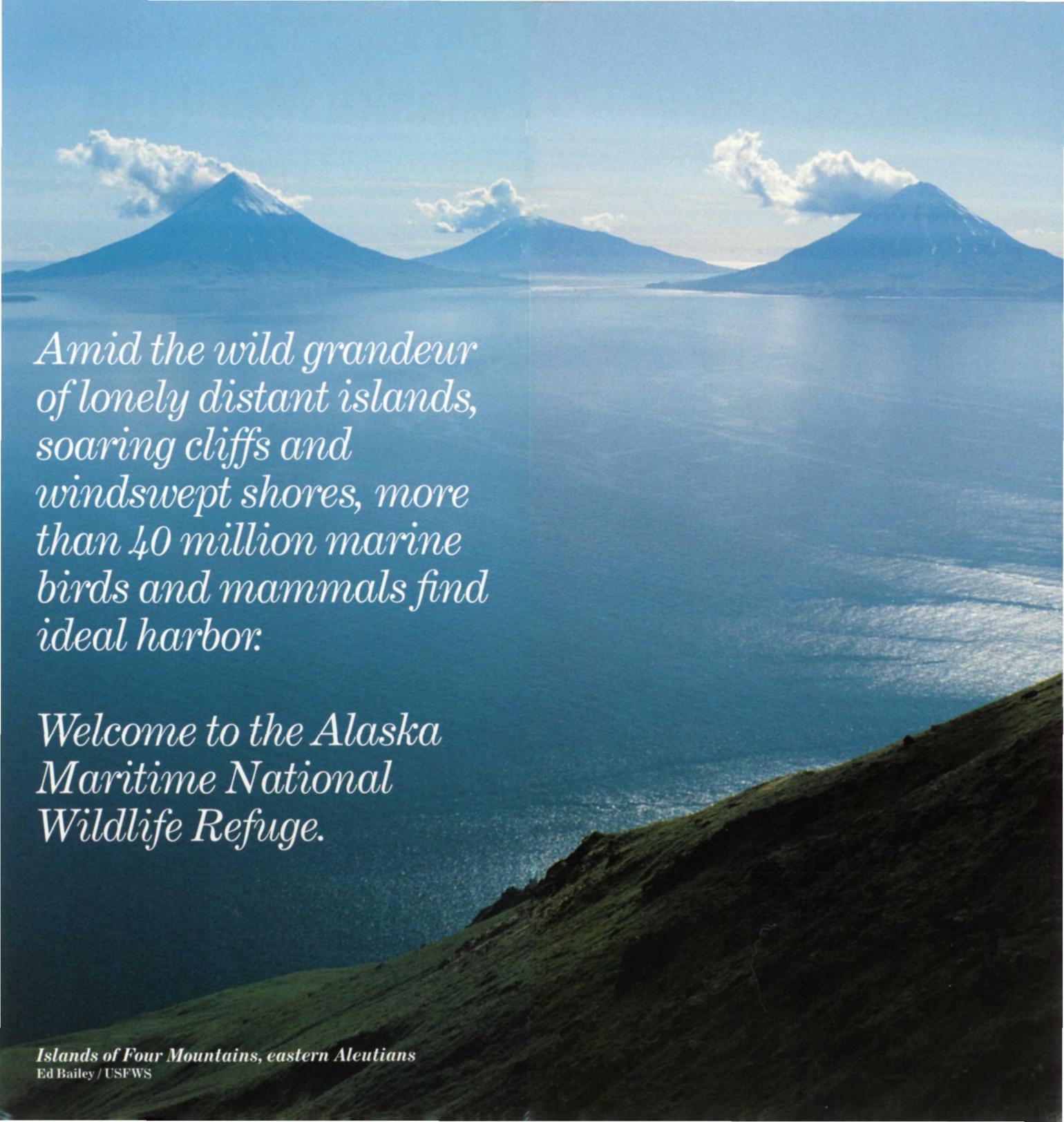


U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Alaska Maritime

*National Wildlife  
Refuge*





*Amid the wild grandeur  
of lonely distant islands,  
soaring cliffs and  
windswept shores, more  
than 40 million marine  
birds and mammals find  
ideal harbor.*

