to the continental slope along south-east Australia, extending to south Western Australia. Actively follow commercial vessels. They lay one egg mid-September. Chicks hatch November to December and depart late March to early April.



Immature
Photo: Penny E Beaver



♀ 122-132 mm ♂ 128-138 mm



♀ 545-570 mm ♂ 535-590 mm



♀ 3.4-3.8 kg ♂ 4.0-4.4 kg

Tube-nosed (*Procellariiformes*)

Southern giant petrel (*Macronectes giganteus*)

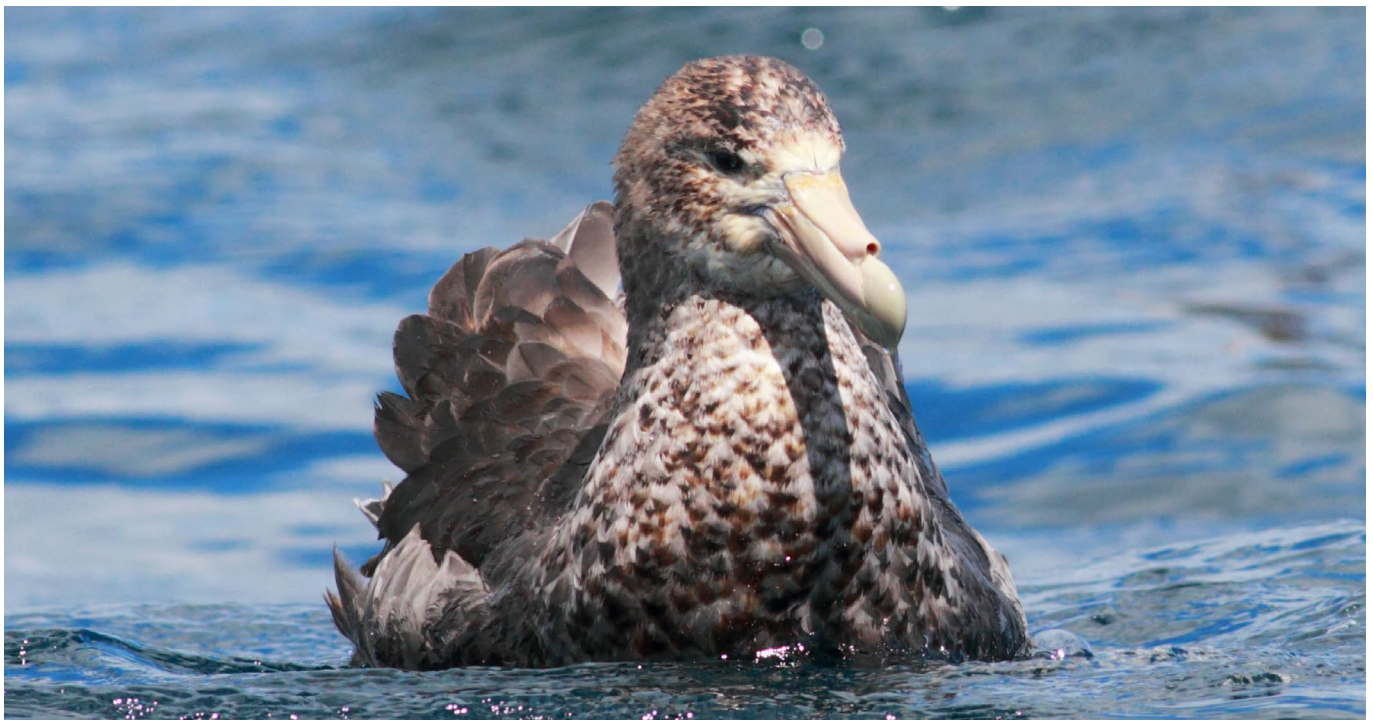


Photo: Dean Ingwersen

Similar species

Northern giant petrel.

Identification

The largest petrel. Large, thick, pinkish bill with green tip. Juveniles are grey-brown all over, developing lighter feathers as they age. A proportion are white morphs with variable flecking. They have a pale leading edge on the wings.

Distribution and breeding

Found in the Southern Ocean to subtropical habitats. Will follow fishing boats. Scavenges from dead animals and preys upon fish, squid and seabirds. Breeds on Antarctic and subantarctic islands, including Macquarie Island, from August to May.



Juvenile
Photo: Penny E Beaver



♀ 85–94 mm ♂ 96–106 mm



♀ 513–540 mm ♂ 534–577 mm



♀ 3.3–5.1 kg ♂ 4.3–5.6 kg; varies by season

Tube-nosed (*Procellariiformes*)

Northern giant petrel (*Macronectes halli*)



Photo: Eric J Woehler

Similar species

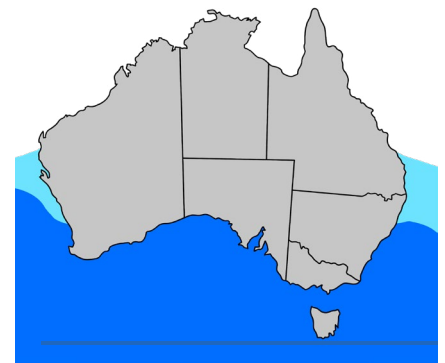
Southern giant petrel.

Identification

The largest petrel. Large, thick, pinkish bill with red tip. Juveniles are grey-brown all over, developing lighter feathers around the head, throat and foreneck as they age. Some adults have a pale or white iris. They have a dark leading edge on the wings, a darker underwing compared to the southern giant petrel, and a dark cap.

Distribution and breeding

Found in the Southern Ocean to subtropical habitats. Will follow fishing boats. Scavenges from dead animals and preys upon fish, squid and a large proportion of seabirds. Breeds on subantarctic islands, including Macquarie Island, from August to March.



