



Nesting Seabirds of the Channel Islands





Note: This map has been altered to only show the islands within Channel Islands National Park and National Marine Sanctuary.

PACIFIC OCEAN

0 50 km

Author: Lencer/Wikipedia

Protecting Seabirds on the Channel Islands

Most of the seabird species on these cards can be seen nesting around the Channel Islands throughout different times of the year (see calendar on back). The Channel Islands provide a safe place for these seabirds to nest. Seabirds are easily disrupted by human activities which can lead to breeding failure for an entire season. Please help us to protect them by following the tips below.

Seabird Protection Tips:

Stay 1,000 feet away from nesting seabirds

Enjoy seabirds from a distance

Always dispose of fishing line properly

Be aware that offshore rocks are closed

Interest others in protecting seabirds

Reduce voices while kayaking in sea caves

Do not feed wildlife

Stay out of dry caves

Channel Islands Seabird Nesting Calendar

	BRPE	WEGU	ASSP	SCMU	CAAU	BRCO	PECO	PIGU/ DCCO
Jan								
Feb								
Mar								
April								
May								
June								
July								
Aug								
Sept								
Oct								
Nov								
Dec								

BRPE=CA Brown Pelican

WEGU=Western Gull

ASSP=Ashy Storm-Petrel

SCMU=Scripps's Murrelet

PIGU=Pigeon Guillemot

CAAU=Cassin's Auklet

BRCO=Brandt's Cormorant

PECO=Pelagic Cormorant

DCCO=Double-Crested
Cormorant

California Brown Pelican



Range

- Their breeding range is from the Channel Islands south to central Mexico.
- The only breeding colonies of California Brown Pelicans in the western United States are on West Anacapa and Santa Barbara Islands.
- Their non-breeding range extends north to Vancouver, Canada.

Nesting Information

- Brown Pelicans build large nest structures on the ground, in trees, or on vegetation.
- Brown Pelicans normally lay three eggs and the adults share incubation duties.

Cool Facts

- In 1970, only one chick on West Anacapa Island survived. In 2009, this species was removed from the endangered species list.
- A pelican's throat pouch can hold over two gallons of water.

Western Gull



Range

- Gulls are found along the Pacific Coast of North America with breeding sites from central Baja California north to Washington.
- They have a relatively limited in distribution compared to most North American Gulls.
- Large colonies are found on Santa Barbara and Anacapa Islands.

Nesting Information

- Western Gulls nest on offshore islands, rocks along the coast, and on islands inside estuaries.
- They nest on the ground and fill the nest with vegetation, feathers, rope, plastic, or other items they find.

Cool Facts

- Gull chicks use the orange dot on their bills to communicate that they are hungry to their parent.
- It takes four years for a Western Gull to achieve its gray and white appearance.

Brandt's Cormorant



Range

- Brandt's Cormorants breed along the Pacific Coast from Alaska to Mexico.
- Their main breeding range is between California and Washington.

Nesting Information

- Brandt's Cormorants nest in colonies on the ground including on cliffs, islands, and offshore rocks.
- The male cormorant selects the nest site and brings the nesting material to the female so she can build the nest.

Cool Facts

- Brandt's Cormorants are great divers and can dive 40 feet in pursuit of prey.
- Their webbed feet propel them underwater so they can swim and feed on fish close to the bottom.
- During the breeding season, they have an expandable pouch on their throat that turns blue.

Pelagic Cormorant



Range

- Their North American breeding range extends from Alaska to the Baja Pacific Islands in Mexico.
- Pelagic Cormorants are the smallest of the North American cormorants.

Nesting Information

- Pelagic Cormorants prefer to nest on narrow ledges on high, steep, inaccessible rocky cliffs.
- A typical nest for this species has between three and five eggs.

Cool Facts

- Pelagic cormorants can dive as deep as 100 feet.
- During the breeding season, the skin under their eyes turns a vivid magenta.
- They prefer to forage near kelp beds or among rocks.

Double-Crested Cormorant



Range

- The Double-crested Cormorant is the most numerous and widely distributed species of the six North American cormorants.
- Their range extends from the Aleutian Islands in Alaska down to Mexico.

