GLAUCOUS-WINGED GULL *Larus glaucesens*

Conservation Status

ALASKA: Not At Risk **N. AMERICAN: Not Currently At Risk** **GLOBAL Least Concern**

Breed	Eggs	Incubation	Fledge	Nest	Feeding Behavior	Diet
June-Aug	1-3	27-29 d	35-54 d	cliff, ground	surface dip	fish, marine invertebrates, birds, fish waste, garbage

Life History and Distribution

The Glaucous-winged Gull *(Larus glaucesens)* is abundant in bays, harbors, estuaries, and rivers during all seasons in northwestern North America. Its fearless nature and opportunistic eating habits make it a well known gull in coastal cities and towns. Due to environmental changes, availability of fish waste from fish processing, and garbage at landfills, this gull has increased in numbers. It nests primarily in colonies on rocky islets offshore, but in response to pressure on the breeding colonies, some birds are now nesting on the roofs of waterfront buildings. Other man-influenced habitats used along the coast include garbage dumps, city parks, athletic fields, school yards, airports, and agricultural fields.

This large, bulky gull is mostly white with a pearly gray mantle. Its wing tips are somewhat darker gray, with white spots. The bill is bright yellow with a red spot, the legs are pink, and the eyes are brownish. In winter, the red spot on the bill becomes a diffuse black and the head and neck look dusky. Glaucous-winged Gulls hybridize with Herring Gulls (*Larus occidentalis)* and Glaucous Gulls *(Larus hyperboreus)* in Alaska. The resulting hybrids are often difficult to identify.

Glaucous-winged Gulls breed from Cape Romanzof, Alaska in the southern Bering Sea, south along the Pacific coast to northwestern Oregon. They nest casually near freshwater in British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon. In Alaska, nesting also occurs on inland lakes on the southwest mainland, the entire Alaska Peninsula, throughout the Aleutian Islands, and casually on St. Lawrence Island and Cape Denbigh in Norton Sound.

Outside of North America, breeding occurs on the Commander Islands and on the Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia.

In winter, the species is generally found further away from shore than in summer. It is found throughout the breeding range south along the coast to southern Baja California and on the Pacific coast of Asia south to Japan.

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Alaska Seasonal Distribution

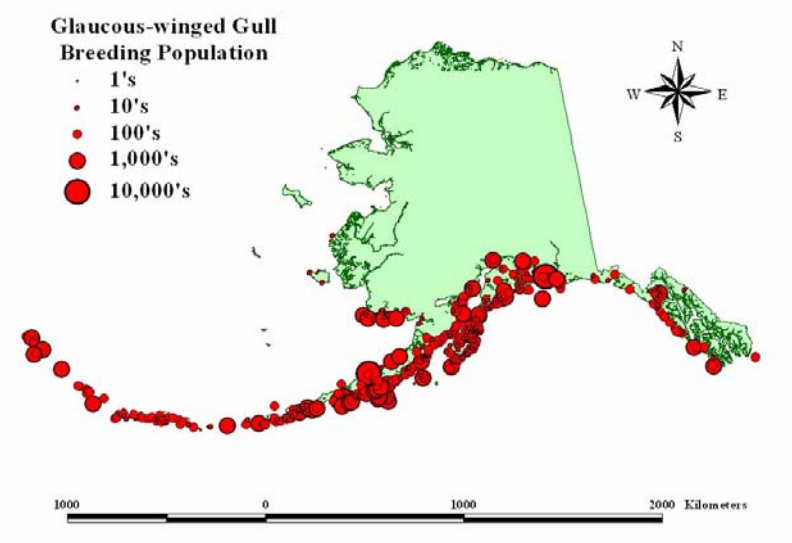
AK Region	Sp	S	F	W
Southeastern *	C	C	C	C
Southcoastal *	C	C	C	C
Southwestern *	C	C	C	C
Central	-	R	R	-
Western *	C	C	C	-
Northern	-	-	+	-

C= Common, U= Uncommon, R= Rare, + = Casual or accidental, - = Not known to occur, * = Known or probable breeder, Sp= Mar-May, S= June and July, F= Aug-Nov, W= Dec-Feb. **© Armstrong 1995.**

Population Estimates and Trends

The total breeding population along the coast of North America is estimated at 400,000 birds. Based on colony counts in Alaska, there are approximately 252,000 Glaucous-winged Gulls at 825 colonies. The largest colony in Alaska is on Middleton Island, in the Gulf of Alaska with about 12,500 birds.

