

## **Questions and Answers & Timeline Ashy Storm-Petrel 12-month Finding**

### **Q: Where is the ashy storm-petrel found?**

**A:** Confirmed breeding locations for ashy storm-petrels have been identified at 32 locations (on islands and offshore rocks) from Mendocino County, California, south to the Todos Santos Islands, west of Ensenada, Baja California, Mexico. More than 90 percent of the species breeds in two population centers at SE Farallon Island and the following California Channel Islands: San Miquel, Santa Cruz, Anacapa, Santa Barbara, Santa Catalina, and San Clemente. At-sea observations of ashy storm-petrels south of Islas San Benitos, Mexico, are unusual; most observations of the species are off the coasts of California and Baja California, Mexico.

### **Q: How many ashy storm-petrels are there?**

**A:** The current total (restricted to California and Mexico) population size of breeding ashy storm-petrels at all known locations is estimated at between 10,000 and 11,000 individuals. One study estimates that 53.5 percent of the SE Farallon Island population was breeding ashy storm-petrels. Using this value to extrapolate from the estimated number of breeding birds to total population size throughout the range, we estimate a total current global population of breeding and non-breeding individuals at about 18,700 to 20,600 birds. These estimates account only for known population occurrences. Unconfirmed and potentially unknown locations are not included in the estimate, however, the existence of sizeable unknown populations (on the scale of SE Farallon or Channel Islands) is unlikely, given the considerable survey efforts that have occurred.

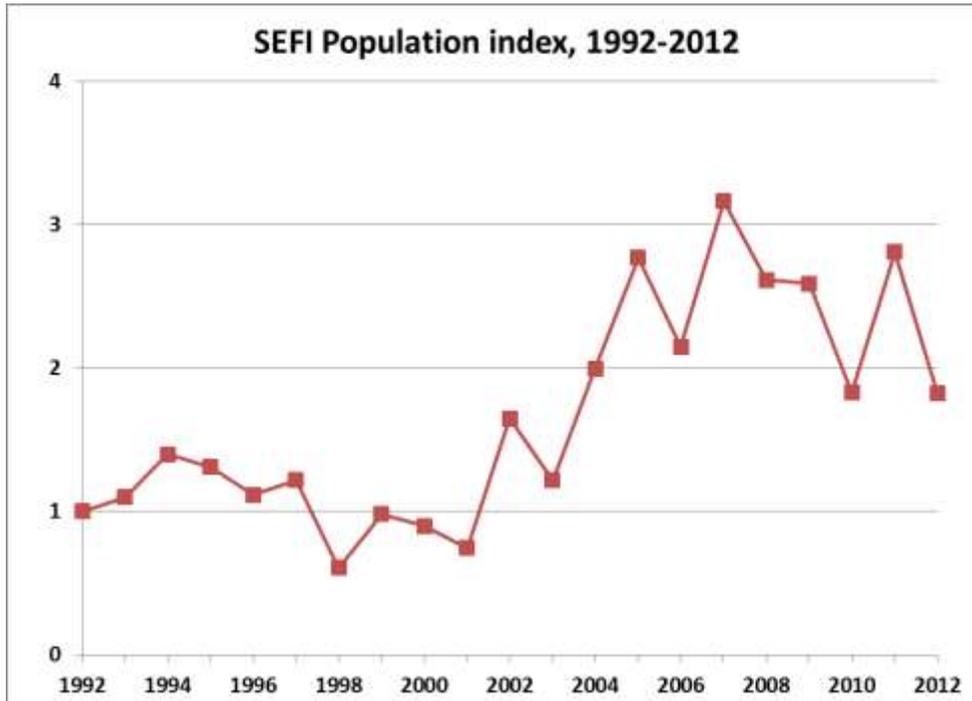
### **Q: What is the population trend of ashy storm-petrels?**

**A:** Over 90 percent of the estimated breeding population is restricted to SE Farallon Island and the Channel Islands and so most colony data (population trends and productivity estimates) are derived from those two locations

Farallon Island population trends:

SE Farallon Island serves as breeding grounds for approximately 58 percent of the known ashy storm-petrel breeding population. We do not have any comparable colony size data for evaluating population trends before 1992, when standardized mist netting efforts began on SE Farallon Island. The best data available are based on the mist net population index there, and show up and down variation from 1992 to about 2001. There was then an average increase in the ashy storm-petrel population index of 22.1 percent per year from 2000–2006, and a mean decrease in the ashy storm-petrel population index on SE

Farallon Island of 7.19 percent per year from 2007 to 2012. However, this recent negative trend was not statistically significant. We conclude that the population is currently experiencing fluctuations due to various factors, including avian predation. After assessing the best available scientific data, we have concluded that there is no consistent long term trend in the species' population nesting on SE Farallon Island.



