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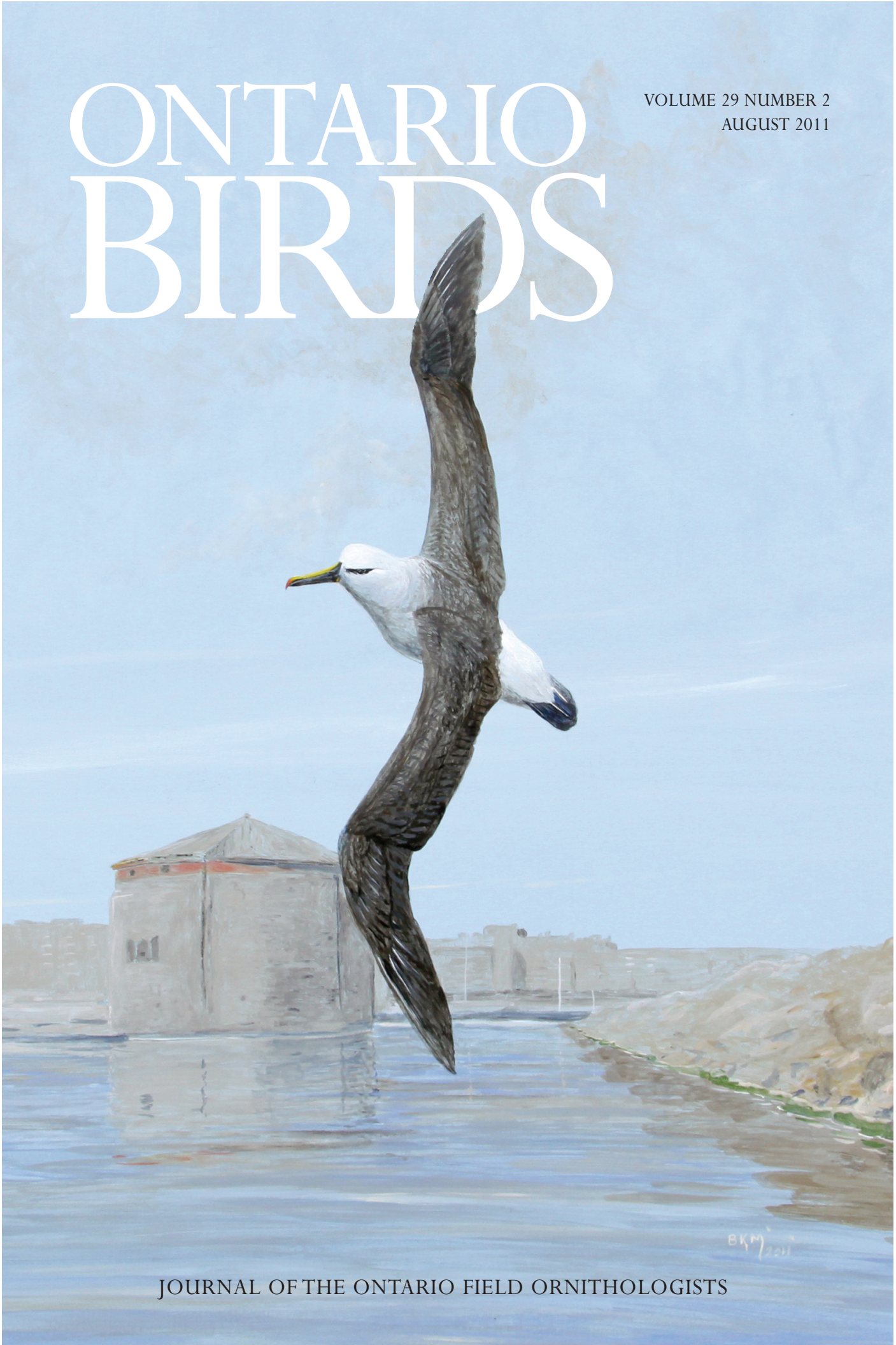

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Yellow-nosed Albatross New to Ontario

By Paul R. Martin and Bruce M. Di Labio

At 1145h on 4 July 2010, an adult-plumaged *Thalassarche* albatross was observed by Paul Martin (PRM) and his two-year old son, Sean Thomas Martin. The bird was flying low over MacDonald Memorial Park at the Kingston General Hospital helicopter pad and nearby smoke stack on the northeast shore of Lake Ontario at Kingston, Frontenac Co. The albatross was at the lakeshore, but flew over land the entire time observed, flying over a parking lot, sun bathers and dog walkers. The bird was as low as ~10 m above the ground and very close to the walking trail along the water's edge. The bird passed back and forth three times, sometimes with Ring-billed Gulls (*Larus delawarensis*) in pursuit. The bird was last seen circling upward above the smoke stack drifting eastward.

Conditions were breezy but sunny with temperatures 23.3 –24.3°C (humidex 29 – 30°C), relative humidity 68 – 71%, atmospheric pressure 100.33 – 100.36 kPa, and winds from the south-southwest (190 degrees) at 17 – 20 km/hr (Environment Canada 2010). Earlier in the day, wind had been more out of the west (210 – 260 degrees) (Environment Canada 2010). At the time of observation, the sky was mainly clear, the lighting conditions were excellent, with the sun slightly behind the observers. While the conditions were good for observation, PRM had no binoculars or camera, making detailed observations of plumage and bare part colouration difficult. The bird was observed for about five minutes in total as close as ~15 m. Below are observations summarized from PRM's notes from 4 July.

