



Pink-footed Shearwater

Photo: © David Fraser



Scientific name
Ardenna creatopus

Taxon
Birds

COSEWIC Status
Endangered

Canadian range
British Columbia, Pacific Ocean

Reason for Designation

This long-lived seabird nests on only three islands off the coast of Chile, where it has suffered significant declines due to nest predation by introduced predators, exploitation by humans and habitat degradation. It also experiences mortality due to incidental take by fisheries across its range, including important foraging areas off the coast of British Columbia. Bycatch risk from fisheries has increased over the last three generations. This species is also sensitive to offshore oil spills.

Wildlife Species Description and Significance

The Pink-footed Shearwater is a stocky seabird about the size of a medium gull. In flight individuals appear heavy, with laboured wingbeats alternating with glides. It is distinguished from other North Pacific shearwaters by a combination of greyish-brown plumage above, variably mottled pale grey underparts with white wing linings, and a dusky head. The plumage of adult and juvenile birds is alike and there are no seasonal differences, although males are larger than females on average. Its pinkish-yellow, dusky-tipped bill and pink legs and feet are

distinctive. The Pink-footed Shearwater is a globally threatened species that is known to breed at only three sites worldwide.



Photo: © Ben Lascelles

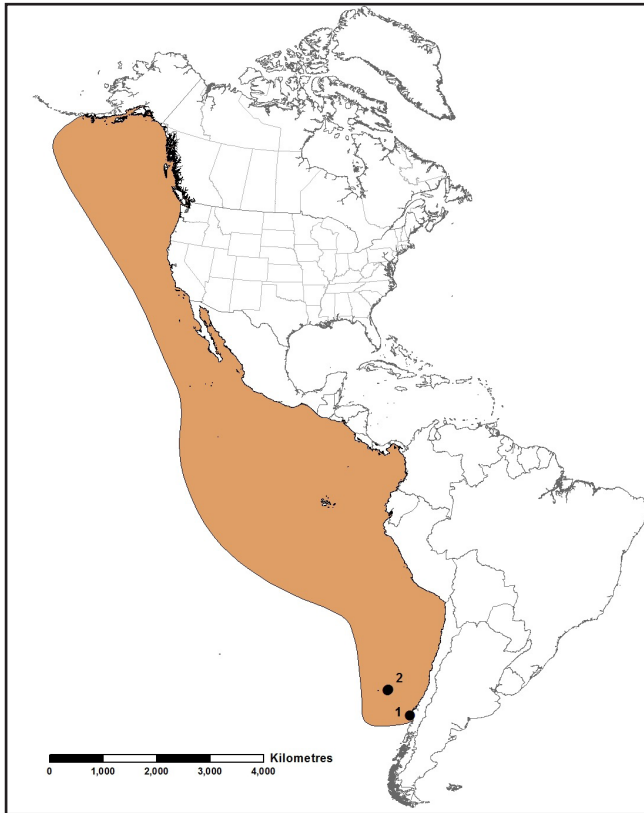
Ventral view of a Pink-footed Shearwater, showing the mottled pale grey underparts, and white wing linings.

Distribution

The Pink-footed Shearwater is known to breed on three islands off the coast of Chile: Mocha, Robinson Crusoe, and Santa Clara islands. At sea, the Pink-footed Shearwater primarily occupies waters of the continental slope, shelf-break, and shelf of the eastern Pacific. Its range extends from its breeding islands north along the coast of South and North America to the Gulf of Alaska and the southern Bering Sea, but only a few individuals occur north of Haida Gwaii. In Canada, the Pink-footed Shearwater occurs exclusively off the coast of British Columbia, with observations concentrated off the west coast of Vancouver Island, the entrance of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and in Queen Charlotte Sound. Numbers in Canada peak from June to October.

Habitat

Pink-footed Shearwaters nest in burrows that they excavate in the soil of their breeding colonies. On Mocha Island, burrows are located in dense native forest along the seaward sides of upper slopes and ridgetops, while on Robinson Crusoe and Santa Clara islands, nests are located in remnant native forests or open terrain with grassy vegetation or bare soils. In the marine environment, Pink-footed Shearwaters display a preference for biologically productive waters associated with the continental slope, shelf and shelf-break.



Global distribution of the Pink-footed Shearwater (to the east of line), based on maps from BirdLife International (2003). 1 – Mocha Island colony, 2 – Juan Fernández Archipelago colonies (Robinson Crusoe and Santa Clara islands). This species is also regularly reported from New Zealand (not shown; intervening range not known). Source: BirdLife International and NatureServe (2015). Map prepared by Alain Filion, COSEWIC Secretariat.

Biology

Pink-footed Shearwaters breed during the austral spring and summer, with birds returning to their colonies from early to mid-October. They lay a single egg per year, with egg-laying occurring from late November to mid-December. Eggs hatch from late January to mid-February after a prolonged incubation period, and fledging primarily occurs in May. Both parents share in incubation. After chicks fledge, post-breeders migrate north to their wintering grounds off Peru and the Pacific coast of the US and Canada.

Population Sizes and Trends

The global population size of the Pink-footed Shearwater is estimated at 28,000 breeding pairs. At Mocha Island, the population is believed to have declined considerably over the 20th century due to

illegal chick harvesting and introduced predators. A study at Mocha Island in the late 1990s estimated a substantial decline in the number of breeding pairs (~40%) from an estimate in the late 1980s, although methods differed between surveys. There is plausible evidence of decline on Robinson Crusoe Island within the past 55 years (3 generations) due to predation of adults and chicks by *Coatimundis* and feral cats. However, the Robinson Crusoe population is thought to have been stable over the past 15 years, and monitoring at Mocha Island since 2010 suggests a stable population over that time. Trends within the Canadian range of the species are unknown.

Threats and Limiting Factors

Threats facing this species at its colonies include human exploitation and disturbance, predation, disturbance and competition from introduced mammals; and habitat loss and destruction, particularly via erosion compounded by vegetation loss. At sea, the species is threatened by interactions with fisheries, oil and other pollution, plastic ingestion, and likely by competition with humans for prey fish.

Protection, Status, and Ranks

The Pink-footed Shearwater is listed as Threatened in Canada, as Endangered in Chile, and as Vulnerable by the IUCN. The British Columbia Conservation Data Centre ranks it as Vulnerable. In 2015, it was added to Annex 1 of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels, an agreement under the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (Bonn Convention), under which it is also listed. The Juan Fernández Archipelago is a Chilean national park, and a national reserve protects the portion of Mocha Island occupied by nesting Pink-footed Shearwaters. In Canada, the species occurs within the Gwaii Haanas National Marine Conservation Area.

Source: COSEWIC. 2016. COSEWIC assessment and status report on the Pink-footed Shearwater *Ardenna creatopus* in Canada. Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Ottawa. xi + 43 pp.

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