

Red-faced Cormorant

Urile urile

Class: Aves

Order: Suliformes

Review Status: Peer-reviewed

Version Date: 07 June 2022

Note: Previously known as *Phalacrocorax urile*.

Conservation Status

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

Organization	Rank
NatureServe	G5/S3
ADF&G	Species of Greatest Conservation Need
Audubon Alaska	Red
USFWS	Bird of Conservation Concern
IUCN	Least Concern

Final Rank

Conservation Category: **I. Red**

High status, biological vulnerability, and action need

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

Category	Range	Score
Status	-20 to 20	6
Biological	-50 to 50	-11
Action	-40 to 40	4

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)

Unknown, but suspected to be declining. Estimating population trends is challenging and annual data are not available (see Knowledge of Population trends, below). The Pribilof Islands population, as well as some colonies on the Aleutian Islands, appear to have declined in the past 20 years (Warnock 2017; Dragoo et al. 2011; 2019; Lefkowitz et al. 2022). Only limited data are available from the Prince William Sound population (Corcoran 2016; Cushing et al. 2018).

Score: 6

Distribution Trend in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Unknown.

Score: 0

Status Total: 6

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 is unknown, but based off scattered counts it is likely between 10,000-25,000 birds (Gibson and Byrd 2007; Corcoran 2016; Lefkowitz et al. 2022).

Score: -6

Range Size in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Occurs year-round along coastlines and on rocky islands of the Bering Sea and the Gulf of Alaska, including the Pribilof Islands, Aleutian Islands, and the Kodiak Archipelago (Causey 2020). Estimated range is 93,000 sq. km., based on range map from ACCS (2017a).

Score: -2

Population Concentration in Alaska (-10 to 10)

Nests in small dispersed colonies (Denlinger 2006). Number of breeding colonies is hard to estimate because most colonies have not been censused in >25 years. At the time, ~60 of the colonies considered occupied had no more than 10 individuals (M. Romano, USFWS, pers. comm.). Until more information is available, we rank this question as $0.5 * B + 0.5 * C$.

Score: -2

Reproductive Potential in Alaska

Age of First Reproduction (-5 to 5)

Unknown, but likely 3 years or more, similar to Pelagic Cormorants (*Urile pelagicus*) (Causey 2020). Biologists on St. Paul Island have documented breeding at 2 years old, but it is extremely rare (M. Romano, USFWS, pers. comm.).

Score: -3

Number of Young (-5 to 5)

Lays 1 clutch annually. Scientists have documented clutch sizes ranging from 1 to 5 eggs (Drummond and Williams 2015; Guitart et al. 2018; Higgins et al. 2018). Wright et al. (2013) reported a mean of 3 eggs.

Score: 1

Ecological Specialization in Alaska

Dietary (-5 to 5)

Very little information available. The Red-faced Cormorant is a nearshore diver that consumes mainly bottom-dwelling fish like sandlance and sculpin (Guitart et al. 2018; Causey 2020). Marine invertebrates, including amphipods and caridean shrimps, are also provisioned to young (Guitart et al. 2018). Because data are too limited to determine degree of dietary specialization, we rank this question as Unknown.

Score: 0

Habitat (-5 to 5)

Inhabits remote islands and rocky coastlines of the North Pacific Ocean. Nesting colonies and roost sites are located on the ledges of rocky cliffs (Squibb and Hunt 1983; Gibson and Byrd 2007). Forages nearshore and is rarely seen in deep water (Causey 2020). Little is known about habitat associations during the non-breeding season.

Score: 1

Biological Total: -11

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). Subsistence harvest is not permitted (AMBCC 2020). Though accidental harvest may occur because of their resemblance with Pelagic Cormorants, harvest is not substantial (Naves 2018).

Score: -10

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

Habitat associations and distribution are well-known during the breeding season (Romano et al. 2014; Drummond and Williams 2015; Cushing et al. 2018; Guitart et al. 2018). Additional research is needed to understand the movements of individuals during the non-breeding season. Carl (2021) found strong genetic differentiation between individuals on the western Aleutian Islands and on St. Paul Island, suggesting limited movement of individuals between these two regions.

Score: 2

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

Population counts and monitoring of reproductive success are conducted at some colonies. Estimating population trends is difficult, however, because movement of individuals between colonies can result in high annual variation and because surveys are not consistently conducted (Corcoran 2016; Dragoo et al. 2019).

Score: 2

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

Relatively little is known about the ecology of the Red-faced Cormorant and the factors that limit its population or distribution in Alaska. Given the remote location of their breeding colonies, Red-faced Cormorants do not face many direct pressures from humans. For example, limited data suggest that neither subsistence harvest nor bycatch from fisheries are substantial (Naves 2018; Krieger et al. 2019). The eradication of Arctic foxes on the Aleutian Islands, which were introduced in the early 20th century, has likely benefited the cormorant colonies that breed there (Causey 2020). On St. Paul Island, where foxes still remain, predation and starvation were the main causes of egg and nestling mortality, respectively (Wright et al. 2013). Wright et al. (2013) also documented consistent reproductive success over the course of their study; these findings suggest stable conditions on St. Paul Island or flexible and effective breeding strategies. Like many seabirds, Red-faced Cormorants are likely influenced by ocean environmental conditions, which affect the abundance and availability of prey species (Zador et al. 2013). Additional research is needed to understand how diet, foraging behavior, and breeding ecology are affected by changes in ocean conditions.

Score: 10

Action Total: 4

Supplemental Information

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

Harvest: None or Prohibited

Seasonal Occurrence: Year-round

Taxonomic Significance: Monotypic species

% Global Range in Alaska: >10%

% Global Population in Alaska: Unknown

Peripheral: No

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