

Coastal Birds: Abundance & Distribution

The Yukon coastal plain and offshore areas of the Beaufort Sea provide important habitat for several species of birds at various times in the year. Large numbers of snow geese stage along the Beaufort coastal plain in the fall. Concentrations of molting sea ducks such as old squaw and surf scoters form near Herschel Island in late summer. The Yukon coast also supports populations of glaucous gulls, black guillemots, tundra swans and shorebirds at different periods of the spring, summer or fall.

Information Available

Although information on the habitat, population abundance and distribution of birds on the Yukon coast has been gathered through many different research projects, there has been little research aimed at annual, long-term monitoring of Yukon North Slope coastal bird populations. Baseline data for monitoring studies could most likely be obtained for some species using research results from one or more studies to put together several years of data. However, it is important to note that not all studies of a species provide comparable data. Several years of observations are necessary to determine natural levels of annual fluctuations in population numbers and distributions.

Future Studies

Currently there do not appear to be any scientific research programs planned or in operation to provide annual monitoring of coastal bird populations in the Northern Yukon. Records of bird sightings at Ivavik and Herschel Parks may provide some monitoring information. It may be possible to expand this type of monitoring through the development of a program to obtain bird observation records from volunteer participants such as is being used in the Northwest Territories (Canadian Wildlife Service, NWT).

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