



Albatross

Facts

What they are

Large seabirds related to petrels.

Height, weight, lifespan, number of offspring

Wingspan: Southern royal albatross: 3m

Lifespan: Southern royal albatross: 42yrs

Weight: Wandering albatross: 7kg

Eggs: 1 (and not every year)

Where they live

They live in the Southern Ocean and the North Pacific.

Food chain

The albatross is at the top of the food chain, and is not threatened by any animal except while nesting (but see threats opposite). It eats fish and squid swimming near the ocean surface.

Threats

Longline fisheries currently pose the greatest threat to albatross as birds are attracted to the bait and become hooked on the lines and drown. Approximately 100,000 albatrosses are killed this way every year, 1/3 of which are caused by illegal and unregulated fishing fleets.

Albatrosses also eat marine debris, mainly plastic, that they mistake for food. Birds are found with bellies full of trash, including cigarette lighters, toothbrushes, syringes, toys, clothespins and every other type of plastic material.

On Midway Atoll, 40 percent of albatross chicks die due to dehydration and starvation from trash filling their bellies providing no nutrition. Albatrosses feed their chicks about 5 tons of plastic a year at Midway Atoll.

Some of the island populations are also threatened by feral cats.

This species is in real danger of extinction because they are unable to breed fast enough to keep up with population declines.