Halibut Quota in Area 4B

The International Pacific Halibut Commission met in Vancouver, British Columbia, during the last week of January. Board Members from the Adak Community Development Corporation; Rick Koso, Layton Lockett and Dave Fraser attended the meeting. The agenda item everyone was worried about - potential cuts to the halibut quota in all areas, including area, 4B. While we dodged a quota cut this year, unless the by-catch quota allotted to factory trawlers is addressed and reduced in the future, area 4-B quota could again face potential cuts.

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Council Seeks Appointee for Seat 1B

The Adak City Council is seeking an appointee to fill seat 1B; vacated when Jack Stewart Jr. resigned. Mr. Stewart, a long-time community member, has been reassigned by his employer to Cold Bay, which made attending the meetings tenuous at best.

Requirements to serve on the City Council include residency in Adak, voter registration, and ability to attend regular meetings held the third Wednesday of every month, and special meetings on an as needed basis. If selected the appointment will last until the next local election in October.

You may submit your name for consideration in a written letter of intent to the City Clerk, by March 16, 2015. The applicant will be selected and sworn in at the regular council meeting on March 18, 5:00pm in Council chambers.

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Recreational Marijuana Use in Alaska

On February 24, 2015, recreational marijuana use became legal in Alaska. It is now legal to possess up to one ounce for personal use. While using marijuana is legal, there are still some aspects of use, cultivation and procurement that are illegal by Alaska State statutes. Statutes that you should be aware of:

17.38.030 – Marijuana plants in public view – mandatory court appearance with a fine up to $750.

Failure to secure marijuana plants from unauthorized access – mandatory court appearance with a fine up to $750.

Marijuana cultivation w/o consent of property owner – mandatory court appearance with a fine up to $750.

17.38.040 - Marijuana consumption in Public as defined in Statute 11 is a mandatory court appearance with a fine up to $100.

17.38.050 – False ID by a person under 21 to purchase or procure marijuana or products – mandatory court appearance with a fine up to $400.

False ID by a person under 21 to enter a marijuana establishment – mandatory court appearance with a fine up to $400.

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Two Residents Pass SAWRS Test

Elaine Smiloff and Debra Sharrah passed the SAWRS test for PADK (Adak Airport). Certification of Smiloff and Sharrah means that a weather report can be transmitted manually to alert pilots of current surface weather conditions, if the ASOS is down.

Spring Clean-Up

This year's Spring Clean-up is being organized by Estrella Rizo. If you are able to help with organizing and hosting, or even donating items for the BBQ, please contact Estrella at: 592-2362.

Stay tuned for next month's issue- There will be an exclusive interview with Dustin Anderson, owner/founder of Premier Harvest.

Bernardo Diaz Jr. and Estrella Diaz Rizo work for Pacific Stevedoring in Kuluk Bay. The Pac-Steves transfer thousands of pounds of frozen Atka Mackerel in 50lb boxes from fishing vessels to a large tramper like the one pictured below.

MARCH 2015

S	M	T	W	TH	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

March 17 – St. Patrick's Day wear your green

March 18 – City Council meeting, 5pm council chambers

March 21 – Movie Night w/ Chief Tannehill, 6:15 pm

March 30 – Seward's Day, City Office will be closed

Saturdays – Alcoholics Anonymous, 5pm in the community center

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service / Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge / Aleutian Islands Unit

FROM THE WILDSIDE

March 2015

Wintering Auklets: Where Do They Go?

By Carley Schacter, Katherine Robbins, and Ian L. Jones (all photos by the authors)

Most people who've spent time in the Aleutians are probably familiar with auklets. These small seabirds breed on the islands in large numbers, and can often be seen from boats feeding at sea or flying in large flocks. Thanks to USFWS monitoring, we've got great data about the lives of auklets and other seabirds during the breeding season when they come ashore to raise their chicks (May-August), but what about the rest of the year? Auklets are a big part of the marine ecosystem in the Bering Sea, but we know very little about their lives at sea. Ship-based bird surveys have provided some information about where these birds can be found, but these surveys are expensive, and winter conditions in the Bering Sea can make them difficult to conduct safely. So our crew from Memorial University (Newfoundland) has been coming through Adak for a couple of years now on our way to field sites on Buldir and Gareloi trying to answer these questions using the latest in tracking technology.

Biologists have been using tracking tags for years to study the movements of large seabirds (like albatrosses) but it's only very recently that these devices have gotten small enough (1-2 g) to use on auklets. We are using new light-weight tags called geolocators. They record light levels which are used to calculate latitude and longitude based on the timing of sunrise and sunset with an accuracy of about 180 km. They also record whether the tag is wet or dry, which we can use to look at behaviours like egg incubation and migration flights. Because of the way that day length is used to determine location, there are unavoidable gaps in the data around each equinox when day lengths are too similar. In 2013 we deployed 158 geolocators: 96 on crested auklets (Buldir and Gareloi), 39 on parakeet auklets (Buldir and Gareloi), and 23 on whiskered auklets (Buldir only). In 2014 we recovered 54% of tags, of which 86% successfully logged data.

