

Pterodroma deserta -- Mathews, 1934

ANIMALIA -- CHORDATA -- AVES -- PROCELLARIIFORMES -- PROCELLARIIDAE

Common names: Desertas Petrel;

European Red List Assessment

European Red List Status

VU -- Vulnerable, (IUCN version 3.1)

Assessment Information

Year published:	2015
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Assessor(s):	BirdLife International
Reviewer(s):	Symes, A.
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Assessment Rationale

European regional assessment: Vulnerable (VU)

EU27 regional assessment: Vulnerable (VU)

This recently-split petrel is endemic to Europe and the EU27, breeding on just one small islet in Madeira (Portugal). It is listed as Vulnerable in both Europe and the EU27 because, although its population appears to be stable, it is nevertheless very small, and the species occupies a very small range on only one island when breeding, and is therefore susceptible to human impacts, including introduced species and stochastic events.

Occurrence

Countries/Territories of Occurrence

Native:

Portugal

Origin Uncertain:

Azores (to PT); Spain; Canary Is. (to ES)

Vagrant:

Ireland, Rep. of; United Kingdom

Population

The European population is estimated at 160-180 pairs, which equates to 320-360 mature individuals. The entire population is found in the EU27. For details of national estimates, see [Supplementary PDF](#).

Trend

In Europe and the EU27 the population size is estimated to be stable, although the species faces a number of threats and is susceptible to stochastic events and human impacts. For details of national estimates, see [Supplementary PDF](#).

Habitats and Ecology

This species is marine and pelagic. It breeds at 80-300 m asl, usually in burrows excavated in the soil, although recently nests were found in rock crevices in areas where soil is not present (D. Menezes and P. Oliveira in litt. 2007). Clutch size is a single egg (Fjeldså and Kirwan 2014). Birds return to their breeding grounds in early June and juveniles fledge throughout December (D. Menezes and P. Oliveira in litt. 2007). It feeds on squid and small fish. Outside of the breeding season birds disperse over subtropical waters in the east of the North Atlantic (Fjeldså and Kirwan 2014).

Habitats & Altitude		
Habitat (level 1 - level 2)	Importance	Occurrence
Grassland - Subtropical/Tropical Dry	major	breeding
Marine Neritic - Macroalgal/Kelp	suitable	breeding
Marine Neritic - Macroalgal/Kelp	suitable	non-breeding
Marine Neritic - Pelagic	major	breeding

Habitats & Altitude			
Habitat (level 1 - level 2)		Importance	Occurrence
Marine Neritic - Pelagic		major	non-breeding
Marine Neritic - Seagrass (Submerged)		suitable	breeding
Marine Neritic - Seagrass (Submerged)		suitable	non-breeding
Marine Neritic - Subtidal Loose Rock/pebble/gravel		suitable	breeding
Marine Neritic - Subtidal Loose Rock/pebble/gravel		suitable	non-breeding
Marine Neritic - Subtidal Rock and Rocky Reefs		suitable	breeding
Marine Neritic - Subtidal Rock and Rocky Reefs		suitable	non-breeding
Marine Neritic - Subtidal Sandy		suitable	breeding
Marine Neritic - Subtidal Sandy		suitable	non-breeding
Marine Neritic - Subtidal Sandy-Mud		suitable	breeding
Marine Neritic - Subtidal Sandy-Mud		suitable	non-breeding
Marine Oceanic - Epipelagic (m)		major	breeding
Marine Oceanic - Epipelagic (m)		major	non-breeding
Rocky areas (eg. inland cliffs, mountain peaks)		major	breeding
Rocky areas (eg. inland cliffs, mountain peaks)		major	breeding
Altitude	80-300 m	Occasional altitudinal limits	

Threats

Historically, the species and its breeding sites have been affected by habitat degradation caused by introduced goats, rabbits and mice (D. Menezes and P. Oliveira in litt. 2007). However, rabbits and mice have been controlled since 2006 (D. Menezes and P. Oliveira in litt. 2007) and goats are reported to only rarely visit the plateau where the breeding sites are located on Bugio (Ramirez 2008). Predation and disturbance by Yellow-legged Gulls (*Larus cachinnans*) are potential threats on Bugio. Despite mitigation work, soil erosion at nesting areas remains a threat (J. Sultana in litt. 2013, I. Ramirez in litt. 2014), with extreme weather events, especially in winter, having the potential for major impacts on the areas of soil used for nesting burrows (I. Ramirez in litt. 2014).

Threats & Impacts					
Threat (level 1)	Threat (level 2)	Impact and Stresses			
Biological resource use	Hunting & trapping terrestrial animals (intentional use - species is the target)	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Minority (<50%)	Slow, Significant Declines	Low Impact
		Stresses			
		Species mortality			
Climate change & severe weather	Storms & flooding	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Past, Likely to Return	Whole (>90%)	Rapid Declines	Past Impact
		Stresses			
		Ecosystem degradation; Reduced reproductive success			
Invasive and other problematic species, genes & diseases	Unspecified mice (<i>Mus</i> spp.)	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Minority (<50%)	No decline	Low Impact
		Stresses			
		Ecosystem degradation			
Invasive and other problematic species, genes & diseases	Unspecified rats (<i>Rattus</i> spp.)	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Majority (50-90%)	Slow, Significant Declines	Medium Impact
		Stresses			
		Reduced reproductive success			
Invasive and other problematic species, genes & diseases	Unspecified species	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Minority (<50%)	Slow, Significant Declines	Low Impact
		Stresses			
		Species mortality			

