NORTHWARD EXTENSION OF CAMPBELL ALBATROSS *THALASSARCHE IMPAVIDA* IN THE EASTERN SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN

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ABSTRACT

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We report the first confirmed record of Campbell Albatross *Thalassarche impavida* in Peruvian waters, observed on 17 June 2024 at 18°31′S, 072°39′W during an Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)-funded at-sea survey. This sighting occurred approximately 1,650 km north of previous sightings in the Humboldt Current. Two records of the species in Chilean waters, one from March and the other from May 2022, were previously reported. The Chilean sightings occurred within outer shelf and upper slope waters (200–400 m depth), whereas the Peruvian record occurred in waters over the outer continental slope (~4,000 m depth). Multi-species assemblages at each location reflected the latitudinal oceanographic gradient, transitioning from austral migrants in Chilean waters to subtropical and tropical species off Peru. Although no bycatch of this species has been reported in South American fisheries, other albatross species have been caught; therefore, its known attraction to longline vessels and discarded bait represents a latent risk. Enhanced observer coverage in eastern South Pacific longline fisheries between 18°S and 47°S during the austral autumn and winter is recommended to assess fishery interactions and monitor the occurrence of this species and other seabirds in the region.

Key words: Campbell Albatross, *Thalassarche impavida*, eastern South Pacific, Peru, Chile, bycatch, non-breeding distribution

RESUMEN

Reportamos el primer registro confirmado del albatros de Campbell *Thalassarche impavida* en aguas peruanas, observado el 17 de junio de 2024 a los 18°31′S, 72°39′O durante una prospección marina financiada por el Acuerdo para la Conservacion de Albatros y Petreles (ACAP). Este avistamiento se produjo aproximadamente 1.650 km al norte de los registros previos en la Corriente de Humboldt. Con anterioridad se habían reportado dos registros en aguas chilenas (marzo y mayo de 2022). Los avistamientos chilenos ocurrieron en aguas de la plataforma continental exterior y el talud superior (200–400 m de profundidad), mientras que el registro peruano tuvo lugar en aguas sobre el talud continental externo (~4.000 m de profundidad). Los ensamblajes multiespecíficos en cada localidad reflejaron el gradiente oceanográfico latitudinal, con una transición desde migrantes australes en aguas chilenas hacia especies subtropicales y tropicales en Perú. Aunque no se han reportado capturas incidentales de esta especie en las pesquerías sudamericanas, otras especies de albatros sí han sido capturadas; por ello, su conocida atracción hacia embarcaciones palangreras y carnada descartada representa un riesgo latente. Se recomienda incrementar la cobertura de observadores en las pesquerías de palangre del Pacífico sur este, entre los 18° y los 47°S, durante el otoño e invierno australes, para evaluar las interacciones con las pesquerías y monitorear la presencia de esta y otras aves marinas en la región.

Palabras clave: Albatros de Campbell, *Thalassarche impavida*, Pacífico sur este, Perú, Chile, captura incidental, distribución no reproductiva

INTRODUCTION

The Campbell Albatross *Thalassarche impavida* breeds exclusively on Campbell Island (52°33′S, 169°09′E), a sub-Antarctic island ~650 km south of New Zealand, with the most recent population estimated at 21,648 breeding pairs (Sagar, 2014). The species ranges widely across Australasian seas (Waugh, 2013) and, during the breeding season (September/October to April/May), exhibits sexual segregation in foraging areas: females concentrate on the Campbell Plateau and adjacent slope waters, whereas males range farther south into the Southern Ocean, occasionally reaching the outer continental slope of the Ross Sea (Sztukowski, 2016; Waugh, 2013). Thus, the Black-browed Albatrosses *Thalassarche melanophris* observed along the Ross Sea shelf slope by Ainley et al. (1984) were presumably Campbell Albatrosses. Notably, those cruises visited Campbell Island before proceeding south.

Based on global location sensor (GLS) logger data from 86 individuals (2009–2020), adults move northward during the non-breeding period (May–August) into waters of approximately 15 °C. About 70% of tracked individuals occupied the south-eastern Indian Ocean, southern Australian waters, the Tasman Sea, and New Zealand waters between 25°S and 55°S. An additional 27% frequented the central South Pacific Ocean south of 40°S, while only 3% occurred in the eastern South Pacific (east of ~135°W), in the direction of Chilean waters (Thompson et al., 2021). Satellite-tracking data presented at the 19th Session of

the Western Central Pacific Fisheries Commission (WCPFC) indicate that approximately 25% of the post-breeding population frequents two discrete areas off Chile: a primary area between Golfo Coronados (41°40′S) and Golfo de Penas (47°30′S), and a secondary area between Coquimbo (30°S) and San Antonio (33°30′S). Individuals are present in Chilean waters from March through August before returning to New Zealand (Fischer et al., 2024; Thompson et al., 2021).

