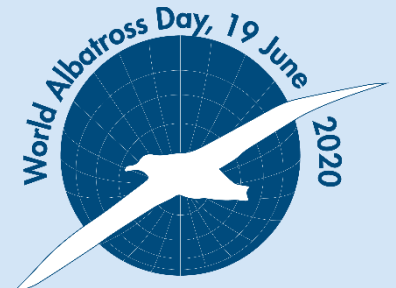


Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross



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Artwork by *Silvia Schmidt* from a photograph by *Michelle Risi*

THE ATLANTIC YELLOW-NOSED ALBATROSS is one of 11 species of 'mollymawk' albatrosses in the genus *Thalassarche*. They, although still big birds by any measure, are noticeably smaller than are the six great *Diomedea* albatrosses – the Atlantic Yellow-nosed is one of the smallest. The mollymawks are largely restricted to the Southern Ocean, breeding on cool-temperate and subantarctic islands.

The Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross is a South Atlantic endemic, breeding only on four islands in the UK's Tristan da Cunha – Gough group. Its closely related 'sister' species, the Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross, breeds in the southern Indian Ocean. The orange-yellow streak along their



upper bills separates the Atlantic and Indian Yellow-nosed Albatrosses from two other mollymawks, Buller's and Grey-headed, which in addition have yellow on their lower mandibles. Separating the two yellow-nosed albatrosses is more difficult, essentially the Atlantic has a greyish head, the Indian a white one.

The Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross has an estimated total breeding population of 26 000 pairs and is thought to be decreasing. However, population surveys are difficult to conduct due to the scattered nature of the bird's breeding, often among and below thick vegetation. The Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross has been most studied on Gough Island, where a long-term study colony of colour-banded birds has been monitored annually since the 1980s, and birds wearing loggers have been followed at sea.

As for the majority of the world's 22 species of albatrosses, the Atlantic Yellow-nosed is considered globally threatened, with a current status of Endangered. This is due to the 'double whammy' of threats at sea from interactions with longline fisheries, and the risks imposed by introduced House Mice on Gough Island, which have turned to attacking both adults and chicks, leading to lowered breeding success. In the past, albatross chicks on the inhabited island of Tristan and nearby Inaccessible and Nightingale Islands were taken for food. These populations are now fully protected, although rumours of poaching occasionally arise. Both Inaccessible and more far-away Gough and their surrounding waters are nature reserves and Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance; together they form a World Heritage natural site. If efforts to eradicate Gough's mice are successful, the species' conservation status will improve, but it will still face threats at sea.

Sources:

ACAP 2012. Atlantic Yellow-nosed Albatross *Thalassarche chlororhynchos*;

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John Cooper, ACAP Information Officer, 6 January 2020