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WATERBIRDS RECORDED IN THE ALEXANDER ARCHIPELAGO, 16-28 JULY 1975

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1976

Under cooperative agreement between the University of Alaska Museum, Fairbanks, and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Anchorage and Juneau, Gibson and Theodore G. Tobish worked aboard the USFWS vessel Surfbird in the outer islands of the Alexander Archipelago, southeast Alaska, 16-28 July 1975. We surveyed the distribution of marine birds on the following itinerary: 16 July--Juneau to Saginaw Bay, Kuiu I; 17 July--Saginaw Bay to Coronation I, including the Hazy Islands; 18 July--Coronation I perimeter survey, Egg Harbor counterclockwise to Aats Bay, thence via the Spanish Islands, Warren Channel, and the Maurelle Islands to Steamboat Bay, Noyes I; 19 July --Steamboat Bay via the seaward coasts of Noyes, Baker, and Suemez islands to Sea Otter Harbor, Dall I; 20 July--Sea Otter Harbor to Forrester I and return; 21 July--Sea Otter Harbor via Meares Passage, Ulloa Channel, and Bucareli Bay to Craig; thence via San Alberto Bay, San Christoval Channel, and Bocas de Finas to Port Alice, Heceta I; 22 July--Port Alice via Summer Strait, Cora Point, and Cape Ommaney up west Baranof I to Sitka; 23-26 July--in Sitka due to foul weather; 27 July--Sitka to St. Lazaria I, thence via Bieli Rocks, Olga and Neva straits, Salisbury Sound, and Peril Strait to Kootznahoo Inlet, Admiralty I; 28 July--Kootznahoo Inlet to Juneau.



