

BARC submission

Chatham Albatross *Thalassarche eremita* – Bremer Canyon, Western Australia, 8th February, 2019.

Machi Yoshida & Jamie Huxtable

(BARC submission prepared on observer's behalf by Daniel Mantle & Plaxy Barratt;

Submission note: this sighting represents the 1st record for Western Australia. There have been 5 previous records accepted by BARC (all from Tasmania). There are a further handful of unsubmitted records from Tasmania and New South Wales.

Circumstances of sighting: a single Chatham Albatross *Thalassarche eremita* was spotted and photographed on the 8th Feb 2019 by Machi Yoshida and Jamie Huxtable during the Naturaliste Charter's Orca tour to the Bremer Canyon, southern coast of Western Australia.

Description (from photos and discussion with Machi): A *Thalassarche* albatross with a dark grey hood, striking bright yellow-orange bill, and all dark underwing tips.

Upperparts: Only apparent from one image of the bird sitting on the water. The upperwings appear mid/dark grey and, in this image, contrast with the slightly paler grey hood (though this contrast may be partly due to the lighting).

Underparts: The underparts are clean, bright white. The underwing is bordered by well-defined, relatively narrow, black leading and trailing edges to the underwing. The marginally broader black leading edge ends with a short, dark tab ('thumbprint') where it meets the body. The wing tips are all dark with no obvious white bleeding into the primaries (in contrast to Shy and White-capped Albatrosses).

Head: A dark grey hood with only marginally paler crown (accentuated in lower photo by sunlight angle)

Bare parts: large and strikingly bright yellow-orange bill with a dark spot on the mandibular unguis and bright orange skin at base of lower mandible. Iris dark. Legs hard to see in detail but appear to be pale blue-grey.

Distinguishing similar species:

The combination of dark grey hood and bright yellow-orange bill is fully diagnostic of this *Thalassarche* albatross.

Adult Salvin's Albatross (*Thalassarche salvini*) is the most similar of the *Thalassarche* albatrosses. However, it is still readily distinguished by the paler grey hood, a notably whiter forehead, and an olive-grey to dull yellow bill (culminicorn and unguis may be brighter yellow but the overall bill colour is never as bright yellow-orange as the submitted bird).

Immature Shy and White-capped Albatrosses (*T. cauta* and *T. steadii*) may also have greyish hoods, but these are duller, less sharply defined hoods, and usually with paler foreheads. These immatures have much paler blue-grey bills and fully dark unguis (including a dark maxillary unguis). The underwing also differs as the white primary bases extend further into the black wingtips and the outer leading edge of these immature birds may be broader and messier.

Observer's experience: Machi (marine observer) and Jamie (skipper) both work aboard the Naturaliste Charters whale watching boats and are experienced with the regular seabirds of the region. They both knew immediately this was a rare species for the canyon, so made sure to take photos for later identification.

References:

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Both images – Machi Yoshida, Bremer Canyon, 8th February 2019