*Welcome to the Alaska  
Maritime National  
Wildlife Refuge.*



*This flying  
"Blue Goose"  
(a stylized  
Canada goose)  
was designed by  
renowned  
cartoonist and  
conservationist  
J.N. "Ding"*

*Darling in 1935.  
It has become the  
symbol of  
the National  
Wildlife Refuge  
System.*

### **Chain of Life**

Stretching from the Arctic Ocean to the southeast panhandle, the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge protects breeding habitat for seabirds, marine mammals and other wildlife on more than 2,500 islands, spires, rocks and coastal headlands. When overlaid on a map of the Lower 48 States, the Refuge extends from Georgia to California. More than half the land is National Wilderness Area.

Some of these isolated islands host unique species not found elsewhere. This Refuge may be the frontier where the next new bird or plant will be discovered.

In 1980 Congress safeguarded a majority of North America's finest seabird habitat when it created the Alaska Maritime Refuge by combining and adding to 11 existing coastal refuges (some established as early as 1909 by Theodore Roosevelt).

The Refuge is part of the National Wildlife Refuge System, a national network of lands and waters administered for the conservation, management and restoration of the fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans.

*Horned puffins  
nest throughout  
the refuge,  
sometimes  
in very large  
colonies of tens of  
thousands.*



*Northern fur seals breed on remote Bogoslof Island in the Aleutians and on the Pribilofs.*

Carla Stanley/USFWS

### Bird Watchers' Paradise

About 40 million seabirds fly to Refuge lands each spring after a winter on the ocean. Their colonies may look chaotic, but each of the 30 species nests in a specialized habitat.



Murres lay their single egg on bare rock ledges. Small parakeet auklets and larger horned puffins raise their chicks deep within rock crevices of different sizes. Storm-petrels dig long tunnels into grassy slopes. Thus they reduce competition for nest space and hide from predatory gulls and falcons.

Vernon Byrd / USFWS

*Parakeet auklets are one of six auklet species on the Refuge.*

Because most seabirds evolved on islands where their only predators were other birds, they are defenseless against introduced foxes and rats that can stalk them on ledges and enter their nest chambers.



©Cornelius Nelo

*Red-legged kittiwakes, nesting only here and in nearby Siberia, are just one of the Refuge's unique species.*



*Murres nest in large colonies.*

Dean Kildaw / USFWS



©Tom Collopy and Mary Frische

*Steller sea lions have mysteriously declined for 40 years.*

### Marine Mammals in Trouble

Remote Refuge beaches and nearshore waters provide protected "nurseries" for endangered and declining marine mammals while biologists search the ocean environment for the cause of their dwindling populations.

Sea otters are in trouble again after making a successful comeback last century from overhunting and near extinction.

Steller sea lions are now endangered, quieting the cries of pups and the roars of bulls on their rookeries.

Harbor and fur seal populations are slowly declining. The sea ice habitat of walrus and polar bears is melting and polar bears are now on the Endangered Species list. Few islands have native land mammals.

*Sea otters are found around Refuge islands in the Aleutians and the Gulf of Alaska. Protecting them was one of the reasons some islands were added to the Refuge.*



©Tom Collopy and Mary Frische

## Human Drama

More than 9,000 years ago, marine mammals and birds fed and clothed Alaska's earliest coastal peoples and gave rise to prosperous civilizations. Aleut/Unangan, Yup'ik, Inupiat, Dena'ina Athabascan, Alutiiq, Haida and Tlingit all have roots here.

Russians arrived in the 1700s, seeking a wealth of furs. They subjugated Natives and slaughtered sea otters and fur seals. They upset the natural balance by introducing foxes and rats to islands where wildlife evolved without land predators.

After purchase of Alaska in 1867, American trappers and traders intensified the outrages, prompting the setting aside of lands for this Refuge and an international treaty protecting sea otters and fur seals.

