

# Black Swift

*Cypseloides niger*

Class: Aves  
Order: Apodiformes

## Conservation Status

NatureServe: Agency:

G Rank: G4 BLM: IUCN: Least Concern Audubon AK:

S Rank: S2N USFWS: Bird of Conservation Concern ADF&G: Species of Greatest Conservation Need

Final Rank		
Conservation category: <b>I. Red</b>		
I = high status, biological vulnerability, and action need		
<u>Category</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>Score</u>
Status:	-20 to 20	6
Biological:	-50 to 50	11
Action:	-40 to 40	24
<b>Higher numerical scores denote greater concern</b>		

**Status** - variables measure the trend in a taxon’s population status or distribution. Higher status scores denote taxa with known declining trends. Status scores range from -20 (increasing) to 20 (decreasing).

	Score
<i>Population Trend (-10 to 10)</i>	6
Unknown for Alaska, but suspected to be declining (Andres et al. 1999b). Declining in its adjacent breeding range in British Columbia (COSEWIC 2015). Global populations are estimated to have declined by 94% from 1970-2014 (Rosenberg et al. 2016).	
<i>Distribution Trend (-10 to 10)</i>	0
Unknown.	
<b>Status Total:</b>	<b>6</b>

**Biological** - variables measure aspects of a taxon’s distribution, abundance and life history. Higher biological scores suggest greater vulnerability to extirpation. Biological scores range from -50 (least vulnerable) to 50 (most vulnerable).

	Score
<i>Population Size (-10 to 10)</i>	10
Unknown, but suspected to be fewer than 500 individuals. The Partners In Flight database version 2.0 estimated a population size of 300 individuals in Alaska. The most recent version does not include a population estimate for black swift (PIF 2019).	
<i>Range Size (-10 to 10)</i>	-2
In the summer, found in southeast Alaska on mainland and islands from Haines and Juneau south into British Columbia (Andres et al. 1999b; Johnson et al. 2008b). Wintering range is unknown but is suspected to be in South America (Lowther and Collins 2002). Estimated range size in Alaska is ~25,000 sq. km.	
<i>Population Concentration (-10 to 10)</i>	-6
Nests in small colonies (Andres et al. 1999b). Surveys from 2003 to 2005 reported few sightings and no nests were found in Alaska, though black swifts are suspected to occasionally breed in the state (Baluss 2006). Given the small population size, restricted distribution, and colonial behavior, we estimate that Black Swifts occur at <250 sites.	

*Reproductive Potential*

<u>Age of First Reproduction (-5 to 5)</u>	0
Lowther and Collins (2002) suggest that black swifts breed at 1 year, but an assessment by COSEWIC (2015) proposed 3-5 years. Given the uncertainty in these estimates, we have chosen to rank this question as Unknown.	
<u>Number of Young (-5 to 5)</u>	3
1 egg per year (Knorr 1961; Marin 1997; Andres 1999b).	
<i>Ecological Specialization</i>	
<u>Dietary (-5 to 5)</u>	1
Feeds exclusively on flying insects. Thought to specialize on winged ants and swarming insects (Marin 1999; Lowther and Collins 2002; Rudalevige et al. 2003; reviewed in Potter et al. 2015), but a recent study by Potter et al. (2015) found that Black Swifts consume a wide variety of flying insects and do not strictly target swarms.	
<u>Habitat (-5 to 5)</u>	5
In Alaska, found foraging over wetlands and water bodies including lakes, rivers, and estuaries (Andres 1999b and references therein; Baluss 2006; Johnson et al. 2008b). Although nests have not been found in Alaska, Black swifts are believed to nest in river valleys with steep, bare cliffs and waterfalls (Andres 1999b; Baluss 2006). Elsewhere in North America, nest sites have been found in highly specific habitats in alcoves, caves, or on cliff ledges behind waterfalls (Knorr 1961; reviewed in Andres 1999b; Levad et al. 2008; Levesque and Rock 2017).	
<b>Biological Total:</b>	11
<b>Action</b> - variables measure current state of knowledge or extent of conservation efforts directed toward a given taxon. Higher action scores denote greater information needs due of lack of knowledge or conservation action. Action scores range from -40 (lower needs) to 40 (greater needs).	<b>Score</b>
<u>Management Plans and Regulations (-10 to 10)</u>	2
Protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA 1918).	
<u>Knowledge of Distribution and Habitat (-10 to 10)</u>	2
Although infrequently sighted, surveys and anecdotal observation suggest that the Black Swift has a restricted distribution and specialized habitat requirements in Alaska, both of which have been described (Andres et al. 1999b; Altman 2003; Baluss 2006; Johnson et al. 2008b). Because nest sites have not been found in Alaska, breeding cannot be confirmed, though it is suspected (Baluss 2006). Because of this important lack of data, however, we have ranked this question as (B) Moderately understood.	
<u>Knowledge of Population Trends (-10 to 10)</u>	10
Not currently monitored in Alaska. Because of its unique ecology and remote habitat, the Black Swift is rarely captured during multi-species surveys (e.g. BBS and ALMS). Species-specific surveys have been conducted in Alaska but have been challenging due to the difficulty of accessing suitable habitat (Altman 2003; Baluss 2006).	
<u>Knowledge of Factors Limiting Populations (-10 to 10)</u>	10
Factors limiting this population and contributing to its decline are unknown and largely speculative (COSEWIC 2015). Conservation assessments in Canada (COSEWIC 2015) and in the U.S. (Wiggins 2004) cite food availability as the most likely limiting factor. Population declines may be caused by a decline in the availability of flying insects, either as a result of pesticides or climate change, though these ideas have not been investigated (COSEWIC 2015).	
<b>Action Total:</b>	24
<b>Supplemental Information</b> - variables do not receive numerical scores. Instead, they that are used to sort taxa to answer specific biological or management questions.	

<b>Harvest:</b>	None or Prohibited
<b>Seasonal Occurrence:</b>	Breeding
<b>Taxonomic Significance:</b>	Monotypic genus
<b>% Global Range in Alaska:</b>	<10%
<b>% Global Population in Alaska:</b>	<25%
<b>Peripheral:</b>	Yes

## References

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