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EN
Sooty Albatross *Phoebastria fusca*

2005 IUCN Red List

Category (as evaluated by BirdLife International - the official Red List Authority for birds for IUCN):

Endangered

Justification The species has been uplisted to Endangered on the basis of a 75% decline over three generations (90 years), probably owing to interactions with fisheries. However, trend information from three sites suggests that this species could be classified as Critically Endangered if these trends are found to be more general.

Family/Sub-family DIOMEDEIDAE

Species name author (Hilsenberg, 1822)

Taxonomic source(s) Brooke (2004), Christidis and Boles (1994), Dowsett and Forbes-Watson (1993), Robertson and Nunn (1998), Sibley and Monroe (1990, 1993), Stotz et al. (1996)

Identification 85 cm. Medium-sized, sooty-brown albatross with diamond-shaped tail. Adult is uniform sooty-brown, slightly darker on sides of head. White crescent above, behind eye. Black bill with orange or yellow sulcus. Juvenile and immature essentially as adult. **Similar spp.** Dark, pale-billed giant-petrels are more bulky with shorter, stubbier wings. Light-mantled Sooty Albatross *P. palpebrata* has violet or bluish sulcus and paler mantle. *P. fusca* with worn plumage difficult to distinguish. **Voice** Two-syllable skycall given from near nest-site.



Population estimate	Population trend	Range estimate (breeding/resident)	Country endemic?
42,000	decreasing	1,900 km ²	No

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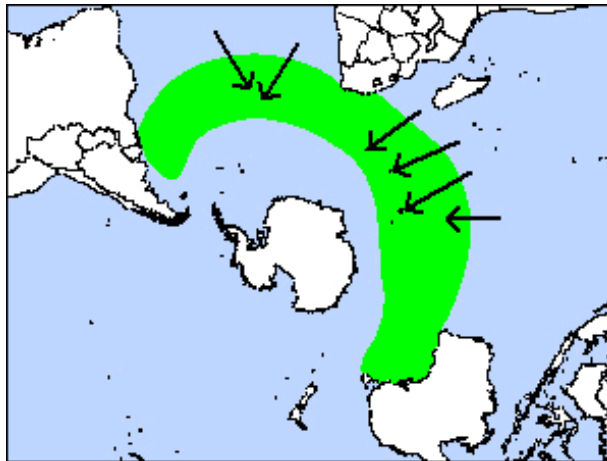
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Range & population

Phoebastria fusca breeds on islands in the South Atlantic and Indian Oceans. The total annual breeding population is estimated at 12,500-19,000 pairs, equivalent to a total breeding population of c.42,000 individuals⁵ as breeding is almost wholly biennial. Estimates of pairs are: c.5,000 on Gough Island¹¹, 4,125-5,250 in the Tristan da Cunha group, both Tristan da Cunha, **St Helena (to UK)**, 1,720 on Prince Edward and Marion Islands (**South Africa**)^{8,12}, 2,620 on the Crozet Islands, less than five on Kerguelen Island, and 300-400 on Amsterdam Island (all **French Southern Territories**)¹. On Possession Island (Crozet), the population declined by 58% between 1980 and 1995¹⁰. On Marion, the population declined by 25% between 1990 and 1998⁸. At Gough Island, the population appears to have decreased by about half over 28 years¹¹. The species forages in subtropical waters both



during and
outside the
breeding
season¹⁰.

Ecology It feeds on cephalopods, fish, crustaceans and carrion, occasionally following fishing vessels². It breeds in loose colonies of up to 50-60 nests on cliffs or steep slopes⁷.

Threats Both adults and juveniles are killed on Japanese longlines set inside and beyond the Australian Fishing Zone⁶ and at least some are killed on tuna longlines off southern Africa¹². However, only one bird (of 1,500 examined) is known to have been killed by vessels with observers in the Prince Edward fishery⁹. Introduced predators on Kerguelen and Amsterdam may have a significant effect on breeding success. The harvest of chicks and adults in the Tristan group is banned and illegal poaching is now probably very rare⁹. The species could be affected by avian cholera and erysipelas bacteria at Amsterdam Island¹³.

Conservation measures underway CMS Appendix II and ACAP Annex 1. Population monitoring and foraging studies are being undertaken at Possession, Amsterdam and Marion. The species is protected in Tristan da Cunha^{3,9}. Gough is a World Heritage Site and the Prince Edward Islands are a Special Nature Reserve. Inaccessible and Gough Islands are nature reserves. A population estimate was made at Gough during 2000/1, and a repeatable monitoring protocol was devised¹⁴. Further monitoring will be repeated during 2003-2006 at Gough. Gough birds will also be remotely tracked, to determine at-sea distribution. A new project on Tristan da Cunha will re-assess the population there for the first time in 30 years during 2004-2006.

Conservation measures proposed Repeat standardised population surveys at all key sites, most notably Gough and Tristan da Cunha. Determine foraging distribution of species and overlap with longline fisheries. Promote adoption of best-practice mitigation measures in all fisheries within the species's range, particularly via existing and proposed intergovernmental mechanisms under auspices of CCAMLR, CMS and FAO⁴.

References **1.** Carboneras (1992b). **2.** Cherel and Klages (1998). **3.** J. Cooper *in litt.* (1999). **4.** J. Cooper and J. P. Croxall *in litt.* (2000). **5.** Croxall and Gales (1998). **6.** Gales *et al.* (1998). **7.** Marchant and Higgins (1990). **8.** Crawford *et al.* (in press). **9.** P. G. Ryan *in litt.* (1999). **10.** Weimerskirch and Jouventin (1998). **11.** Cuthbert and Sommers (2004a). **12.** Ryan *et al.* (in press). **13.** H. Weimerskirch (2004). **14.** Cuthbert and Sommers (2004b).

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