The bird was predominantly immaculate white, with contrasting black on the wings. The upper side of the wings

and back were uniform black. The black on the upper side of the wings extended across the entire wings, including the secondaries and primaries, without any white visible on the upper side. The undersides of the wings were striking, with an even-coloured and fairly even width black patch on the leading edge of the wing,

Figures 1. to 3. Adult Yellow-nosed Albatross (*Thalassarche chlororhynchos*) at Browns Bay, Wolfe Island, Frontenac Co., Ontario on 17 July 2010. Note the bill colouration that identifies this bird as an adult Yellow-nosed Albatross, and the extensive gray on the head and nape extending to the back, and the pronounced dark gray/black around the eye, that identify this bird as the "Atlantic" subspecies (*Thalassarche c. chlororhynchos*).
Photos by Emma K. Brown

extending from the body to the end of the primaries and around to the back edge of the wing. Other than the wings, the bird appeared entirely white from below. The underside of the tail may have been slightly dusky, but it did not stand out from below. The undertail coverts were white, as was the rump. The head appeared slightly dusky and a dark smudge or shadow was evident around the eye. The bill was heavy and dusky, and appeared to get darker toward the top of the bill forming some sort of edge or line. The colour of the top and tip of the bill was not visible.The shape and behaviour of the bird stood out as remarkable. The bird appeared large, with excessively long wings that were fairly even in width, somewhat thin for the size of the bird.

The wings tapered very gradually from both the leading and distal edges, forming a less asymmetrical tip compared with other birds (e.g. gulls). The body was stocky with a sizable head and heavy bill. The bill appeared somewhat swollen at the base. The bird appeared about 2.5 –3 x the size (wingspan) of the Ring-billed Gulls nearby, although they were usually diving at it, making comparisons difficult.

From head-on, the bird gave a giant dragonfly-like appearance, with stiff and shallow wing beats. Wing beats appeared somewhat fast for such a large bird (maybe slightly over one beat per second and fairly even on the up and down stroke), and occurred in pulses (maybe four or five at a time) interspersed with periods of gliding. Most striking was the shallow aspect of the wing beats and the stiff nature of the wings. When gliding, the wings were held in a broad sweeping arc.

PRM was unsuccessful in attempts to relocate the bird later in the day, and the bird went unreported for 12 days

Figure 4. Adult Yellow-nosed Albatross photographed in captivity at the Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre. Note the white feathers on the underwing that extend to the trailing edge of the wing. *Photo by Sue Meech.*

Figure 5. Adult Yellow-nosed Albatross photographed in captivity at the Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre. Photo illustrates the white undertail coverts and mostly obscured dark tail. *Photo by Sue Meech.*

Figure 6. Adult Yellow-nosed Albatross photographed in captivity at the Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre. Photo illustrates the head, bill and eye colour. *Photo by Sue Meech.*

thereafter. Based on the 4 July observations, the albatross was thought to be in the Yellow-nosed Albatross (*T. chlororhynchos*) group, but we could not definitively exclude Buller's Albatross (*T. bulleri*) as a possibility.

In the evening of 16 July 2010, Gregory R. Brown (GRB), Katherine E. Brown, and Emma K. Brown observed an unidentified bird fly over their cottage along the north shore of Wolfe Island, Frontenac Co. at Browns Bay. The bird initially drew their attention as unusual. The next morning, GRB found what appeared to be the same bird wading and apparently feeding in the shallow water, but the bird then disappeared. Later in the morning, he relocated the bird squatting in a couple inches of water along the shore. The bird appeared alert but very weak and tired, and small waves caused the bird to lose balance. GRB approached the bird, which appeared calm, even allowing him to touch it. The Brown family recognized that the bird was something special and was in poor health, so they moved the bird a few feet onto the shore and contacted Sue Meech at the Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre in Napanee, Lennox and Addington Co., Ontario. Emma Brown took several photos (Figures 1 – 3). The Brown family placed the bird in a large bin and transported it onto the Wolfe Island ferry to Kingston, where they were met by Sue Green. Sue Green then transported the bird to the Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre where the bird was identified as a Yellow-nosed Albatross.

We suggest that the albatross on Wolfe Island was the same individual as the albatross observed in Kingston for three reasons. (1) The Wolfe Island bird's appearance closely matched the individual observed on 4 July, including

Table 1. Records of Yellow-nosed Albatross (*Thalassarche chlororhynchos*) from the United States and Canada. We include only records that have been reviewed and deemed acceptable by regional experts and rare bird committees[1]. All records are of single birds.

Record[2]	Year	Month	Day	Prov./State	Location
1	1885	Aug	20	QC	Mouth of the Moisie River, Sept-Rivières Municipality
2	1913	Aug	1	NB/ME	off Grand Manan I. / Machias Seal I., Charlotte Co.
3	1934	Jul	~20	ME	East Fryeburg, Oxford Co.
4	1958	Jul	13	FL	32 km off New Smyrna Beach, Brevard Co.
5	1960	Mar	21	ME	off Monhegan I., Lincoln Co.
6 [A]	1960	May	29	NY	3 km off Jones Beach, Nassau Co.
7	1964	May	12	ME	off Monhegan I., Lincoln Co.
8	1968	Jul	12	NS	50 km off Yarmouth
9	1970	May	9	LA	Holly Beach, Cameron Parish
10	1971	May	7	MA	Bird I., Plymouth Co.
11	1972	May	14	TX	South Padre I., Cameron Co.
12	1975	Feb	1	MD	Baltimore Canyon, 92 km east of Ocean City
13	1976	Jun	14	MA	Cultivator Shoal, NW Georges Bank
14	1976	Aug	10	NY	Croton Point, Westchester Co
15	1976	Aug	20	NS	~70 km west of Yarmouth
16	1976	Aug	21	RI	Cox Ledge
17 [I]	1976	Oct	28	TX	South Padre I., Willacy Co.
18	1979	Aug	21	RI	Cox Ledge
19	1979	Dec	3	VA/MD	88 km from coast
20	1981	Nov	28	VA	Back Bay, Virginia Beach Co.
21 [A]	1983	Jul	3	FL	near St. Marks Light, Wakulla Co.
22	1989	May	28-29 [3]	NS	Seal I.

