

SOOTY SHEARWATER

Puffinus griseus

non-breeding visitor, regular migrant

monotypic

Sooty Shearwaters breed on islands off SE Australia, S New Zealand, and the S tip of South America, generally in Oct-May. After breeding they disperse throughout the world's oceans including the entire Pacific (King 1967, Cramp and Simmons 1977, Harrison 1983, AOU 1998, Spear and Ainley 1999). In the N Pacific, records exist for most island groups including Wake Atoll (Rauzon et al. 2008). They have been observed migrating northward through Hawaiian Island waters primarily in Mar-May and southward in larger numbers in Sep-Nov, consistent with a figure-eight flight pattern for many birds (Spear and Ainley 1999); records of lower numbers also occur in Hawaii for all other months of the year. Many records of dark shearwaters were not described well enough to distinguish Sooty from the very similar Short-tailed Shearwater (see next account), but the following account appears to reliably represent the status of Sooty Shearwater in Hawaiian Island waters.

At sea, during daily surveys SE of the Southeastern Hawaiian Islands Sooty Shearwaters first appeared in the 3rd week of Mar and peaked during Apr of both 1964 and 1965 (King 1970). In fall 1964 the southward migration started in mid-Sep, peaked in the first week of Oct, and continued sporadically through Nov. King tallied a high count of 1,333 Sooties on 3 Apr 1964 about 470 km NE of O'ahu, and he recorded a total of 1,684 during that month. The next highest monthly total was 507 in April 1965 and all other monthly totals, year-round, were much lower (King 1970). Only one was recorded in Jun-Aug and only two in Dec-Feb (see also [HRBP 5794-5795](#)). Rowlett (2002) recorded 7,036 Sooty Shearwaters on 59 of 93 days during 25 Aug-14 Nov 2002 within Hawaiian waters from W of Kure to E of Hawai'i. Rowlett's high count was of 6,250 birds on 28 Sep 2000, 110 km N of Kaua'i. The next highest daily totals were only 230, 85, 55, and lower, with most counts <10 birds; abundance appeared to be consistently higher near the Southeastern Hawaiian Islands. These high numbers on single days during both surveys indicate that migrating Sooty Shearwaters may travel in distinct aggregates of individuals; although Rowlett (2002) comments that flocks of Sooty Shearwaters were not as defined as those of [Short-tailed Shearwaters](#). During mid-Oct 1952, a similarly large flight of Sooty Shearwaters, estimated to be at least 50 miles in width and traveling SE, was reported at sea E of Hawai'i (*E* 24:52), a count of 700 was also recorded at sea off Kailua Kona, Hawai'i, 15 Sep 2004, and a good passage was observed in these waters during the week of 22-29 Sep 2009. Spear et al. (1999) recorded 164 in 72 hrs of surveying at sea in spring and fall 1984-1991, with significantly higher densities recorded in fall.

In the *Northwest Hawaiian Islands*, dead remains of Sooty Shearwaters have been found washed up on ***Kure, Midway, Pearl and Hermes, Lisianski, Laysan, and French Frigate***, many preserved at USNM, BPBM, and elsewhere (at least 15 specimens; A. Wetmore in Olson 1996b, *E* 18:2, Bailey 1956, Fisher 1965, Clapp and Woodward 1968; [HRBP 1448](#)). In the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands*, they are seen occasionally from shore (high counts of 650 from O'ahu 18 Sep 2005 and 500 from Kaua'i, 1 Apr 2000; *AB* 54:330) and regularly during single-day fall and spring trips offshore (date range 3 Mar-17 Dec). They occasionally become stranded on beaches and are turned in for

rehabilitation to long-standing programs on *Kaua'i* and *O'ahu*. During the Save-Our-Shearwater Program on Kaua'i, at least four Sooty Shearwaters were received between 1983 and 1997 (e.g., [HRBP 0587-0588](#)) and at SLP, O'ahu, four Sooty Shearwaters were also received, in 1991-2003. In addition, single Sooty Shearwaters were found stranded on a used car lot in Honolulu 3 Apr 1964 (*E* 24:52; died) and in Kahului, *Maui* 6 Nov 1992 (released next day). One was collected 4 mi off Pepe'ekeo Pt. N of Hilo, *Hawai'i I* in Sep 1956 (*E* 24:52) and several have been photographed during trips off Kona in 2002-2009 (e.g., [HRBP 5620-5622](#), 5794-5795, published NAB 62:495 lower of two photos; upper is mis-identified [Wedge-tailed Shearwater](#)). At least 14 Sooty Shearwaters, recovered from beaches or rehabilitation centers on O'ahu, Maui, and Hawai'i I have been preserved as specimens at BPBM (e.g., [HRBP 5671](#); *E* 24:52, Clapp and Woodward 1968).

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

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