Channel Islands population trends:

The Channel Islands population comprises an estimated 36 percent of the total ash storm-petrel population. We currently have no published studies of population trends on the Channel Islands.

**Q: What are the main stressors that have a potential to impact the ash storm-petrel population?**

**A:** The Species Report prepared by the Service revealed that the primary stressors for the ash storm-petrel on SE Farallon Island are burrowing owl predation and western gull predation. Other potential stressors evaluated in the Species Report include climate change (ocean acidification, ocean warming, and sea level rise); invasive species; human activities, including military; overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes; house mouse predation; skunk predation; barn owl predation; common raven predation; artificial light pollution; oil pollution; contaminants; and ingestion of plastics.

**Q: Isn't the ashy storm-petrel struggling in several locations?**

**A:** The Service determined that the species is currently experiencing natural population fluctuations and there is no long term decline in the species. The species population at SE Farallon Island (the most populated breeding ground) has more than doubled in the last 20 years according to mist net surveys. Although there may have been a recent decrease in the population on SE Farallon Island in the last six years possibly due to avian predation, we have no data indicating that this trend will continue.

Populations at the Channel Islands have suffered mortality events from ravens and skunks. These predation events were isolated to certain caves or rock structures on or adjacent to Santa Cruz Island. There is no indication that these predation events are driving overall population trends on the Channel Islands.

**Are you doing anything to help the population in those locations?**

**A:** A number of steps are being taken in attempt to reduce predation on both SE Farallon Island and the Channel Islands. On the Farallon Islands, owls have been translocated in the past and a house mouse eradication effort is currently in the planning stages. Specifically, the Service has released for public comment the South Farallon Islands Invasive House Mouse Eradication Project to eradicate house mice on SE Farallon. If implemented, mouse eradication is expected to reduce numbers of burrowing owls on the Island. In addition to likely being beneficial to ashy storm-petrels that breed on the island, the eradication of house mice on SE Farallon Island would likely benefit the entire SE Farallon Island ecosystem. On the Channel Islands, spotted island skunk traps have been deployed at cave sites where this has been a problem. Efforts are also being taken to restrict raven access to nest sites where ravens have been a problem through installation of raven proof nest boxes.

**Timeline of ashy storm-petrel actions:**

- On October 16, 2007, the Service received a petition from the Center for Biological Diversity, requesting that the ashy storm-petrel be listed as a threatened or endangered species under the Act and that critical habitat be designated concurrently with listing.
- On May 15, 2008, the Service published in the Federal Register a 90-day finding on the petition to list the ashy storm-petrel as threatened or endangered, and the 90-day finding determined that the petitioned action may be warranted.
- On Aug. 19, 2009, the Service announced its 12-month finding that found, after reviewing the best available scientific and commercial information, that listing the ashy storm-petrel was not warranted.

- The Center for Biological Diversity challenged the 2009 12-month finding in the District Court of the Northern District of California on Oct. 25, 2010.
- This challenge was resolved by a Sept. 16, 2011, Stipulation of Dismissal, based on the approval of two settlements in which the Service agreed to submit a proposed rule or a not-warranted finding regarding the ashy storm-petrel to the Federal Register by the end of Fiscal Year (Sept. 30) 2013.
- The Service published a notice of initiation of status review and solicitation of new information for the ashy storm-petrel in the Federal Register on Nov. 28, 2012. Based on a review of the best available information and a full assessment of the status of the species in light of the five listing factors in the Endangered Species Act, FWS recommended on Oct. 21, 2013 that the ashy storm-petrel is not warranted for listing as an endangered or threatened species under the Act. This 12-month finding is part of the settlement agreement.