Whiskered auklet

Crested auklet

We're still working on analyzing the data from the 2013-2014 season, but our early results show that these three closely related species handle their winter migration very differently.

Whiskered auklets

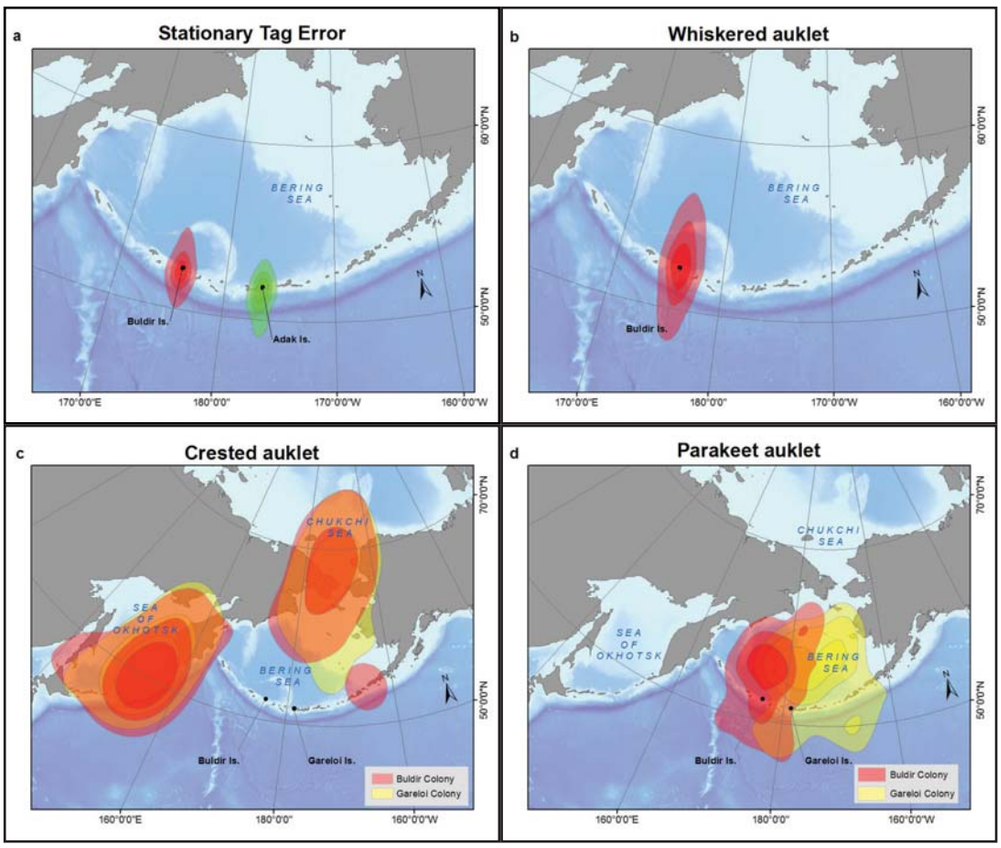
Of the three auklets we studied, this is the smallest (~118 g), and the only nocturnal species. Since the 1880s there have been reports (from explorers and locals) of these birds sticking around the islands in the winter, and even occasionally roosting on land. Our tracking data support these observations. Even considering the limited accuracy of the tags, the data show that whiskered auklets stay very close to their breeding colony in the winter. The wet/dry data from the tags also tells us that the birds are dry all night, meaning that they are actually roosting on land at night all year. Taken together, these facts make whiskered auklets very unusual seabirds. You could even argue that they aren't seabirds at all, since the definition of 'seabird' usually requires that once the birds no longer have to stay near the colony to feed their chicks, they should move to a more productive location where they'll have access to more or better food. Parakeet and crested auklets both show a more typical pattern of occasional dry spells (flying) and long stretches resting on the water away from land.

Crested auklets

These medium-sized auklets (~230 g) are the most classically migratory of the species we studied because they use relatively direct and consistent routes to travel to distinct wintering areas before returning to their breeding colony. Like parakeet auklets, crested auklets initially make a beeline for the northern Bering

Above: the authors, top to bottom: Carley with a tagged parakeet auklet, Kat with a crested auklet, and Ian extracting an auklet from its nesting crevice.

Close-up of a whiskered auklet leg wearing a geolocator tag.