Latitude	Longitude	Plumage [4]	Record [5]	Reference
50.20	-66.07	imm	sp	McDaniel 1973, Godfrey 1986
44.70	-66.81		sp	McDaniel 1973, Christie *et al*. 2004
44.04	-70.87		sp	Norton 1934, McDaniel 1973
29.13	-80.60		sr	Stevenson 1958, Stevenson and Anderson 1994
43.76	-69.33		sr	McDaniel 1973
40.59	-73.50	ad	ph	Bull 1961
43.76	-69.33		sr	McDaniel 1973
43.79	-66.77		sr	Tufts 1986
29.77	-93.46	ad	ph	Imhof 1970
41.67	-70.72	sub	sr	Finch 1971, Veit and Peterson 1993
26.08	-97.17		sr	Webster 1972, Oberholser 1974
38.32	-73.87	sub	ph	Scott and Cutler 1975
41.50	-68.17	ad	sr	Veit and Peterson 1993
41.18	-73.89	ad	sr	Howe and Weissman 1976
43.80	-66.99	ad or sub	sr	Tufts 1986, Godfrey 1986
41.10	-71.17	sub	sr	Conway 1992
26.58	-97.30	ad	sp	Webster 1977, TOS 1995
41.10	-71.17	sub	ph	Vickery 1980, Conway 1992
38.02	-74.07	imm or sub	sr	Kain 1987
36.60	-75.97		sr	Kain 1987
30.07	-84.18		ph	Paul 1983
43.42	-66.62		sr	Maybank 1989, I. McLaren, pers. comm.

Record[2]	Year	Month	Day	Prov./State	Location
23	1992	May	27	FL	Key Largo, Monroe Co.
24	1993	May	24	NB	Dieppe/Moncton, Westmorland Co.
25 [A]	1997	Jul	11	TX	San Jose I., Aransas Co.
26 [A]	1999	Jul	6	ME	Matinicus Rock, Knox Co.
27 [A]	2000	Feb	5	NC	5 km east of Salvo, Dare Co.
28	2000	May	1	FL	50 km west of Tarpon Springs, Pinellas Co.
29 [A]	2000	May	9	MA	off Penikese I., Dukes Co.
30	2000	May	9	NY	Fire I., Suffolk Co.
31	2000	May	21-23	NJ	Cape May/Delaware Bay Shore, Cape May Co.
32	2003	Jun	2	MA	Cape Cod Bay, Eastham, Barnstable Co.
33 [I]	2003	Sep	26	TX	80 km east of Port Isabel, South Padre I., Cameron Co.
34	2004	Apr	11	NC	Cape Hatteras, Dare Co.
35 [A]	2005	May	29	MA	Tuckernuck I., Nantucket Co.
36	2006	Apr	11-late	NC	Cape Hatteras, Dare Co.
37	2006	May	14	MA	Sandy Neck, Barnstable Co.
38	2006	Jun	6	MA	Andrews Point, Essex Co.
39	2006	Jun	6	NH	Hampton Beach, Rockingham Co.
40	2006	Jun	11	ME	Yarmouth, Cumberland Co.
41	2006	Jul	16-20	ME	Old Orchard Beach, York Co.
42 [A]	2007	Apr	28	ME	Cape Neddick, York Co.
43	2007	May	26	NS	~ 60 km southeast of Shelburne
44	2008	Aug	24-25	ME	Seal I. and Matinicus Rock, Knox Co.
45	2009	Jun	6	MD	Assateague I., Worcester Co.
46	2010			FL	24 km SW of Key West, Monroe Co.
47 [A]	2010	Jul	4-17	ON	Kingston, Frontenac Co.

[1] NF = Mactavish *et al.* (2003); B. Mactavish, pers. comm., 2011; NS = Tufts (1986); I. MacLaren, pers. comm. 2011; NB = Christie *et al.* (2004); QC = M. Gosselin, pers. comm., 2011; ME = Maine Bird Records Committee; NH = NHRBC (2010); MA = Veit and Peterson (1993); Massachusetts Avian Records Committee; NY = New York State Avian Records Committee and published photographs (Bull 1961; Buckley and Schairer 2000); NJ = NJBRC (2011); VA = Virginia Avian Records Committee; MD = MOS (2011); RI = Conway (1992); NC = Carolina Bird Club Records Committee; FL = Stevenson and Anderson (1994); Florida Ornithological Society Records Committee; LA = Louisiana Bird Records Committee; TX = Texas Bird Records Committee

Latitude	Longitude	Plumage [4]	Record [5]	Reference
25.18	-80.37	sub	sp	Stevenson and Anderson 1994
46.10	-64.72	ad	ph	Mactavish 1993, Christie *et al.* 2004
28.00	-96.93	ad	sp	Lasley *et al*. 1997
43.79	-68.85	ad	ph	Peterson 1999
35.54	-75.47	sub	ph	Tove and Patteson 2002
28.18	-83.36		ph	Pranty 2000
41.45	-70.92	ad	ph	Perkins 2000
40.67	-73.05	ad	ph	Buckley and Schairer 2000
38.96	-74.93	ad	ph	Burgiel *et al*. 2000, NJBRC 2011
41.83	-69.97		sr	Peterson 2004
26.07	-96.35	ad	ph	Lockwood 2004
35.22	-75.53		ph	Davis 2004
41.30	-70.26	ad	ph	Perkins 2005
35.22	-75.53		ph	Davis 2006
41.73	-70.31	ad	sr	Perkins 2006, MARC 2007
42.69	-70.62	ad	sr	Peterson 2007
42.92	-70.80	ad	sr	Peterson 2007, NHRBC 2010
43.80	-70.19	ad	sr	Peterson 2007
43.52	-70.38		ph	Vazzano 2006, Peterson 2007
43.17	-70.60		sp	Perkins 2007
43.33	-64.73		sr	Mills 2008
43.79	-68.85	imm	ph	MBRC 2008
38.09	-75.20		video	MOS 2011
24.39	-81.97	imm	ph	FOSRC 2010
44.26	-76.50	ad	ph	this paper

