

Photo of Sooty Tern



Seabirds

**'Ewa'ewa or
Sooty Tern**

Sterna fuscata

SPECIES STATUS:

State recognized as indigenous

SPECIES INFORMATION: Breeding adults remain close to colonies, which are often dense and consist of several subcolonies breeding synchronously. Both adults participate in incubation and feeding. Sexual maturity is reached around 4-10 years. Feed primarily by aerial-dipping and capture as well as plunge-diving. Diet consists of squid, goatfish, flyingfish and mackerel scad.

DISTRIBUTION: Currently, breeding pairs are found in the NWHI.

Map of Sooty Tern distribution



ABUNDANCE: Estimated populations in Hawai'i ? The largest populations occur at Lisianski and Laysan with 500,000 pairs each.

LOCATION AND CONDITION OF KEY HABITAT: Nest on oceanic islands and atolls, usually on the ground in sandy substrates with sparse vegetation. Most habitat is protected through wildlife refuge designations.

THREATS: Natural threats include El Nino-Southern Oscillation conditions that can cause breeding failure as well as predation of eggs and chicks by Cattle Egrets, Great Frigatebirds, Black-crowned Night Herons, Ruddy Turnstone, and Laysan Finches. Introduced predators such as rats and cats have a high impact on populations. They are also highly susceptible to oil pollution. Over-fishing of tuna may also reduce food availability and affect populations.

CONSERVATION ACTIONS: The goals of conservation actions are to not only protect current populations, but to also establish further populations to reduce the risk of extinction. In addition to common state-wide and island conservation actions, specific actions include:

- Eradicate mammalian predators from current and potential habitats;

MONITORING:

- Continue surveys of population and distribution in known and likely habitats;
- Survey for presence of mammalian predators and ungulates;

RESEARCH PRIORITIES:

- Impact of tuna fishing on food availability;
- Better understanding of actors limited populations;

References:

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.

Schreiber, E.A. et al. 2002. Sooty Tern (*Sterna fuscata*). In the Birds of North America, No. 665 (A. Poole and F. Gill, eds). The Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia, PA and The American Ornithologists' Union, Washington, D.C.