



ALBERT TIMES

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"Don't be warped - trawl for fish, not birds"

From the desk of Admiral Albert Ross, MBE (Mighty Big Eater)

Mabel and I are doing shift work incubating the egg, with a week on, then a week off. One more month to go and I'm so over it already! At least the weather is warming up. God, it was cold down here in October when we arrived. What! I would give anything to be back holidaying on that Chilean coast again. What!

Overall things are pretty quiet in the deepwater trawl fishery, and different from a few years back when seabird issues and controls were "flying" around and regulatory actions were being demanded by the chattering classes. It's almost as if the "wave" of concern has passed-by and a bit of common sense has moved in.

To reflect, in this time of peace I have reduced our threat rating at HQ and pulled back some of our long range scouts. BUT the NZ NPOA has yet to be finished and you know they are going to come up with some "bird brain" ideas and management controls in that! What! They have had a few false starts with this NPOA document, it's been drafted then dropped like a "hot potato" a few times already. I just know it's going to be complicated and over the top; so I'm keeping the forces on standby at HQ, just in case we need to re-group to protect our "free-feeds".

As it's the festive season I thought it a good time to promote the Royal Albatross Colony at Taiaroa Head, if you get any time in the Otago region, get yourself onto one of the great Taiaroa-head tours and go and see some of my northern cousins.

I am having January off, catch you in February on the squid grounds and have a Merry Xmas and great New Year.

ChowAlbert.

The Royal Albatross Colony

by John Cleal

The Royal Albatross Colony at Taiaroa Head, on the tip of the Otago Peninsula, is the only mainland breeding colony for any albatross species found in the southern hemisphere. The Taiaroa Head colony was first established in 1938 and has grown into an established colony of around 140 birds.

This season the first Northern Royal Albatross egg was laid on 28th October 2010 and there are now 30 albatross eggs laid. The parents are at the beginning of a very long incubation process, which is nearly 2½ months! One parent will remain on the nest at all times, while the other is out at sea feeding. As well as adults, adolescents are visiting the colony for courtship and some will choose lifelong partners in the coming months.

The breeding birds arrive in September. The white egg, weighing up to 500 grams, is laid during late October to mid November. The chicks hatch during late January and

early February. For the first 20 days the chick is fed on demand and then meals decrease to three or four times a week. At 100 days old the chicks are fed larger meals, which can be up to two kilograms at a time. The following September, when fully fledged, the chicks take their initial flight with the aid of a strong wind.

The young albatross will spend the next three to six years at sea. Many will return to this unique headland to start another generation of Royals. Nearly 12 months after their arrival at Taiaroa Head, having cared for egg and chick over a period of some 300 days, the parents will leave the colony to spend a year at sea before returning to breed again.

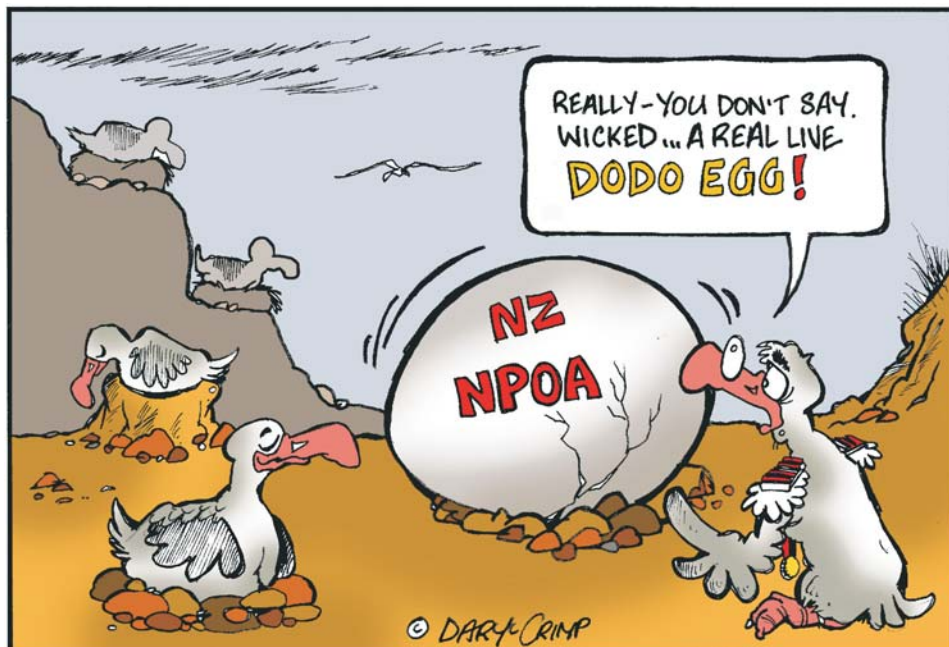
As well as the albatross, many other local animal species are also in the middle of their breeding season....including: fur seals, spoonbills, red-billed gulls, spotted shags, Stewart Island shags and blue penguins. Guided tours are available daily, on 0800528767 or reservations@albatross.org.nz for bookings.



