

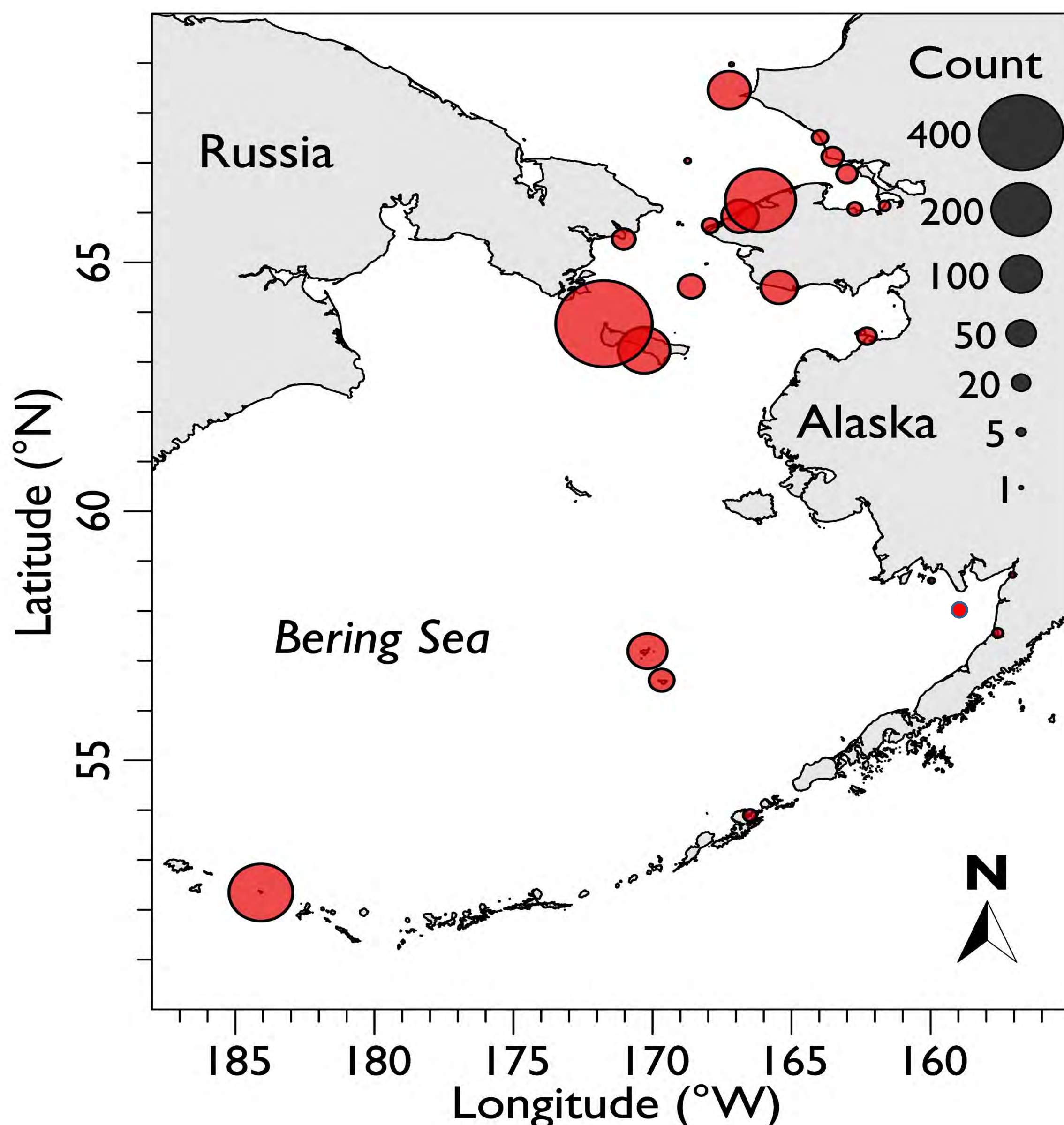


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Seabird Die Off: Point Hope to Bristol Bay, June to September 2017