During World War II, Japanese swept into the Aleutians, bombing Dutch Harbor and seizing Kiska and Attu. Allied forces fought the long and bloody Aleutian Campaign to recapture these Refuge islands. The military remained after the war, later testing three underground nuclear bombs on Amchitka Island.

World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument includes three Refuge sites such as this bomber on Atka Island.



Steve Hillebrand/USFWS

## Restoration Challenge

History left a dirty legacy. War, nuclear tests, marine pollutants and introduced predators ravaged native plants and animals on some islands. The challenge is to heal those wounds and prevent new ones.



Robert Angell/USFWS

*The Refuge's M/V Tiglax supplies remote camps and supports a program of international marine research.*

To restore natural biodiversity, the Refuge is removing introduced species to make these islands safe for the original wildlife. The results are already exciting.

Vigilant to new threats, a "rat spill" team is ready to be deployed if a ship wrecks on the islands. Rats can pose a greater threat than oil spills to island ecosystems because rats multiply and cause havoc forever.

Biologists return yearly to a set of seabird colonies from the Arctic to Southeast Alaska to learn more about these birds and to look for changes that could signal critical shifts in the ocean environment.

*More than 30 years of work saved the Aleutian cackling goose from extinction by introduced foxes.*



USFWS

# Alaska Maritime

## National Wildlife Refuge

 Land within the Refuge Boundary (includes some private land)

 Unit Boundary

 Refuge Headquarters

0 80 160 240 320 Miles

0 100 200 300 400 Kilometers



## Visiting the Refuge

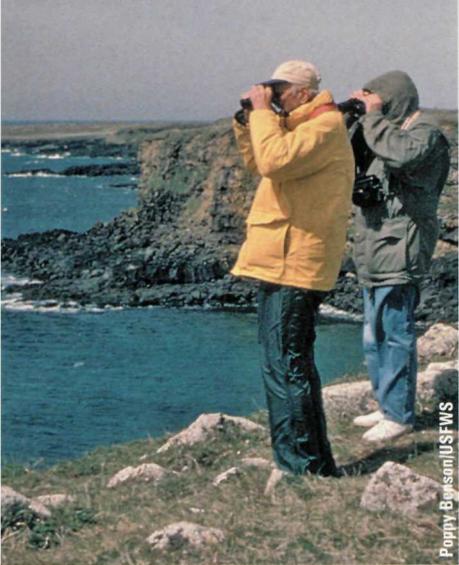
Ferries, tour boats, planes, and cruise ships can transport you to parts of the Refuge. Only Homer and Seward are accessible by road, but all communities in and near the Refuge have scheduled air service.

Refuge naturalists accompany the state ferry from Homer to Kodiak and Unalaska during the summer.

The best time to visit is from June through August when marine birds and mammals come ashore to breed and raise young. Expect cold, wet, windy weather and bring rain gear and layers of warm clothing. There are no campgrounds on the Refuge. Nearby towns have lodging.

## Alaska Islands & Ocean Visitor Center

The Refuge's visitor center in Homer brings the adventure and wildlife of this remote Refuge to you in exhibits, films and environmental education classrooms. Naturalists lead walks and programs in summer. Special experiences can be arranged for schools and other organized groups.



Poppy Benson/USFWS

*The Pribilof Islands offer the best marine bird and mammal viewing from land.*



Poppy Benson/USFWS

*Regularly scheduled boat tours to nearby Refuge islands leave from Homer, Seward and Sitka. Charters are available in other Refuge communities.*

**Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge**  
95 Sterling Highway  
Homer, Alaska 99603  
907/ 235 6546  
907/ 235 7783 Fax  
alaskamaritime@fws.gov  
<http://alaskamaritime.fws.gov>

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
1 800/ 344 WILD  
<http://www.fws.gov>

**Federal Relay**  
1 800/ 877 8339 Voice and TTY

**March 2010**



*Crested Auklets*  
© Cornelius Melo

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**

# **Alaska Maritime**

## *National Wildlife Refuge*