

**Winter Movements Of Female Bearded Seals (*Erignathus barbatus*) In Kotzebue Sound
And The Chuchki Sea**

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Bearded seals are an important resource for the native peoples of northern and western Alaska, they are a key ecological component of arctic marine ecosystems and, because they are sensitive to suitable sea ice conditions, they may be particularly vulnerable to climatic change. However, studies of their seasonal movements and habitat use have never been conducted in U.S. waters. In October, 2004, we tagged two sub-adult, female, bearded seals (*Erignathus barbatus*), with satellite-linked dive recorders in Kotzebue Sound, Alaska. One seal remained near the coast of inner Kotzebue Sound and the other moved into the deeper waters of the Chuchki Sea. Despite their different habitats, they exhibited similar patterns in the use of their surroundings. Both seals exhibited a tendency to remain in a given area, presumably foraging, for a number of days (i.e., 3-18), before moving to a new location, usually in excess of 150 km away. The seals are currently still being tracked and further analyses investigating their diving behavior and the effects of bathymetry and sea ice on their movements will be presented.

Marine Science in Alaska: 2005 Symposium Abstracts

**January 24-26, 2005
Hilton Hotel
Anchorage, Alaska**

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