USFWS Alaska Region
Migratory Bird Management
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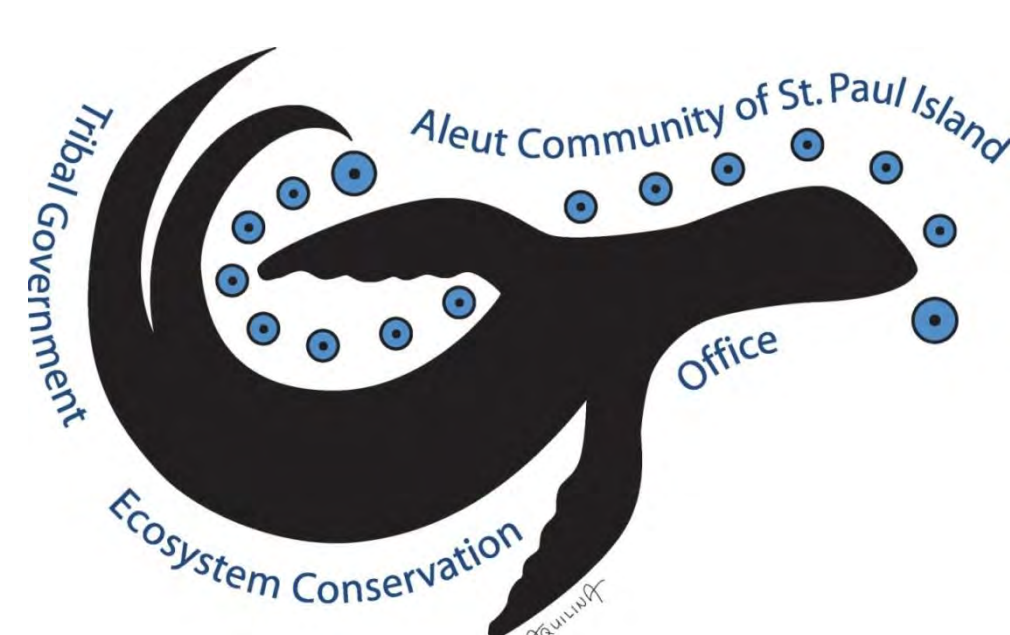
What Did We Learn?

Seabird carcasses from Point Hope, Shishmaref, Gambell, St. George and St. Paul Islands indicated death by drowning and starvation. There was no evidence that the deaths were caused by an infection. Saxitoxin is a biotoxin naturally produced by algae that can affect the mammalian nervous system if ingested in high concentrations. Saxitoxin was detected in the intestinal contents and livers of five northern fulmars from Shishmaref, Gambell, St. George and St. Paul Islands. **All samples were below human consumption limits for shellfish (80 µg/100 g); however, potential impacts of algal toxins on birds are unknown.** Domoic acid, which is also associated with algae, was not detected in any samples. We do not have evidence of acute toxicity as a direct cause of seabird deaths, but it is possible that exposure to saxitoxin may have been a contributing factor.

What Happened?

During June to September 2017, USFWS received reports of dead and dying seabirds from the Bering and Chukchi regions - from Point Hope south to the Bristol Bay. Responders at Deering, Gambell, Nome, Point Hope, Shishmaref, Unalaska, Unalakleet, St. George, St. Paul and other coastal areas have counted nearly **1600 beached seabird carcasses since early June 2017**, including northern fulmars, shearwaters, and kittiwakes. Murres, auklets, gulls, and puffins have also been reported. The USFWS coordinated with the Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST) to monitor several beaches. Twenty-one carcasses were examined by the USGS National Wildlife Health Center, USGS Alaska Science Center, and the NOAA Laboratory in Beaufort, North Carolina.

Contributing Partners:



Remember to...

Report unusual numbers of sick or dead birds to:

1-866-527-3358 or email **AK_MBM@fws.gov**

Information needed includes:

- Time & Date you see sick or dead birds
- Location of the sick or dead birds
- Type & number of birds (count or estimate)
- Photos of sick/dead birds (see above; include scale if possible)
- Videos of any unusual behaviors (approachable, drooping head and wings, etc.)

Participate in monitoring efforts on your local beaches

The Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team (COASST) provides training in how to identify birds and collect data that are shared with researchers and resource management agencies. Visit www.coasst.org to learn more or contact COASST at 1-206-221-6893 or email coasst@uw.edu.