2 A = "Atlantic" Yellow-nosed Albatross (*T. c. chlororhynchos*); I = "Indian" Yellow-nosed Albatross (*T. chlororhynchos carteri*)
3 dates in Maybank (1989) are incorrect (I. McLaren, pers. comm.)
4 ad = adult; sub = subadult; im = immature
5 sp = specimen; ph = photograph; sr = sight record

exhibiting extensive white on the trailing edge of the wing (Figure 4). (2) All previous North American records of Yellow-nosed Albatross were of single birds (Table 1), and thus it is unlikely that there were two *Thalassarche* albatrosses in the Kingston area. (3) The Wolfe Island bird was found close in both space (7 – 8 km across the water) and time (12 days later) to the first sighting.

Identification

The Kingston bird is identifiable as an adult Yellow-nosed Albatross based on our examination of photos (Figures 1 – 6), and in particular bill and head colouration. The bill is primarily black, with bright yellow on the top (culminicorn) of the bill. The tip of the bill (maxillary unguis) is reddish in colour, while the base of the lower mandible is orange (Figures 2, 6). Outside of Yellow-nosed Albatross, only two species of albatross have a combination of primarily black bills with yellow running along the top of the bill (Brooke 2004, Onley and Scofield 2007). Both Gray-headed Albatross (*T. chrysostoma*) and Buller's Albatross have yellow on the top of the bill, but both species also have yellow running along the lower edge of the lower mandible (ramicorn), and have yellow (not red) on the tips of their bills (Brooke 2004, Onley and Scofield 2007). The bright colouration of the Kingston bird's bill also identifies this bird as an adult — this colouration is not present on younger birds (Brooke 2004, Onley and Scofield 2007).

Additional differences exist between the Yellow-nosed Albatrosses and other albatross species. The bird is identifiable as a *Thalassarche* albatross by the combination of its grey/white head, dark upper wings and back, completely white rump, and predominantly white underparts (Brooke 2004). Laysan Albatrosses (*Phoebastria immutabilis*) look similar to *Thalassarche* albatrosses in some plumages, but Laysans typically have brown extending from the back onto the rump, and have feet that extend beyond the tail (Sinclair *et al.* 2002, Brooke 2004, Onley and Scofield 2007). Younger Laysan Albatrosses are primarily dark on the undersides of the wings, while older Laysans have pale bills (Onley and Scofield 2007).

Other *Thalassarche* albatrosses show different colouration of the bill and undersides of the wings. Black-browed (*T. melanophrys*) and Campbell (*T. impavida*) albatrosses typically have more extensive black on the underside of the wings (particularly as immatures), while older birds have pale or yellow bills (Sinclair *et al.* 2002, Brooke 2004, Onley and Scofield 2007). Shy (*T. cauta*), Salvin's (*T. salvini*) and Chatham Islands (*T. eremita*) albatrosses all show thinner black on the leading edges of the undersides of the wings, symmetrical with black on the trailing edges of the wings.

These species also have pale or yellow bills as adults and subadults and show a black "thumb print" at the base of the wings on the leading edge (Sinclair *et al.* 2002, Brooke 2004, Onley

and Scofield 2007). Gray-headed Albatrosses have different bill colouration as adults (discussed above), and typically have more black on the undersides of the wings, including along the trailing edge, and have prominent gray heads (Sinclair *et al.* 2002, Brooke 2004, Onley and Scofield 2007). Buller's Albatross is probably the closest in appearance to the Yellow-nosed, differing in bill colouration (discussed above), and by having slightly more extensive gray on the head and black on the underside of the wings, and being larger and bulkier than Yellow-nosed Albatross (Sinclair *et al.* 2002, Brooke 2004, Onley and Scofield 2007).

The Kingston bird is further identifiable as an "Atlantic" Yellow-nosed Albatross (*T. c. chlororhynchos*) based on the extent of gray on the head and black around the eye. "Indian" Yellow-nosed Albatrosses (*T. chororhynchos carteri*) have primarily white heads and napes, with gray restricted to the cheeks, and very little dark gray or black around the eye (Figure 7; Sinclair *et al.* 2002, Brooke 2004, Onley and Scofield 2007). In contrast, "Atlantic" Yellow-nosed Albatross, including the Kingston bird, have gray extending from just behind the top of the head down to meet the back, continuing onto the cheeks to the bill, contrasting with a whitish forehead and top of the head. Dark gray/black around the eye is more extensive and defined in the "Atlantic" compared with the "Indian" Yellow-nosed Albatross (Figure 7; Sinclair *et al.* 2002, Brooke 2004, Onley and Scofield 2007).

Outcome

When brought to the Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre, the Yellow-nosed Albatross was emaciated and anemic, and weighed far below the normal weight of the species, but showed no signs of trauma (S. Meech, pers. comm., 2010; Hendra 2010). At the centre, Sue Meech and coworkers were, remarkably, able to save the bird. On 12 August 2010, the bird was shipped from Napanee to a special facility at the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, Tufts University in western Massachusetts, and later, to Suncoast Seabird Sanctuary, a seabird rehabilitation facility in Florida. In late November 2010, the bird was euthanized in captivity in Florida after developing a bone infection in its leg (S. Meech, pers. comm., 2010).

