

## SHORT NOTE

# First record of Salvin's albatross (*Thalassarche salvini*) on the Patagonian Shelf

JUAN P. SECO PON

Centro de Investigaciones de Puerto Deseado. Universidad Nacional de la Patagonia Austral. Av. Prefectura s/n. Puerto Deseado (9050). Santa Cruz, Argentina

Present address: Av. Colón 1906 8° L (7600) Mar del Plata, Buenos Aires, Argentina

secopon@yahoo.com.ar

BARBARA WEINECKE

GRAHAM ROBERTSON

Australian Antarctic Division. Kingston, Tasmania, Australia 7050

The Patagonian Shelf extends from Uruguay in the north to the Strait of Magellan in the south and reaches a maximal width of some 850 km in its southern part and covers an area of c.2.7 million km<sup>2</sup> (Bakun 1993). Influenced by 2 major currents, the warm, saline, southward-flowing Brazil Current and the cool, nutrient rich, northward flowing Falklands/Malvinas Current, the Patagonian Shelf resources provide rich year-round foraging grounds for several marine top predators and also attract a diverse and large-scale commercial fisheries fishing for squid (*Loligo gahi*, *Illex argentinus*) and a variety of fin-fish species, including hake (*Merluccius* spp.), Atlantic anchovy (*Engraulis anchovita*), kingclip (*Genypterus blacodes*), and Patagonian toothfish (*Dissostichus eleginoides*) (Bakun 1993; Croxall & Wood 2002; Bastida *et al.* 2005).

The overlap of foraging grounds of seabirds and fishing areas of commercial operators, particularly those using longlines, has resulted in the incidental by-catch of seabirds by fishing gear in nearly all industrial fishing operations (e.g., Brothers *et al.* 1999; Tasker *et al.* 2000). This fisheries-induced mortality, particularly among albatrosses, has been deemed the major threat to the survival of many albatross populations (Gales 1998). It is important in this context, that the global ranges of threatened, or potentially threatened, species are better understood.

One of the species threatened by pelagic longlining operations is Salvin's albatross (*Thalassarche salvini*). Most Salvin's albatrosses breed on small islands south of New Zealand; at the Bounty Islands (47°7'S, 174°0'E) where the breeding population of < 31000 pairs is by far the largest

concentration of Salvin's albatrosses (Gales 1998). Some Salvin's albatrosses nest also at The Snares Is and the Chatham Is and a few pairs have been recorded at the Crozet Islands, Indian Ocean (Onley & Bartle 1999; Brooke 2004). The global population of Salvin's albatrosses appears to have declined significantly since 1970. However, because of different census methodologies employed over the years, the magnitude of the change in the population is difficult to estimate (Brooke 2004). Currently, Salvin's albatrosses are listed as Vulnerable because of their restricted breeding range (IUCN 2002).

As ocean wanderers, Salvin's albatrosses travel great distances on their foraging trips, particularly outside their breeding season. At-sea observations have showed that Salvin's albatrosses are widely distributed throughout the Indian and the southern Pacific Oceans. The distribution of Salvin's albatrosses in the eastern Pacific and along the western coast of South America has been summarized recently by Arata (2003). These birds are frequently observed over continental slopes off western South America, where they are found in near-equatorial waters up to 6° S (Spear *et al.* 2003; Taylor 2000; Brooke 2004). Juveniles are present along the South American Pacific coast (14-18°S), while adults are seen mainly over the continental shelves of New Zealand (38°S) and Tasmania (50°S) (Onley & Bartle 1999). Although this albatross is sometimes observed in the South Atlantic (Taylor 2000; Brooke 2004), there are few records known from this region.

In recent years, incidental observations of Salvin's albatrosses in various parts of the southern oceans have established that their range is more extensive than previously thought. In 2003, a single Salvin's albatross noted on Sand Island (Midway



**Fig. 1** Location of the Salvin's albatross (*Thalassarche salvini*) record in relation to Patagonian Shelf, the 200 m isobath, and the Argentina Coast near Puerto Deseado, Santa Cruz Province.

Atoll, 28°12'N, 177°23'W) (Robertson *et al.* 2005) extended the species' range to the North Pacific. Similarly, a Salvin's albatross sighted on Gonzalo Island (Diego Ramirez group, 56°31'S, 68°44'W) was the first record of a Salvin's albatross in the Diego Ramirez/Cape Horn Region, Chile (Arata 2003).

On 10 Mar 2006, a Salvin's albatross was seen at 29 km off Puerto Deseado (Santa Cruz Province, Argentina) in 47°39'S, 64°53'W (Fig. 1). The sighting was made opportunistically while onboard the longliner FV *Argenova XV*. The bird had a grey mantle, back, and head; its crown and chin were pale grey. The rump and undersides were white, and the upper wings black. The bill was pale grey with a yellow ridge and a blackish tip on the mandible, and a relatively bright yellow tip to the maxilla (Fig. 2). The yellow markings on the beak indicated that the albatross was an adult. The Salvin's albatross was 1st noticed when it was preening on surface among several black-browed albatrosses (*Thalassarche melanophrys*), southern giant petrels (*Macronectes giganteus*), a few Wilson's storm petrels (*Oceanites oceanicus*), and some great shearwater (*Puffinus gravis*). Initially, the albatross was about 20 m from the vessel. It then took off and flew in large

circles behind the vessel; it landed several times and continued preening, but did not come close to the vessel again. The bird remained near the ship for about 1.5 h.