Juvenile
Photo: Penny E Beaver



♀ 82–94 mm ♂ 96–108 mm



♀ 487–510 mm ♂ 515–544 mm



♀ 3.4–4.5 kg ♂ 4.7–5.4 kg; varies by season

Tube-nosed (*Procellariiformes*)

Wedge-tailed shearwater (*Ardenna pacifica*)



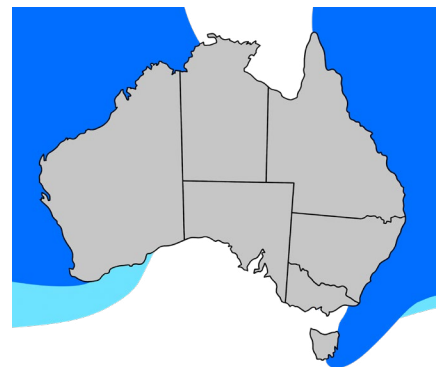
Photo: Paul Walbridge

Similar species

Short-tailed shearwater, sooty shearwater and flesh-footed shearwater. Distinctive wedge tail, pink toenails and longer bill length compared to short-tailed shearwater.

Identification

Distinctive wedge-shaped tail, pink toenails and legs. Some individuals have grey legs; legs do not extend past the tail in flight. Dark smoky grey to brown feathers all over. Long, dark, grey slender bill.



Distribution and breeding

Widely distributed in tropical, subtropical, temperate habitats in the South Pacific and Indian oceans. Nests in burrows on offshore islands along the south-east and south-west Australian coastline. Arriving in Australia from their winter habitat from approximately August, they lay one egg in late November to early December. Chicks appear from early to mid-January, and fledge approximately late March to April. Adults begin migration just before chicks depart (varies by latitudinal location). One NSW breeding population on Muttonbird Island in Coffs Harbour.



Photo: Paul Walbridge



35–40 mm



277–310 mm



320–510 g

Tube-nosed (*Procellariiformes*)

Short-tailed shearwater (*Ardenna tenuirostris*)



Photo: Paul Walbridge

Similar species

Wedge-tailed shearwater, sooty shearwater and flesh-footed shearwater.
Distinctive shorter bill and short tail compared to wedge-tailed shearwater.

Identification

Short tail, predominantly grey legs, some have pinkish legs. Grey to black toenails; toe tips protrude past tail in flight. Dark smoky grey to brown feathers all over. Short slender bill. Pale throat, some have paler underwing. Often with same or similar shearwater species feeding in large flocks offshore. Prefers krill, will also eat fish and squid.

Distribution and breeding

Breeds in south-east and south Australia, largest populations located in Tasmania. Migrates from southern hemisphere to the Bering Sea in April to May, remaining there until September. Lays one egg late November to early December, chicks fledge from April. Non-breeders depart earlier than breeding adults who begin to depart in April. Nests in burrows on offshore islands, with some breeding colonies located on mainland Tasmania. NSW populations are at their northern extent. Endemic to Australia.



Photo: Paul Walbridge



29–34 mm



273–288 mm



480–720 g

Tube-nosed (*Procellariiformes*)

Sooty shearwater (*Ardenna grisea*)



Photo: Paul Walbridge

Similar species

Wedge-tailed shearwater, short-tailed shearwater and flesh-footed shearwater. The bill measurement is the most reliable way of identifying this species.

Identification

Dark shearwater with broad pale underwing, bill longer and thicker compared to Short-tailed shearwater. Legs predominantly dark grey, protruding beyond the tail; toenails dark grey.

Distribution and breeding

Widely distributed, breeds on temperate and subantarctic islands in the southern hemisphere, largest breeding population in New Zealand. Also breeds in low numbers on several offshore islands in New South Wales. Nests in burrows.

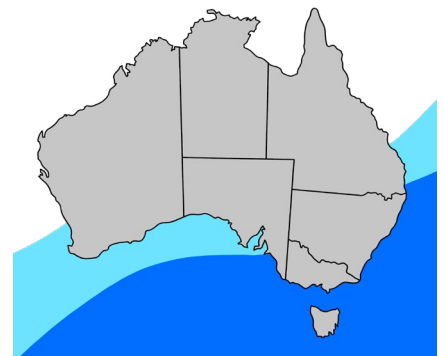


Photo: Paul Walbridge



39–44 mm



260–318 mm



650–950 g

Tube-nosed (*Procellariiformes*)

Flesh-footed shearwater (*Ardenna carneipes*)



Photo: Paul Walbridge

Similar species

Wedge-tailed shearwater, short-tailed shearwater and sooty shearwater. Easily distinguishable by flesh-coloured bill and legs.

Identification

Large body and head. Easily distinguished from other large shearwaters by the combination of a flesh-coloured bill with dark grey or black tip and pale pink feet. Tail is weakly wedge-shaped; dark brown feathers over the entire body.

Distribution and breeding

Tropical to temperate oceans, breeding from September to early May, similar to other shearwater species. Large population on Lord Howe Island. Attracted to fishing vessels. On Lord Howe Island, nests in burrows under palms. Chicks fledge from late April.

