Sooty Tern
*Onychoprion fuscatus*

**Rarity Rank:** S1B/G5

**Identification:**
- Medium sized tern, 36 to 45 cm long with a wingspread of 82 to 94 cm
- Sexually monomorphic
- Adults in breeding with completely black back, white belly, forked tail with white edges, white brow, sharp pointed bill, with black feet and legs
- Adults in non-breeding have plumage similar but blackish feathers of crown and nape with white margin
- Immature birds are dark brown with white flecks along back and wings

**Taxonomic comments:**
Some consider the Sooty Tern to be a superspecies with *Onychoprion anaethetus*, the Bridled Tern

**Habitat:**
- Stays out at sea unless nesting
- Nests on remote islands and beaches with scattered or no vegetation

**Food habits:**
- Small fish as well as squid and insects
- Individuals in flock generally remain 1 to 20 meters above water when hunting for food, descending simultaneously when food is spotted
- When prey descend, flock rises up again
- Unlike diving birds, must catch prey within a few centimeters of surface

**Range:**
Tropical islands and coasts along the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans

**Reproduction:**
- Individuals begin to breed at about 6 to 8 years of age
- Nest is a simple depression in the sand, sometimes surrounded by sea plants
- A single white egg with brown spots is laid between April and June (more variable in other locations) and is tended by both parents throughout a month of incubation
- Young fledge about 1 to 2 months after hatching
**Threats:**
- Predation by cats
- Egg collection by other seabirds and humans
- Coastal land loss

**Beneficial Management Practices:**
- Create beach habitat with dredge materials
- Create nesting areas

**LA River Basins:**
Pontchartrain, Mississippi, Barataria

**References:**


