

Alaska Subsistence Harvest of Migratory Birds



For thousands of years, Alaska's indigenous peoples have relied on migratory birds and their eggs as part of their seasonal cycle of subsistence harvests. Harvesting and sharing subsistence foods keeps communities together. Nowadays Alaska Native people also buy food in stores, but subsistence harvests still occur following the seasonal cycles of availability of animals and plants.

The total rural subsistence harvest of all resources in Alaska is 34.3 million edible pounds of food per year. This is almost one pound per person per day, providing 176% of daily protein needs and 25% of daily energy needs. Birds and eggs are a

relatively small part (3%) of the total subsistence harvest in Alaska, but they have economic, social, and spiritual value. Harvest of migratory birds at times when few other food resources are available, particularly in spring, ties together the seasonal cycle of harvest. In spring, arriving migratory birds are the first fresh food available after a long winter of preserved foods. Birds and eggs also add diversity to the subsistence diet.

Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council



In 1997, the Migratory Bird Treaty was amended to legally recognize spring-summer subsistence harvest of migratory birds by northern indigenous peoples. The Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council (AMBCC) was formed in 2000 to formally include subsistence users in harvest management and bird conservation processes in the U.S. The AMBCC includes representatives of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the Native Caucus, with Alaska Native representatives from 10 subsistence regions. Each region has a regional bird council. The main objectives of the AMBCC are to conserve migratory birds and to support sustainable subsistence harvest opportunities. The AMBCC makes recommendations for the

Alaska spring-summer subsistence harvest and other topics related to bird harvest and conservation. The spring-summer migratory bird subsistence harvest was legalized starting in 2003. Fall-winter bird harvest in the whole U.S. is managed under the fall-winter sport hunting season. For more information, visit the AMBCC website <https://www.fws.gov/alaska/ambcc/index.htm>.

Subsistence Bird Harvest Survey and Research

The Harvest Assessment Program of the AMBCC conducts annual bird and egg harvest surveys in five regions of Alaska. The Division of Subsistence of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game coordinates the harvest survey on behalf of the AMBCC. The survey relies on collaboration with many regional and local partners. Villages and households are randomly selected to be surveyed. Participation in the survey is voluntary at the community and household levels. Alternate communities and households may be selected as needed. Participation in the survey is important to document harvest patterns typical of each region. Each year, the survey staff contacts local tribal councils in advance to request consent to



conduct the survey. The survey is usually done by local surveyors and household visits happen in November-December each year. Harvest data from communities surveyed within a region are extrapolated to represent all communities in that region. Harvest estimates are produced at the regional level.

The Harvest Assessment Program of the AMBCC also conducts harvest studies to address specific management questions, to document local and traditional knowledge, and to better understand the importance of birds as food and cultural resources for Alaska Native peoples.

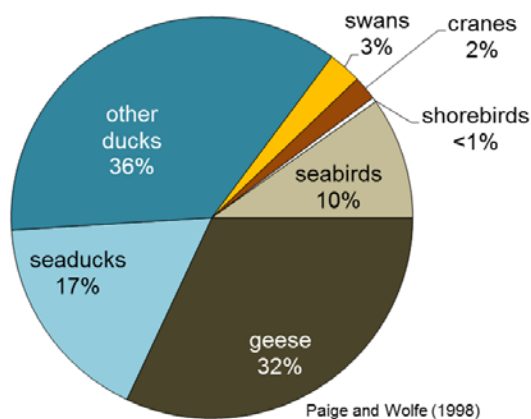


Migratory birds are resources shared across geographic and cultural boundaries. The Administrative Flyways mirror main pathways travelled by birds along their migrations. For management and conservation of migratory birds, Alaska belongs to the Pacific Flyway, together with states in the Lower 48 west of the Rocky Mountains. Bird harvest in the Pacific Flyway is about 6.6 million birds each year. Most of this harvest (93%) occurs in the Lower 48 as fall-winter sport hunting, while

6% is subsistence harvest in Alaska (spring-summer subsistence season and fall-winter season), and 1% is sport harvest in Alaska (fall-winter season).

The Alaska-wide subsistence bird harvest is about 370,000 birds each year. About 60% of this harvest happens in spring, 10% in summer, and 30% in fall-winter. Ducks and geese account for 85% of the subsistence harvest of migratory birds in Alaska.

Composition of the Alaska Subsistence Bird Harvest.



Subsistence bird harvest in Alaska's regions (number of birds per year)