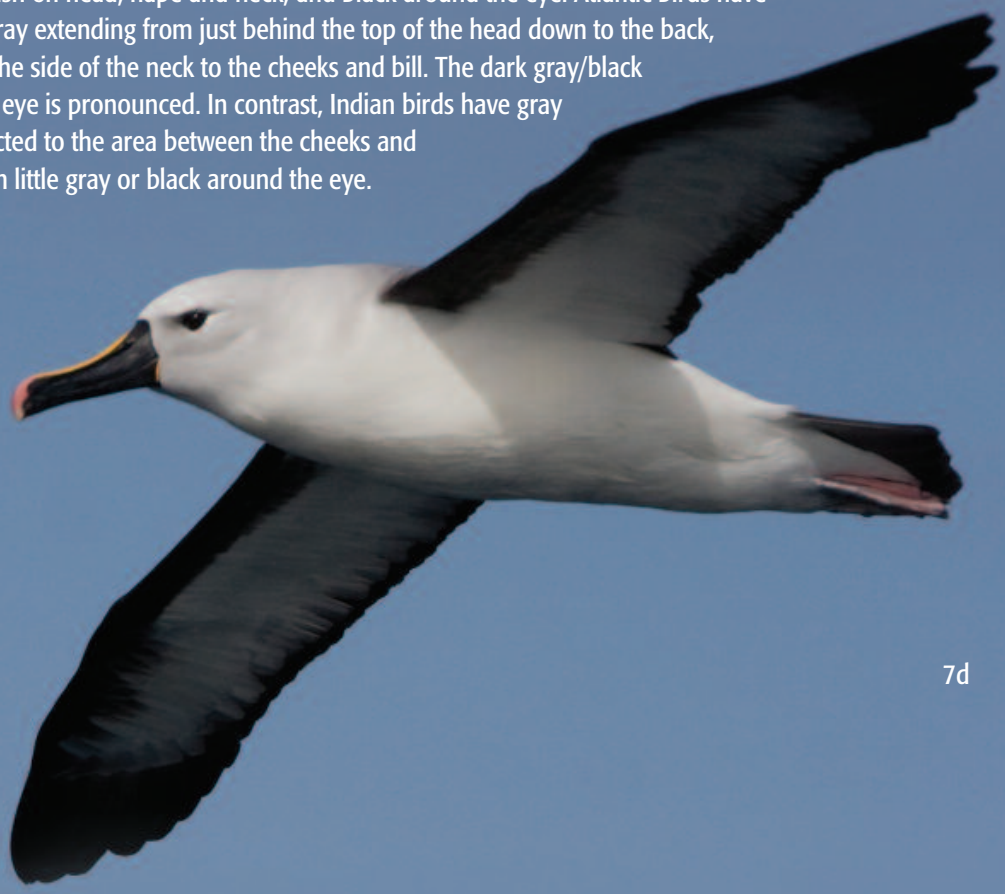
The bird is now a specimen (skin) in the Royal Ontario Museum (ROMZ #120272, collector Gregory R. Brown). A blood sample taken at the Sandy Pines Wildlife Centre was also deposited at the ROM. The record has been accepted as Ontario's first Yellow-nosed Albatross (Ontario Bird Records Committee, pers. comm., 2011), and the committee has concurred that it is indeed of the "Atlantic" subspecies. Consistent with the adult plumage and bill colouration, the bird had no bursa (bursa are only present in younger birds; Pettingill 1970). The bird was found to be a female, with granular ovaries (18 x 13 mm), no fat, and a weight of 1622 grams (postmortem).

7a

7b

All photos were taken off Cape Town, South Africa by Trevor Hardaker.

Figure 7. "Atlantic" Yellow-nosed Albatross (*T. c. chlororhynchos;* 7a, 7b) and "Indian" Yellow-nosed Albatross (*T. c. carteri;* 7c, 7d) sitting and in flight. Note differences in the gray wash on head, nape and neck, and black around the eye. Atlantic birds have extensive gray extending from just behind the top of the head down to the back, and along the side of the neck to the cheeks and bill. The dark gray/black around the eye is pronounced. In contrast, Indian birds have gray wash restricted to the area between the cheeks and the bill, with little gray or black around the eye.



Taxonomy

The taxonomy of the Yellow-nosed Albatross group is not yet consistent across ornithologists. Historically, the Yellow-nosed Albatross was considered one species with two subspecies ("Atlantic", *chlororhynchos* and "Indian", *carteri*). Robertson and Nunn (1998) proposed elevating these two subspecies to full species based on genetic differences between the Atlantic Ocean-breeding and Indian/Pacific Ocean-breeding populations that suggested that these populations do not interbreed, and on differences in plumage (discussed above) and size (Indians are slightly smaller). In addition to these differences, the "Atlantic"and "Indian" Yellow-nosed Albatrosses usually differ slightly in the shape of the yellow on the upperside of the bill, with "Indians" typically having a more pointed proximal end to the yellow at the base of the upper mandible (Tickell 2000, Brooke 2004, Onley and Scofield 2007). "Atlantic" and "Indian" Yellow-nosed Albatrosses are now regarded as full species by most seabird biologists (e.g.,Brooke 2004, Onley and Scofield 2007), BirdLife International (BirdLife International 2010a,b), the International Ornithologists' Union (Gill and Donsker 2010), and ornithologists in southern Africa (Sinclair *et al.* 2002, Hockey *et al.* 2005). The split has not yet been recognized by the American Ornithologists' Union, in part because neither taxonomic committee (North and Middle Americas or South America) have yet received proposals to elevate the two taxa to full species (J.V. Remsen, *in litt.*, 9 August 2010).

Natural History

The Yellow-nosed Albatross is a small southern hemisphere albatross in the mollymawk group (Tickell 2000, Brooke 2004) that typically feeds by seizing food from the surface of the ocean, and less frequently, plunging and even diving in pursuit of prey (Marchant and Higgins 1990, BirdLife International 2010a,b). The primary food includes small fish, squid, krill, and offal from fishing boats (Marchant and Higgins 1990, Brooke 2004, ACAP 2009). Yellow-nosed Albatrosses often forage in the company of shearwaters, and are thought to associate with foraging whales, dolphins and larger predatory fish that force small fish and squid towards the ocean surface (Marchant and Higgins 1990, Brooke 2004, Onley and Scofield 2007, ACAP 2009, BirdLife International 2010a,b). They will also follow fishing boats, feeding on discarded fish and bait used in long line fisheries (ACAP 2009, BirdLife International 2010a,b).