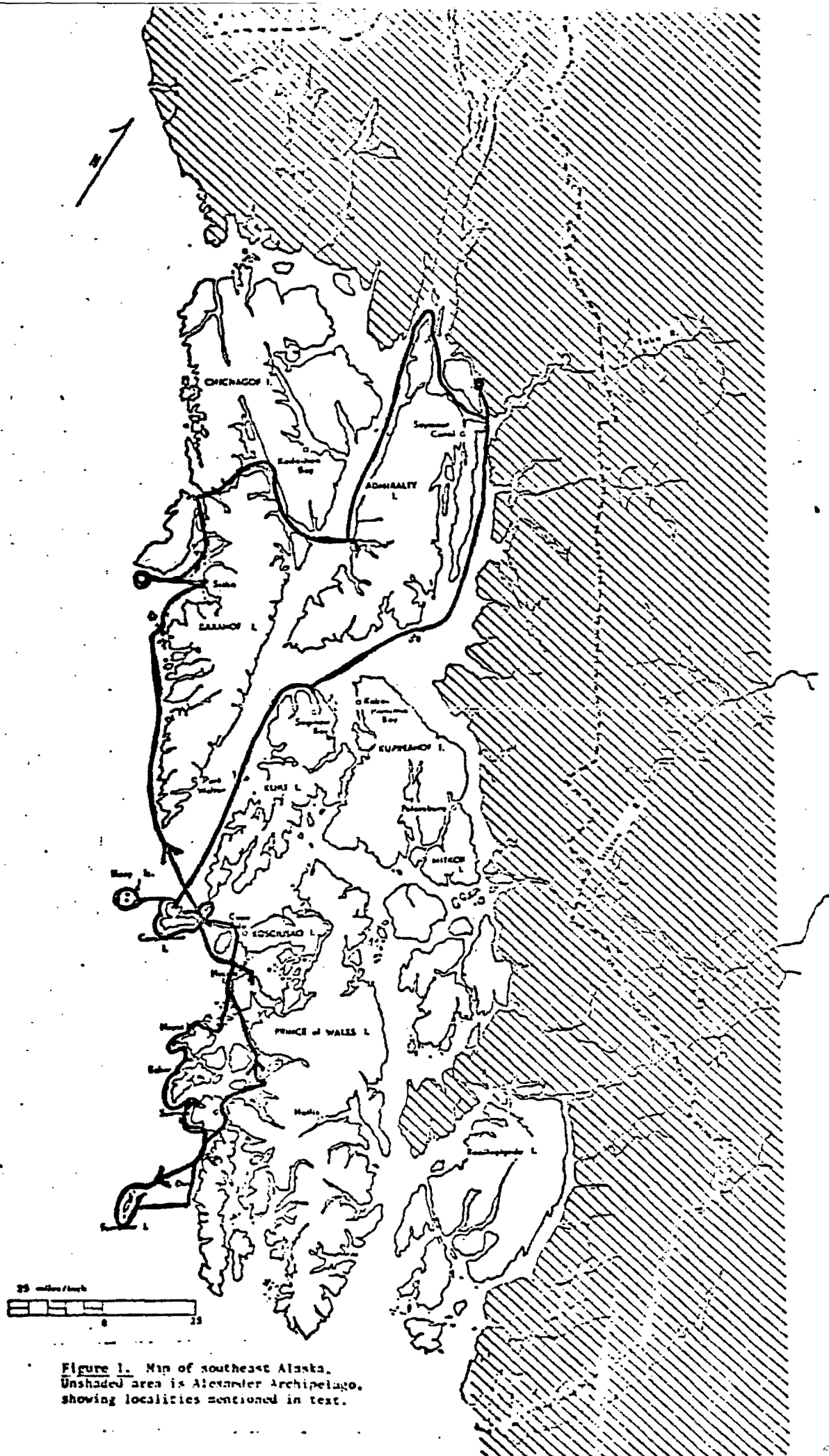


Figure 1. Map of southeast Alaska.
Unshaded area is Alexander Archipelago,
showing localities mentioned in text.

ANNOTATED LIST OF SPECIES OBSERVED

Yellow-billed Loon. Gavia adamsii. We observed a pair of breeding-plumaged Yellow-billed Loons on saltwater at The Brothers, Frederick Sound, on 16 July, and one breeding-plumaged individual on saltwater off Peisar I, Sitka Sound, on 22 July. This species is an arctic breeding bird, individuals of which remain in the southeast Alaska winter range all year.

Arctic Loon. Gavia arctica. Arctic Loons were seen at a number of protected saltwater locations. Maximum count was 15+ breeding-plumaged birds on Egg Harbor, Coronation I, on 17 July. The species, like the preceding, is not known to breed in southeast Alaska.

Northern Fulmar. Fulmarus glacialis. We found at least 12 Northern Fulmars undoubtedly breeding at Petrel I, off the south end of Forrester I, on 20 July. We observed most of them sitting on boulders and grass hummocks on the seaward side of the island, but others circled over the island and about the vessel as we went by. The species does not come to land except to nest. All but one of these birds were dark-phase individuals. Three separate dark-phase birds were seen at the entrance to Summer Strait, between Warren and Coronation islands, on 22 July, our only other observation

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birds probably breeding in sea caves in Halleck Harbor, Kuiu I, on 16 July; we saw several hundred birds at a distance on the Hazy Islands on 17 July; we found at least 100 on the outer coast of Coronation I on 18 July; and we noted small numbers nesting at Forrester I on 20 July.

Oldsquaw. Clangula hyemalis. We saw one Oldsquaw on the protected waters of Egg Harbor, Coronation I, on 17 July.

White-winged Scoter. Melanitta deglandi. A total of 314+ White-winged Scoters was recorded, all on saltwater in scattered groups of up to about 30 birds.

Surf Scoter. Melanitta perspicillata. We saw 107 Surf Scoters, also in scattered small groups on saltwater.

Bald Eagle. Haliaeetus leucocephalus. We recorded 90+ Bald Eagles from shipboard, many of them pairs at nests. Maximum count was an aggregation of 42 eagles together at a fishing melee of auklets, murres, kittiwakes, and other gulls at least two miles offshore from Cone I (between Noyes and Baker islands), on 19 July.

