

39. SPRING MIGRATION OF SURFBIRDS AND BLACK TURNSTONES IN PRINCE WILLIAM SOUND

John M. Wright. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 1300 College Road, Fairbanks, AK 99701.

Philip D. Martin. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 101 12th Avenue, Fairbanks, AK 99701.

Allan K. Fukuyama. TENERA Environmental Services, 586 Higuera Street, San Luis Obispo, CA 93424.

Stanley E. Senner. ICBP, U. S. Section, P.O. Box 101193, Anchorage, AK 99510.

David W. Norton. North Slope Higher Education Center, Pouch 7337, Barrow, AK 99723.

Robert E. Gill, Jr. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Fish and Wildlife Research Center, 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503.

Studies of shorebirds using rocky intertidal habitats of Prince William Sound (PWS) during spring migration were undertaken in response to the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill. Surfbirds (*Aphriza virgata*) and Black Turnstones (*Arenaria melanocephala*) were the most numerous species. More than 25,000 were counted on northern Montague Island in the first week of May 1989. Flocks of this magnitude have never been reported for these Beringian shorebird species. PWS appears to provide a unique spring staging area. Both species fed heavily on herring (*Clupea harengus*) roe in the intertidal zone. In addition to roe, Surfbirds fed primarily on mussels; and Black Turnstones fed on barnacles. Preliminary data indicated Surfbirds accumulated considerable fat deposits during their stopover in PWS.

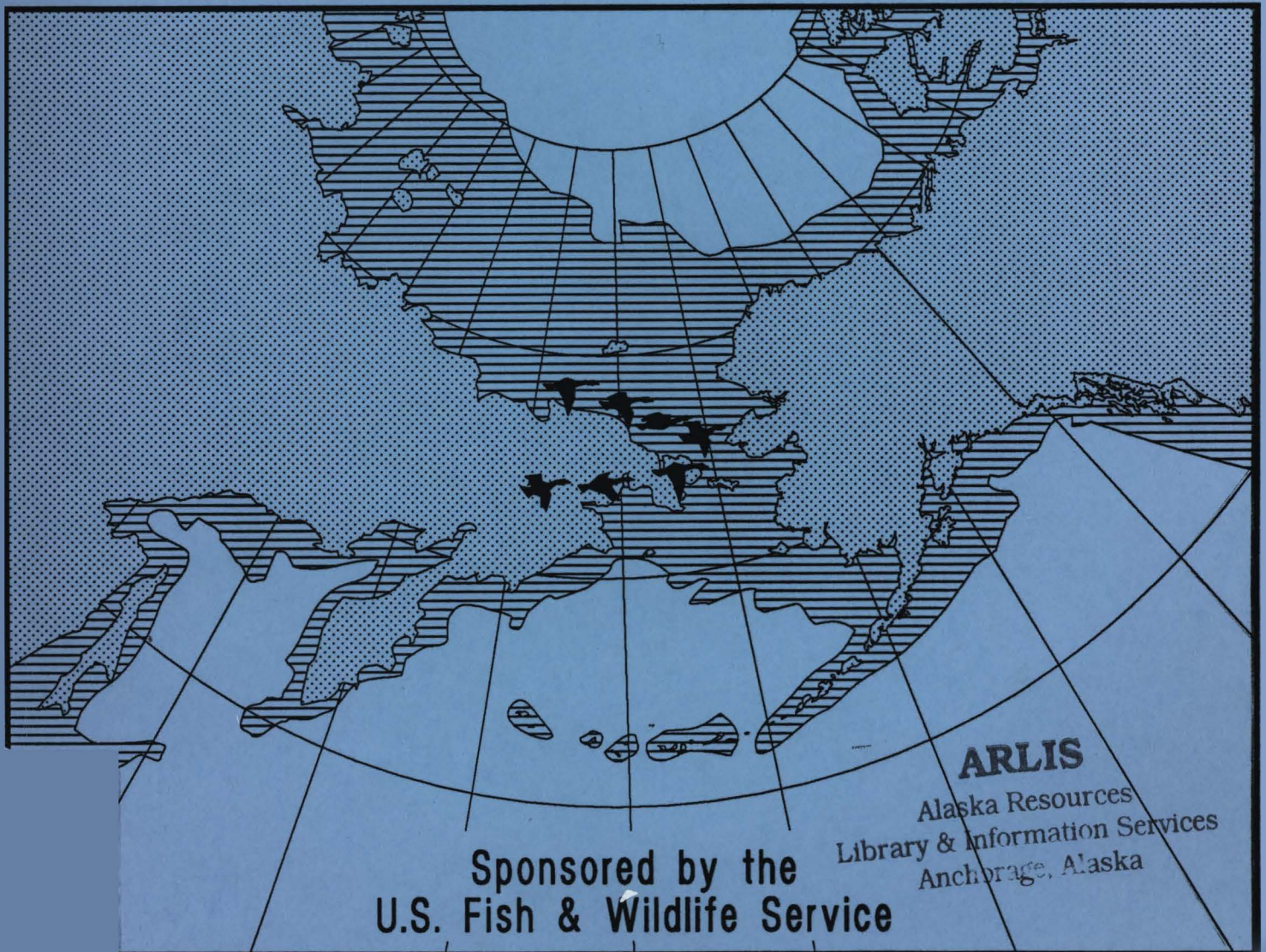
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