"Atlantic" Yellow-nosed Albatross is listed currently as globally endangered by BirdLife International due, in part, to high incidental mortality during fisheries activities (ACAP 2009, BirdLife International 2010a). "Atlantic" Yellow-nosed Albatrosses begin breeding at about 10 years of age (range six – 13 years) and typically breed almost annually (on average two out of every three

years) (ACAP 2009). Birds arrive at at breeding colonies in late August or September, lay one egg per nest without replacement, typically in September, with young fledging in March and April (ACAP 2009). Atlantic" Yellow-nosed Albatrosses can live to at least 37 years in the wild (Hagan 1982)

"Atlantic" Yellow-nosed Albatrosses breed on the Tristan da Cunha Island group in the south-central Atlantic, specifically on Tristan, Gough, Nightingale, Inaccessible, Middle and Stoltenhoff islands (Figure 8; Tickell 2000, Brooke 2004, ACAP 2009, BirdLife International 2010a). These birds are pelagic, typically occurring in the subtropical southern Atlantic Ocean between South America and southern Africa and extending into the Indian Ocean, commonly off South Africa (Figure 8; Tickell 2000, Sinclair *et al.* 2002, Brooke 2004, BirdLife International 2010a), rarely east to Australia and New Zealand (Marchant and Higgins 1990, Tickell 2000). "Atlantic" Yellow-nosed Albatrosses show some evidence of seasonal movements, becoming abundant off the African continental shelf in March and April and moving south in May, possibly associated with a movement towards breeding islands (Tickell 2000). Off Brazil, however, they are common throughout the year (Tickell 2000). Yellow-nosed Albatrosses have a history of vagrancy into the North Atlantic, with over 40 records from the United States and Canada (Table 1; Figure 9), and additional records from Europe (Brooke 2004, Onley and Scofield 2007).

"Indian" Yellow-nosed Albatross are ecologically very similar to "Atlantic", but breed on islands in the Indian Ocean (and rarely in the Pacific near New Zealand) and occur from the southwest Pacific Ocean through the Indian Ocean and into the southern Atlantic off South Africa (Tickell 2000, Brooke 2004, BirdLife International 2010b).

Other North American Records

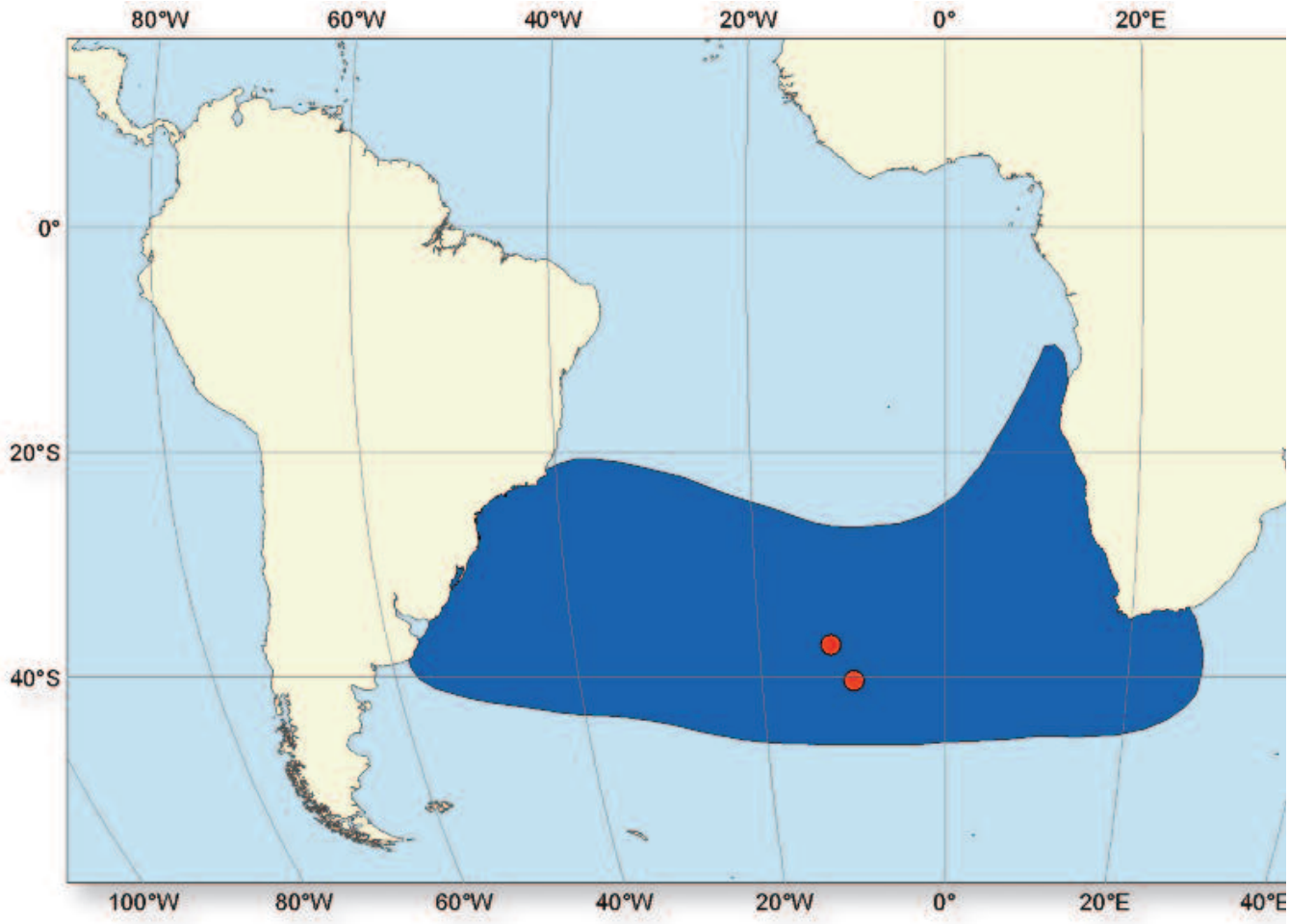
Forty-seven records of Yellow-nosed Albatross have been documented from North America, primarily from the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, from Québec to Texas (Table 1; Figure 9). All previous records of Yellow-nosed Albatross in North America were thought to represent "Atlantic" Yellow-nosed Albatross (Buckley and Schairer 2000, Pranty *et al.* 2008); however, we note that photographs of two Texas records are of "Indian" Yellow-nosed Albatross (28 October 1978, South Padre Island, specimen; 26 September 2003, east of Port Isabel, photos; see http://www. texasbirds.org/tbrc/ynalbatr.htm). The remaining North American records identified to subspecies appear to be "Atlantic" Yellow-nosed Albatross (including an 11 July 1997 record from San Jose Island, Texas). Most North American records, however, do not distinguish between "Atlantic" and "Indian", and further review may reveal additional records of "Indian" Yellow-nosed Albatross in North America.

