



The Dance

When young albatrosses *fledge* (develop wing feathers large enough for flight), they soar over the Pacific Ocean for four years or more. Then, they return to the island of their birth to meet other albatrosses and practice their dance. Dancing and vocalizations are very important to these birds; albatrosses choose mates for life by dancing together, though it takes a few years of practice to learn how to dance correctly and find a mate.

After they mate, albatrosses still spend most of their lives alone over the ocean. They return to land in late fall every year, arriving at the same place as their mate at almost the same time.

When I returned to the island for the first time, there were albatrosses all around, some sitting on nests, some dancing, wailing, grunting, and bill-clacking. I had seen dancing when I was a youngster, so I joined a group of other young albatrosses. Together we stumbled through the movements and sounds. It would take more practice to do all the right moves.

– Mālie

