

A Photographic Guide for Identification of South Atlantic Seabirds

An Observer's contribution for other Observers of the Southern Oceans

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Bycatch has a serious impact on the health of seabird populations, some of which are seriously threatened. Observers play a key role in bycatch assessment, monitoring, and mitigation. The effectiveness of this work depends on their ability to identify seabirds under real, on-board work conditions.

Generally, guides count on the fact that observers catch the birds in their hands, hurt or dead. This guide emphasizes the recognition of seabirds from the observer's point of view, using binoculars or a camera onboard fishing vessels. For this reason, bird identification is supported by more than 100 color photographs throughout the guide.

This photographic guide is the result of Mark's opportunity to be onboard Argentinian fishery vessels for more than 200 sea days as a biologist, scientific observer, and professional photographer, with a passion to invest his "after hours" on the deck, taking pictures.

Development Process:

STEP 1 - The Idea of a Guide

As a Scientific Observer on board, working under many weather conditions, I did not have the proper tools for seabirds identification. With that in mind, I decided to make a more helpful and visually-guided book, for me and for other Scientific Observers.



STEP 2 - How I did it ?

I chose the Scientific Observer's point of view and decided to do the identify birds with my binoculars and camera, because that is the most common situation observers are in, watching seabirds flying all around and interacting with the fishing gear.



STEP 3 - What was done ?

I spent almost 2 years as a fishing observer for INIDEP, with more than 200 days of "after hours" work on the deck of the vessel after finishing my work as observer, to take the necessary photographs to make a complete guide of seabirds of the South Atlantic Ocean.



STEP 4 - What I get ?

I was able to take photos of albatrosses and petrels of the South Atlantic Ocean (13 species), as well as photos of accidents, flying and feeding behavior, and interaction with fishing boats. I included information on mortality and size comparison, using graphs and a visual Beaufort scale.






STEP 5 - Why is important ?

It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. Well, that was the main objective of this guide. When you see a picture of a dead albatross, killed by the net of a fishing boat, you feel that something must be done urgently. A correct seabird identification is the first step for the conservation of these species. And this depends on us. So, Scientific Observers, lets go to work.



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