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United States Department of the Interior

U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

B7 USFWS Report



Report # B-7: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Report to the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, June 2018.

The following information is a summary of the major updates from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) that the Service is involved in relation to the affairs of the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council.

I. Migratory Bird Management

Update on Seabird Mortality Events and Monitoring

In early May 2018, the Service received reports of higher than normal dead and dying common murres (*Uria aalge*) in the Unalakleet region of Norton Sound. Specifically, live, sick, and dead murres were reported from the estuary beaches of the Unalakleet River. Several fishing vessels returning from checking crab pots north of Unalakleet in Norton Sound also reported observations of dead murres floating in the water. Community members from Unalakleet emphasized that the observation of murres around Unalakleet is highly unusual, as well as the lack of sea ice this spring. Gay Sheffield (Alaska Sea Grant, University of Alaska Fairbanks - Nome) coordinated collection and shipping of one carcass to the US Geological Survey (USGS) National Wildlife Health Center (Madison, WI). Cause of death of the one intact carcass was emaciation. Laboratory tests for diseases were negative; however, testing for the harmful algal bloom biotoxins (i.e., Saxitoxin and Domoic Acid) are pending from the USGS Alaska Science Center (Anchorage, Alaska). Best estimates of total number of common murres affected is approximately 200 individuals, with observations of carcasses reported from 2-7 May, including 20 miles of beach (Unalakleet River north to Blueberry Creek) surveyed by Norton Sound Economic Development Corporation staff. After 7 May, winds shifted to coming from the east and most carcasses were carried out to sea. No further reports of murres have been received. Staff from the Aleut Community of St. Paul Ecosystem Conservation Office conducted beach surveys in response to Norton Sound reports and found no sick or dying murres at St. Paul Island.

For further information, contact Ms. Kathy Kuletz, Seabird Coordinator, at kathy_kuletz@fws.gov (907-786-3453) within the Division of Migratory Bird Management.