

BLUE-GRAY NODDY

Procelsterna cerulea

Other: Blue Noddy, Gray Noddy, Blue-gray Ternlet,
Necker Island Tern

P.c. saxatilis

non-breeding visitor, indigenous

The Blue-gray Noddy occurs locally in the c. and se. Pacific, from San Ambrosio and Easter Is through Polynesia, and N to the Marshall Is, Johnston Atoll, and the Hawaiian Islands (King 1967, Harrison 1983, AOU 1998). The similar Gray Noddy (*P. albivitta*) breeds in the s. Pacific from Chile to Kermedec I off Australia (Higgins and Davies 1996). The subspecies *P.c. saxatilis* is confined to the Marshall, Johnston, Marcus, and Northwestern Hawaiian Islands.

Although reported near Nihoa, within sight of Kaua'i, and probably at La Perouse Pinnacle, French Frigate, during the Rothschild Expedition in 1891 (Rothschild 1900, Munro 1944), Blue-gray Noddy was not established as a breeding species in the *Northwestern Hawaiian Islands* until Fisher (1903c; see also Fisher 1903a, Rauzon 2001) described it as a new species, the Necker Island Tern, *P. saxatilis*. Populations have since been estimated as high as 1,000-1,500 breeding pairs on *Necker* (Clapp and Kridler 1977, Harrison 1990) and 2,000-2,500 pairs on *Nihoa* (Clapp et al. 1977, Harrison 1990), together comprising over 99% of the breeding population in Hawaii ([Table](#)). Two additional small breeding colonies (< 20 pairs each) are also present at *Gardner Pinnacles* (Clapp and Woodward 1968, Clapp 1972) and La Perouse Pinnacle, *French Frigate* (Amerson 1971), although in 2008 a [Peregrine Falcon](#) had reduced numbers on La Perouse to just one adult, either predated all other adults or chasing them from the colony. Preliminary information indicates peak colony attendance and breeding in Dec-Mar (Berger 1972, 1981; Rauzon et al. 1984), although it appears that breeding can occur at reduced rates year-round, in at least some years.

There are very few records of Blue-gray Noddy away from the immediate vicinity of breeding colonies (*cf.* King 1967); e.g., there are no records *at sea* among the Northwestern Islands and there are only about 5 records (1967-1990) from Tern Island, only 12 km from the colony on La Perouse Pinnacle, French Frigate. The only other records from the Northwest Islands are from *Laysan*, where they had been noted "once in a while" prior to 1923 (Wetmore in Olson 1996b) and on 19 Sep 1964, 11 Jun 1967, 16 Jun-10 Jul 1994, and 17 Jul 1998 (found dead; BPBM 184343), and 14 Apr-21 Jul 2009. The observations in 1994 were of 4-17 individuals at the rocky ledges at the S end of the island, suggesting that they were prospecting for breeding that summer.

In the *Southeastern Hawaiian Islands*, Wetmore collected an adult male Blue-gray Noddy at Kaula Rock near *Ni'ihau* 1 Jul 1923 (USNM 300430) and a small breeding colony was reported there in 1932 (Caum 1936). However, other than a sighting of an individual near the islet 1 Mar 1961 (*E* 22:2) and a record of 1-3 in the vicinity 11 Apr 1965 (King 1970), there have been no subsequent reports from Kaula. Three individuals were also described 10-15 km E of Lehua Islet off Ni'ihau 14 May 2004. Several other records from the Southeastern Islands either lack description or are accompanied by details suggesting other tern species; these include individuals off Lihue, Kaua'i 24 Mar 1998, in Honolulu, O'ahu 8 Aug 2000, at Kealia Pond NWR, Maui 4 Jul

1988; and over Nu'upia Pond on Mokapu Peninsula, O'ahu 11 Nov 1996 (3 individuals).
We consider these records unsubstantiated.

[Acronyms and Abbreviations](#)

[Literature cited](#)

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