Northern Royal Albatross, photographed by Robert Brown

No One Captures Birds in Argentina?

I popped into see Daryl Smith from the Sealord Group Ltd. Daryl had just arrived back from Argentina, after reviewing the Sealord Group's JV fishing operation in Argentina. He had the new Argentine National Action Plan to Reduce Interactions of Birds within Fisheries (basically their Seabird NPOA). It's a 50-odd page glossy booklet with plenty of information on seabird species and their foraging ranges, how these overlap with fishing areas, overviews of the fisheries themselves, and it also covers all the well known mitigation devices and offal control procedures that are used around the world. This plan of action is obviously a step in the right direction, and more



WHICH COUSIN OF MINE IS THIS?



It has a dark speckling on the crown and rump.

BE IN TO WIN: Albert Ross' cap and the "Field Guide to New Zealand Seabirds"

If you know the name of this bird then email your answer, name, postal address and date of publication to albertross@fishinfo.co.nz



The cousin of last month:
Northern Fulmar

importantly it appears it may be followed by some controls to improve what is happening out on the water. "No one captures birds in Argentina!" That is the first line, Daryl tells me! Argentina has a big fishing fleet, many times larger than NZ, and includes many hundreds of smaller inshore vessels, a good size fleet of large squid jiggers, a heap of large 25 to 45m fresh fish trawlers, and 30 odd large, 60 - 90m factory trawlers, of which only a hand full have fish-meal plants, most having to discharge all their offal overboard. Hake, squid, hoki and shrimp are the biggest fisheries and with around 1 million tons of fish caught annually, we're talking big volumes.... There are plenty of birds around the deepwater vessels - heaps of them, just like down south here in NZ. Much of the fishing is done between 40 & 50 degrees South, which is a primary foraging area for many seabirds. Remember 'Toroa' the 500th royal albatross chick from Taiaroa Head-Otago? Well, he's been satellite tracked to these fishing areas so 'our-birds' spend time around these vessels too.

There is no regulation requiring the use

of mitigation devices in these fisheries. It is entirely voluntary! Apparently, few vessels bother deploying mitigation devices (the Sealord JV vessels there always deploy tori lines). However there are mandatory controls for long liners; introduced in 2009. There is also very little observer coverage.

Large vessels have high block heights, which combined with the shallow water fishing means the warp wires are entering the water a long way back from the stern i.e. the warp danger zone is very large behind these vessels. **In**

summary, there are lots of big trawlers, heaps of birds, big volumes of offal discharged, big warp danger zones and few vessels using mitigation devices. You would think that the risk of warp strikes would-be relatively high. So why does *no-one capture birds in Argentina?* There is NO requirement to report seabird captures. It is that simple!

Good to see this new Action Plan is starting to address the issues to improve things in the future. With companies like Sealord involved, the flow of information between NZ and Argentina with regard to using mitigation devices and reducing seabird incidental captures can only be a positive influence.

To learn more go to www.albertross.co.nz and pick up this month's issue



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