

Laysan Albatross

Phoebastria immutabilis

One of the most marvelous sights in the Pacific ocean is the graceful glide of a Laysan Albatross at play among the winds and waves. These expert soarers can travel hundreds of miles per day with barely a wingbeat. They nest on islands of the tropical Pacific, but they may head out to Japan, the Aleutian Islands, or California to feed. Laysan Albatrosses are numerous, though they face threats from longline fishing, plastic trash in the ocean, and predation by dogs, rats, and cats.

Keys to Identification

Size and Shape

Laysan Albatrosses are very large seabirds (though they are among the smaller albatrosses). They have very long, very narrow wings. The neck is thick and the head is large.

Color Pattern

Laysan Albatrosses are white-headed birds with dark gray-brown upperwings and mostly white underwings (with variable dark markings). The underparts are clean white. They have a dark patch around the eye. In flight, note the dark back, white rump, and dark tail.

Behavior

They fly by dynamic soaring: gliding low over the waves and then wheeling up into the sky to take advantage of the wind. They rarely flap their wings. They feed by sitting on the water, often at night, catching squid and other small prey with their bills.

Habitat

Laysan Albatrosses spend most of their time on the open Pacific Ocean, spanning tropical waters up to the southern Bering Sea. They nest on open, sandy or grassy islands, mostly in the Hawaiian Island chain.

Cool Facts

- Laysan Albatrosses live very long lives. They usually don't start breeding successfully until they are 8 or 9. The oldest known individual was 65 years old, when she was identified in 2016 by the band on her leg while she was at her nest.

Measurements

Male

- Length - 31.1 - 31.9 inches
- Wingspan - 76.8 - 79.9 inches
- Weight - 77.6 - 151.7 ounces

Female

- Weight - 77.6 - 127.0 ounces

