

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

ASHY STORM-PETREL

Oceanodroma homochroa

Family: HYDROBATIDAE
B581

Order: PROCELLARIIFORMES Class: AVES

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, SEASONALITY

Occurs year-round in offshore waters of the continental slope (200-2,000 m deep) from Cape Mendocino to northern Baja California, Mexico (Small 1994). Spends most of its time at sea, coming to land only to reproduce. The entire world breeding population, estimated at 10,000-20,000 birds, breeds on offshore islands at 17 localities from Southeast Farallon Island to Los Coronados (Sowls et al. 1980, Ainley 1995). The Ashy Storm-Petrel does not migrate.

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: Diet not well known. Obtains all food at sea, probably mostly at night or during crepuscular periods; observations of feeding are rare (Ainley 1995). Feeds at the sea surface on cephalopods, crustaceans, and small fish (Shuford 1992).

Cover: Tied to land only to nest; otherwise remains over open sea. Nests in natural cavities and sea caves, mainly talus but also larger rock (Ainley 1995).

Reproduction: Nests in natural cavities, sea caves, or rock crevices on islands and on the mainland (Point Reyes Peninsula; Shuford 1993). Does not excavate a burrow or enlarge the cavity. In some cases, may share cavities with cavity-nesting alcids (Carter et al. 1992, as cited in Ainley 1995).

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

Pattern: For nesting, prefers offshore islands with talus slopes and also prominent peninsulas. Forages over open ocean off the continental shelf.

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. In Monterey Bay, up to 8,000 Ashy Storm-Petrels may be seen from late August to October (Small 1994).

Home Range: Not known.

Territory: Not territorial. At the colony, nest spacing is determined by the distribution of talus cavities and crevices. In some cases, >1 pair may use the same entrance to a large, branching cavity (Ainley 1995).

Reproduction: May frequent nesting colony year-round, but most activity occurs from February to October. A clutch of a single egg is laid from late April to July or later (Ainley et al. 1990). Both sexes incubate and feed the young, which fledge about 84 days after hatching.

Fledging may occur into the fall (Allen 1994).

Niche: Burrowing owls and western gulls prey on Ashy Storm-Petrels on Southeast Farallon Island; western gulls are more numerous there than ever before (Ainley and Boekelheide 1990). House mice eat storm-petrel eggs. Peregrine falcons may take Ashy Storm-Petrels at sea and near colonies on land. Hunt et al. (1980) noted that small burrowing seabirds are absent from those Channel Islands on which the Channel Island fox occurs.

REFERENCES

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