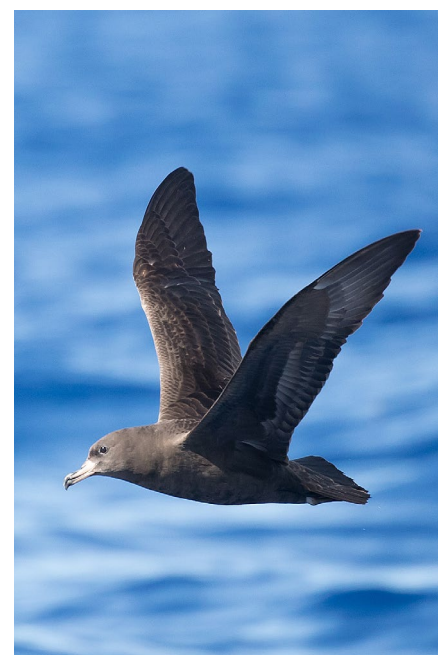
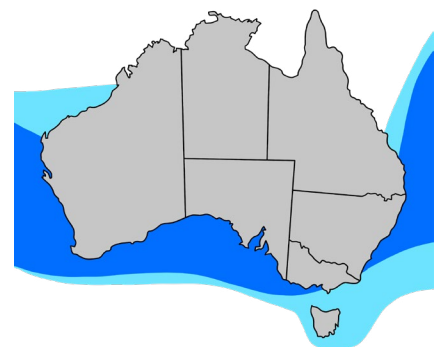


Photo: Paul Walbridge



39–46 mm



309–340 mm



533–750 g

Tube-nosed (*Procellariiformes*)

Fluttering shearwater (*Puffinus gavia*)



Photo: Paul Walbridge

Similar species

Little shearwater, Hutton's shearwater and subantarctic shearwater. Slightly smaller compared to Hutton's shearwater and lacks dark triangle axillary feathers (armpit). Flanks, throat and breast are all white. Distinctive white tab on rump, lacking in other species.

Identification

Medium-sized white and grey shearwater, long slender grey or black bill. White body underneath to rump sides, with distinct white rump tabs visible from above. Crisp white throat and breast. Underwing and triangular armpits (axillaries) are grey-white. Pink legs with dark webs.

Distribution and breeding

Endemic to New Zealand. Breeding from August, chicks fledge January to February, adults and immatures migrate to south-east Australia with numbers highest from March to August. Breeds in burrows, rock cavities and under vegetation.

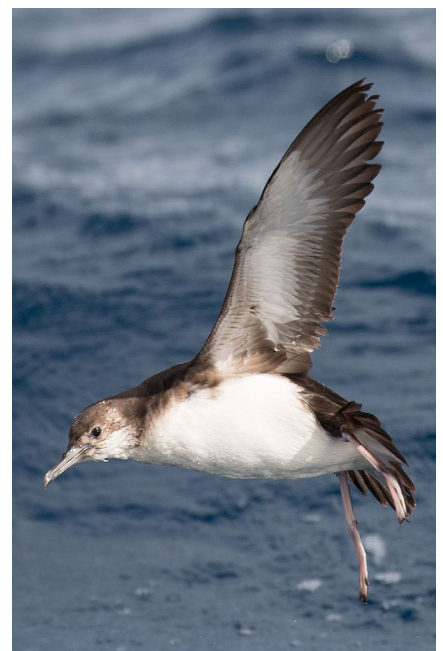
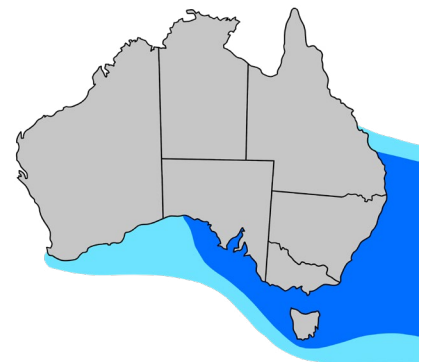


Photo: Paul Walbridge



31–37 mm



180–221 mm



286–330 g

Tube-nosed (*Procellariiformes*)

Hutton's shearwater (*Puffinus huttoni*)



Photo: Paul Walbridge

Similar species

Fluttering shearwater, but slightly larger; measurements overlap in these species. Main differences are dark triangle axillary feathers (armpit) and dusky edge to the flank.

Identification

Small grey and white shearwater with grey underwing and armpits compared to fluttering shearwater. Long slender bill. Feet dark grey with pink webs and toes.

Distribution and breeding

Endemic to New Zealand's South Island. Breeds at above 1,000 m in mountainous habitat, nests in burrows. Returns to breeding habitat August to September each year, chicks fledge from mid-March. Most commonly seen between September and February in New South Wales along the continental shelf.

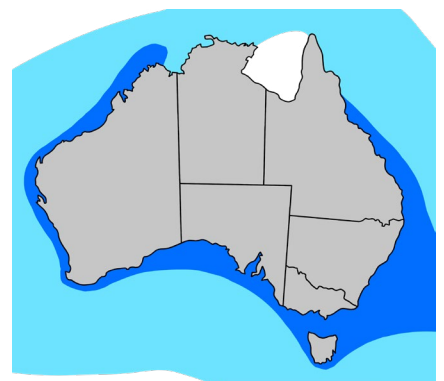


Photo: Paul Walbridge



32-37 mm



218-223 mm



226-233 g

Tube-nosed (*Procellariiformes*)

Little shearwater (*Puffinus assimilis*)



Photo: Paul Walbridge

Similar species

Fluttering shearwater, Hutton's shearwater and subantarctic shearwaters.

Identification

Smallest shearwater, with white throat and breast, distinctly white underwing with grey edges. Distinctive blue legs and feet. Bill is bluish grey, short and slender.

Distribution and breeding

In Australia, breeds on Lord Howe and Norfolk islands, present from March to November; chicks fledge from late October. Does not leave the Tasman Sea during migration. Breeds in soil burrows and rock cavities.

