The albatross is a large to very large seabird with long, slender wings, with a spread of over 350 centimetres, exceeding every other bird species.

With a weight of up to 12 kilograms, the albatross is one of the heaviest birds capable of flight. The webs between its toes enable the bird to stay in the water even during strong sea conditions. The majority of species live above the oceans of the southern hemisphere, the Galapagos-albatross being the only tropical species.

Land is only frequented for breeding. Albatrosses are known as good flyers, but also for having great difficulty with takeoff and landing. Takeoff and landing on the water cause less difficulty.

In breeding colonies there are common runways, on which nest-building is avoided. Even though the movement of their huge wings wears them out quickly, albatrosses can cover great distances. They use the technique of dynamic gliding for this. If wind speed is less than 12 km/h, albatrosses are unable to takeoff and have to remain on land or in the water. On the other hand they can manoeuvre even in storms. Albatrosses eat cuttlefish for the most part. Other food sources are small fishes, shellfish and seldom jellyfish and carrion.

Albatrosses have an extraordinarily long reproduction cycle. For larger species, one year passes between nest-building and the squabs' independence, so breeding is only possible every other year. Few species breed yearly. Large species breed for the first time at the age of 10 or 11. The highest detected age was 58 years in a King-albatross.