

# SPECTACLED PETREL | *Procellaria conspicillata*

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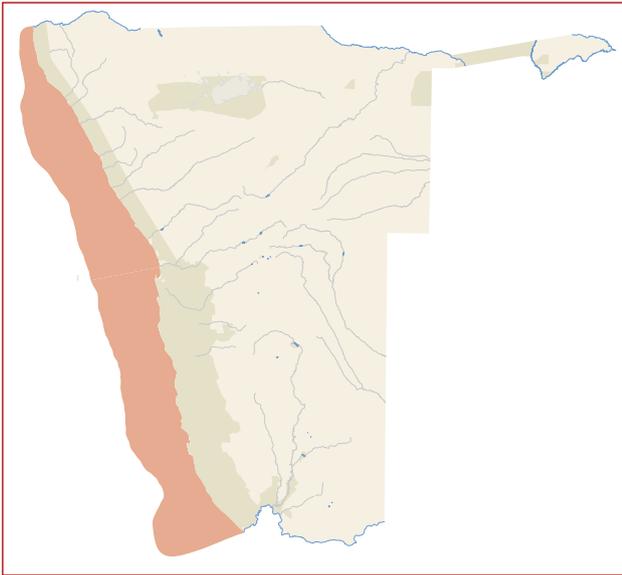
<b>Conservation Status:</b>	Vulnerable
<b>Southern African Range:</b>	Waters off Namibia, western South Africa
<b>Area of Occupancy:</b>	Unknown
<b>Population Estimate:</b>	14,400 breeding pairs globally
<b>Population Trend:</b>	Increasing
<b>Habitat:</b>	Oceanic and shelf break waters
<b>Threats:</b>	Bycatch in longline fisheries, introduction of alien species at breeding locality, ingestion of marine debris



## DISTRIBUTION AND ABUNDANCE

Long regarded as a subspecies of the White-chinned Petrel *P. aequinoctialis*, the Spectacled Petrel was given species status in 1998 based on differences in morphology, courtship calls and its more northerly breeding range (Ryan 1998b, Brooke 2004). It is found mostly in the south Atlantic Ocean, between the latitudes of 25°S and 41°S (ACAP 2009d, Reid *et al.* 2014). The breeding population is confined to Inaccessible Island in the Tristan da Cunha island group, although historically, there may have been a population breeding at Amsterdam-St. Paul in the southern Indian Ocean (Ryan 1998b). Birds frequent waters off

Brazil throughout the year (Bugoni *et al.* 2009), but are also found regularly in small numbers along the southern African coast, including along the Walvis Ridge, particularly during summer (Camphuysen & van der Meer 2000, Ryan 2005e, Reid *et al.* 2014). Vagrants possibly occur as far north as Angola (Lambert 2001). The population has been increasing steadily throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century following the disappearance of introduced feral pigs from Inaccessible Island. There were thought to be only a few tens of pairs in 1937/38 (Hagen 1952), perhaps 100 pairs in 1950 (Elliott 1952) and 1,000 pairs in 1982/83 (Fraser *et al.* 1988). Subsequent more detailed surveys in 1999 (Ryan & Moloney 2000), 2004 (Ryan *et al.* 2006) and 2009



gave increasingly higher estimates, with 14,400 breeding pairs in 2009 (Ryan & Ronconi 2011), which translates to a total population of more than 50,000 birds. Counts at sea in Brazilian waters in 1997 to 1999 estimated a total population of up to 45,000 birds (IUCN 2012a).



## ECOLOGY

The breeding ecology of the Spectacled Petrel is poorly studied. It nests in burrows in bogfern heath and along streams (Ryan & Moloney 2000). Eggs are laid in late October; chicks hatch in December and fledge in March (Ryan & Moloney 2000, ACAP 2009d). Tracked breeding birds mainly foraged in oceanic waters, while non-breeders and failed breeders principally foraged over the Rio Grande Rise, the Walvis Ridge and along the shelf break off the east coast of South America (Reid *et al.* 2014). They feed mainly by seizing prey from the water surface and by surface-diving (Ryan 2005e), but like the closely-related White-chinned Petrel (Rollinson *et al.* 2014) they can probably dive to at least 15 m. Its diet is dominated by cephalopods (Colabuono & Vooren 2007), but it also feeds on crustaceans and small fish (Ryan 2005e). It is attracted to fishing vessels and readily feeds on fishery discards (Ryan 2005e, Colabuono & Vooren 2007, Bugoni *et al.* 2008). In waters off South Africa, it often associates with White-chinned Petrels at fishing vessels (ACAP 2009e).



## THREATS

The Spectacled Petrel's attraction to longline vessels, predominantly in waters where its distribution overlaps with the Brazilian fishery, poses a threat to the small population (Bugoni *et al.* 2009, Yeh *et al.* 2013). Tracking studies showed that foraging areas used by non-breeding birds overlapped to a greater extent with areas targeted

by tuna longline fisheries than that frequented by breeding birds (Reid *et al.* 2014). Up to about 1,000 individuals were estimated to be killed annually by pelagic and demersal longlining activities off southern Brazil in the 1990s (Olmos *et al.* 2000), but mortality rates have since decreased in this region. Small numbers of Spectacled Petrels have also been killed by the pelagic longline fishery off South Africa (Petersen *et al.* 2008a).

Predation by feral pigs nearly caused the extinction of the population during the nineteenth century (Fraser *et al.* 1988, Ryan 1998b) and the ongoing growth of the population is thought to result from the recovery of the population following the disappearance of feral pigs (Ryan *et al.* 2006, Ryan & Ronconi 2011). The potential invasion of other alien species, such as mice and rats, poses a threat and great care is taken to avoid rodents reaching the island (Ryan 2005g). Ingestion of marine debris, including plastics, has been recorded (Colabuono & Vooren 2007).



## CONSERVATION STATUS

The species is classified as *Vulnerable* in Namibia because of its small, restricted population and the threats that fishing activities pose to the species. These threats are particularly severe in Namibian waters, given the high rates of petrel bycatch reported in the region (Petersen *et al.* 2008c, Albatross Task Force unpubl. data). Until 2007, the Spectacled Petrel was listed as globally *Critically Endangered* because of its small population size and the incidence of fishery-related mortalities (IUCN 2012a). However, recent surveys of burrows at Inaccessible Island indicate that the population is increasing, prompting the revision of its conservation status to *Vulnerable*. Demographic models indicate that the population is currently increasing at roughly 7% per year (Ryan *et al.* 2006, Ryan & Ronconi 2011). The Spectacled Petrel is listed in Appendix II of the Convention for the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) and in Annex 1 of the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP). It should be accorded *Specially Protected* status in Namibia in any revised or new Parks and Wildlife legislation.



## ACTIONS

Actions that are required for this species are the same as those listed for the White-chinned Petrel. These include an assessment of the extent of fisheries-induced mortalities in Namibian waters, and the rigorous enforcement of the National Plan of Action for seabirds and its associated regulations pertaining to the mandatory implementation of mitigation measures by the longline and trawl fisheries in Namibian waters.