

California Wildlife Habitat Relationships System
California Department of Fish and Wildlife
California Interagency Wildlife Task Group

FORK-TAILED STORM-PETREL

Oceanodroma furcata

Family: HYDROBATIDAE
B579

Order: PROCELLARIIFORMES

Class: AVES

Written by: T. Kucera, 1998

DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, SEASONALITY

Uncommon, sporadic late fall-early spring visitor on open ocean along the entire coast; occasionally in bays and harbors, particularly after storms (Small 1994). Ecology and behavior not well known. Breed on six small islets off Del Norte and Humboldt counties. Entire California breeding population estimated at 310 (Sowls 1980).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Diet not well known. Obtains all food at sea. Like other storm-petrels, the fork-tailed storm-petrel feeds at the sea surface, probably on cephalopods, crustaceans, and small fish (Palmer 1962).

Cover: Tied to land only to nest; otherwise remains over open sea. Nests in burrows and rock cavities.

Reproduction: Nests in burrows, natural cavities, or rock crevices on islands. Presumably monogamous.

Water: Drinks seawater. Specialized glands excrete salt through nostrils.

Pattern: For nesting, prefers offshore islands. Forages over open ocean; prefers colder water than other storm-petrels (Palmer 1962).

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Nocturnal at the breeding colonies. Nesting pairs enter and leave nest only at night. Presumably sleep in burrow or on water at sea.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: Not migratory (Palmer 1962).

Home Range: Not known.

Territory: Not territorial.

Reproduction: A clutch of a single egg is laid during May or June (Palmer 1962). As with other storm-petrels, both sexes incubate and feed the young.

Niche: May be preyed upon, like other pelagic, island-nesting seabirds, by gulls and raptors (Ainley et al. 1975).

REFERENCES

Ainley, D. G., S. Morrell, and T. J. Lewis. 1975. Patterns in the life histories of storm petrels on the Farallon Islands. *Living Bird* 13:295-311.

- Palmer, R. S. 1962. Handbook of North American Birds. Vol. 1. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.
- Small, A. 1994. California birds: their status and distribution. Ibis Publishing Co., Vista, CA.
- Sowls, A. L., A. R. deGange, J. W. Nelson, and G. S. Lester. 1980. Catalog of California seabird colonies. U. S. Fish and Wildl. Serv., No. FWS/OBS 80/37.

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Life history accounts for species in the California Wildlife Habitat Relationships (CWHR) System were originally published in: Zeiner, D.C., W.F.Laudenslayer, Jr., K.E. Mayer, and M. White, eds. 1988-1990. California's Wildlife. Vol. I-III. California Department of Fish and Game, Sacramento, California. Updates are noted in accounts that have been added or edited since original publication.