

Ivory Gull

Pagophila eburnea

STATUS	Not Listed 	Endangered 
Endangered 	Not Listed 	Not Listed 



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Species Description

The Ivory Gull is a medium-sized (40-43 cm) seabird. Adults have distinctive pure white plumage all over, black legs, black eyes, and a small, grayish green bill with a yellowish red tip. Immature Ivory Gulls are speckled with dark spots that mostly disappear after the first summer.

About 8000-11,500 breeding pairs globally; roughly 400 pairs in Arctic Canada. Some winter between Greenland and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Habitat

Ivory Gulls breed in the High Arctic on remote islands, or in polar deserts or cliff faces surrounded by glacial ice. These extreme nesting sites provide refuge from predators such as the Arctic Fox. Breeding sites are typically close (<50 km) to open sea water where they feed. Wintering occurs out at sea and occasionally along the coast in the Arctic Ocean and the north Atlantic, where Ivory Gulls feed and scavenge among pack ice.



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In the winter, Ivory Gulls can be observed in the Labrador Sea, Strait of Belle Isle and northern portion of the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Interesting Points

- Recent surveys point to an 85% decline in breeding colonies since the 1980s.
- The Baffin Bay / Davis Strait area is believed to be the main wintering area for Ivory Gulls from Canada and from Greenland and Norway populations as well.
- In Newfoundland and Labrador, they are often called “ice partridge” and were historically hunted for food.
- They feed on fish and zooplankton, and also scavenge on Polar Bear prey, such as seals.



Ivory Gull in flight



Immature Ivory Gull with dark spots



Ivory Gull feeding on carrion

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Similar Species

Iceland Gull, Glaucous Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake:

None of these species, or other gulls or gull-like bird species, are completely ivory white with black legs. Iceland Gulls and Glaucous Gulls are greyish with pinkish. Black-legged Kittiwake have black legs but are greyish in appearance.



Iceland Gull

Pinkish legs

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Black-legged Kittiwake

Greyish plumage

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Threats to Survival

- Illegal shooting in other parts of its range, which is particularly important given the Ivory Gull's naturally low annual reproductive rate.
- High concentrations of contaminants may affect its reproduction, behaviour, and general health.
- Other threats and potential threats include nest predation, disturbance from industrial and research activities, climate change, and oil spills.



Environmental contaminants that pollute the world, including the Arctic

How You Can Help

Report any sightings of this fairly easy-to-identify seabird to Ebird.org. Do your part to reduce your greenhouse gas emissions at home and work to help maintain ice floes in the Arctic. Report any illegal hunting, and contact the Coast Guard (1-800-565-1633) if you observe any oil spills.

Contacts, Information & Sighting Reports

Contact: Environment Canada (506) 364-5044 ext. 5060 or www.ec.gc.ca

Info: www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca

Sighting Reports: eBird.org