



Pelagic Birds

[Source: DTE](#)

Why in News?

Bird enthusiasts were able to **document rare 'pelagic' birds** throughout 2023 just off the Karnataka coast.

- Besides pelagic birds, Karnataka has drawn attention to **land-based species**, with the **New Mangalore Port (NMP)** transforming into a [green port](#), fostering avian diversity.



What are the Key Facts About Pelagic Birds?

- **About:**
 - Pelagic birds are birds that spend a **large portion of their lives on the open ocean.**
 - They can be found thousands of miles offshore but can get blown onto land during high winds and storms. The only other time they come inland is to breed.

▪ **Features:**

- These birds vary greatly in size and description from each other, but they all live on **open water, dive for food, and are excellent swimmers.**
- Pelagic birds possess **remarkably long, slender wings** enabling extended flights without rest.
 - Some can stay airborne for days or weeks, even sleeping during flight.
- These birds feature a unique **salt gland that extracts salt from seawater, preventing its accumulation to toxic levels.**
- They feed on planktonic crustaceans (related to shrimp and crabs), and squid and hunt fish far from land.

▪ **Examples:**

- One of the better-known pelagic birds is the **Laysan Albatross**, which breeds almost exclusively on the Hawaiian islands but roams the nutrient-rich waters of the Pacific to feed.
 - Pelagic birds also include **Sooty Shearwater, Brown Skua, Brown Booby, Streaked Shearwater** and Masked Booby, Pomarine Skua, Arctic skua, Long-tailed skua, Swinhoe's storm-petrel, Wilson's storm-petrel, and other oceanic wanderers.

▪ **Threats:**

- Human activities pose threats to birds, including those in remote open oceans.
- Seabirds, globally, face significant threats, with issues arising both from terrestrial nesting grounds and oceanic factors.
 - **Oil spills, climate change-induced alterations** to prey availability, and fishing nets contribute to the challenges.
- The decrease in pelagic bird density is attributed to a decline in fish populations, possibly influenced by factors such as **sea rains** pushing fish to deeper waters.
- **Plastic pollution** is a major concern for pelagic birds, as plastics persist in oceans, breaking into smaller pieces.
 - Birds often mistake plastic fragments for prey, leading to ingestion and associated health risks.