

Species Fact Sheets

Order: Charadriiformes
Scientific Name: *Leucophaeus modestus*

Family: Lariidae
Common Name: Grey Gull

AZA Management: Green Yellow Red None

Photo (Male):



Photo (Female):



NATURAL HISTORY:

Geographic Range: Europe Asia North America Neotropical
 Africa Australia Other
 Range includes coastal areas of Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Falkland Islands. Breeding occurs in Northern Chile.

Habitat: Forest Desert Grassland Coastal
 Riverine Montane Other
 Found in coastal areas except in breeding season. Nesting occurs inland in the Atacama Desert, Chile.

Circadian Cycle: Diurnal Crepuscular Nocturnal Other
 Nocturnal during nesting season, as chicks would likely overheat during the day.

Cold Tolerance: To 70° F To 60° F To 50° F To 40° F
 To 30° F To 20° F Other
 Can tolerate most weather conditions, but access to shelter when temperatures are below freezing is beneficial.

Heat Tolerance: To 30° F To 50° F To 70° F To 90° F
 To 110° F Other
 Can tolerate heat, but access to shaded areas and a large pool or water source is ideal.

Diet: Frugivore Carnivore Piscivore Insectivore

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Nectivore Omnivore Folivore Other (Add Below)

Captive Dietary Needs:

Whole or chopped smelt, capelin, trout, herring and silversides offered twice (three times when chicks are present) daily.

Vitamin supplements offered daily:

Vitamin E, Thiamine, Salt, Vitamin A

Seabird Tablets can be crushed and sprinkled over diet prior to breeding season (April – June), then discontinued once chicks have fledged.

Life Expectancy in the Wild: Males: Unknown Females: Unknown

Life Expectancy in Captivity: Males: Between 15 – 20, although one outlier lived to 30. Females: No difference between sexes.

BREEDING INFORMATION:

Age at Sexual Maturity: Males: 2 years Females: 2 years

Courtship Displays: Data deficient. Breeding season in the wild is generally November – January, but April – June in the Northern Hemisphere under human care.

Nest Site Description: In the wild, the nest site is a small scrape in the sand, usually amongst large rocks. In captivity, they will utilize rock work nest cavities filled with play sand as well as open sandy or pebbled areas in the exhibit.

Clutch Size, Egg Description: 1 – 3 eggs, 2 is typical. Egg slightly pointed at one end.

Incubation Period: 29 – 31 days **Fledgling Period:** 40 days

Parental Care: In the wild, both parents take turns making daily trips to bring food and water back for the chick. In captivity, both parents will care for the chick.

Chick Development: Grey gulls have the slowest growth rate of any gull species. There is a high mortality rate during the first two weeks after hatching. More research is needed to determine reasons leading to this.

CAPTIVE HABITAT INFORMATION:

Social Structure in the Wild: Gregarious. Feeds, rests, and breeds colonially.

Social Structure in Captivity: A single pair can breed on their own, although breeding may be encouraged by having multiple pairs present. Careful attention must be used to determine parentage in large colonies.

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Minimum Group Size: Very social, should not be housed singly

Maximum Group Size: Dependent upon exhibit size only

Compatible in Mixed Species Exhibits: Yes

Comments:

Often kept in coastal themed exhibits with Humboldt penguins and Inca terns. They are more timid than other gull species and may be displaced by other birds. Can also be housed with small herons, storks, spoonbills, ibis, stilts, lapwings, small waterfowl, and pelicans.

Optimal Habitat Size: As large as possible with multiple elevated perching and resting opportunities with access to a large water source.

Management Challenges: Achieving consistent breeding has been more difficult in recent years. Many of the birds in the US are likely post-reproductive, so imports are needed if the species is to be maintained long-term. Historically, Brookfield has been very successful in breeding the species. More research is needed in determining conditions for natural parent rearing in mixed-species exhibits and determining the most ideal nest site conditions. The population is currently unmanaged and consists of only fifteen individuals, all of Brookfield descent. If there is sufficient interest and successful breeding, formal management by the Shorebird TAG will be considered and the US population can be supplemented by imports from EAZA.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

Conservation messaging opportunities include: protection of inland desert nesting sites and coastal feeding sites; competition with the fishing industry and the importance of seafood sustainability; effects of global warming; reducing and eliminating single use plastics.

Questions and comments can be directed to the species champion:
Kirby Pitchford, kpitchford@birminghamzoo.com

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Photo by Oregon Zoo

COMPLETED BY:

Name: Kirby Pitchford

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