

# The Wandering Albatross



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# Introduction

Welcome to our lesson on the Wandering Albatross. There are many breeds of Albatross but I want to focus just on this one.

The wandering albatross is famous in sailing. When you are sailing in the Southern Ocean, this is the only creature you will see for days on end.

## Did you know?

The Wandering Albatross is the living bird with the greatest wingspan, measuring almost 3.5 m



## **Facts and figures**

**Minimum size:** 80 cm

**Maximum size:** 135 cm

**Average size:** 108 cm

**Breeding season:** Nov to Jan

**Clutch size:** 1

**Incubation:** 56 days

**Time in nest:** 252 days

## **Conservation status**

Federal - Vulnerable

NSW - Vulnerable

NT - Not present

Qld - Not present

SA - Vulnerable

Tas - Endangered

Vic - Critically endangered

WA - Endangered



# Description

The adult Wandering Albatross appears entirely white from a distance. Close up, the fine black wavy lines on the breast, neck and upper back become visible.

The bill can vary in colour, but is normally yellowish-pink. The white tail is occasionally tipped with black and the back of the wing changes from black to white with age.

A series of plumage (feather colors and patterns) phases are passed through as young birds reach full adult plumage, which can take up to nine years. Females are slightly smaller than males.



# Where does it live?

## Distribution:

The Wandering Albatross visits Australian waters from Fremantle, Western Australia to northern New South Wales between June and September each year. At other times birds roam the southern oceans and commonly follow fishing boats for several days.

## Habitat:

Wandering Albatrosses spend most of their life in flight, landing only to breed and feed. Distances travelled each year are hard to measure, but one banded bird was recorded travelling 6000 km in twelve days.





# Feeding

Wandering Albatrosses are often seen scavenging scraps from fishing boats, but squid and fish are the preferred foods. Galley refuse and floating waste also form part of the diet. Feeding is one of the few times that birds land, and this is mostly undertaken at night.



# Breeding

**Pairs of Wandering Albatrosses mate for life and breed every two years.**

**Breeding takes place on subantarctic islands and commences in early November.**

**The nest is a mound of mud and vegetation, and is placed on an exposed ridge near the sea. During the early stages of the chick's development, the parents take turns to sit on the nest while the other searches for food. Later, both adults hunt for food and visit the chick at irregular intervals.**



# Threats

In our first lesson I gave you a statistic that 1 million plus sea birds will die from plastic entanglement or suffocation every year.

The mighty wandering albatross is part of that statistic. With so much plastic in our ocean, the parents dive into the ocean to catch food. Sometimes they pick up plastic and then take it home and feed it to their chicks.

