

Albatross Dress-up Challenge

Ever wanted to fly... or soar the southern ocean like an albatross? This activity will help you transform yourself into a bird that can survive life at sea. Albatross spend most of their time at sea (over 80%) and gather all their food there. They can fly an average of 500 km/day and travel at speeds of 100 – 120 km/hr. They only come to land to breed.

Use the questions below to brainstorm your ideas for your costume. Think about what features are common to all birds and what features are unique to seabirds.

Once your costume is complete, get a family member to photograph you in your costume and send to us at education@albatross.org.nz. Remember to give yourself a name and we will share on the Royal Albatross Centre web site and social media.

This is just one of the many educational activities you will find on the Albatross web site <https://albatross.org.nz/education/educational-resources/>

Features of an Albatross!

- 1. Bill / beak** – download this [mask](#) to get you started with your costume.
 - The hooked shape helps to catch food. You could add serrated edges to hold slippery fish or squid
 - Adults have a yellowish bill, but while breeding it turns pink. Juveniles bills are lighter, straw coloured
 - Males have a slightly bigger bill – so reduce the size of your bill if you are a female
- 2. Tubenose** – The large external nostrils to help them find other birds, good feeding grounds, breeding areas, and nest sites by smell. They're also used for breathing and excreting salt!
- 3. Salt Gland** – these glands (located above the eyes) remove excess salt allowing albatross to drink seawater and eat salty food.
 - Salty liquid flows out the nostrils and down along the groove in the bill where it drips off the end giving the bird the appearance of having a runny nose.
- 4. Wings** – Albatross have long, narrow wings that are 1.5m each in length. Find a measuring tape or ruler and fold up newspapers to make these.
 - Wing span of up to 3 m for effortless soaring and gliding on sea surface winds
 - They can fly long distances – sometimes up to 1000km in a day!
 - Compare their wings to other birds (e.g. gulls have flapping flight, penguins fly underwater)
- 5. Feathers** – download this [feather](#) which is the life size of a real albatross flight feather!
 - White with black on upper part of wing (colouration same in male and female)
 - Important for warmth (waterproof) and flight
 - Replaced once a year (moulting) during winter at sea
 - Feathers are of high spiritual value to the Maori – a symbol of peace

6. **Preen Gland** - this oil gland is found just above the base of the tail/spine.
 - The oil keep feathers clean, flexible and waterproof
 - Oil spread to feathers by bill (can you reach the preen gland with your bill?)
 - This is good oil, however oil from oil tankers is bad for seabirds – why?

7. **Feet** - Spread your hand as far as you can and draw around your hand to make the webbed feet of an albatross – look how huge their feet are!
 - Albatross only have three toes, so link fingers to create the three toes before you draw around your hand
 - When flying their feet are tucked up next to body. How are they used when on the water, or on land?

8. **Eyes** – Located on either side of the head, they provide a wide field of view.
 - The clear eyelid (like goggles) to protect them from wind and salt spray
 - Small eye protects them from bright light at sea

9. **Identification Tags** - Coloured bands on left leg give each bird an identity.
 - OWG = orange, white, green - read from top down
 - Silver number ring on right leg has personal ID number and address of National Museum

Other things to features to consider

- Ears (covered by feathers to protect from the wind)
- Large size (about 8 kg)
- Favourite food is squid and octopus – draw one of these to add to the costume

Wrap Up

Compare your albatross to the birds in the garden. How are they similar? How are they different?