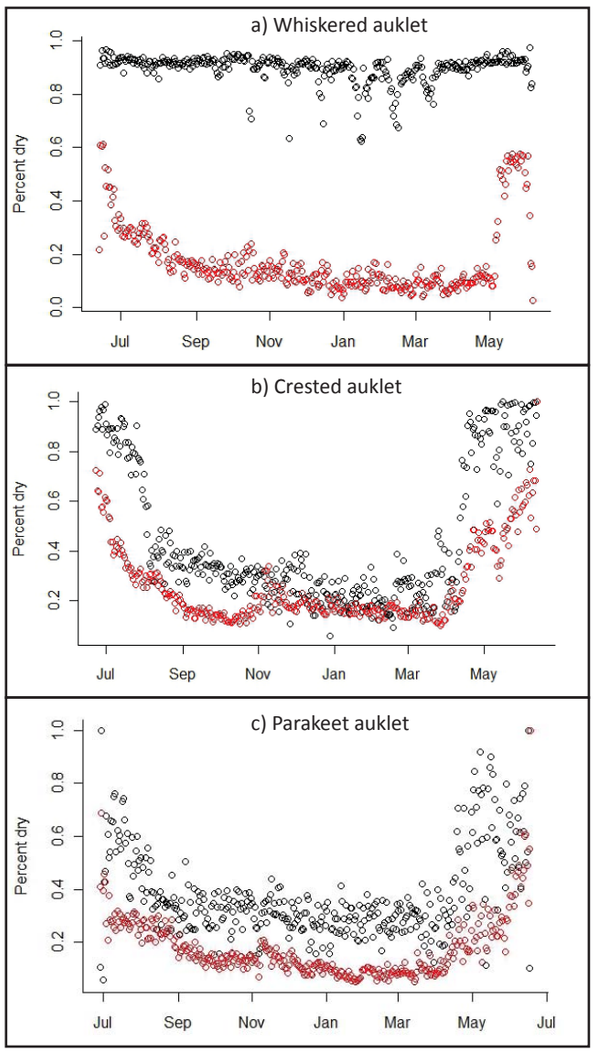


Non-breeding season (Aug 2013 – Apr 2014) distribution of auklet species breeding in the Aleutian Islands. Maps show percent volume contours representing 25%, 50%, and 80% use areas derived from kernel density estimation. (a) Stationary tags left at known locations on Buldir (red, n=3) and Adak (green, n=2) islands over the same time period; (b) whiskered auklets from Buldir (n=12); (c) crested auklets from Buldir (red, n=23) and Gareloi (yellow, n=21); (d) parakeet auklets from Buldir (red, n=11) and Gareloi (yellow, n=3).

and Chukchi Seas where they stay from late August to early November. Unlike parakeet auklets, however, they then make a second long journey to one of three secondary wintering areas: southwest to either the Kuril Islands or Sea of Japan, or southeast to Unimak Pass in the eastern Aleutians. They stay in their second wintering areas until early April, after which they head back to their breeding colony, where their migratory journey began. Our data show little or no difference between the two colonies.

Parakeet auklets

This is the biggest auklet we studied (~280 g), and their migration strategy seems to be intermediate between whiskered and crested auklets. Most birds leave the colony in August and head north to the Bering Shelf/ Chukchi Sea areas, or east along the peninsula and up the Alaskan coast. After this initial migration, individuals tend to move slowly around the Bering Sea, converging in the deep basin of the western Bering Sea in December/January. Birds from the two colonies have similar wintering patterns, although it seems (based on a small sample so far) that the eastern birds (breeding on Gareloi) winter further east than the western birds from Buldir. Interestingly, at least three parakeet auklets made a trip south to the Northwest Hawaiian Islands in early April before returning to the colony to breed.



Percent of time tags were dry (not immersed in salt water) over the course of a year (2013-2014). Data split into day (red) or night (black) and daily average calculated across all individuals for each species. (a) Whiskered auklets (n=12) spend the night on land year-round, while (b) crested auklets (n=28) and (c) parakeet auklets (n=14) spend most of the year on the water before returning to the colony in April.

What's next?

We're now in the early stages of analyzing this data, but we think it will make an exciting contribution to our knowledge about auklets, and about the Bering Sea ecosystem in general. By comparing these species and the types of habitat that they use, we will also be able to identify times and places where these birds might be at risk (e.g. due to overlap with busy shipping routes or proposed oil drilling) and provide valuable information to help refuge managers and other stakeholders minimize those risks.

We still have a lot of questions to answer. How/why are whiskered auklets surviving in the Aleutians all winter after the other seabirds have left? What are they eating? Why do crested auklets from different colonies use the same winter habitat while parakeet auklets do not? Is it because crested auklets have more specific food requirements and so they have fewer options, while the parakeet auklets can afford to spread out a little more? Stay tuned. We have an additional 193 geolocators out recording data right now that we'll be back to collect in 2015. This will increase our sample size and allow us to make much stronger conclusions, as well as to look at possible differences between years.


Parakeet auklet

If you would like more detailed information, please contact Carley (crs634@mun.ca), Katherine (kfr056@mun.ca) and Ian (ianljones60@gmail.com) at the Department of Biology, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada (Or stop by the bunkhouse this spring when they are in Adak, awaiting transport to Buldir and Gareloi!)