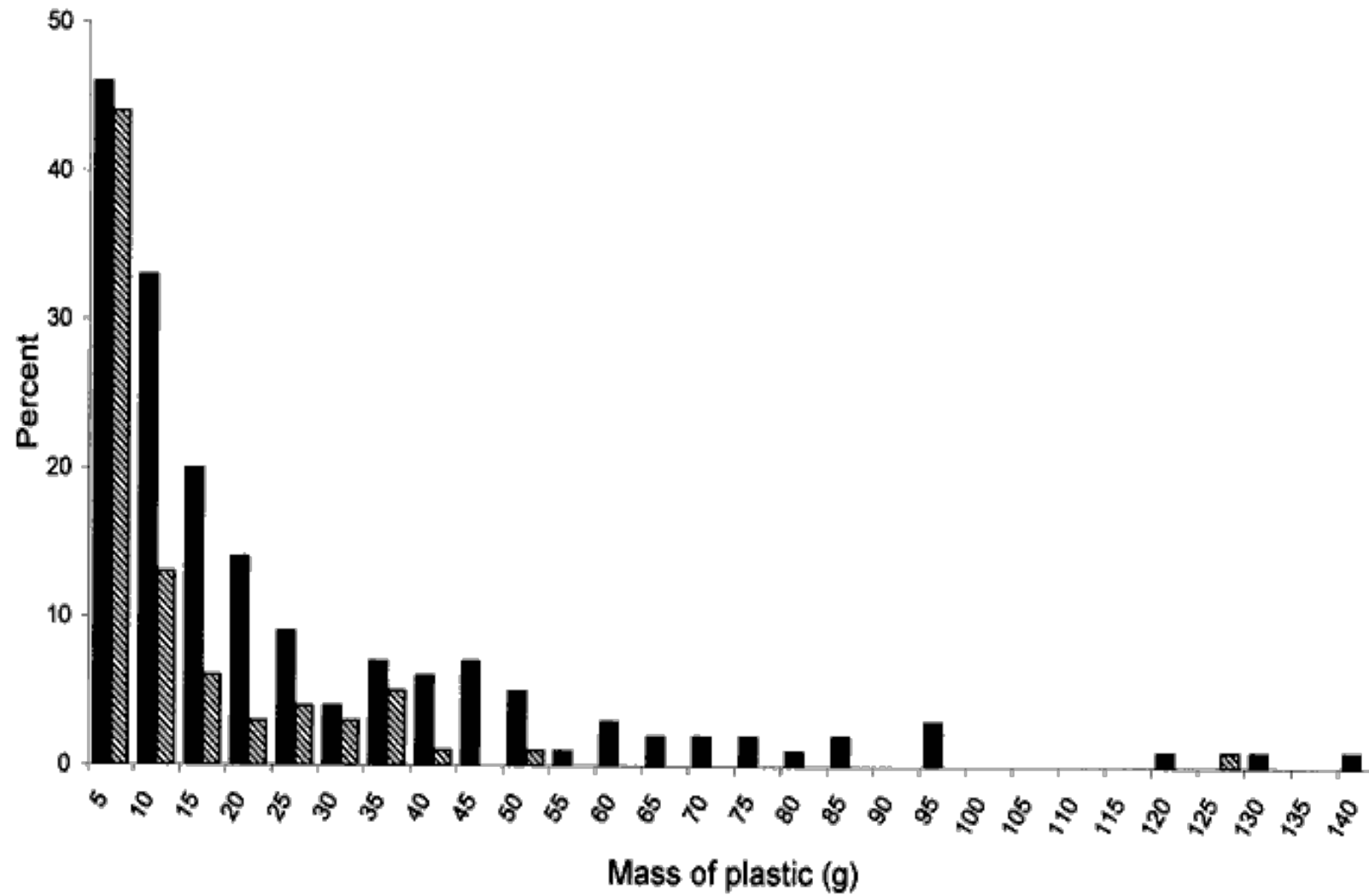
The images below are not very nice. In fact they are unbelievable but for you to get the message of what we are doing to our animals, I decided to show them to you.

Look closely at the images and see if you can tell what they have eaten.





# Size of plastic particles consumed by Albatrosses



**This island is called Pedra Branca and is located south of Tasmania. It has always been a popular breeding ground for the wandering albatross but more recently Gannets (another type of bird) have been moving in.**

**The problem is that the gannets are using marine debris to build their nests and through population expansion are kicking the albatross out. Every year a group of people go down to this island to remove the debris to challenge the gannets to build their nests out of natural products.**



# ENDANGERED

Location	Population	Trend
South Georgia Islands	1,553 pair	Decreasing -4% per year
Prince Edward Islands	1,850 pair	Stable
Marion Island	1,600 pair	Declining
Crozet Island	2,000 pair	Declining
Kerguelen Islands	1,100 pair	Declining
Macquarie Island	10 pair	Almost extinct
<b>TOTAL WORLD-WIDE</b>	<b>26,000 Pair</b>	<b>Decreasing -30% over 70 years</b>

# What can you do

The biggest thing you can do is to say NO TO PLASTIC.

But I'm going to go one step further today. When you see a piece of plastic in the street, in your playground or anywhere it shouldn't be, pick it up and put it in the bin.

Maybe you can organise a clean up at your local beach or playground.

At least that way it won't get washed into the ocean.







A plastic free  
ocean is a safe  
ocean for me  
to feed and  
play in.

