## Pelagic Cormorant

*Phalacrocorax pelagicus*

**Conservation Status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heritage</th>
<th>Agency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G Rank: G5</td>
<td>USFWS/NOAA: Bird of Conservation Concern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S Rank: S5</td>
<td>SOA: Species of Greatest Conservation Need</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Final Rank**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Status:</td>
<td>-20 to 20</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biological:</td>
<td>-50 to 50</td>
<td>-42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action:</td>
<td>-40 to 40</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Higher numerical scores denote greater concern

### Status

- **Population Trend (-10 to 10)**
  
  Numbers fluctuate between years. In Gulf of Alaska, population declined historically, but have increased compared to 1950s numbers on Middleton Island (Sowl 1979, Hatch 1993). At Cape Thompson, population decreased in late 1970s to 20% lower than in early 1960s (Ainley et al. 1994). Numbers or nests have remained stable at most monitored sites with local fluctuations common (USFWS 2006a). Alaska BBS nonsignificant estimate of -6.4% annually between 1980 and 2007 (\(P=0.75, n=4, c=3\)). Continental BBS shows an insignificant trend of -1.9% (\(P=0.57, n=14, c=2\); Matsuoka and Pardieck 2009)

  Score: **2**

- **Distribution Trend (-10 to 10)**
  
  Distribution throughout range considered unchanged. Local fluctuations in colonies occur (Sowls et al. 1980, AOU 1983, Carter et al. 1984). Numbers or nests have remained stable at most monitored sites with local fluctuations common (USFWS 2006a).

  Score: **-5**

### Biological

- **Population Size (-10 to 10)**
  
  In Alaska, 43,700 pairs occur at 420 colonies.

  Score: **-10**

- **Range Size (-10 to 10)**
  
  Range extends throughout inner and outer coastal areas from northern Alaska south through Bering Sea to Aleutian Islands. Colonies occur on Cape Lisburne, Diomede Island, St. Lawrence, St. Mathew, Kodiak Island, Homer, Kachemak Bay, Cook Inlet, south through Alexander Archipelago. During winter, regularly occurs on Pribilof islands and Aleutian Islands, Gulf of Alaska and north to St. Mathew, St. Lawrence, and Diomede Island. Breeding range and associated foraging areas >400,000 km² calculated in ARCMap.

  Score: **-10**

- **Population Concentration (-10 to 10)**
  
  Nests alone or in loose colonies at 420 sites within Alaska (Hobson 1997, USFWS 2006a). Migrates in loose flocks or singly (Hobson 1997).
Alaska Species Ranking System Summary Report - Pelagic Cormorant

**Reproductive Potential**

**Age of First Reproduction (-5 to 5)**

2 years of age.

**Number of Young (-5 to 5)**

3.1 mean clutch size in Alaska.

**Ecological Specialization**

**Dietary (-5 to 5)**

Generalist. Feeds on medium-sized fish and invertebrates on bottom.

**Habitat (-5 to 5)**

Breeding and roost sites include rocky habitat along coast, bays, inlets, estuaries, rapids, coves, harbors, lagoons (Campbell et al. 1990). Nesting colonies occur on cliffs of forested, grassy and rocky islands, ledges, sea caves, driftwood logs, pilings, and manmade structures (Gabrielson and Lincoln 1959, Hobson and Wilson 1985, Campbell et al. 1990). Diurnal roosts sandbars, rocky islands, cliffs, logs, and pilings (Godfrey 1986).

**Action** - variables measure current state of knowledge or extent of conservation efforts directed toward a given taxon. Higher action scores denote greater information needs due to lack of knowledge or conservation action. Action scores range from -40 (lower needs) to 40 (greater needs).

**Management Needs (-10 to 10)**

Protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA 1918). Harvested for subsistence and sport hunting (AMBCC 2007).

**Monitoring Needs (-10 to 10)**

Fluctuations in colony attendance from year to year make accurate trend estimates difficult. Local monitoring has occurred (i.e. Buldir Island), but is not species specific (Hobson 1997, Orban et al. 2006, Anderson and Barrett 2006). The Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge annually monitors selected species of seabirds at 9 sites. Pelagic Cormorants are 1 of the 11 indicator species selected for monitoring (Helm and Zeman 2006).

**Research Needs (-10 to 10)**

Food availability and nest site availability important determinant of productivity in some areas. Warming events cause declines in prey availability in Oregon and California (Ainley et al. 1995, Hobson 1997). This demonstrates the potential impact of warming temperatures on their prey base in Alaska. Suffered losses from Exxon Valdez oil spill (Piatt et al. 1990a) and vulnerable to future oil spills. Organochlorines residues highest in Pelagic Cormorants compared to 18 other species (Ohlendorf et al. 1982). Human disturbance is a concern at nesting areas. Subsistence harvest may have a large impact on this species. 1,753 cormorants as a whole were collected annually from 1995-2000. Fishing industry bycatch is also a concern where overlaps occur (USFWS 2006a).

**Survey Needs (-10 to 10)**

Colony distribution information available in the Beringian Seabird Colony Catalog (USFWS 2006a). Marine distribution year-round captured by shipboard and aerial censuses in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea (Gould et al. 1982).

**Supplemental Information** - variables do not receive numerical scores. Instead, they that are used to sort taxa to answer specific biological or managerial questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Harvest:</th>
<th>Substantial, regulations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seasonal Occurrence:</td>
<td>Year-round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxonomic Significance:</td>
<td>Monotypic species</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Global Range in Alaska:</td>
<td>&gt;10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Global Population in Alaska:</td>
<td>&gt;25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peripheral:</td>
<td>No</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Range Map

References


