

Sooty tern

The Sooty tern, a bird of the ocean, is a creature of grace and wonder. With sleek black feathers that shimmer in the sunlight and wings that span the length of a grown man’s arms, this avian marvel is a true sight to behold.

A master of the open sea, the Sooty tern spends most of its life flying over the waves, diving into the ocean to catch its prey with effortless ease. Its keen eyesight and lightning-fast reflexes make it a force to be reckoned with, and its tenacity in the face of adversity is nothing short of inspiring.

Serial Number	Characteristic	Description
1.	Common name	Sooty tern
2.	Scientific name	Onychoprion fuscatus
3.	Colour	Blackish-grey upperparts and white underparts
4.	Average length in cms	33 – 38 cm
5.	Average height in cms	70 – 80 cm
6.	Type of bird	Waterbird
7.	Found in India in states	Found in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands
8.	Habitat	Breeds on coral islands and sandy beaches; found in tropical and subtropical oceans
9.	Status	Least Concern

Features

The Sooty tern, a seabird of the family Laridae, boasts a striking physical appearance that sets it apart from other birds in its habitat. With its dark, velvety black plumage, this bird appears to have been painted with the finest ink, lending it an air of mystery and elegance.

Standing at a height of around 40 centimeters (16 inches) and with a wingspan of approximately 80-90 centimeters (31-35 inches), the Sooty tern is a medium-sized bird, but don't let its size fool you. This bird is a master of the skies, able to soar for hours on end without tiring.

In addition to its striking coloration, the Sooty tern has several other notable physical features. Its long, slender wings are perfectly designed for the bird's oceanic lifestyle, allowing it to effortlessly glide above the waves and dive down into the water to catch its prey.

The Sooty tern's beak is another impressive feature, sharp and curved, it is the perfect tool for snatching up fish and other small sea creatures. And with its keen eyesight, the Sooty tern is able to spot its prey from great distances, ensuring that it never goes hungry.

In terms of size, the Sooty tern is typically around 33-38 centimeters (13-15 inches) in length, with males and females being roughly the same size. And while the bird's plumage may vary slightly depending on its age and location, its distinctive black coloration is a constant feature that makes it instantly recognizable.

Habitat and Food

The Sooty tern is a seabird that spends the majority of its life on the open ocean, rarely venturing too far from land. This species has a wide range, found throughout the tropical

and subtropical waters of the world, including the Atlantic, Indian, and Pacific Oceans.

The Sooty tern is an incredibly adaptive bird, able to make use of a variety of different habitats within its range. It can be found nesting on islands, atolls, and even on man-made structures such as buoys and oil platforms.

When it comes to eating habits, the Sooty tern is a skilled hunter that feeds primarily on fish and squid. It is a bird that is well-suited to life on the open ocean, able to hunt for its food by diving into the water from great heights, or by simply skimming the surface of the waves.

The Sooty tern is also known to follow schools of fish, using its keen eyesight to spot any prey that may be swimming below the surface. Once it has located its prey, the Sooty tern will dive down into the water, using its sharp, curved beak to snatch up fish and other small creatures.

In addition to its hunting skills, the Sooty tern is also able to drink seawater, a remarkable adaptation that allows it to survive in environments where freshwater is scarce. This bird is able to filter the salt from the seawater, extracting the necessary nutrients and fluids to sustain its life.

Nesting and Nurturing

The Sooty tern is a seabird that typically breeds on islands and atolls, forming large colonies that can number in the thousands or even tens of thousands of individuals. These birds are monogamous, forming long-term pairs that work together to care for their young.

Nesting typically occurs between March and September, with the birds laying a single egg in a nest made from whatever materials are available, such as vegetation or feathers. The Sooty tern's nest is often a simple scrape in the sand,

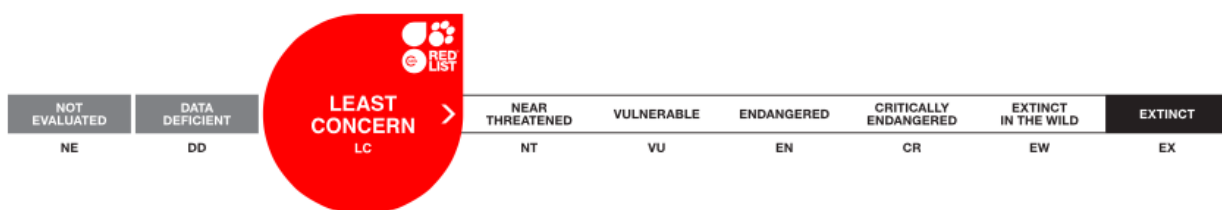
although in some cases it may be more elaborate, featuring a small mound or a ring of rocks.

The egg laid by the Sooty tern is usually pale brown with dark spots, although it can also be white or pale blue-green. The eggs are typically around 35 mm (1.4 in) in length and weigh around 25 g (0.88 oz).

The incubation period for the Sooty tern's egg is around 28-30 days, with both parents taking turns to incubate the egg and protect it from predators. Once the egg hatches, the chick is initially covered in fluffy down and is entirely dependent on its parents for food and warmth.

The Sooty tern's chick grows quickly, reaching fledgling age at around 42-49 days old. During this time, the parents continue to care for the chick, providing it with food and protection. The Sooty tern's chick is able to fly within a few weeks of fledging, although it may continue to be fed by its parents for several months after leaving the nest.

IUCN Status



The Sooty tern (*Onychoprion fuscatus*) is currently listed as a species of "Least Concern" on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species. This means that the species is not currently considered to be facing a high risk of extinction in the wild.

However, the Sooty tern is still facing several threats, particularly from human activities such as fishing and pollution. These birds are sometimes caught accidentally in

fishing nets, and can also be impacted by oil spills and other types of pollution in the ocean.

Additionally, some Sooty tern populations have been impacted by habitat loss and disturbance due to human activities on their nesting islands. Climate change is also a growing concern for this species, as rising sea levels and ocean temperatures could impact the availability of suitable nesting habitat and prey.