



# Birds Australia Rarities Committee Unusual Record Report Form

<b>Full Name:</b> Dan Mantle, Alan Collins, John Graff	Office Use
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<b>Address:</b>	<b>Phone No:</b>
	<b>Fax/Email:</b>

<b>Species Name:</b> Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross	<b>Scientific Name:</b> <i>Thalassarche chlororhynchos</i>
Date(s) and time(s) of observation:	5 May 2018; 12.37pm
How long did you watch the bird(s)?	The bird made a single turn and pass behind the boat. It was in view for no more than 30 seconds.
First and last date of occurrence:	5 May 2018
Distance to bird:	Picked up coming out of the sun at 25–30 m and watched until it disappeared into the distance.

<b>Site Location:</b> 45 km south of Albany, Western Australia. Approximately at the shelf edge.
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<b>Habitat:</b> Offshore, edge of the continental shelf at the head of the Albany Canyon (approx. 600 m water depth).
<b>Sighting conditions:</b> Clear skies, bright sunlight, but the bird was initially strongly backlit as it appeared out of a very brightly sunlit patch of ocean.
<b>Optical aids used:</b> DM was using Swarovski 10x50 and a Canon 5D Mk III with Canon 1-400mm Mk II lens.

<b>Were other observers present? Do any of the other observers disagree with your identification?</b> There were 17 birders on this pelagic but no one else got on to the bird well enough to add any further details. No one disagrees with the identification.
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<b>To your knowledge, is the species seen frequently at this site?</b> This bird is very rare anywhere in Australia but has been recorded off the southwest of Australia on several occasions – though not all have been submitted to BARC. Previous SW WA records include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Perth Canyon: 20<sup>th</sup> July 1997 (not submitted to BARC)</li><li>2. Perth Canyon: 21<sup>st</sup> August 2016 (BARC accepted)</li><li>3. Albany: immature AYNA seen off Albany on the 13<sup>th</sup> May 2013. It was identified retrospectively from photographs and submitted to BARC in 2014/15. This record was ‘not accepted’ based on the lack of published data on immature Atlantic and Indian Yellow-nosed Albatrosses, particularly with respect to the shape of the culminicorn stripe (see now Flood and Fisher 2016).</li><li>4. Cape Naturaliste: AYNA was spotted during a seawatch from Cape Naturaliste on the 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2018 (John Graff, Daniel Mantle, Martin Cake and Stu Ford; a BARC submission is in progress).</li></ol> <p>Other BARC accepted records for Australia are:</p> <p>Wollongong, NSW – 24<sup>th</sup> August 1986 Portland, Vic – 4<sup>th</sup> September 1994 Wollongong, NSW – 26<sup>th</sup> July 2014 Wollongong, NSW – 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2014</p>
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<b>Did you use a field guide?</b> Field guides were not used during the pelagic trip. References used help prepare this report were:
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FLOOD, D. & FISHER, A. (2007): Multimedia Identification Guide to North Atlantic Seabirds – Albatrosses & Fulmarine Petrels. Essex.  
MARCHANT, S. & HIGGINS, P.J. (eds) (1990). Handbook of Australian, New Zealand and Antarctic Birds. Volume 1: Ratites to Ducks. Melbourne.  
MENKHORST, P., ROGERS, D., CLARKE, R., DAVIES, J., MARSACK, P. & FRANKLIN, K. (2017): The Australian Bird Guide. CSIRO publishing.  
ONLEY, D. & SCOFIELD, P. (2007): Albatrosses, Petrels & Shearwaters of the World. Princeton.  
SHIRIHAI, H. (2007, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.): A Complete Guide to Antarctic Wildlife. London.

**How confident are you of your identification?** 100%

### Other details:

Unfortunately, very few of the albatrosses at the shelf edge stopped to feed on the berley provided, and this Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross was no different. It appeared out of the strongly sunlit patch of sea behind the boat, made a single turn and then disappeared off into the distance.

