



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Izembek National Wildlife Refuge
P. O. Box 127
Cold Bay, Alaska 99571



Activity Report **Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, March – July 2025**

CARIBOU

Federal Subsistence Hunt—Unit 9D (Southern Alaska Peninsula)

The most recent Izembek NWR Federal Subsistence Caribou Hunt in Unit 9D ran from November 15, 2024 through March 31, 2025. The next Federal Subsistence Caribou Hunt runs from August 1 through September 30, 2025. Consultation with ADF&G supported maintaining harvest regulations the same as the prior year's federal subsistence caribou hunt, with a harvest limit of 3 caribou. To date there have not been any harvest reports submitted to the Refuge from the participating communities.

Federal Subsistence Hunt – Unimak Unit 10

The Federal Subsistence Caribou Hunt on Unimak Island in Unit 10 runs from August 1 through September 30, 2025. The harvest limit is 1 bull by Federal registration permit. Unimak Unit 10 is open for residents of Akutan, Cold Bay, False Pass, King Cove, Nelson Lagoon, and Sand Point. To date there have not been any harvest reports submitted to the Refuge from the participating communities.

AVIAN

Alaska Landbird Monitoring Survey

The Alaska Landbird Monitoring Survey is designed to monitor trends in breeding bird populations on the Refuge over time. During the survey, a randomly selected grid of 25 points is visited, and at each point, an observer counts all detected birds during a 10-minute observation period. This survey was conducted June 25-27. A highlight of the survey was observing multiple breeding pairs of Pacific golden-plovers, which were first documented breeding on the Refuge in 2024!



Pacific golden-plover male in breeding plumage and defending a territory, suggesting there was a nest nearby. Photo by Alison Williams.

Breeding Bird Survey

Izembek surveyed the Cold Bay route of the Breeding Bird Survey June 30 and July 4. The Breeding Bird Survey is a long-term and international monitoring program operated across North America. The survey route covers 25 miles of roads across the refuge and through Cold Bay, with survey points every 0.5 miles where an observer counts all detected birds for 3 minutes. During the 2025 survey, 39 unique species were detected, including multiple Pacific golden-plover pairs.

OTHER WILDLIFE

Walrus Haulout Monitoring

Izembek NWR continues to monitor a walrus haulout in Izembek Lagoon, where up to 500 animals have been observed hauled out in the lagoon and resting between foraging trips in the Bering Sea. Monitoring use of the haulout and the levels of disturbance to walruses is important, as these disturbance events can result in stampeding, injuries and mortality.



Walrus hauled out on a sand spit in Izembek Lagoon in July 2025. These animals spend several days feeding in the Bering Sea, then return to the coast to rest, where they can be sensitive to human presence. Photo by USFWS/Tessie Offner.

HABITAT

Invasive Species

Invasive species compete with native plant and wildlife species and disrupt the ecosystems that subsistence users rely on, and the USFWS is continuously working to limit the spread of invasive species in Alaska. USFWS Staff from the Invasive Species Program visited Izembek NWR July 7-26, 2025. During their visit, they conducted surveys for invasive species on Izembek NWR and in the town of Cold Bay. They also continued treatments on invasive creeping thistle, orange hawkweed, oxeye daisy, creeping buttercup, and European mountain ash. While in Cold Bay, the Invasive species team identified multiple new invasive infestations of the creeping buttercup, tall buttercup, meadow hawkweed, and creeping thistle. Discussions are ongoing on how to effectively address these new infestations.

Staff also set crab traps in Cold Bay and King Cove to survey for the invasive European green crab, which can have significant and destructive effects on native aquatic plants and crustaceans and was first found in southeast Alaska in 2022. Fortunately, no evidence of European green crab was found in either community!

Additionally, staff from the Invasive Species Program and the Alaska Maritime NWR hosted a ‘Slug-Off’ event in the community of King Cove. The non-native European black slug is established in the community, and attempting to limit the slug’s population and spread will help protect subsistence resources, such as plants and berries. During the ‘Slug-Off’ event, community members collected slugs and competed for prizes. Over 24 hours, participants collected a total of 3,940 slugs that weighed 50.8 pounds!



One of the new infestations of creeping thistle, the prickly plant shown above, was discovered on an island within Izembek Lagoon. Photo by USFWS/Alison Williams.

OTHER UPCOMING WORK

Eelgrass Abundance and Productivity Monitoring

An eelgrass survey of Izembek and Kinzarof Lagoons is planned for August 4-15. This survey is a long-term monitoring study designed to assess changes in the status and trends in distribution and abundance in eelgrass. Staff from the USGS Alaska Science Center and other seagrass experts from across the United States will be traveling to Izembek to assist with the surveys. During the survey, observers visit approximately 175 systematically selected points in the lagoons and record information on eelgrass cover and length, seaweed cover, water temperature, water salinity, water depth, and invertebrate presence.

Annual Brown Bear Stream Survey

The Annual Brown Bear Stream Survey is scheduled for August 19-23. This survey is used to understand population trends and composition of brown bears on the lower Alaska Peninsula and Unimak Island.

Avian Influenza Monitoring

USGS staff are scheduled to be at Izembek NWR from late August until the end of October for Avian Influenza research and monitoring. Samples will be taken from hunter-harvested birds and fecal material at roost sites to detect presence of Avian Influenza.

Brant Age Ratio Survey

The 2025 Brant Age Ratio survey is scheduled for September 29 – October 10. Accurate estimates of the age composition can inform past reproductive success and future population trajectories. The productivity index for the entire Pacific brant population is generated from ground- and boat-based count ratios of adult to juvenile birds conducted in Izembek Lagoon and adjacent areas each fall when the birds are staging for migration. Data are shared with USGS, run through modeling processes, then shared with managers to aid in management decisions.