

THE BERING SEA



WHERE THE FISH ARE

Most of the Bering Sea's fish and wildlife inhabit in the rich, shallow waters of the Continental Shelf, Continental Slope and Aleutian Islands. Most of the commercial trawling is done in these same areas, as shown in red below. Wildlife declines have occurred in the same general areas.

Wildlife declines in the "Galapagos of the North"

The Bering Sea, with its abundant marine mammal, fish and seabird species, has been compared to waters off the Galapagos Islands for its natural wealth as well as its fragility.

Over the last half century, the U.S., Russia and Japan have transformed the Bering Sea into one of the richest fisheries in the world. Both the U.S. and Russia catch half their fish from the Bering Sea.

The Bering's western part is Russian territory, and the eastern portion belongs to the United States. A section in the middle, the "Donut Hole," is actually international waters. Fished out in the early 1990s, the Donut Hole has been off-limits to trawling since 1993 by international agreement.

These 878,000 square miles of ice, wind and wildlife extend

from the the Aleutian Islands on the south to the 53-mile-wide Bering Strait between Russia and Alaska on the north.

Maps and charts on this and the following pages show the places where wildlife live and forage in the Eastern Bering Sea, and the progression of wildlife declines over the last two decades. ■

Extinct species

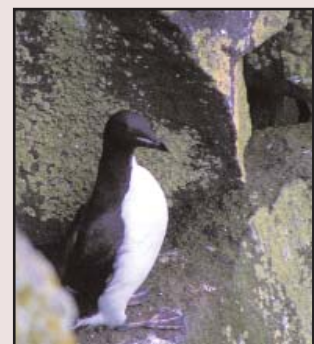
MARINE MAMMALS

Steller Sea Cow
Last seen in 1770

Declining species

SEABIRDS/SEA DUCKS

Spectacled Eider
Declared threatened 1993
King Eider
Declined 31% 1970s-1990s
Steller's Eider
Declared threatened 1997



Thick-billed murre on St. Paul Island, Alaska, has declined 40 percent since 1977

Common Eider

Declined 90%

Common Murre

Declined 67% since 1977

Thick-Billed Murre

Declined 40% since 1977

Red-legged Kittiwake

Declined 38% since 1977

Black-Legged Kittiwake

Declined 57% since 1977

Short-Tailed Albatross

Declared endangered 1970

MARINE MAMMALS

Northern Fur Seal

Declared depleted 1988

Steller Sea Lion

Declared threatened 1990

Western stock declared endangered 1997

Declined 81 percent since 1979

Harbor Seal, Pribilof Group

Declined 80 percent 1974-1995

Northern Sea Otter

Declined 70 percent between

1992 and 2000; another 68

percent from 2000 to 2003

Proposed threatened 2004



A platter of Bering Sea snow crab prepared by Pribilof Aleuts

CETACEANS

Blue Whale

Declared endangered 1970

Fin Whale

Declared endangered 1970

Northern Right Whale

Declared endangered 1970

Bowhead Whale

Declared endangered 1970

Sei Whale

Declared endangered 1970

Sperm Whale

Declared endangered 1970

Humpback Whale

Declared endangered 1970

FISH

Pacific Ocean Perch

Overfished in 1960s

Aleutian Islands Pollock

Stock declined 43 percent since 1992

Donut Hole Pollock

Fishery closed 1993

Bogoslov Island Pollock

Fishery closed 1993

Pribilof Area Halibut

Catch down 47% since 1999

Bering Sea Sablefish

Stock declined 48% since 1985

Bering Sea Greenland turbot

Stock declined 74% since 1980

Rougheye Rockfish

Stock declined 60% since 1980

CRAB

Bristol Bay Red King Crab

Sharp declines 1980-83, 1993; Fishery closed 1983, 1994, 1995; still far below 1980 peak; remains open



Young black-legged kittiwake on St. Paul Island.

Pribilof Red King Crab

Long-term decline

Fishery closed since 1999

St. Matthew Blue King Crab

Fishery closed since 1999

Declared overfished 1999

Pribilof Blue King Crab

Fishery closed since 1999

Declared overfished 2002

Tanner Crab

Fishery closed since 1997

Declared overfished 1999

Snow (Opilio) Crab

Declined precipitously in 1999

Declared overfished 1999

Fishery remains open

Korean Hair Crab

Several years of decline

Fishery closed since 2001