Field records of Campbell Albatross in Chilean waters are limited to two observations. The first was an adult observed on 19 March 2022, ~22 km off Valparaíso (33°00′S, 071°56′W; Fig. 1; Table 1), associated with a mixed-species assemblage that included Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicanus*, Salvin's Albatrosses *T. salvini*, Black-browed Albatrosses *T. melanophris*, Pink-footed Shearwaters *Ardenna creatopus*, Sooty Shearwaters *A. grisea*, and Peruvian Pelicans *Pelecanus thagus*, among others (eBird, 2022a). The second was an adult recorded on 29 May 2022, 6 km off Punta Hualpén (36°49′S, 073°16′W; Fig. 2, Table 1; Barros & Red de Observadores de Aves, 2022), in an assemblage that additionally included Southern Fulmars *Fulmarus glacialoides*, Brown-hooded Gulls *Chroicocephalus maculipennis*, and Northern Giant Petrels *Macronectes halli* (eBird, 2022b).



Fig. 1. Campbell Albatross *Thalassarche impavida* observed on 19 March 2022, ~22 km off Valparaiso, central Chile. Photo credit: Sandra Machmar

TABLE 1
Records of Campbell Albatrosses *Thalassarche impavida* in waters off Chile and Peru

Latitude	Longitude	Date	Distance to coast (km)	Depth (m)	Habitat
33°00'S	071°56'W	19 March 2022	22	~200	Continental Shelf
36°49'S	073°16'W	29 May 2022	6	~400	Upper Slope
18°31'S	072°39'W	17 July 2024	95	~4,000	Lower Slope

OBSERVATION

During an Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP)-funded at-sea survey in southern Peruvian waters, a single Campbell Albatross was observed on 17 June 2024 at 18°31′S, 072°39′W, ~95 km south-west of the port of Ilo. The bird was interacting with hauling operations of an artisanal longline vessel (Fig. 3; Table 1), apparently attempting to feed on discarded Chub Mackerel *Scomber japonicus peruanus* bait. It occurred within a multi-species assemblage comprising four Black-browed Albatrosses, two Northern Buller's Albatrosses *T. bulleri platei*, 15 White-chinned Petrels *Procellaria aequinoctialis*, one Waved Albatross *Phoebastria irrorata*, and 15 Elliot's Storm Petrels *Oceanites gracilis*. This record constitutes the first confirmed occurrence of the species in Peruvian waters, some 1,650 km north of the Chilean sightings (Fig. 4). Although firm conclusions cannot



Fig. 2. Campbell Albatross *Thalassarche impavida* observed on 29 May 2022, 6 km off Hualpen Peninsula, south–central Chile. Photo credit: Herderd Torres



Fig. 3. Campbell Albatross *Thalassarche impavida* observed on 17 July 2024, ~95 km off Ilo, southern Peru. Photo credit: Javier Quiñones

