

by Paul Hess

Tracking Seabirds Online

Long-distance tracking of seabirds by satellite telemetry began in the 1980s with pioneering studies of Southern Giant Petrels (*Macronectes giganteus*) on the Antarctic peninsula and Wandering Albatrosses in the southern Indian Ocean. Those projects heralded a revolutionary era in understanding the details of ocean birds' travels—knowledge that otherwise would have been impossible to learn. Since then, researchers have used increasingly sophisticated electronic methods to monitor seabirds' behavior during journeys covering tens of thousands of kilometers of open ocean.

A number of recent projects in North American waters are colorfully reported online, in most cases with maps of individual birds' routes. The following websites are examples:

- Tagging of Pacific Pelagics <toppcensus.org>. Besides the Sooty Shearwater studies covered elsewhere in this installment of News and Notes, TOPP reports on maiden flights of Black-footed Albatross fledglings tagged on Midway Atoll and tracked through wide-ranging movements in the northern Pacific.
- The Albatross Project <wfu.edu/biology/albatross/shorttail/shorttail.htm>, <[shorttail2.htm](http://wfu.edu/biology/albatross/shorttail/shorttail2.htm)>, and <[shorttail3.htm](http://wfu.edu/biology/albatross/shorttail/shorttail3.htm)>. Hosted by Wake Forest University, these three websites include maps depicting the positions of Short-tailed Albatrosses captured at the breeding colony on Japan's Torishima Island and tracked through their post-breeding dispersal as far as the Aleutians. The research is a joint project of the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Oregon State University, and the Yamashina Institute in Japan. Other maps show movements of Laysan, Black-footed, and Short-tailed Albatrosses tagged in the Aleutians.
- Tracking Ocean Wanderers <www.birdlife.org/action/science/species/seabirds/tracking.html>. A remarkably extensive information center developed by BirdLife International, this site includes more than 90 percent of all existing albatross satellite-tracking data for 17 albatross taxa, Northern (*M. halli*) and Southern Giant Petrels, and White-chinned Petrel (*Procellaria aequinoctialis*).
- Oikonos <oikonos.org/projects/albatross.htm>. This conservation organization's website displays research analyzing the time spent in various oceanic foraging regions by 18 Black-footed Albatrosses captured off central California.
- North Pacific Research Board <nprb.org>. Projects funded through the NPRB and described here include a study of interactions between Laysan, Black-footed, and Short-tailed Albatrosses and North Pacific commercial fisheries in Alaskan waters.
- Seaturtle.org <seaturtle.org/tracking>. Maps and information focus on three shearwater tracking projects: 1. Grand Manan Whale and Seabird Station in New Brunswick monitors Greater Shearwaters' feeding locations in the Bay of Fundy, and then tracks the birds' migration routes to their breeding grounds on southern Atlantic islands. 2. Moss Landing Marine Laboratories monitors local foraging movements of Sooty Shearwaters in Monterey Bay, and then tracks their migrations to breeding islands in the southern Pacific. 3. The Pink-footed Shearwater Conservation Collaborative tracks the post-breeding migration of these birds from their breeding colony in the Juan Fernández Archipelago, off Chile, to Baja California. To see these data, enter the species' names in the website's "Animal Finder".