



## Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge Winter 2022 Report for Kodiak/Aleutians Regional Advisory Council

### Snow on the Ground, Summer on Our Minds

While we strap on ice cleats or skis at our headquarters, we are cautiously planning summer biological field work and community visits. Our priority continues to be the safety of your villages, our neighbors, and our staff.

This year it will likely be impossible for us to complete all of the work we have historically performed. Village visits, seabird monitoring, and visitor center operations are all affected not just by Covid, but also by our rapidly shrinking staff. Due to budget limitations in Alaska, we have been unable to refill many positions left vacant when staff have retired or moved away. Our staff has shrunk by more than 1/3 in recent years. We'll have to make some tough decisions about where to focus our limited time and resources. Any cuts to our long-term seabird monitoring program are particularly worrisome, as this is an integral part of understanding and managing the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. The information it provides is used to define normal variability and identify patterns that fall outside norms, highlighting conservation issues.

### Youth Summer Camps and Employment

We're optimistically planning on in-person visits again with youth in St. Paul, Unalaska, and Sand Point if Covid concerns allow and communities wish to have us back. For over 20 years we have partnered with tribes and local partners in these three communities, providing financial support and educational staff.

We're also requesting funding to support youth employment programs again this year. In the past we've been able to hire or partner with tribes to hire interns. Young people that come onboard get a taste of careers in conservation, learning deckhand and navigation skills on the R/V Tiġlaġ, teaching lessons to younger students at camp, or shadowing a biologist to collect data about seabirds.



## Adak Caribou Discussion

We are hoping to schedule a February or early March discussion with Adak community members, Aleut Corporation staff, (as a major landowner) and ADF&G staff, (hunting and game management oversight and expertise) about the caribou situation. We want to listen, learn, and better understand the issues surrounding caribou on Adak Island.

## Invasive Species are a Serious Threat to Wildlife

### Plant Prioritization Workshop

In February, we will hold a workshop to identify invasive plant species on the refuge and their known locations and rank them in terms of priority for treatment. In this session we will be identifying locations and noting adjacent landowners, but we will not yet be creating any plans for when or how to treat the invasive plants. If you would like to provide input on this issue, please contact [Lauren.Flynn@fws.gov](mailto:Lauren.Flynn@fws.gov).

### Vision for a Rat-Free Aleutians

We're working with Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the communities of Adak and Atka on a long-term vision for a rat-free Aleutian Islands. During the summer of 2021 we began a feasibility study for rat eradication on Great Sitkin Island. This fact-finding mission was undertaken to increase familiarity with the site and assess the rodent population on the main island and adjacent islands. We also surveyed the islands for other wildlife including fish and birds so that we can consider ways to reduce risks to native wildlife in any potential rat eradication operation. So far, we have found no sign of rats on the string of islands between Kagalaska and Great Sitkin. This is good news as it reassures us that future rat eradication on Great Sitkin couldn't be undone merely by rats island hopping back from Kagalaska to Great Sitkin.



Images from left to right, 1. Searching for rats on Kagalaska, 2. Bite marks on a rat chew block, 3. Setting snap traps on Kagalaska.