North American records of Yellow-nosed Albatross show some repeated patterns of occurrence. Most records occur from May to August (36 of 47

records) with eight records for the Gulf of Mexico (Florida, Louisiana, Texas), eight records from eastern Canada (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Québec and Ontario), and 30 records from eastern United States, from North Carolina north to Maine (Table 1; Figure 9).

Many of the Yellow-nosed Albatross records from North America involve birds flying along shorelines and over land, with over one-half of the sightings made by observers on land. Some of these birds flew back and forth over beaches (e.g., Buckley and Schairer 2000, Burgiel *et al.* 2000, Davis 2006, Vazzano 2006, Peterson 2007), while one bird even roosted on a beach (Burgiel *et al.* 2000) and another lingered around a Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus occidentalis*) colony for weeks (Davis 2006). Many birds appeared to be in good health, and several observers suspect the same birds of returning to the same locations in subsequent years (e.g., Perkins 2005, Davis 2006). Richard Veit (cited in Perkins 2005) suggested that North American records of Yellow-nosed Albatross may be increasing, and may represent long-distance dispersal events of birds in search of breeding sites,

Figure 8. Distribution of the "Atlantic" subspecies of Yellow-nosed Albatross (*Thalassarche c. chlororhynchos*). Dark blue indicates distribution at sea. Red dots indicate breeding islands. Map adapted from BirdLife International and NatureServe (2011).