Peregrine Falcon. Falco peregrinus. Our only record of Peregrine Falcon was of a pair at Petrel I, off the south end of

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Glaucous-winged Gull. Larus glaucescens. We saw a total of 1835+ Glaucous-winged Gulls, adults and subadults, and we observed at a distance several nesting colonies on grassy slopes on outer islands: 600+ birds at the Hazy Islands on 17 July; about 200 birds on the seaward side of Coronation I on 18 July; 40 birds on the seaward side of Noyes I on 19 July; 200 birds at Lowrie I (just north of Forrester I) and 150+ at Forrester I on 20 July. A small percentage of 1000 birds at St. Lazaria I on 27 July were breeding. During these shipboard surveys we saw several thousand unidentified large gulls--either at great distance, under poor visibility conditions, or merely subadults in confusing plumage--the vast majority of which were probably of this species.

Herring Gull. Larus argentatus. We recorded 53 Herring Gulls, adults and subadults, singly or in mixed flocks of other gulls.

Mew Gull. Larus canus. We saw a total of 46 Mew Gulls, all scattered birds, mostly adults. There is no evidence that this species nests in the Alexander Archipelago.

Bonaparte's Gull. Larus philadelphia. Very local on open water. We saw one bird on Gastineau Channel on 16 July; a flock of 45 on Chatham Strait on 17 July; two among numerous other gulls on the Craig waterfront on 21 July; a flock of seven with kitti-

July; 28 between Heceta I and Coronation I on 22 July; 118 on outer Chatham Strait, between Coronation I and Cape Ommaney, on 22 July; 198 along west Baranof I, from Cape Ommaney to Sitka Sound, on 22 July; and several thousand at St. Lazaria I on 27 July. Murres were nesting on sea cliffs and in caves at the Hazy Islands, on Forrester I, and at St. Lazaria I.

Pigeon Guillemot. Cepphus columba. We recorded 235+ Pigeon Guillemots during the shipboard surveys, scattered birds on protected saltwater at many of the islands visited. The species breeds throughout the outer islands.

Marbled Murrelet. Brachyramphus marmoratus. We saw Marbled Murrelets on protected saltwater and on the open ocean in areas immediately adjacent to large coastal bays. A total of 872+ was recorded, mostly pairs or scattered small groups. We saw lone pairs of adults each with a single fledged young on saltwater at the Spanish Islands on 18 July and on the protected waters of Sea Otter Harbor, Dall I, on 20 July.

Ancient Murrelet. Synthliboramphus antiquus. A total of 47 Ancient Murrelets, scattered pairs or individuals, was recorded on unprotected saltwater. We observed flightless young of approximately the same age one month apart: a pair of adults with a large downy young on the open waters of Clarence Strait on 13

islands on 19 July; 521 along the northwest coast of Dall I, 19-20 July; 60+ at Forrester I on 20 July; 390 between Sea Otter Harbor, Dall I, and Craig on 21 July; 2210 between Craig and Port Alice, Heceta I, on 21 July; 37 birds between Heceta and Coronation islands on 22 July; 38 from Coronation I to Cape Ommaney, Baranof I, on 22 July; 296 along west Baranof I, between Cape Ommaney and Sitka Sound, on 22 July; and 25+ in Sitka Sound, plus at least four individuals at St. Lazaria I, on 27 July. These birds are nocturnal on the breeding grounds, so it is not surprising that our brief, daytime visits to the vicinity of probable breeding areas (e.g., Forrester I) revealed no evidence of nesting. The many birds feeding in the small island groups off west Prince of Wales I may have been birds coming all the way from Forrester I.

Horned Puffin. Fratercula corniculata. A total of 248+ Horned Puffins was recorded, all along the outer coast. We observed two birds in the vicinity of the Hazy Islands on 17 July; 28 on the seaward perimeter of Coronation I on 18 July; three between capes Ulitka and Addington, Noyes I, on 19 July; 212+ at Forrester I on 20 July; one bird off west Baranof I on 22 July; and two at St. Lazaria I on 27 July. The species was probably breeding in sea caves and rock crevices at Coronation I, it was nesting in such habitat at Forrester/Petrel islands, and the single bird seen off west Baranof I was carrying small fish stacked in its beak.