

FIRST RECORD OF A SHY ALBATROSS IN ALASKA

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On 4 August 2003 we observed and photographed a large dark-mantled albatross (Figure 1) 18 km northwest of Kasatochi Island, in the Aleutian Islands (52° 13'N, 175° 49'W), Alaska. We identified it as a Salvin's Shy Albatross (*Thalassarche cauta salvini*) (for information on the taxonomy of the Shy Albatross complex, see Cole 2000.) Our observation and photographs provide the first record of this species for Alaska and the 10th record for the North Pacific (Table 1). Of these birds, five were identified as Salvin's Albatrosses, five as White-capped Albatrosses (*T. c. cauta/steadii*).

We sighted the bird while traveling on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service research vessel *Tiglaġ*. The weather was clear and calm with a glassy sea. Noticeably larger than Laysan (*Phoebastria immutabilis*) and Black-footed (*P. nigripes*) albatrosses in the area, the Shy Albatross was first sighted approximately 300 m from the vessel. Unlike the other albatrosses in the area, this bird had extreme difficulty becoming airborne, and we were able to observe it within 30 m of the vessel for >30 minutes.

This albatross had a light forehead, gray hood, dark mantle, extensive white rump and upper-tail coverts, and an olive-gray bill with an obvious dark nail. The wingspan was considerably larger than that of the other albatrosses nearby. The underwing was mostly white with very narrow black margins and extensive black on the tips of the primaries. We also noted the black preaxillary notch at the base of the underwing, which is characteristic of the Shy Albatross (Marchant and Higgins 1990). The combination of gray hood, bill color, and underwing pattern are consistent with subspecies *salvini* (Jean-Claude Stahl in litt., Marchant and Higgins 1990, Shirihai and Jarrett 2002). During our observations we noted that the wings were in molt (Figure 2). From the combination of wing molt, dull bill coloration with dark nail, and near-adult plumage we assessed the bird as a subadult (see Shirihai and Jarrett 2002).

Salvin's Albatross breeds on the Snares and Bounty islands off New Zealand (ca. 76,000 pairs) and on Penguin Island in the Crozet Island group (<5 pairs; Enticott and Tipling 1997). Subadult birds forage widely in the South Pacific, ranging north to about 5° S latitude along the west coast of South America (Marchant and Higgins 1990). Seabird authority Sandy Bartle (in litt.) opined that our bird probably drifted north from those waters via the California Current. Salvin's Albatross is classified as vulnerable because of probable population decline and because breeding is restricted to one tiny island group (Stattersfield and Capper 2000, IUCN Red List for birds).

Many observers were present when this bird was sighted, and identification was aided by Daniel C. Barton, Jeffrey C. Williams, Kirsten E. Lindquist, Donald E. Dragoon, and Kevin D. Bell, besides us. We thank Kevin D. Bell and the crew of the M/V *Tiglaġ* for a memorable trip. Photos were provided by Kenneth S. Gates. Thanks to Luke W. Cole, Stephen F. Bailey, Thomas J. Evans, and Steven G. Mlodinow for their help and review. Confirmation of identification from the photos and video capture was made by Sandy Bartle and Jean-Claude Stahl, Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa. Thanks to Daniel D. Gibson and the Alaska Checklist Committee for assistance with this manuscript.

NOTES



Figure 1. Salvin's Shy Albatross observed near Kasatochi Island, Alaska, 4 August 2003.

Photo by K. S. Gates

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Table 1 Records of Shy Albatrosses in the North Pacific

Date	Location	Subspecies	Reference
1 Sep 1951	near Quillayute River, WA	White-capped	Slipp 1952
5 Oct 1996	Heceta Bank, OR	White-capped	Hunter and Bailey 1997
24 Aug 1999	Point Arena, CA	White-capped	Cole 2000
22 Jan 2000	Westport, WA	White-capped	Wahl et al. 2005
29 July–10 Sep 2000	Cordell Bank, CA	Salvin's	McKee and Erickson 2002
10 and 17 Sep 2000	Cordell Bank, CA	Salvin's	McKee and Erickson 2002
27 July 2001	Cordell Bank, CA	Salvin's	Garrett and Wilson 2003
7 Oct 2001	Perpetua Bank, OR	White-capped	Marshall et al. 2003
8 April 2003	Midway Atoll, HI	Salvin's	Pyle and Donaldson 2003

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Figure 2. Symmetrical wing molt of the Shy Albatross near Kasatochi Island, shown in attempted takeoff.

Photo by R. B. Benter

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