Threats & Impacts					
Threat (level 1)	Threat (level 2)	Impact and Stresses			
Invasive and other problematic species, genes & diseases	Unspecified species	Timing	Scope	Severity	Impact
		Ongoing	Minority (<50%)	Negligible declines	Low Impact
		Stresses			
Species mortality; Species disturbance; Reduced reproductive success					

Conservation

Conservation Actions Underway

A European action plan was published in 1996 (Zino et al. 1996) and its implementation reviewed in 2010 (Barov and Derhé 2011). Since 2006, an eradication programme for rabbits and mice has been in force, and is on-going. As a result, their effect on the most sensitive areas is already negligible. A contingency plan for accidental introductions of invasive species is being developed. A goat eradication programme is on-going and not yet complete. The threat from Yellow-legged Gulls is being monitored (D. Menezes and P. Oliveira in litt. 2007). Natural vegetation has been replanted, anti-erosion blankets installed, wardening and monitoring conducted and artificial burrows installed on Bugio as part of a LIFE Nature project (Menezes 2007, Menezes et al. 2011). Geolocators were attached to some individuals from 2007 to investigate foraging ecology (Ramirez 2008). Monitoring of the species is carried out by staff from the Madeiran Natural Park and other researchers, although such work requires great efforts, as the southern plateau of Bugio is extremely remote (I. Ramirez in litt. 2014).

Conservation Actions Proposed

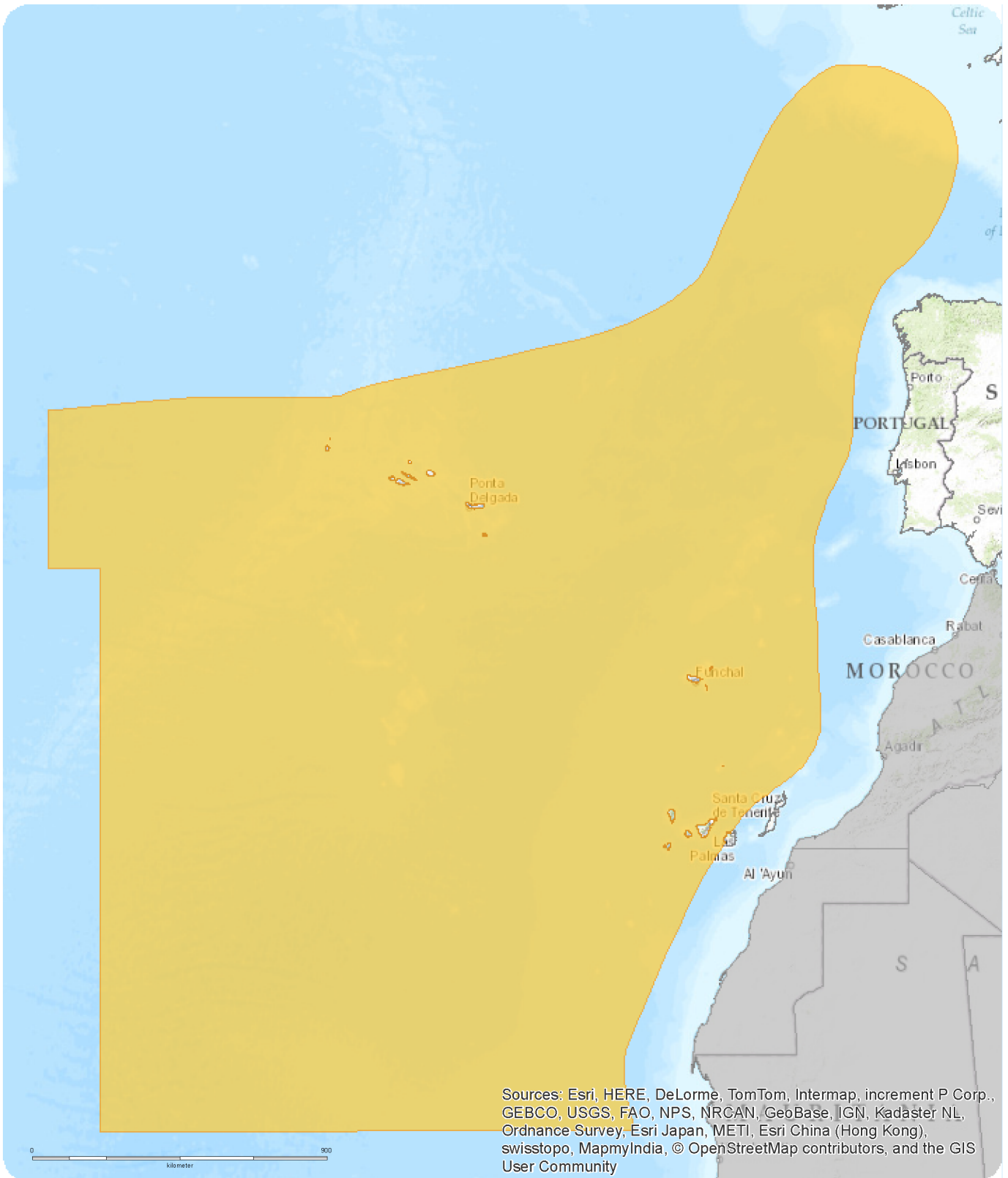
Conduct coordinated surveys to obtain an up-to-date estimate for the total breeding population. Continue annual surveys to monitor population trends. Study the at-sea distribution of the species. Complete control measures against goats. Continue control measures against rabbits and mice. Assess the impact of Yellow-legged Gulls through detailed research.

Bibliography

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Map (see overleaf)

European Regional Assessment



Pterodroma deserta

Range

■ Extant (resident)

Citation:
BirdLife International (2015)
European Red List of Birds



Map created 05/12/2015

