

Light-mantled Albatross

July 28, 2022

In news– Bird researchers have recently recorded sightings of a light-mantled albatross (*Phoebetria palpebrata*) in Tamil Nadu's Rameswaram.

About the sighting-

- The location where the Albatross was spotted is **part of the Palk Bay and near to the Gulf of Mannar Marine National Park**, an 'Important Bird Area' on India's southeast coast.
- The bird was also **spotted on Anthoniyarpuram Beach, an important spot for birds in the Gulf of Mannar region**, on September 8, 2020.
- **And it was for the first time that the bird – a native of Antarctica – was being spotted in the Asian continent, according to the researchers.**
- Sighting of this bird had not been previously recorded in either Southern Asia or Oriental region. It still remains a mystery how this large pelagic bird reached Rameswaram.
- Earlier in June 2022, the duo recorded Arctic skua, also known as Parasitic jaeger, in Dhanushkodi, another rare species for the region, though it was a third spotting in Tamil Nadu.

About the bird-

- The light-mantled albatross **also known as the grey-mantled albatross or the light-mantled sooty albatross**, is **a small albatross in the genus Phoebetria**, which it shares with the sooty albatross.
- The light-mantled albatross is largely sooty-brown or blackish, darker on the head, with paler upperparts from the nape to the upper tail-coverts which are grey to

light grey, the palest on the mantle and back.

- These birds are **common in Antarctic seas**. They maintain a circumpolar distribution in the Southern Ocean, mainly south of the sub-Antarctic convergence.
- They breed on several sub-Antarctic islands and forage over cold Antarctic waters.
- **They have a loud shrill voice that is trumpet-like**, and when threatened will snap their bills or utilize a throaty “gaaaa”. When courting, they will utilize aerial displays and formation flying.
- Light-mantled albatrosses share **some identifying features with other Procellariiformes**.
- They **have nasal tubes on the upper bill called naricorns**, though with albatrosses these are on the sides of the upper mandible rather than the top.
- They also **have a salt gland above the nasal passage** which excretes a concentrated saline solution to maintain osmotic balance, due to the amount of seawater imbibed.
- The bills of the Procellariiformes are unique in that they are covered with from seven to nine horny plates.
- **These birds produce a stomach oil made up of wax esters and triglycerides that is stored in the proventriculus. This can be sprayed out of their mouths as a defence against predators** as well as an energy rich food source for chicks and for the adults during their long flights.
- It has a worldwide population of 21,600 breeding pairs, according to an estimate in 1998.
- The bird is listed as **‘near threatened’ on the IUCN Red List**.