

Waved Albatross



Agreement on the Conservation
of Albatrosses and Petrels

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Artwork by *Georgia Feild*

The WAVED ALBATROSS is endemic to Ecuador, breeding only on Isla Española in the Galapagos Islands and Isla de la Plata close to the mainland, both localities a little south of the Equator. The main population on



Española has been estimated at around 9600 breeding pairs some years ago, and of the order of 35 000 adult birds. The Isla de la Plata population is only about 12 pairs. The population trend is not that well known but based on monitored colonies on Española, the species is thought to be decreasing at an annual rate of around 6%, giving it a global threat level of Critically Endangered.

Waved Albatrosses are medium-sized, with a whitish head, neck and underwings; the body and upper wings are brown with fine barring in places, giving the bird its name. The bill is noticeably long and yellow. From the front the head appears wide with distinctive feather 'eyebrows'.

Waved Albatrosses lay a single white egg on bare ground, which they can move over short distances when incubating by shuffling along. These movements could be due to the unwelcome attentions of introduced mosquitoes during heavy rainfall years. This sometimes leads to egg breakages and thus breeding failures. Partners share incubation and brooding, with both feeding the chick until it fledges. At sea, Waved Albatross keep to the southern hemisphere, travelling to the upwelling continental shelf waters of northern Chile, Peru and Ecuador. Diet is mainly fish, squid and crustaceans obtained by surface seizing and scavenging.

Removal of feral goats on Isla Española in 1978 has led to recovery of woody vegetation and the subsequent loss of some inland breeding habitat. Feral cats and goats have been eradicated on Isla de la Plata. Bycatch (and deliberate catches) of adults and juveniles by inshore artisanal fishers using longlines and drift nets on the continental shelf is thought to be the main threat facing Waved Albatrosses. El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) oceanographic events may be causing increased adult mortality. Isla Española falls within the [Galápagos National Park](#) and the [Galápagos Marine Reserve](#), both forming a World Heritage Site. Isla de la Plata is also part of a national park and lies within a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance. An international Action Plan for the Waved Albatross, supported by ACAP, guides research and conservation.

Sources:

ACAP 2012. Waved Albatross *Phoebastria irrorata*; <https://www.acap.aq/en/acap-species>

BirdLife International 2020. Species factsheet: *Phoebastria irrorata*
<http://datazone.birdlife.org/species/factsheet/waved-albatross-phoebastria-irrorata/text>

John Cooper, ACAP Information Officer, 13 October 2020