Other birds seen: Total count (max number seen at one point)

Wandering Albatross 1 (1)  
Antipodean (NZ Wandering) Albatross 1 (1)–ssp. *antipodensis*  
Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross 15 (3)  
Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross 1 (1)  
Black-browed Albatross 2 (1)  
Shy Albatross 15 (2)  
Great-winged Petrel 80 (10)  
Soft-plumaged Petrel 30 (4)  
Flesh-footed Shearwater 600 (400)  
Sooty Shearwater 8 (2)  
Short-tailed Shearwater 3 (3)  
Hutton's Shearwater 6 (1)  
Wilson's Storm-Petrel 12 (4)  
White-faced Storm-Petrel 60 (9)  
Black-bellied Storm-Petrel  
Brown Skua 5 (4)  
South Polar Skua 6 (2)  
Arctic Jaeger 1 (1)  
Long-tailed Jaeger 2 (1)  
Crested Tern 7 (3)  
Australasian Gannet 12 (8)

### Physical Description

The bird was only seen well by very few people and despite being in view for up to 30 seconds, most of this time it was flying away from the boat. JG, AC and I immediately called for people to get on to the bird as we could see straight away that it was a 'Yellow-nosed' Albatross with large dark eye patches and a substantial grey half collar. DM managed to get a few quick photos but it was soon flying away from the boat.

#### Summary description:

- (1) **Number:** one individual was observed.
- (2) **Age, sex:** older immature or sub-adult bird – based on bright yellow culmicorn stripe, the slight rosy tint to the maxillary unguis, partial grey collar and extensive black markings around the eyes. Sex unknown.
- (3) **Size and shape:** small, slim mollymawk with relatively long narrow wings and long neck. No obvious structural differences to Indian Yellow-nosed Albatrosses seen throughout the day.
- (4) **Plumage colour and pattern:** The upperwings are dark grey-brown, whilst the underwings are white with a narrow dark trailing edge and thicker black leading edge (broader than would be expected for a fully adult bird). The rectrices are similarly dark grey. The photos are not good enough to be confident of the relative wear and thus moult pattern that could otherwise help to age the bird. The body is white other than the dark grey back that merges into a paler grey-brown lowermost hind neck and strongly marked partial grey-brown collar. The head and face are mostly white with obvious and extensive black, downward pointing triangles around the eyes.

**(5) Bill shape and structure:** a relatively slender, long bill that narrows mid-length and with a weakly domed maxillary unguis. The shape of the culminicorn stripe was not seen or visible in the photos.

**(6) Colour of bill, eyes and legs/feet:** The bill was mostly dark black with a bright yellow culminicorn stripe and a hint of rosy colouring to the maxillary unguis. The eyes are dark. The legs and feet appear to be pale flesh pink but are only apparent in a single photo.

**(7) Behaviour, movements, flight pattern, feeding, interactions with other birds, comparisons with other species:** The AYNA appeared out of the strongly sunlit patch of sea behind the boat, made a single turn and then disappeared off into the distance.

#### **Photos (Daniel Mantle)**



Photo 1. Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross





Photo 2. Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross



Photo 3. Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross



Photo crops 1a, 2a, & 3a. Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross

**Other species with which you think it might be confused and how these were eliminated?**

The only confusion species is Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross. Only two of the main features that can be used to distinguish these two species were observed on this individual (unfortunately the shape of the culmine stripe wasn't noted):

1. The downward pointing black triangles around the eyes (Onley & Schofield, 2007; Shirihai, 2007; Flood & Fisher, 2016) were very obvious when the bird was first seen (through binoculars and even to the naked eye) and are also readily apparent in the photos (photo crop 1a probably shows this feature best).
2. The greyish partial collar (Onley & Schofield, 2007; Shirihai, 2007; Flood & Fisher, 2016) was also strongly developed (possibly stronger than it appears on the photos). It is not yet the complete grey hood of a full adult bird but is still notably stronger than would be expected for most Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross (IYNA immatures may have a weak greyish collar).

**Was the description written from notes and/or sketches made** (tick box):

during the observation or;  shortly after the observation or;  from memory;  with the aid of the photographs

**Please indicate supportive evidence available.**

Was the bird:  photographed,  taped or  video taped? If yes to any of these, by whom? Dan Mantle

**What experience have you had with the species in question?**

Dan Mantle, Alan Collins and John Graff have all seen this species in WA, whilst DM and AC have also AYNA off southern Africa. AC has also seen this species in the southern Atlantic.

**Signature: Dan Mantle**

**Date: 18 July 2018**