This is the 1st record of Salvin's albatross in the southern Atlantic Ocean. Its presence suggests that this albatross species occurs not only over the continental shelf off the west coast of South America (see Brooke 2004), but also ventures around Cape Horn onto the Patagonian Shelf. The only published record of Salvin's albatrosses in the wider region to date was of 2 adults sighted on the Malvinas/Falkland Is region (White *et al.* 1999).

This record extends the known at-sea distribution of Salvin's albatross, and suggests that this vulnerable species may be affected by fishing operations in the southern Atlantic as well as in its breeding grounds off New Zealand. Such findings only serve to emphasize the need for effective mitigation techniques to reduce the incidental by-catch of Salvin's albatrosses and other seabirds.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank Julian Crujeiras of *Argenova*, the crew of the FV *Argenova XV* and Patricia Gandini for their support on



Fig. 2 Salvin's albatross (*Thalassarche salvini*), Patagonian Shelf, 10 Mar 2006.

our trip across the Patagonian Shelf. Sincere thanks to Ben Phalan, Richard Phillips, and Nicholas Huin for reading, criticizing and assisting with information in earlier drafts of this note. Two anonymous referees improved the manuscript with their criticism and helpful comments. The FV *Argenova XV* was chartered under the Pew Fellowship (Pew Charitable Trusts, U.S.A) to G. Robertson.

#### LITERATURE CITED

- Arata, J. 2003. New record of Salvin's albatross (*Thalassarche salvini*) at the Diego Ramirez Islands, Chile. *Notornis* 50: 169-171.
- Bakun, A. 1993. The California Current, Benguela Current, and Southwestern Atlantic Shelf Ecosystems; A comparative approach to identifying factors regulating biomass yields, pp. 199-221. In: Sherman, K.; Alexander, L.; Gold, B. (ed.), *Large marine ecosystems: stress mitigation, and sustainability*. Washington, D.C., American Association for the Advancement of Science.
- Bastida, R.; Rodriguez, D.; Scarlato, N.; Favero, M. 2005. Marine biodiversity of the South-Western Atlantic Ocean and main environmental problems of the region. pp. 172-207. In: Miyazaki, N.; Adeel, Z.; Ohwada, K. (ed.), *Proceedings of the International Conference on Man and the Ocean*. Tokyo, United Nations University and University of Tokyo, .
- Brooke, M. 2004. *Albatrosses and petrels across the world*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Brothers, N.P.; Cooper, J.; Lokkeborg, S. 1999. The incidental catch of seabirds by longline fisheries: worldwide review and technical guidelines for mitigation. *FAO fisheries circular*. no. 937.
- Croxall, J.P.; Word, A.G. 2002. The importance of the Patagonian Shelf for top predator species breeding at South Georgia. *Aquatic conservation: marine and freshwater ecosystems* 12: 101-118.
- Gales, R. 1998. Albatross populations: status and threats. pp. 20-45 In: Robertson, G.; Gales, R. (ed.) *Albatross biology and conservation*. Chipping Norton, Surrey Beatty & Sons.
- IUCN 2002. 2002 IUCN red list of threatened species. <http://www.redlist.org>
- Onley, D.; Bartle, J.A. 1999. *Identification of seabirds of the Southern Ocean*. Wellington, Te Papa Press. .
- Robertson, C.J.R.; Klavitter, J.; McCarthy, R. 2005. Salvin's albatross (*Thalassarche salvini*) on Midway Atoll. *Notornis* 52: 236-237.
- Spear, L.; Ainley, D.G.; Webb, S.W. 2003. Distribution, abundance and behaviour of Buller's, Chatman Island, and Salvin's Albatrosses off Chile and Peru. *Ibis* 145: 253-269.
- Tasker, M.L.; Camphuysen, C.J.; Cooper, J.; Garthe, S.; Montevecchi, W.A.; Blaber, S. J.M. 2000. The impacts of fishing on marine birds. *Journal of marine science* 57: 531-547.
- Taylor, G. 2000. *Action plan for seabird conservation in New Zealand, Part A: Threatened Species*. *Threatened species occasional publication* no. 16. Wellington, Department of Conservation.
- White, R.W.; Reid, J.B.; Black, A.D.; Gillon, K.W. 1999. *Seabird and marine mammal dispersion in the waters around the Falkland Islands 1998-1999*. Peterborough, Joint Nature Conservation Committee. .

**Keywords** Salvin's albatross; *Thalassarche salvini*; Argentina; South West Atlantic