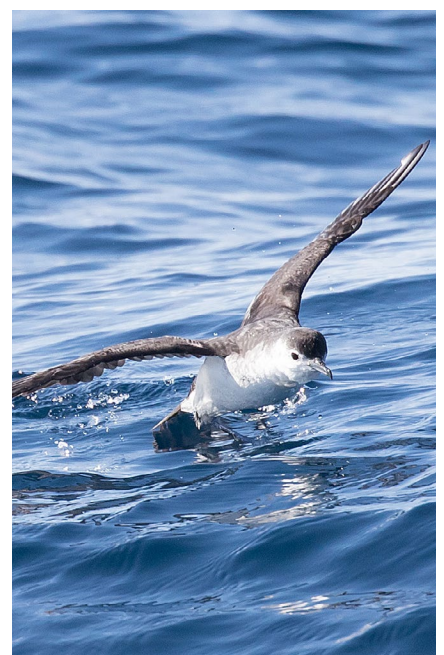


Photo: Paul Walbridge



22-25 mm



171-195 mm



220-260 g

Tube-nosed (*Procellariiformes*)

Gould's petrel (*Pterodroma leucoptera*)



Photo: James Bennett

Similar species

Black-winged petrel, collared petrel and Cook's petrel.

Identification

Distinctive black hood with white lower face and forehead. Dark carpal bar on underwing, black bill, bluish pink legs.

Distribution and breeding

Uses habitats in south-east Australia; breeding on Montague, Cabbage Tree, Boondelbah, Broughton and Little Broughton islands. Nests in cavities and artificial burrows. Present at nests from September to May, with eggs laid in November and December. Chicks fledge from late March. Post-breeding migration to the south Pacific Ocean.

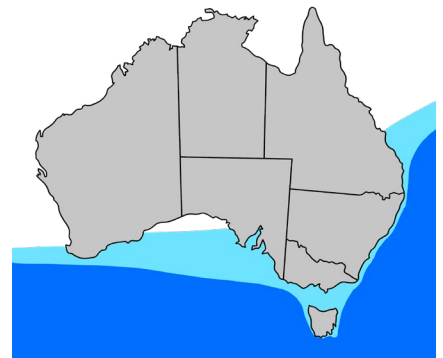


Photo: Nicholas Carlile



23-27 mm



213-238 mm



143-220 g

Tube-nosed (*Procellariiformes*)

White-faced storm-petrel (*Pelagodroma marina*)



Photo: Paul Walbridge

Similar species

Other storm-petrels.

Identification

'Walks' on water with wings outstretched when feeding. Feet dangling, kicking off water to take flight. Distinctive dark bandit-like mask around the eyes, contrasted with white face; grey nape extends down neck sides. White underparts and rump. Forked, dark tail feathers. Black legs with bright yellow webbing.



Distribution and breeding

Breeds on islands located off south-east to west Australia; temperate subtropical species. Attracted to boats. Nests in burrows and is present at nests between August and February, with a single egg laid in October. Chicks fledge from January. Migration varies and includes Tasman and Coral seas and the south Pacific Ocean.

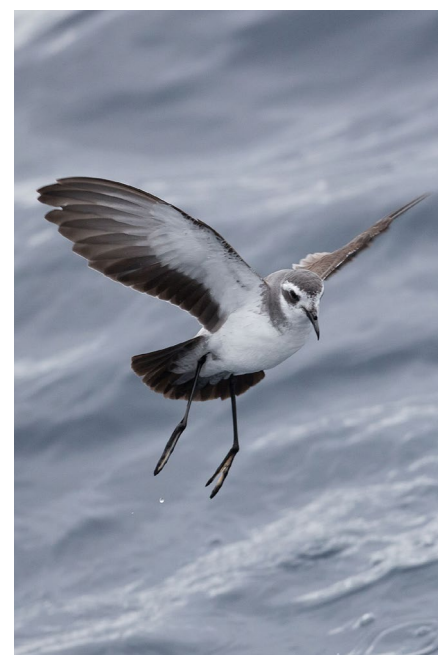


Photo: Paul Walbridge



17-19 mm



145-173 mm



43-72 g

Tube-nosed (*Procellariiformes*)

Fairy prion (*Pachyptila turtur*)



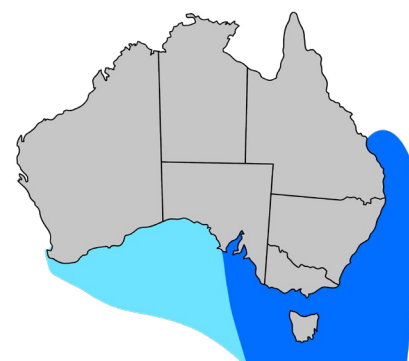
Photo: Paul Walbridge

Similar species

Antarctic prion (distinctive very dark collar and tail band) and fulmar prion (much paler plumage).

Identification

Pale blue-grey with distinctive dark brown-black 'M' mark across top of wings. Broad dark tail-band (20–30% of tail length) extending to the outermost tail feathers, white-grey underneath. Bluish bill with black strip across nasal tube and culminicorn. Feet and legs blue. Well-defined dark eye stripe. Foot-pattering across waves into the wind for take-off is characteristic. Usually surface-seizes prey.



Distribution and breeding

Abundant breeding in south-east Australia from October to March. Nests in burrows on offshore islands.



Photo: Paul Walbridge



171–189 mm



20–24 mm



109–169 g

Penguin
(*Sphenisciformes*)



Little penguin (*Eudyptula minor*)



Photo: Penny E Beaver

Similar species

Unlikely to be mistaken for any other species.

Identification

Smallest penguin species, at 30–35 cm high. Unmistakeable – easily identified by short pink legs, white underneath including flippers, and slate blue on top appearing iridescent blue in the light. Variation in eye colour from brown to blue.



