

FEDERAL AID
INTERIM PERFORMANCE REPORT

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION
PO Box 25526
Juneau, AK 99802-5526

COOPERATIVE ENDANGERED SPECIES CONSERVATION FUND

STATE: Alaska

GRANT AND SEGMENT NR.: E – 2 – 1

PROJECT NR.: 2

GRANT TITLE: Nongame Bird Monitoring

WORK LOCATION: Cook Inlet

PROJECT DURATION: 1 January 2003 – 30 June 2004

PROJECT REPORTING PERIOD: 1 January 2003 – 30 December 2003

PROJECT TITLE: Population Status and Distribution of Steller 's eider

Project Objectives:

The general objective of this study is to improve our knowledge of the status, distribution, and population trend for Steller's eiders wintering in lower Cook Inlet by:

1. improving knowledge of habitat use and distribution within wintering areas;
2. improving survey methodology and population estimates;
3. documenting age and sex structure of winter flocks;
4. identifying fidelity to wintering sites;
5. identifying arrival and departure dates for wintering Steller's eiders; and
6. exploring capture and marking opportunities for future research.

Summary of Project Accomplishments:

1. Completed 2 aerial surveys along the eastern shore of lower Cook Inlet from Kachemak Bay to Cape Kasilof and 1 along the western shore of lower Cook Inlet from Tuxedni Bay to Cape Douglas. Conducted boat surveys in Kachemak Bay and in lower Cook Inlet from the Homer Spit to Clam Gulch. We planned to conduct additional repetitions but could not due to poor weather.
2. We were able to conduct a repeat aerial survey along the east side of lower Cook Inlet and followed with a boat survey. Weather (see above) prevented us from our original objective of 3 repeat aerial surveys of the same transects.
3. We conducted boat surveys to test feasibility of documenting age and sex structure from skiffs and videographed large flocks to determine sex ratios. We could not get age ratios from video.

4. This will require multiple years of surveys and/or telemetry. We will also compare our locations with what is known from any previous surveys. This has not been completed.
5. We narrowed departure dates in 2003 to a 2-week window between March 26 and April 11. We did not fly surveys in the fall to get arrival dates but have estimates from anecdotal observations and local knowledge.
6. From aerial and boat surveys we were able to assess the feasibility of capturing eiders in lower Cook Inlet.

Some portions of this project will not be completed because during the course of this project, which was being assisted by USFWS, the USFWS received funding from the Mineral Management Service to conduct a similar, but more comprehensive monitoring program. Completion has been delayed due to unforeseen events with our partners, Cook Inlet Keeper, in completing the matching GIS component of this project. More time will allow them to complete this task.

Project Costs: Federal share \$ 21,693 + match share \$ 1,529 = total cost \$ 23,222
(Costs show funds committed. Match portion will increase with activity by 3rd party on project in the coming spring.)

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Date: December 16, 2003