



Photo by A. Corso

Week 5 Dichotomous Identification Key Common seabirds of the Western Antarctic Peninsula

Always start with the first question, Q1. In this case, the questions are worded as statements. Choose the statement that best describes the bird in the photo, and then follow the instructions which will tell you which Question to go to next. Don't worry if that means you skip over a question – just follow the directions and you will get to an identification when you are done. Good luck!

Question 1 (Q1)

1a – Each wing on the bird is as long (or longer) than the body.....Go to Q2

1b – Each wing is half the length of the bird's body. The wings appear flipper-like.....Go to Q4

Q2

2a – The wings and body are dark brown colored with single white patches on the outer portions of the wing.....**Answer=*Stercorarius* spp. (skuas)**

2b – The wings are not brown with outer white patches.....Go to Q3

Q3

3a – The bird's bill (or beak) is much longer than its head. Overall large size, with each wing nearly twice as long as its body.....Go to Q5

3b – The bird's bill is the same size or smaller than its head. A small tube on top of the bill may be present, but not always.....Go to Q6

Q4

4a – The bird has a black band around its face that looks like a chinstrap.....**Answer=*Pygoscelis antarcticus* (chinstrap penguin)**

4b – The bird's bill is orange and there is a white patch on its head.....**Answer=*Pygoscelis papua* (gentoo penguin)**

4c – The bird has an entirely black head and black bill.....**Answer=*Pygoscelis adeliae* (Adélie penguin)**

Q5

5a – Almost entirely white body with wings mostly black on top and white underneath. Pink bill and a peach colored patch on the neck behind the head.....**Answer=*Diomedea exulans* (wandering albatross)**

5b – Black wings and tail with a white body. Distinctive black streak across the eye.....**Answer=*Thalassarche melanophris* (black-browed albatross)**

5c – The entire body is light grey with a black head.....**Answer=*Phoebastria palpebrata* (light-mantled sooty albatross)**

Q6

6a – Top of the bird has a semi-circular stripe that resembles the letter “C”, with the opening of the “C” facing the bird’s head.....**Answer=*Pachyptila* spp. (prions)**

6b – The bird is lacking the semi-circular stripe.....Go to Q7

Q7

7a – A light grey body with a black cap on the top of its head.....Go to Q8

7b – There is no black cap on head.....Go to Q9

Q8

8a – A grey body and a black cap on the top of its head. It has long tail feathers and its wingtips are black.....**Answer=*Sterna paradisaea* (Arctic tern)**

8b – A grey body and a black cap on the top of its head. It has long tail feathers and its wingtips are white.....**Answer=*Sterna vittata* (Antarctic tern)**

Q9

9a – The body and wings are entirely white.....Go to Q11

9b – There are other markings or colors on the body and wings.....Go to Q10

Q10

10a – A whitish head and neck region and a grey body. These birds are relatively large and also have long bills.....**Answer=*Macronectes* spp. (giant petrels)**

10b – The head is not white.....Go to Q12

Q11

11a – The body is short and round. Feathers missing around the bird’s bill. These birds are most often observed near land

.....**Answer=*Chionis albus* (snowy sheathbill)**

11b – The body is longer and more hawk-like. The bill is dark black. These birds are most often observed near sea ice

.....**Answer=*Pagodroma nivea* (snow petrel)**

Q12

12a - A grey body, with a light white stripe on each wing. A large white patch surrounding the upper tail feathers, the lower tail feathers are dark grey.....
.....**Answer=Oceanites oceanicus (Wilson's storm petrel)**

12c – The body is not entirely grey.....Go to Q13

Q13

13a – The top of the body is dark grey and the stomach is white. A horizontal white stripe runs the length of the wing
.....**Answer=Thalassoica antarctica (Antarctic petrel)**

13b – The top of the body is dark grey and the stomach is white. There are multiple white spots on the wings. Tail feathers are white with small grey dots.....
.....**Answer=Daption capense (cape petrel)**

BONUS: Can you identify the two species of birds in this photo?



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