



SNOW PETREL
Pagodroma nivea





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Order : *Procellariiformes* — Family : *Procellariidae*

GEOGRAPHIC RANGE :

The species's circumpolar range is reduced to the Antarctic continent, South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands.

HABITAT :

Snow petrels are found from the edge of the pack ice to the continental ice-shelf. They nest on rocky cliffs, but several nesting sites have been located inland.

DIET :

They primarily feed on fish, squid, mollusks and crustaceans. They sometimes scavenge the placenta and carcasses of marine mammals, as well as dead birds.

BEHAVIOR :

They capture their prey in flight by dipping their beak in the water as they pass. They also surface plunge, surface seize, and flutter on the surface of the sea while pecking it continuously. Snow petrels are loosely gregarious at sea and when breeding. They are loosely colonial breeders and nests are widely scattered, often in the middle of a large concentration of other petrel species. At the beginning of the breeding period, both males and females perform aerial displays. The female flies around the nest area and the male follows her, trying to stay as close as possible to her. These high-speed aerial ballets are amazing to watch. Other displays include head-raising, bill-fencing, bill-kissing and mutual preening. Snow petrels are monogamous with long-lasting pair bonds. When disturbed, nesting birds squirt fowl-smelling orange stomach oil at intruders through the open mouth.

REPRODUCTION :

The breeding season starts in late October-early November, and eggs are laid between late November and mid-December. The species forms loosely spaced colonies and breeds on glaciated islands and continental Antarctica. Nests are pebble-lined scrapes on snow-free rock ledges with overhanging protection or in deep rock crevices. Females lay a single white egg. Shared incubation takes 41 to 49 days. Both adults brood the chick during the first week. They feed it krill and fish. Chicks fledge between 42 and 54 days after hatching.

- Size : 30-40 cm
- Wingspan : 75-95 cm
- Weight : 200-460 g



THREATS :

The species is categorized as "Least concern" (IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, August 2018). It may be threatened in the future by climate change, leading to the reduction of the sea-ice cover and the decrease of prey in some areas.