Distribution and breeding

Breeds along the coast from Port Stephens to Tasmania on offshore islands, with 2 NSW mainland breeding populations (Manly and Eden). Breeding typically from July to February, will attempt to rear 2 clutches of 2 chicks from winter (varies by location). A third breeding attempt can occur in some years. Nests in burrows and crevices, including under buildings. Every year between January and April, penguins undergo a catastrophic moult, replacing worn feathers in order to maintain their waterproofing. During this period, they are not waterproof and are more vulnerable to predators. They cannot go out to sea to feed while moulting, so they must double their weight in order to survive, as a moult can take up to 3 weeks. Pre-moulting penguins can reach up to 2.1 kg.



Moulter
Photo: Penny E Beaver



♀ 36.9 mm (depth 12.3 mm)

♂ 39.1 mm (depth 14.4 mm)



♀ 81–97 mm

♂ 88–102 mm



♀ 1.1 kg

♂ 1.2 kg

Terns and gulls (*Charadriiformes*)



Crested tern (*Thalasseus bergii*)



Photo: Penny E Beaver

Similar species

Lesser crested tern and common tern.

Identification

Breeding adults have a distinctive lemon to yellow bill (bill colour stronger in breeding adults), black legs with well-defined black cap, and shaggy crest and cap. Grey back and top of wings, outer primaries darker, completely white underneath; forked tail. Juveniles have a washed-out lemon bill, brown cap and poorly developed crest extending to the edge of the top of the bill. Feathers are mottled or dappled brown with a dark tail. As they age, they obtain distinctive grey (adult) wing feathers, bill colour intensifies, and cap edges become more defined.



Distribution and breeding

Abundant in south-east Australia. Nests in large colonies on rocky platforms along coastlines and on offshore islands.



Non-breeding
Photo: Paul Walbridge



311–368 mm



53–66 mm



275–371 g

Sooty tern (*Onychoprion fuscatus*)



Photo: Paul Walbridge

Similar species

Bridled tern.

Identification

Breeding adults have a neat black cap including nape, crown, sides of head through eye to bottom bill (loral stripe), black bill. Rest of the head is white, tail feathers are grey black and outer tail feathers have streamers. Black legs, white underwing with grey outer primaries, dark grey top of wing and back. Non-breeding adults have similar colours but less distinct. Juveniles are brown rather than grey, with white and brown barring across the upper wings, and crown is grey with white.

Distribution and breeding

Oceanic tropical species. Breeds on offshore islands including the Lord Howe and Norfolk island groups. Foraging happens offshore in oceanic habitats, rarely inshore except at colonies unless forced by oceanic weather patterns. They are present at breeding sites from September to March with egg laying occurring between October and January. Chicks fledge from January.



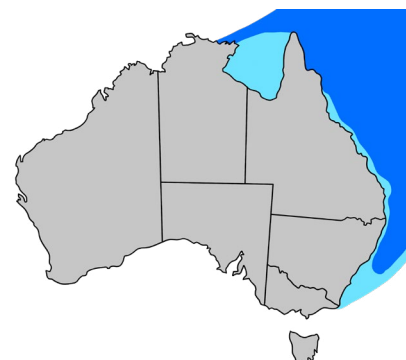
38–44 mm



276–314 mm



147–240 g



Juvenile
Photo: Paul Walbridge

Common tern (*Sterna hirundo*)



Photo: Paul Walbridge

Similar species

Crested tern and arctic tern.

Identification

Breeding adults have a black cap down to the bottom of the eye and to the bill, grey underparts and wings, white forked tail and black bill. In non-breeding adults the cap is less defined, trailing tail feathers are shorter than breeding adults, carpal bar is dark grey. Juvenile uniform primaries are grey and fresh, cap and lores pale brown, carpal bar is dark, and wing and back feathers have light scalloping.

Distribution and breeding

Usually present in Australia from September to April each year from north Asia. Feeds in coastal inshore habitats, plunge dives, roosts at night on rocky platforms and ocean beaches with other terns.



Photo: Paul Walbridge



32-38 mm



268-288 mm



90-140 g

Little tern (*Sternula albifrons*)



Photo: Paul Walbridge

Similar species

Fairy tern and common tern.

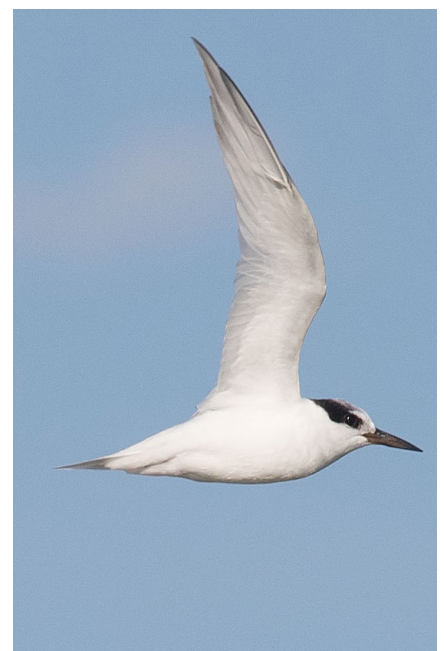
Identification

Breeding adults have a black cap with black loreal stripe through the eyes to the base of the bill, yellow legs and bill with black tip, black outer primaries contrasting with other wing feathers that are grey, white breast, moderately forked tail, and grey underneath. Non-breeding adults are the same as adults except the bill is black, cap is less defined. Juveniles have scalloped grey to dark grey wings, dark brown bill with diffuse black tip, dirty orange legs and feet.



Distribution and breeding

Breeds on sheltered coastal lagoons, estuaries and river mouths near sandbars and ocean beaches. Breeds from October through to January.