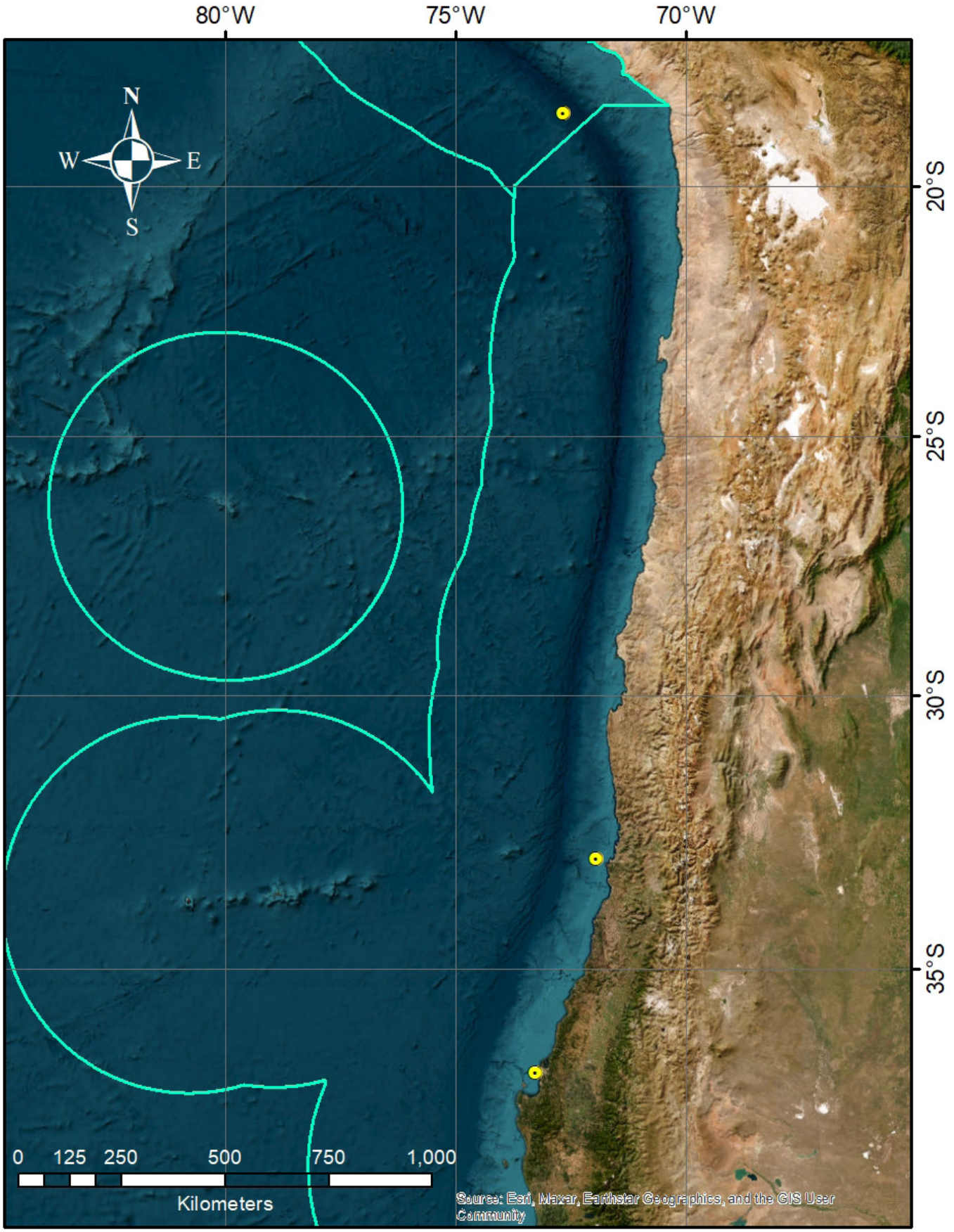

Fig. 4. Yellow circles represent the three sightings of Campbell Albatross *Thalassarche impavida*. The turquoise line represents the boundaries of Peruvian (northernmost) and Chilean exclusive economic zones. The Peruvian sighting is > 1,600 km north of the northernmost Chilean sighting.

be drawn from three sightings alone, assemblage composition was consistent with the spatial occurrence patterns of seabirds in the Peru Current (Spear et al., 2003; Spear & Ainley, 2008).

DISCUSSION

Bycatch in longline fisheries constitutes a primary threat to Campbell Albatrosses throughout their range (Gales, 1993). The species was split from Black-browed Albatross as recently as 1998, complicating early bycatch assessments. Re-examination of specimens from southern Australian and Tasmanian waters (1989–1995) revealed that 52% of birds initially attributed to Black-browed Albatross were in fact Campbell Albatrosses, yielding an estimated annual mortality of 780 individuals (Gales et al., 1998). More recently, extrapolation from 52 documented mortalities in the WCPFC Convention Area in 2019, based on 4.6% observer coverage, suggests that annual mortality in that region may exceed 1,000 individuals (Thompson et al., 2021; WCPFC, 2020). No published bycatch records currently exist for Campbell Albatross in Chilean or Peruvian fisheries (Suazo et al., 2014). However, the observation of this species associated with a fishing vessel during hauling operations indicates a latent bycatch risk in South American waters.

CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL REMARKS

The first documented record of Campbell Albatross in Peruvian waters was ~1,650 km north of two previous sightings in the eastern South Pacific and reinforces the importance of monitoring seabird distributions beyond their known core areas. It is possible that these sightings do not represent vagrant birds, as other albatross and petrel species that nest in New Zealand visit the Peru Current during their non-breeding season (Quiñones et al., 2021; Spear et al., 2003, 2005; Spear & Ainley, 2008).

Enhanced observer coverage in longline fisheries operating between 18°S and 47°S during the austral autumn and winter, coupled with targeted capacity-building for accurate seabird identification at sea, is strongly encouraged. This photographic documentation provides a baseline for future monitoring and underscores the value of collaborative seabird research across the Pacific basin for the conservation of wide-ranging pelagic species.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: JQ. Data curation: JQ. Formal analysis: JQ. Funding acquisition: JQ. Investigation: JQ, CAM. Methodology: JQ. Visualization: JQ. CAM. Writing—original draft: JQ. Writing—review & editing: JQ, CAM.

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ETHICS STATEMENT

This study was based entirely on observational records of free-flying seabirds at sea. No birds were captured, handled, or disturbed, and no eggs or nests were accessed. Ethical approval and animal care committee certification were therefore not required.

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