

To Prospective Yukon Delta Nest Plot Survey Participants – Summer 2018

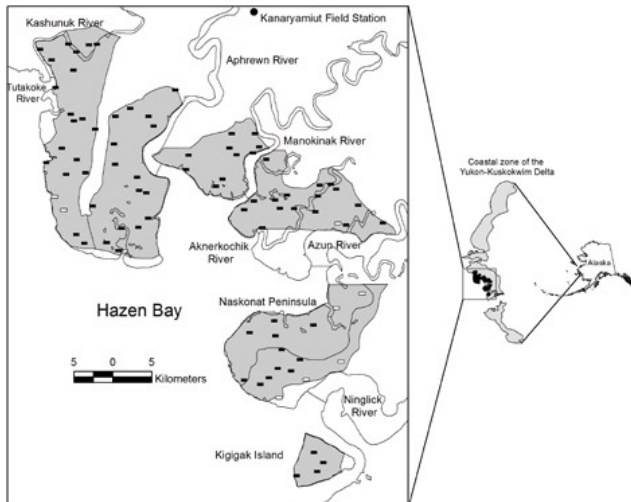
Winter is sliding by and summer field season is fast approaching. Now is the time to announce your intent to participate in a long-term waterfowl nesting survey located on Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta.

Background

The Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Nest Plot Survey is a cooperative project between FWS Migratory Bird Management and the Yukon Delta NWR and serves as the primary monitoring tool to measure recovery of the threatened spectacled eider in western Alaska. Since 1985, the survey has also provided data on nesting phenology, nest density, distribution and habitat selection of other waterfowl species including Emperor Geese. Survey results are also used to measure detection rates of aerial survey crews.



During mid-incubation, we search for all waterfowl nests in randomly selected plots near Hazen Bay on the central coast of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. At each nest, crews record the species, clutch size, nesting status, and stage of incubation. Data from spectacled eider nests is integrated with aerial survey results to produce a nesting population estimate. This estimate is then compared to recovery criteria specified in the Spectacled Eider Recovery Plan.



Field Conditions

This is a field assignment in a remote part of Alaska. All crew members must be in good physical condition. Participants will work long days, walk miles on tundra (the tundra here is semi firm but still more tiring than most people are used to) and boat many days. Though generally sub-arctic, crews may experience sub-freezing temperatures, high winds, precipitation and sometimes, biting insects. There are no modern amenities at the field site, so crews must be prepared to thrive in the absence of electricity, running water, flush toilets (or any toilet), heat, and cellular phone coverage (that's right, no coverage!). This said, it is an incredible place to boat and camp, the days are long and the birds are fantastic.

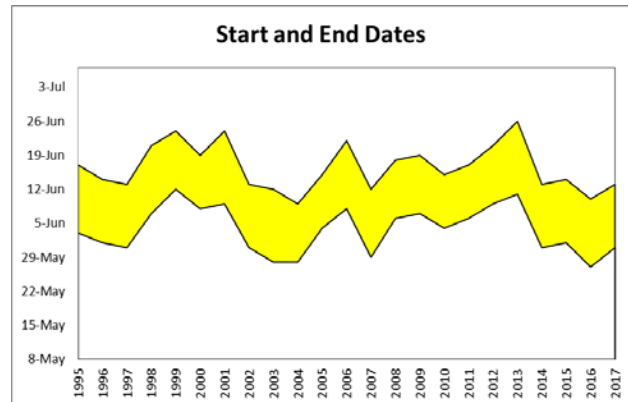
Crews, Travel, Equipment

I need 12-14 people who will work in crews of 2-3. In a typical year most participants are FWS employees or volunteers from Alaska, but we also welcome employees and volunteers from various organizations, universities, and agencies around the country as well as individuals interested in gaining experience in wildlife biology.

This long-term survey has been possible only by keeping costs to a minimum; thus, I cannot cover salary. I will cover travel costs from Anchorage to the field as well as food and equipment. For returning volunteers from outside of Anchorage, I will also cover transportation from your home. To reach the field site, we will fly on a commercial air carrier to Bethel where the Yukon Delta NWR headquarters is located. From there, crews will get to their field site via float plane or via small skiff from the village of Chevak.

Timing

The survey takes approximately 2 weeks to complete and starts during the second week of nesting which varies greatly from year to year. On average we begin data collection on June 1st, but we have started as early as May 27th and as late as June 11th so flexibility in your schedule is required. For those coming from outside of Alaska and who need training that can't be accomplished online or in your home town, you may need to tack a week on the front end of the survey to accomplish this. Realistically, I will not be able to provide a firm start date until early May. I realize this is frustrating and inconvenient, but it is the reality we are faced with in a variable climate and a brief nesting period.



Required Training

Given the remote nature of the field location and the means of transportation required to get there various training is required. However, we can also deliver one or two crews to sites via boat, so while it's a real benefit to be able to travel by small floatplane, it's not necessarily a necessity if aviation training cannot be completed. Please contact me if you want to know more about how to get this training.

- 1) A-100 BASIC AVIATION SAFETY^a – This course must be repeated every 2-years per FWS policy. The course and a refresher course can be taken on line at the following website: <https://www.iat.gov/>
- 2) A-104 Overview of Aircraft Capabilities and Limitations^a - This course must be repeated every 2-years per FWS policy. The course and a refresher course can be taken on line at the following website: <https://www.iat.gov/>
- 3) A312– WATER DITCHING AND SURVIVAL^a – The initial training must be taken in a classroom/pool. This course must be repeated every 2-years per FWS policy. The refresher course can be accomplished via webinar. If you've completed A312 in the past, you can take a refresher via webinar (A325R). A schedule of classes can be found at: <https://www.iat.gov/> Click on Find Courses and enter A312.
- 4) First Aid/CPR
- 5) Dept. of Interior Motorboat operator training (one trained operator per boat crew).

^a Aviation requirements are for those traveling via small aircraft; in some cases crews may be traveling entirely by boat so these courses would not be required.

If you are interested in participating in this survey, or know someone who does, please contact me soon. **Priority will be given to qualified people who can commit now.**

Thank You,
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