Glaucous-winged Gulls on Middleton Island increased (+13.6% per annum) from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, but currently they are declining there. This species has decreased on Buldir Island in the Aleutian Island chain (a significant negative trend of -21.3% per annum) since 1992. No trends are evident at other monitored colonies in Alaska.



Seabird breeding population maps created from data provided by the Beringian Seabird Colony Catalog Database. U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Anchorage, Alaska.

Conservation Concerns and Actions

The attraction of Glaucous-winged Gulls to fish waste discarded by fishing vessels can result in birds being entangled or drowned in nets. In Alaska, gulls (Glaucous-winged Gulls, Glaucous Gulls, Herring Gulls) are the second most frequently taken species group as bycatch in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands demersal groundfish longline fisheries and the third most frequently caught species group in the Gulf of Alaska. Between 1993-2003, gulls comprised 20% of the total bycatch in the longline fisheries in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands (2,571 individuals per year) and 12% (106 individuals per year) of the total bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska. In 1999, gulls were taken as bycatch in the Upper Cook Inlet salmon setnet and driftnet fisheries. Additionally, low numbers of gulls have been taken as bycatch in the Alaskan trawl fisheries.

Other effects of human activity include hunting. In Alaska, Glaucous-winged Gulls and their eggs are taken by Native subsistence hunters. Between 1995 and 2000, an average of 71 adult Glaucous-winged Gulls and 5,286 eggs were taken annually. An additional 16,992 gull eggs were harvested, but not identified to species. Glaucous-winged Gull eggs may be included in this number. Effects on the populations are not directly known, but current harvests are not thought to cause severe impacts.

This species is not presently a management concern. If Glaucous-winged Gulls increased in numbers in mixed colonies to the point where they had deleterious effects on other species (e.g. kittiwakes, murrelets), management might become necessary. For example, the presence of large numbers of gulls could cause interference with the foraging success of small diving birds such as murrelets.

Control measures are sometimes necessary if gulls roost at airports, create problems at garbage dumps, or create public health hazards nesting on buildings.

Recommended Management Actions

- Continue monitoring Glaucous-winged Gulls in Alaska at geographically-dispersed breeding sites.
- Work with the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council (AMBCC) to monitor subsistence use of Glaucous-winged Gulls.
- Continue to work with state and federal agencies and fisheries councils to measure and minimize the negative impacts of fisheries interactions.
- Measure contaminant levels in Glaucous-winged Gull eggs.

Regional Contact

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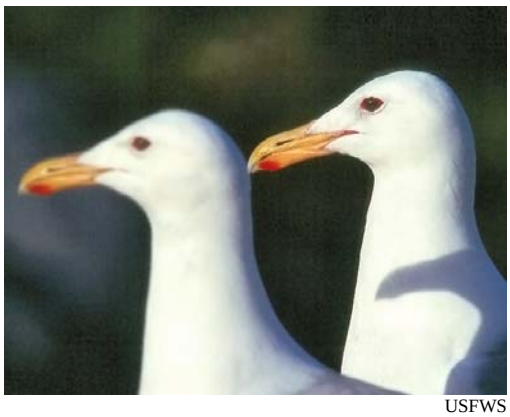
References

Armstrong 1995; Dragoo *et al*. In Press; Hatch, S.A. *et al.* unpublished data; IUCN Internet Website (2005); Kuletz 2005; Kushlan *et al.* 2002; Maniscalco *et al.* 1998*;* Manly 2004; NOAA Ostrand 1999; Internet Website (2005); U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service 2006, 2002; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Internet Website (2005); Verbeek 1993.

Full credit for the information in this document is given to the above references.



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