Short-billed Gull

Larus brachyrhynchus

Class: Aves

Order: Charadriiformes

Review Status: Reviewed (Alaska)

Version Date: 03 February 2023

Note: Until recently, combined with the Common Gull (*Larus canus*) and referred to as Mew Gull. The two species have since been split, with *L. canus* largely restricted to Eurasia, though it is a casual visitor to Alaska.

Conservation Status

Table 1 Conservation status according to state, national, and international organizations and agencies.

Organization	Rank
NatureServe	S5/G5
ADF&G	Species of Greatest Conservation Need
IUCN	Least Concern

Final Rank

Conservation Category: **V. Orange**

Unknown status and either high biological vulnerability or high action need

Table 2 ASRS categorical scores. Higher numerical scores denote greater concern.

Category	Range	Score
Status	-20 to 20	0
Biological	-50 to 50	-34
Action	-40 to 40	12

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).

Population Trend in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Statewide data unavailable. Platte and Stehn (2015) estimated a positive population trend for the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, based on data from 1992 to 2014.

Score: 0

Distribution Trend in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Unknown.

Score: 0

Status Total: 0

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).

Population Size in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Statewide population estimate is unknown, but local estimates >25,000: ~19,000 birds on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, (Platte and Stehn 2015) and ~14,400 birds in the eastern Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska, (Denlinger 2006).

Score: -10

Range Size in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Breeds throughout much of the state south of the Brooks Range (Moskoff and Bevier 2021). Western limits include Kotzebue Sound in the north and the western Aleutian Islands in the south. Its winter/year-round range is more restricted and extends from Kodiak Island and southcentral Alaska south to Southeast Alaska (Moskoff and Bevier 2021). Estimated size of winter range is ~166,800 sq. km, based on range map from ACCS (2017a).

Score: -8

Population Concentration in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Nests in pairs or in small colonies up to 800 individuals (Moskoff and Bevier 2021). The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Beringian Seabird Colony lists 69 colonies on islands and coastlines of the Gulf of Alaska and the eastern Bering Sea (cited in Denlinger 2006). In the fall, also concentrates along salmon-spawning streams (Moyle 1966; Isleib and Kessel 1973). Although a statewide estimate of breeding colonies does not exist, we estimate that this species concentrates between 25-250 sites.

Score: -6

Reproductive Potential in Alaska

Age of First Reproduction (-5 to 5)

Unknown, but females of closely related Common Gull (*Larus canus*) begin to breed at 3-4 years of ago (Moskoff et al. 2021). Because this estimate spans 2 categories, we rank this question as 0.5 *B + 0.5 * C.

Score: -1

Number of Young (-5 to 5)

Females lay a single clutch per year. Clutch size ranges from 1 to 5 eggs, with a mean of 3 (Hatch et al. 1978; Adamson 1988; Moskoff and Bevier 2020). Can lay a replacement clutch if the first one fails (Hatch et al. 1978; Adamson 1988).

Score: 1

Ecological Specialization in Alaska

Dietary (-5 to 5)

Omnivorous predator and scavenger with a varied diet. Food items include invertebrates, fishes, crustaceans, offal, amphibians, small mammals, and garbage (Moyle 1966; Isleib and Kessel

1973; Hatch et al. 1978; Adamson 1988; Burger 1988; Kessel 1989; Denlinger 2006). Additional research is needed to determine the degree to which individuals specialize on certain food items, and whether individual variation in diet affects survival or reproductive success. Until such data are available, we rank this question as C- Highly adaptable.

Score: -5

Habitat (-5 to 5)

Breeds near water in a variety of habitats including banks along flowing and standing freshwater, marshes, coastal beaches, and deltas (Isleib and Kessel 1973; Burger 1988; Kessel 1989; Gibson and Byrd 2007). Occasionally nests on stumps, in trees, on buildings, and in open meadows (Adamson 1988; Burger and Gochfeld 1987; 1988). Less information is known about wintering habitats, though this species maintains its association with freshwater or marine habitats (Moskoff and Bevier 2021).

Score: -5

Biological Total: -34

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 Plans and Regulations in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA 1918). Open for subsistence harvest and egg gathering, with seasonal closures (AMBCC 2020).

Score: -10

Knowledge of Distribution and Habitat in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Distribution and habitat associations during the breeding season are well-known along coastal and island habitats throughout the state (e.g., Petersen et al. 1991; Tibbitts et al. 2006; Arimitsu et al. 2007; Hodges et al. 2008; Phillips et al. 2017; Amundson et al. 2018). Additional research is needed on the distribution and habitat characteristics of inland breeding areas, as well as during the non-breeding season (e.g., Day 2006; DeCicco et al. 2015b).

Score: 2

Knowledge of Population Trends in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Not currently monitored. Previously, detected during aerial waterbird surveys along the coast of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta (Platte and Stehn 2015); data from this effort were adequate for determining trends, but did not encompass the entirety of this species' range in Alaska.

Score: 10

Knowledge of Factors Limiting Populations in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Little is known about the factors that limit this species' population in Alaska or elsewhere in its range (Moskoff and Bevier 2021). Floods, inclement weather, and predation are all factors that are likely to affect nest survival in Alaska (Burger and Gochfeld 1988). Burger and Gochfeld (1988) proposed that small colony sizes were in part due to the limited availability of colony sites and the limited availability of nest sites; they thought that food availability was an unlikely explanation for colony size. Meanwhile, Hatch (1978) listed severe storms and food shortage as

the most important factors leading to poor fledging success during their study. Using data from 2004 to 2014, Naves (2015) estimated that anywhere from a few hundred to a few thousand birds were harvested each year. Given the population size, subsistence harvest is unlikely to be an important limiting factor, however, additional research would be beneficial.

Score: 10

Action Total: 12

Supplemental Information

Variables do not receive numerical scores. Instead, they are used to sort taxa to answer specific biological or management questions.

Harvest: Not substantial

Seasonal Occurrence: Year-round

Taxonomic Significance: Monotypic species

% Global Range in Alaska: >10%

% Global Population in Alaska: 50-74%

Peripheral: No

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