



United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Anchorage Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office
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Report # B-8: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Report to the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, June 2020.

The following information is a summary of the major updates from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) that the Service is involved in related to the affairs of the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council.

I. Migratory Bird Management

Update on Seabird Monitoring

The Service is adapting planned summer field work this year given travel restrictions due to coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) which have impacted Service Migratory Bird Management (MBM) surveys. A list of cancelled, pending, and postponed surveys are below:

- The MBM conducts seabird surveys in offshore waters of the Bering and Chukchi Seas and the Gulf of Alaska, in conjunction with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) other partners. These surveys provide information on seabird distribution and abundance. To date, two of these offshore vessel-based surveys were cancelled. Eight surveys remain active with start dates between July and October; however, implementation of these surveys will be evaluated as departure dates near.
- The MBM biannual marine bird survey in Prince William Sound has been postponed until July 2021. This survey monitors recovery of injured marine birds from the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill.
- The MBM aerial waterfowl surveys used to gather information on spectacled eiders in both the Northern Alaska and Western Alaska breeding populations have been cancelled. The cancellation of these surveys will result in greater uncertainty in measuring the recovery status of listed spectacled eiders.
- The Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge (AMNWR) has cancelled surveys of annually monitored seabird colonies, including St. Lazaria, Chowiet, Aiktak, Buldir, St. Paul, and St. George Islands. Population, productivity and diet data collected at these sites are included as ecosystem indicators in the NOAA Ecosystem Status Reports. The AMNWR staff is evaluating options to conduct scaled-down colony monitoring at select sites in the Gulf of Alaska and Cape Lisburne.
- Seabird mortality events have been recorded in the Bering and Chukchi Seas annually since 2017. As of May 2020, there are no reports of dead or dying seabirds in Alaska. Although the Service response capabilities will likely be limited this year, the Service will

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continue to work with Federal, State, Tribal partners, and coastal communities to document and respond to reports of sick and dying birds in the coming months.

For further information, contact Ms. Elizabeth Labunski, Seabird Coordinator, at 907-786-3865 or via email elizabeth_labunski@fws.gov, within the Division of Migratory Bird Management.