Non-breeding
Photo: Paul Walbridge



27-33 mm



176-195 mm



42-65 g

Silver gull (*Larus novaehollandiae*)



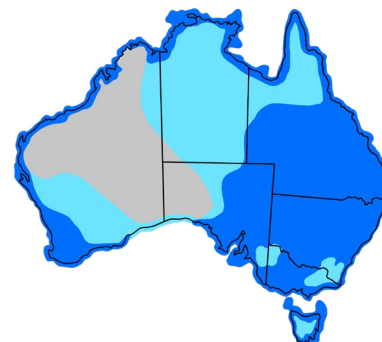
Photo: Paul Walbridge

Similar species

Juvenile may be mistaken with a juvenile crested tern.

Identification

Adults have distinctive blood-red legs and bill, white pupils, red eye rings. White head and body, silver-grey wings with distinctive black outer primaries and secondaries, with white strips on 2 outer primaries. Adult plumage is obtained at 3 years. Juveniles have brown irises, brownish bill, pink-brown legs, brownish smudge on head, brown and cream chequered wings.



Distribution and breeding

Widely distributed throughout Australia in coastal, inland and urban areas; the most common species around coastal waterways. In New South Wales they breed from July to February, building nests on the ground from nearby vegetation and laying 2 to 3 eggs, occasionally 4. Roosts are mixed species, with crested terns.



Juvenile
Photo: Paul Walbridge



30–40 mm



271–314 mm



220–355 g

Pacific gull (*Larus pacificus*)



Photo: Eric J Woehler

Similar species

Kelp gull, which has red on the lower mandible only and does not have a tail band.

Identification

Adults have an orange-yellow bill with red tips on the upper and lower mandibles, yellow legs, distinctive white irises and yellow eye rings. Head, nape, breast and underside are white. Distinctive subterminal black band across tail feathers, black upper wing with narrow white trailing edge. Adult plumage takes 4 years to obtain. Juveniles fledge from January to March and are dark brown, with brown irises, pink-grey legs, dark grey bills, and dark brown scallops on feathers.



Distribution and breeding

Mainly found along the Australian coastline, inshore or slightly offshore, with breeding populations on offshore islands in Victoria, Tasmania, Bass Strait, South Australia and Western Australia. Forages in mainly coastal to mainland areas. Builds nests from local vegetation on the ground, laying 2 to 3 eggs.



48–65 mm



418–455 mm



1.0–1.2 kg



Juvenile
Photo: Paul Walbridge

Cormorants, pelican
and gannets
(*Pelecaniformes*)



Little black cormorant (*Phalacrocorax sulcirostris*)



Photo: Paul Walbridge

Similar species

Great cormorant.

Identification

Adults have bright blue-green irises, a grey thin bill, dark facial skin, black to dark brown body, copper-colour wings scalloped with dark brown. Breeding adults have short white feathers on their head and neck. Juveniles are similar to adults with brown irises, duller feathers, and pinkish brown gular skin.



Distribution and breeding

Widespread throughout Australia across a broad variety of water-based habitats including wetlands, coastal waters, offshore islands, lakes, reservoirs, dams, swamps, rivers and pools. Breeding ecology not well known.

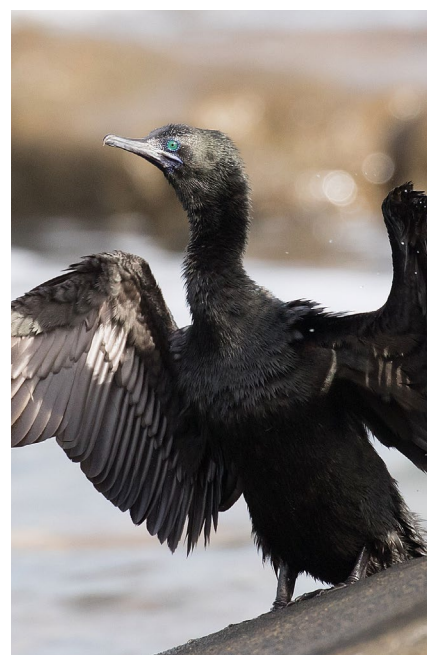


Photo: Paul Walbridge



♀ 40-50 mm



♀ 225-265 mm



0.6-1.1 kg

♀ 0.9 kg

♂ 1.1 kg

Great cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*)