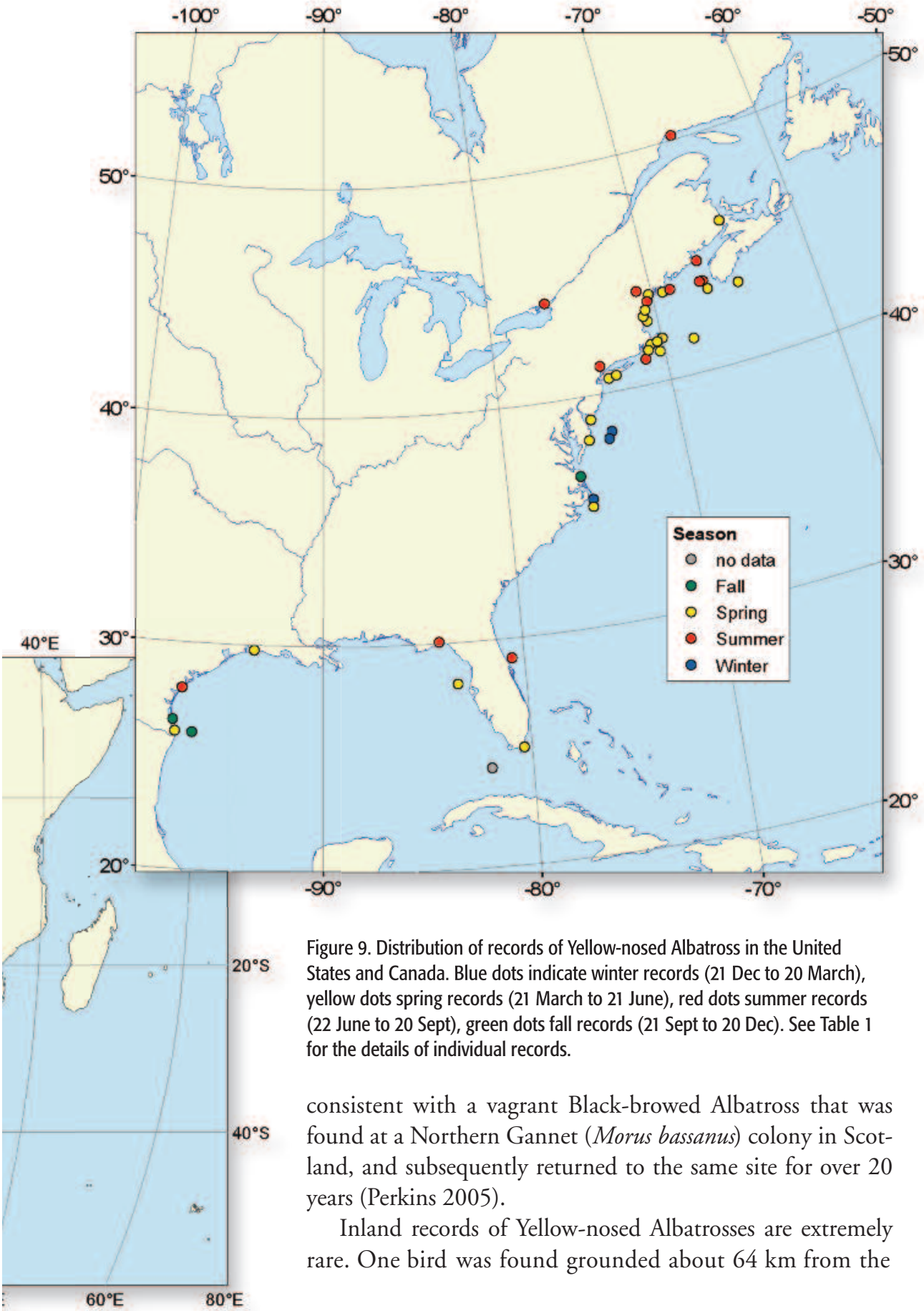


Figure 9. Distribution of records of Yellow-nosed Albatross in the United States and Canada. Blue dots indicate winter records (21 Dec to 20 March), yellow dots spring records (21 March to 21 June), red dots summer records (22 June to 20 Sept), green dots fall records (21 Sept to 20 Dec). See Table 1 for the details of individual records.

consistent with a vagrant Black-browed Albatross that was found at a Northern Gannet (*Morus bassanus*) colony in Scotland, and subsequently returned to the same site for over 20 years (Perkins 2005).

Inland records of Yellow-nosed Albatrosses are extremely rare. One bird was found grounded about 64 km from the

... the "Atlantic" Yellow-nosed Albatross at Kingston represents an amazing example of vagrancy, occurring over 8,000 km away from its normal distribution in the southern hemisphere.

coast in East Fryeburg, Maine, in July 1934 (Norton 1934). One adult was recorded 40 km up the Hudson River in Westchester Co., New York on 10 August 1976 and was associated with Hurricane Bella (Howe and Weissman 1976). Another albatross, believed to be a Yellow-nosed, was observed in Lake Champlain, Essex Co., New York on 8 May 1994, over 200 km from the ocean (accepted by the New York State Avian Records Committee as an albatross spp.; A. Wilson, pers. comm., 2011, Lowe 1996).

Other species of pelagic seabirds have been recorded previously in southeastern Ontario, and thus inland vagrancy of seabirds into this area has precedence. Northern Fulmar (*Fulmarus glacialis;* Dobos 1999), Audubon's Shearwater (*Puffinus lherminieri*; Godfrey 1976), Manx Shearwater (*P. puffinus*; Curry and Di Labio 2008), Band-rumped Storm-Petrel (*Oceanodroma castro*; Taverner 1934), Leach's Storm-Petrel (*O. leucorhoa*; Toner 1940), Northern Gannet (*Morus bassanus*; Dobos 1999), Thick-billed Murre (*Uria lomvia;* Dobos 1997), Dovekie (*Alle alle;* Di Labio 1995a), Long-billed Murrelet (*Brachyramphus perdix*; Di Labio 1996) and Atlantic Puffin (*Fratercula arctica*; Di Labio 1995b) have all occurred in southeastern Ontario. Some of these records were associated with hurricanes and other weather systems (e.g., Leach's Storm-Petrel), but others were not associated with any unusual local weather, similar to the Ontario Yellow-nosed Albatross (e.g., Manx and Audubon's shearwaters, Long-billed Murrelet).

Possible Causes of the "Atlantic" Yellow-nosed Albatross in Kingston

We are not sure what prompted the Kingston bird to stray so far from its usual distribution. A hurricane in the Atlantic Ocean preceded the 4 July sighting, suggesting that the albatross may have been blown north with the storm and continued inland with the subsequent weather front. Hurricane Alex formed as a tropical depression in the western Caribbean Sea on 25 June 2010, and strengthened to a tropical storm on 26 June, reaching land in Belize. Alex then weakened as it moved across the Yucatan Peninsula, but re-emerged over the Bay of Campeche and strengthened to a Category 2 hurricane on 29 June. Hurricane Alex moved northwest, making landfall on 30 June along the north Mexican coast near Texas with maximum sustained winds

of 169 kph (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Climatic Data Center, www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/). The timing of Hurricane Alex fits the arrival of the albatross in Kingston on 4 July. It should be noted, however, that the path of Hurricane Alex did not reach the Great Lakes, and that most birds associated with hurricane displacement generally occur along areas of direct hurricane contact.

Other possible causes of the albatross landing in Kingston include problems with navigation, perhaps resulting from the bird straying far into the northern hemisphere, following fishing vessels (or other ships), or travelling to Kingston while resting or in captivity on a ship. We feel that ship-assistance is unlikely for several reasons. First, albatrosses are pelagic and spend most of their lives on the ocean without need to land on ships like terrestrial birds caught at sea. Indeed, albatrosses are quite awkward on land, and would be unlikely to settle on a ship. Second, albatrosses are renowned for their ability to fly, taking advantage of wind currents to minimize energetic effort (Tickell 2000, Brooke 2004). This tendency to use air currents for movement makes them good candidates for vagrancy associated with storms. Third, the numerous records from North America (Table 1; Figure 9) suggest that Yellow-nosed Albatrosses have a tendency to stray, and such repeated patterns of vagrancy are unlikely to represent repeated cases of ship assistance.

Regardless of how this bird arrived in Ontario, the "Atlantic" Yellow-nosed Albatross at Kingston represents an amazing example of vagrancy, occurring over 8,000 km away from its normal distribution in the southern hemisphere. The Kingston record represents the first of an albatross in Ontario and on the Great Lakes.

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Paul R. Martin, Department of Biology, Queen's University, Kingston, ON K7L 3N6.
E-mail: pm45@queensu.ca

Bruce M. Di Labio, 400 Donald B. Munro Drive, Carp, ON K0A 1L0.
E-mail: bruce.dilabio@sympatico.ca