

Seabirds

'Ou or Bulwer's Petrel

Bulweria bulwerii

SPECIES STATUS:

State recognized as indigenous
Moderate Concern – NAWCP
Hawai'i Natural Heritage Ranking G4-Apparently secure

SPECIES INFORMATION:

The Bulwer's Petrel is sooty brown with long and pointed wings, black bill, pale short legs, and a long, wedge-shaped tail. It flies in a batlike manner and is rarely observed flying over land during the day. The Bulwer's Petrel is a relatively long-lived seabird, with the oldest banded bird recovered at 24 years old. This species spends less than 6 months each year in breeding colonies, spending the remaining time at sea. Breeding season in the Hawaiian Islands is between the months of April and September. It lays a single white egg per season in rock ledges or crevices, in human-made or natural cavities, or in the burrows of other species. Based on limited banding and recapture data, it is thought that breeders return to their natal colony. During breeding season, adults come to nesting grounds at dusk and fly straight into the burrow, leaving at dawn the next day. During the nonbreeding season, the Bulwer's Petrel migrates to areas of rich nutrient upwellings. At sea, it flies close to the water, seizing food at the surface. They are not known to follow ships.

DISTRIBUTION:

Nests in the main Hawaiian islands on offshore islets (Hulu, Kaeoi, Kaohikaipu, Kapapa, Kaula, Lehua, Manana, Moke'ehia, Mokolea Rock, Moku Lua, Moku Manu, Mokuho'oniki, Molokini, and Popoi'a), in the Northwest Hawaiian Islands (Pearl and Hermes Reef, Lisianski Island, Laysan Island, Gardner Pinnacles, French Frigate Shoals, Necker Island and Nihoa Island) and on a few other islands in the North and South Pacific, eastern North Atlantic, and Indian oceans.

ABUNDANCE:

The worldwide population is unknown, but the population in the Pacific is estimated at over 100,000 pairs. The estimated population in the Main Hawaiian Islands is 500 to 1,000 pairs, and at 75,000 to 103,000 pairs in the NWHI, with most birds found at Nihoa (75,000 to 100,000 pairs), the largest known breeding colony in the world. Other small colonies are found on Laysan (1,000 – 2,000 pairs), French Frigate Shoals (200 – 500 pairs), and Necker (250 – 500 pairs).

LOCATION and CONDITION OF KEY HABITAT:

Terrestrial: The Bulwer's Petrel nests under cover in crevices, caves, rock and coral rubble, under vegetation, and in man-made structures. **Marine:** pelagic

THREATS:

- Introduced predators (rats);

- Introduced species (ants) predation of eggs;
- Vulnerable due to extreme concentration of species at one colony (Nihoa)

CONSERVATION ACTIONS:

- Eradication and control of rats at current and potential nesting sites;
- Continued protection and management of existing wildlife sanctuaries and refuges;
- Improve habitat at other locations to reduce species vulnerability

MONITORING:

RESEARCH PRIORITIES:

- all aspects of its life history, primarily distribution and status of the colonies of the Hawaiian Islands and impact of marine debris on health.

References:

Division of Forestry and Wildlife. Undated. Fact Sheet on Bulwer's Petrel. Available by request from the Department of Land and Natural Resources Division of Forestry and Wildlife, Honolulu, HI.

Hawaii Natural Heritage Program, University of Hawaii, Center for Conservation Research and Training, 2050 Maile Way, Gilmore 406, Honolulu, HI 96822.

James A. Kushlan, et al., 2002. Waterbird Conservation for the Americas: The North American Waterbird Conservation Plan, Version 1 ("NAWCP"). Waterbird Conservation for the Americas, Washington, DC, U.S.A. 78pp. available at www.waterbirdconservation.org.

Megyesi, J.L. and D.L. O'Daniel. 1997. Bulwer's Petrel (*Bulweria bulwerii*). In The Birds of North America, No. 281 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds.). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA, and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2005. Regional Seabird Conservation Plan, Pacific Region. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Migratory Birds and Habitat Programs, Pacific Region, Portland, Oregon.