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United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199



FWS/AFES

Agenda Item B-6: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Report
March 30, 2011

Short-tailed Albatross

Nesting short-tailed albatrosses on Torishima and Mukojima islands fared pretty well after the devastating earthquake and subsequent tsunamis that struck Japan on March 11, 2011. We have had no reports of human or avian casualties from the Japanese islands. Midway Island was inundated by waves that washed away many Laysan albatross chicks. However, the short-tailed albatross chick on Midway Island (see Feb. 2011 B-Report), has proven a tough little bird and survived this second attempt by mother nature to wash it away. In February 2011, a storm surge that killed thousands of other nesting birds washed the short-tailed albatross chick 25-meters away from its nest cup; and the tsunami again washed the chick away, this time 35-m (see image below). In both cases, the chick was returned to the nest. We are pleased to report that all personnel stationed on the islands are safe.



(Pete Leary, USFWS)

We also received reports from our colleagues in Japan that sub-adult short-tailed albatross that were hand-reared and fledged from Mukojima Island in 2008 have returned and are initiating courtship displays. This is a very hopeful sign that the birds are imprinted on the island's experimental colony and will indeed return there to breed when they are adults. This colony is the product of the joint recovery efforts of the USFWS and the Yamashina Institute for Ornithology, with the help of researchers from Oregon State University.

Pacific Walrus

The USFWS has determined that the Pacific walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus divergens*) warrants protection under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), but an official rulemaking to propose that protection is currently precluded by the need to address other higher priority species. As a result, the walrus will be added to the agency's list of candidates for ESA protection and its future status will be reviewed annually.

The determination – also known as a 12-month finding – that sufficient scientific and commercial data exist to warrant protecting the Pacific walrus under the ESA was made after a comprehensive review of the best available scientific information concerning the walrus and the threats it faces. This review found that the walrus is primarily threatened by the loss of sea ice in its arctic habitat due to climate change. The Federal Register Notice and other information can be found at:

<http://alaska.fws.gov/fisheries/mmm/walrus/esa.htm>.

Salmon Bycatch

North Pacific Fisheries Management Council members and/or staff attended several Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (RAC) meetings and gave a presentation on chum salmon bycatch in the BS/AI pollock fishery. Attended meetings include the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta (Feb. 23), Western Interior (March 2), Eastern Interior (March 3), and Bristol Bay (March 9) RACs. Representatives from these four councils have indicated they will likely attend the NPFMC meeting in Nome in June to testify. NPFMC staff also attended the Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council meeting (March 22) and gave a presentation on GOA Chinook salmon bycatch. All of the federal subsistence councils appreciated the NPFMC outreach and information gathering efforts.