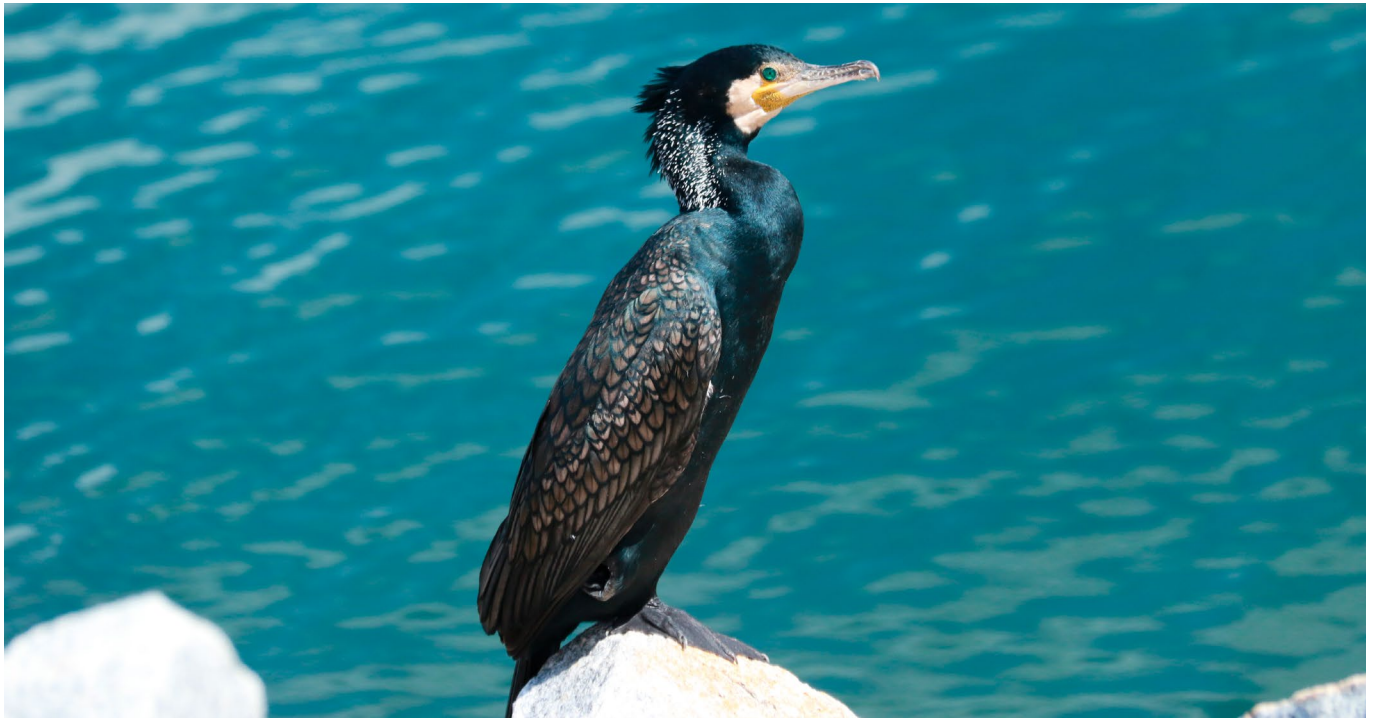


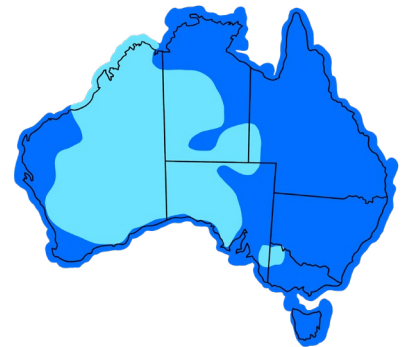
Photo: Penny E Beaver

Similar species

Little black cormorant or juvenile pied cormorant.

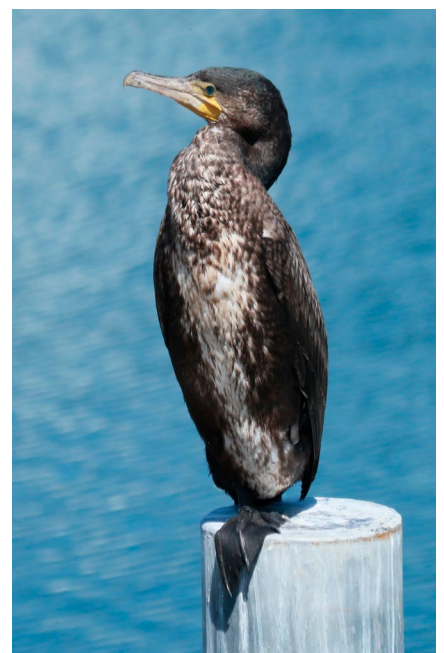
Identification

Breeding adults are glossy black with a blue-green sheen to body feathers. Wings have black edges with brown sheen. They have a white throat patch, white flecks through the nape feathers, yellow facial skin and bright blue-green irises, and, during the breeding season, a distinctive white thigh patch. Yellow facial skin is brighter in breeding adults. Non-breeding adults lack the white thigh patch, throat patch and white flecks through the nape feathers. Juveniles are similar to non-breeding adults, with browner and lighter brown-to-creamy breast feathers, and lack the white throat patch.



Distribution and breeding

Widespread throughout Australia across a broad variety of water-based habitats including wetlands, coastal waters, offshore islands, lakes, reservoirs, dams, swamps, rivers and pools. Timing of breeding is not well known, usually from September to January in New South Wales.



Juvenile
Photo: Paul Walbridge



♀ 59-71 mm



♀ 325-360 mm



1.8-2.8 kg

♀ 2.0 kg

♂ 2.4 kg

Little pied cormorant (*Microcarbo melanoleucos*)



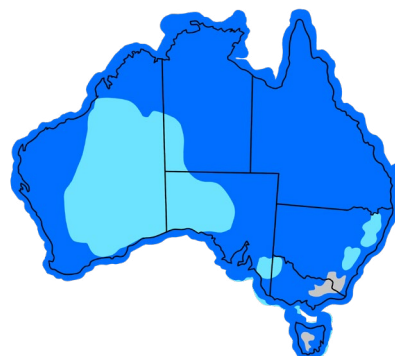
Photo: Penny E Beaver

Similar species

Pied cormorant, but much smaller and with a yellow-orange bill.

Identification

Adults are a small black and white cormorant. Black cap extends down the back of the neck to the back. White underneath, distinctive yellow-orange bill, dark brown irises. Juveniles are similar to adults except duller, with dusky face feathers extending below the eyes.



Distribution and breeding

Usually solitary unless roosting. Forages in shallower water habitats for invertebrates and small fish. Widespread throughout Australia across a broad variety of water-based habitats including wetlands, coastal waters, offshore islands, lakes, reservoirs, dams, swamps, rivers and pools. Usually nests in trees or bushes, or on the ground if no trees are available.



