

## ALBATROSSES — FAMILY DIOMEDEIDAE

### Laysan Albatross *Phoebastria immutabilis*

The Laysan is the most numerous of the three species of albatross breeding in the North Pacific (almost entirely on the northwestern Hawaiian Islands). But the bulk of the population forages in the northwest quadrant of the Pacific Ocean, making the species rare off California. In 1986 the Laysan Albatross established a new breeding colony just 210 miles south of San Diego on Guadalupe Island (Dunlap 1988). But the only certain records for San Diego County are of two birds found dead on beaches.

**Migration:** Linda Belluomini found a Laysan Albatross dead and partly decomposed on the beach just north of the Santa Margarita River mouth (G4) 31 March 1983 (SDNHM 42196). Charles Herzfeld found another at Torrey Pines City Beach (O7) 8 March 2000 (SDNHM 50396). The report of a Laysan Albatross found dead at the south end of Blair Valley (L24) 28 May 1982 is plausible, as there are eight well-supported records elsewhere in the Colorado Desert May–July, presumably of birds that wandered north out of the Gulf of California (Patten et al. 2003). But no remains of the albatross in Blair Valley were preserved (AB 36:893, 1982).

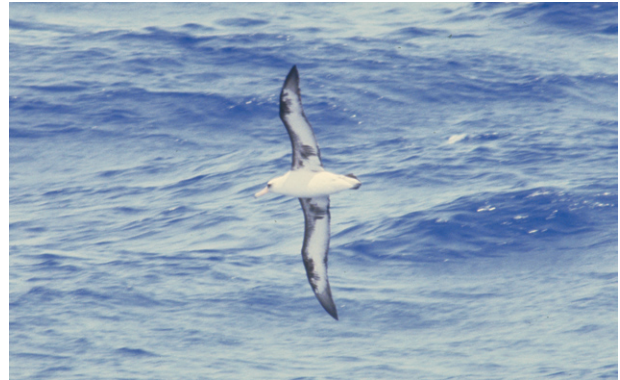


Photo by Philip Unitt

**Conservation:** Although the Laysan Albatross expanded its breeding range in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century by colonizing several islands in the eastern Pacific (Pitman 1988), its recent population trend has been downward. It faces two serious threats: death from swallowing the baited hooks trailed by longline fishing boats and death from swallowing bits of floating plastic trash, accumulating in massive quantities in the North Pacific gyres.