Nesting Information

- Double-crested Cormorants nest: on the ground, cliff edges, trees, shrubs, and in artificial structures.
- They are gregarious birds usually found in colonies.
- These seabirds on average lay 4 eggs.

Cool Facts

- Like other cormorants, their feathers are not waterproof and they need to dry their wings after spending time in the water.
- During the breeding season, the skin on their throat turns bright orange.
- Incubating adults hold the eggs on their feet.

Pigeon Guillemot



Range

- Pigeon Guillemots have an extensive breeding range along the western North America coast from Alaska to California.
- There is a large breeding colony of Pigeon Guillemots at the Farallon Islands, California.

Nesting Information

- They usually lay their eggs in rocky crevices and cavities along cliffs.
- Pigeon Guillemots will lay 1-2 eggs.
- They usually return to their natal colony to breed.

Cool Facts

- They dive into the water to feed on fish and invertebrates.
- This seabird can scale vertical rock faces by flapping its wings and using its sharp claws.

Ashy Storm-Petrel



Range

- Ashy Storm-Petrels are rare seabirds only found in California and northwestern Baja California, Mexico.
- They have a restricted range and a small global population of ~10,000 birds.
- About 90% of the population breeds at just 3 island groups: *South Farallon Island*, *Santa Barbara Island*, and *San Miguel Island*.

Nesting Information

- Ashy Storm-Petrels nest in rock crevices along cliffs, offshore rocks, and under driftwood in sea caves.
- Ashy Storm-Petrels lay just one egg/year.

Cool Facts

- Ashy Storm-Petrels can live to 34 years.
- Petrels “patter” on the ocean’s surface to gather prey items including squid, fish and krill.
- Ashy Storm-Petrels return to and depart from the nest at night to avoid predators.

Scripps's Murrelet



Range

- Limited breeding range on offshore islands from southern California to central Baja California, Mexico.
- Birds disperse after breeding, sometimes as far north as British Columbia.
- Santa Barbara Island supports the largest nesting colony for this species.

Nesting Information

- Restoration to improve nesting habitat is underway on Santa Barbara Island.
- Murrelets nest in small crevices, caves and under dense bushes.
- Adults are active at the colony only at night.

Cool Facts

- A Scripps's Murrelet chick will leave the nest for the open ocean at two days old tumbling down steep slopes and cliffs to reunite with parents in the water.
- Females lay two eggs containing 22% of her body weight which are incubated for about a month.

Cassin's Auklet



Range

- Cassin's Auklets breed along the Pacific coast, from midway up the Baja California peninsula to the Aleutian Islands.
- On the Channel Islands, the Cassin's Auklet currently nests on Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz, San Miguel, and Anacapa Islands.
- During the non-breeding season, Cassin's Auklets will spend most of their time at sea.

Nesting Information

- Cassin's Auklets nest in rock crevices and build burrows. They also nest in artificial burrows allowing biologists to easily monitor a colony. They return to their nest only at night.
- Both parents incubate a single egg.

Cool Facts

- Cassin's Auklets are excellent divers, their wings allow to them "fly" underwater.
- During the nesting season, food is stored in a specialized throat pouch and brought back to the nesting site.

Tufted Puffin



Range

- Tufted Puffins have an extensive breeding range along the Pacific coast from Alaska south to the Channel Islands.
- They spend the winter over large areas of the North Central Pacific, generally over deep oceanic waters.

Nesting Information

- Tufted Puffins nest mostly in earthen burrows (up to 1.5m/5ft. deep) they dig into cliff edges and slopes which are well-lined with vegetation and feathers.
- They have been known to nest in small numbers on the northern Channel Islands. The last confirmed breeding on the Channel Islands occurred in 1997.

Cool Facts

- Over 25,000 pairs have been recorded in a single colony off the coast of British Columbia.
- Yellow tufts appear on both males and females during the breeding season.

Partners for this project

SEABIRD PROTECTION NETWORK



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***Remember...
follow the Seabird Tips in
this card to protect nesting
seabirds!***



For more information about
seabird restoration on the
Channel Islands

www.montroserestoration.gov



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