Photo: Paul Walbridge



♀ 26–34 mm



♀ 225–245 mm



♀ 700 g ♂ 800 g; can vary depending on age and season

Pied cormorant (*Phalacrocorax varius*)



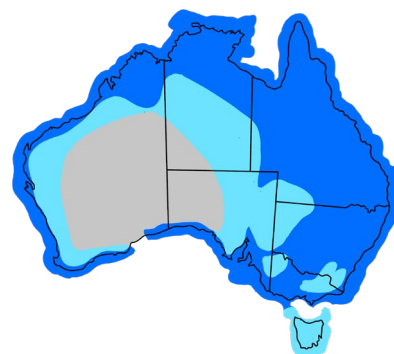
Photo: Paul Walbridge

Similar species

Little pied cormorant.

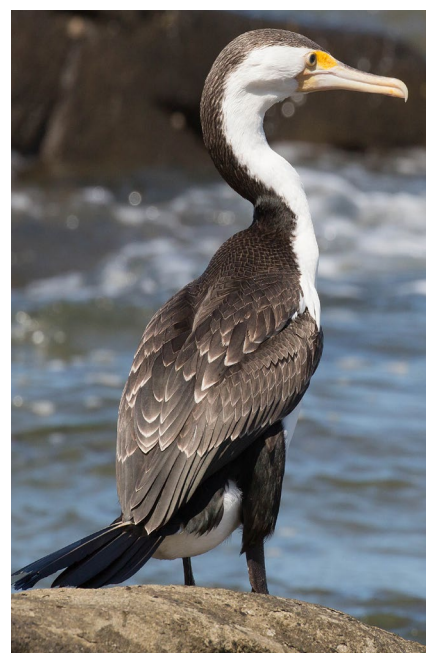
Identification

Breeding adults have sharply demarcated black and white feathers. Black cap extends down the neck to the upper body; white face extends just above the eyes. Black tail and wing feathers and black thighs. Eye rings are bright blue, irises bright blue-green. Flesh front of eye is flashy orange-yellow, gular skin bright pink. Non-breeding adults have paler pink gular skin; flesh front of eye is paler yellow. Juveniles have grey eye rings, mottled brown instead of black, with white breast feathers edged light grey-brown, and brown irises.



Distribution and breeding

Widespread throughout Australian mainland coastal waters, subcoastal and inland freshwater habitats. Usually nests in trees or bushes, or on the ground if there are no trees available.



Juvenile

Photo: Paul Walbridge



♀ 60–80 mm



♀ 285–355 mm



1.4–2.2 kg

♀ 1.6 kg

♂ 2.1 kg

Australasian gannet (*Morus serrator*)



Photo: Eric J Woehler

Similar species

Juveniles may be mistaken for a juvenile masked booby or red booby. The distinguishing difference is that a booby does not have 3 stripes (varying in colour from green to blue) from the toes to the upper leg.

Identification

Distinctive golden neck and cap, rest of the body white except for 4 central tail feathers. Primaries, primary coverts and secondaries are black. Three green to blue stripes from the toes to the upper leg. Bill tapers and is grey with dark edges; eye rings are blue. Adult plumage is obtained within 3 to 4 years. Juveniles have speckled dark grey to brown feathers; all feathers have a white tip; white belly through to secondary coverts, black tail feathers, dark grey bill.

Distribution and breeding

Inhabits the Australian coastline to the continental shelf. Plunge dives with wings stretched out behind the tail, will chase prey underwater. Rafts in calm weather. Within Australia, breeds in Victoria and Tasmania approximately from August to March; varies by location.



Immature
Photo: Paul Walbridge



88–94 mm



450–480 mm



2.0–2.8 kg

Australian pelican (*Pelicanus conspicillatus*)



Photo: Penny E Beaver

Similar species

Unlikely to be mistaken for any other species.

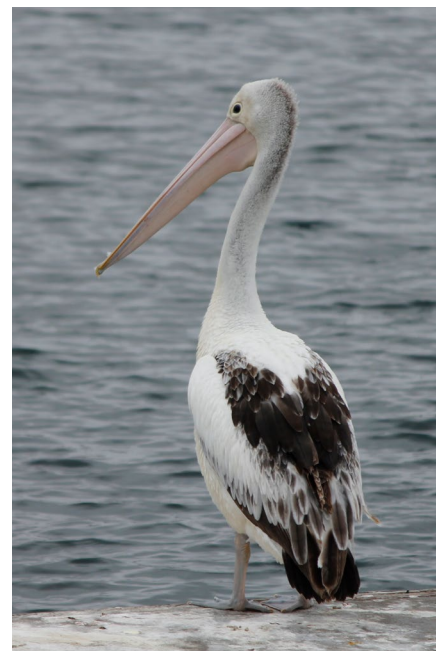
Identification

The only species of pelican in Australia. Unmistakeable long bill and large gular pouch. Adults have a white head, neck and body; all other feathers are black. Legs are blue, skin around the eyes is a distinctive yellow, and the large gular pouch is used to scoop up prey. Breeding adults' gular pouch has a distinctive orange with blue edging, and the yellow around the eyes is stronger; some have a tinge of yellow on the chest. Juveniles are similar, with brown feathers instead of black, pink legs and yellow around the eyes.



Distribution and breeding

Widely distributed throughout Australia apart from areas with no water. Prefers estuarine, marine and wetland habitats. Breeds inland after wet conditions fill lakes and wetlands. In some habitats they will breed on sandy islands or islets.



Juvenile
Photo: Penny E Beaver



♀ 355–408 mm ♂ 410–495 mm



♀ 541–605 mm ♂ 560–690 mm



♀ 4–6 kg ♂ 6–8 kg

Further information

There are several free resources available online including:

New Zealand Birds Online

www.nzbirdsonline.org.nz/

Birdlife Australia

birdlife.org.au/bird-profiles/

Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP) Species List

acap.aq/resources/acap-species

Australian Fisheries Management Authority Seabird ID Guide

www.afma.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-02/seabird_id_guide.pdf

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White-faced storm-petrel, Photo: Paul Walbridge

