



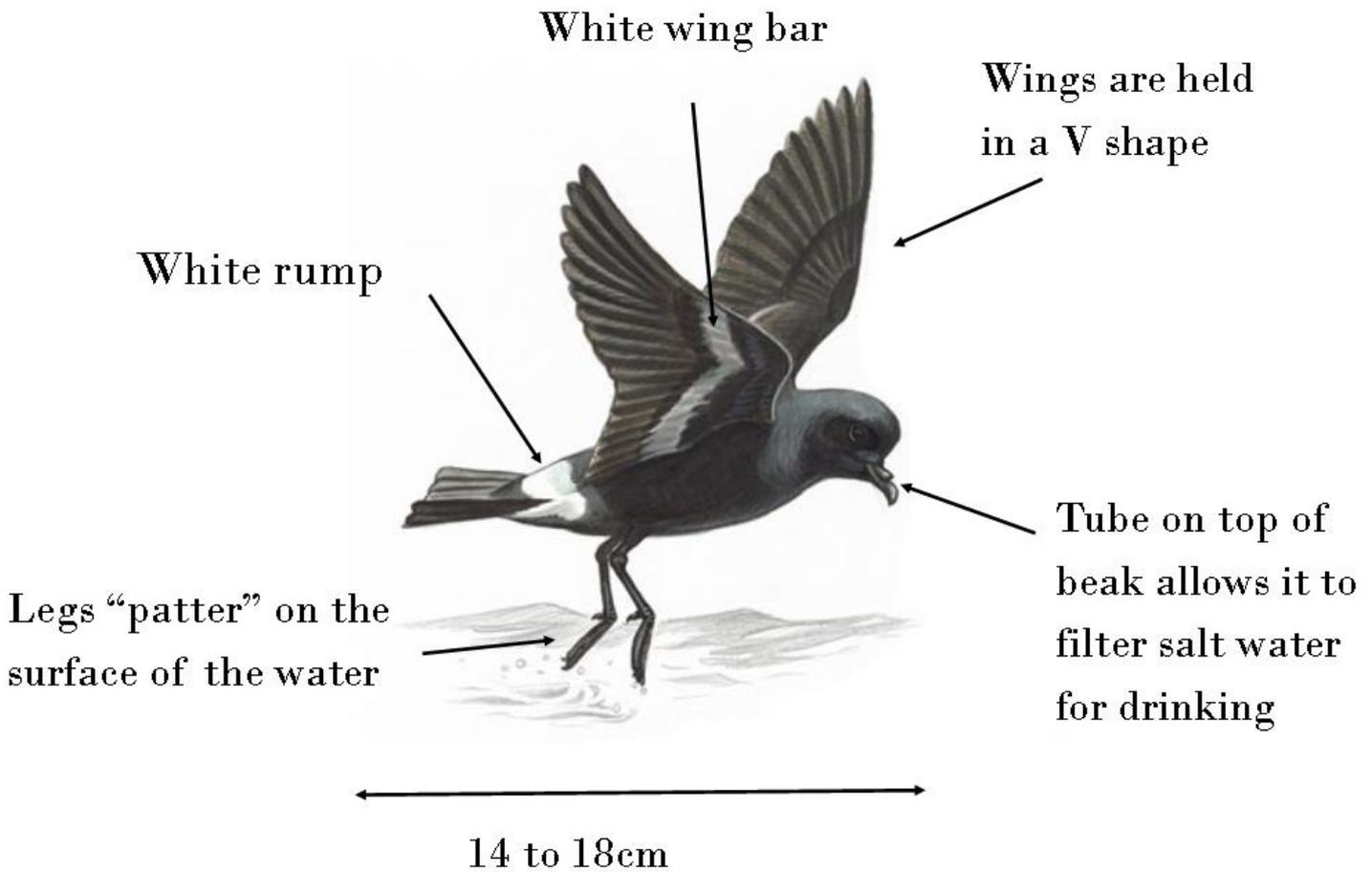
Storm Petrels

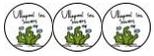
Hydrobates Pelagicus

Storm petrels are small seabirds related to albatrosses. They live out on the open ocean and are very difficult to study. They were named storm petrels by sailors who saw them out in horribly stormy weather, and believed them to be the harbingers of storms.



This is what a storm petrel looks like:





Diet

Storm Petrels feed off the surface of the water, picking out small fish and plankton.

Population

4% of the world's population breeds in Scotland; roughly 25000 pairs. They can live to be up to 20 years old.



Breeding

They breed on small islands, in rocky crevices or burrows. Both sexes incubate the egg, which hatches after 40 days. The chick is completely reliant on its parents, as it is born blind with a silvery down coat.

Main threats

They are vulnerable to introduced mammals such as rats and feral cats when they are nesting. Islands infested with rats have often been abandoned. They are also eaten by gulls and skuas, but this does not seem to have had such an extreme effect. They can also pick up pieces of plastic when they are feeding, especially if they are feeding off rubbish dumps from ships.





Surveying

They can be surveyed by playing a recording when they are in their burrows, and listening for a response, or by ringing. Birds for ringing are captured in tall nets called mist nets when they are coming in to feed chicks or to breed.



Where to see one

You are unlikely to see a storm petrel as they are normally far out at sea. However, lots do breed on one of the islands near Ullapool, which the RSPB own and run a ringing scheme every year.





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www.ullapoolseasavers.com

