



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Endangered Species

Alaska Region

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Short-tailed albatross (*Phoebastria albatrus*)

Designation: Endangered

The short-tailed albatross is the largest seabird in the North Pacific with a wingspan up to 8 feet. An adult birds' plumage is primarily white with black on the wings, it has a golden head, and their beak is large and pink. Short-tailed albatross breed in colonies on remote, windswept islands. A single egg is laid in late October to late November. Parents take turns incubating the egg and making foraging trips to sea. Their diet includes squid, flying fish eggs, and other items that are available at or near the surface of the ocean.

Critical Habitat: None designated

Distribution: The species is known to breed on only two remote islands in the western Pacific: Torishima, Japan; and a site in the Senkaku Island Group, northwest of Taiwan. Recently, a single pair nested on Midway Island in the Hawaiian Island chain. After breeding, the birds are found throughout the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska, along the Aleutian Islands, southeast Alaska, as well as the Pacific coasts of Canada and the United States.

Threats: Just over 100 years ago, harvest of the birds by feather collectors nearly exterminated this species. Volcanic activity on Torishima Island is a threat to nesting birds and their offspring. Because they feed at the surface of ocean, albatross are vulnerable to hooking mortality by [longlines](#) during commercial fishing operations. If birds are hooked or snagged, they can be pulled underwater and drown. Oil and gas development may threaten their breeding habitat in the Senkakus.

Conservation efforts: The Short-tailed albatross is designated as a "National Monument" in Japan, and regulations now prohibit harvest of this species. Because Torishima Island is an active volcano, an eruption or lava flow could threaten the breeding colony. Consequently, the Service and Japanese partners at the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology are attempting to establish a third breeding colony by translocating chicks from Torishima to a historic breeding location on the island of Mukojima. As of 2011, 55 chicks have been translocated and successfully fledged. Subadults hand-reared in previous years, as well as other short-tailed albatrosses attracted to the site have been observed on Mukojima, and have practiced their courtship dances there. Regulations in the U.S. now require the use of seabird bycatch avoidance devices known as tori or streamerlines in Alaskan commercial longline fisheries. These regulations have resulted in a dramatic reduction of seabird mortality incidental to domestic fishing operations. Further efforts are needed to encourage similar bycatch reduction methods in international fisheries. Population numbers are increasing as a result of protection and conservation actions.

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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Species Profile
Anchorage Field Office recovery website
Fact sheet

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