Sea Birds of the Pacific NW

Marine Biology
Prepared by Diana Wheat - LBCC

Seabirds
- Birds that dwell a significant part of their life using the resources from the sea.
- Usually nest on islands or near the shore.
- Special adaptations for high energy environments.
  - Flight in potentially high winds
  - Many can float or dive
  - May nest seasonally on cliff faces.
  - Often fast moving to avoid predators.
  - Homeothermic/Endothermic

Western Gull
*Larus occidentalis*
Most common seabird
Often near human habitations e.g. piers
Often fly inland

Traits
- Distinctive red dot on bill
- White head
- Dark gray back
- Pink legs
- White bands on dark tail
- Juvenile mottled gray,
  Takes over 2 yrs to dev adult plumage

Double Crested Cormorant
*Phalacrocorax auritus*
Most common diving bird.
Float low on water surface
After fishing they spread wings to dry.

Traits
- Large, dark plumage
- Long hooked bill
- Orange/yellow skin patch around base of bill & chin
- Often seen in groups
- Long, outstretched necks
- Nests made of sticks, bones and feathers.
Brown Pelican
*Pelecanus occidentalis*

Large bird found along beaches and near estuaries. Often in flocks. Forage for fish over the ocean just offshore. Dives! Spring & Summer only (OR)

**Traits**
- Brown plumage
- Massive bill / gular pouch
- White stripes on upper wing, seen if diving.
- Long wingspan 84”

Common Murre
*Uria aalge*

Gregarious/form colonies Nest on ledges of islands. Cliff dwellers

**Traits**
- Large upright standing
- Long, slender, pointed bill
- Dark sooty gray head & back
- Vivid white chest & belly
- Eggs are pear shaped/blue

Black Oystercatcher
*Haematopus bachmani*

Commonly found on intertidal shorelines. Feed on many invertz, especially limpets and mussels, but rarely oysters. Only on W. coast ➔ Alaska Walks with unusual gait.

**Traits**
- Nearly entirely black.
- Long, thin pink legs.
- Vivid red-orange beak
- Red eye ring around yellow eye.

Cassin’s Auklet
*Ptychoramphus aleuticus*

Rarely seen – pelagic Colonies - offshore islands. May wash up onto shore. Fly during dark hours. Diving birds, feed on krill Nest in crevices or burrows

**Traits**
- Small, plump & gray
- Bill short & stout (gray)
- Pale eyes, crescents above & below eye.
- Countershading
Semipalmated Plover
*Charadrius semipalmatus*

- Found along the beach.*
- Seen from afar, have a behavior of run-stop-scan movement.
- Hunting for surface invertz.

**Traits**
- Small shorebird ~7”
- Brown & black wings.
- Distinctive dark breast band
- Short orange & black bill
- Long skinny legs (orange)

*Sooty Shearwater
*Puffinus griseus*

- Perhaps the most common seabird in OR.
- Form huge flocks.
- Glide along the waves.
- Seen mostly by fisherman or boaters just off coast.

**Traits**
- Dark/sooty plumage
- Fast wingbeats followed by short glides.
- Whitish under wings
- Hooked bill

**Common loon
*Gavia immer**

- Seen in bays and lakes near shore.
- Famous for its call.
- Large, floating/diving bird.
- Cumbersome on land.

**Traits:**
- Large
- Robust neck
- B&W speckled plumage
- Complex coloration, bands
- Red eye

**Rarely Seen but noteworthy birds**

- Tufted Puffin
- Marbled Murrelet
Threats to Seabirds

✓ Habitat loss – conversion to development.
✓ Increased recreational use of beaches e.g. ATVs and human encroachment.
✓ Disruption of food chain, warming seas & overharvesting of food sources.
✓ Disturbance e.g. dogs chasing them, boating close to colonies, fireworks*
✓ Pollution – in particular plastics/fishing line

To learn more……

• Consider watching nature films.
• Be open to learning more.
• When you visit the coast:
  - Take time to stroll
  - Consider workshops/Audubon mtgs.
  - Book a pelagic tour – ecotourism.
  - Share your enthusiasm with others.

Credits

Background Template - Attribution Presentation Magazine website
www.presentationmagazine.com

Seabirds of the Pacific Northwest
USFWS Brochure

Websites:
Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife
Siletz Bay – National Wildlife Refuge Website, USFWS
https://www.fws.gov/refuge/Siletz_Bay/wildlife_and_habitat/shorebirds.html