

Northern Fur Seal Harvests, St. George Island, AK

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Harvest report
for the 2012
Season
7.8.2012-
8.8.2012

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Traditional Council of St. George Island

INTRODUCTION

Laqux, northern fur seal (*callorhinus ursinus*) is an important customary traditional food for the Unangan of St. George Island, Alaska. Together, the Traditional Council of St. George along with the U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service coordinated, monitored, and managed the subsistence harvest of northern fur seals to safeguard their existence. The 2012 subsistence fur seal harvest was conducted in accordance to 50 CFR §216 Subpart F on St. George Island.

METHODS

The Island Sentinel of the St. George Traditional Council Kayumixtax Eco-Office monitored the 2012 subsistence fur seal harvest for the Aleut Community of St. George Island and in accordance with the Co-management Agreement between the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Aleut Community of St. George. Within this context, management and activities were conducted under a cooperative agreement with the National Marine Fisheries Service. During the 2012 subsistence fur seal harvest information was collected on:

- a) the number of sub-adult male fur seals harvested
- b) incidence of by-products and waste during the harvest process
- c) the occurrence of older male seals judged to be 124.5 cm or more in length
- d) female seals killed or injured during the harvest operation
- e) the number of seal deaths due to overheating
- f) number of seals entangled in marine debris and the number of seals disentangled
- g) evidence of oil contaminated seal pelts
- h) other types of fur seal mortality
- i) weather conditions at the time of the harvest
- j) any other unusual conditions related to the harvest
- k) Research conducted during the harvest, and visitors requesting to view or film the harvest

RESULTS

Harvest season began 6.24.2012 to 8.8.2012 with the first harvest taking place on July 13 and ending the harvest season on August 7th. The community of St. George harvested 64 northern fur seals (63 males and 1 female) during the 2012 season. Harvesters and the Sentinel observed 4 tagged fur seals during the harvest round-ups (Table 2). One tagged seal was an accidentally clubbed during the harvest. Six harvests were conducted in the one month period. All six harvests were distributed equally among the rookeries so as not to disturb one rookery more frequent than the other.

Table 1: Dates, locations, weather, harvest time and number of Sub-adult males harvested.

Date of Harvest	Rookery	Weather	Time of Harvest	# of seals harvested
7-13-2012	North East	Wind: W 7 Temp: 42	Start 10:15am End 10:45am	12
7-21-2012	Zapadni	Partly Cloudy/ Variable 7 Temp:43	Start 3:40pm End 4:20pm	11*
7-30-2012	North East	Raining Temp: 40	Start 11:40am End 12:20pm	7
8-2-2012	Zapadni	Sunny Temp: 47	Start 10:15am End 10:45am	11
8-3-2012	North East	Overcast/raining Temp:46	Start 10:30am End 11:15am	11
8-7-2012	Zapadni	Sunny Temp: 48	Start 11:15am End 12:00pm	12

*One sub-adult female was accidentally harvested on this date, but was not identified until subsequent analysis of teeth at NMML in February 2013. Therefore 11 seals were harvested on 21 July 2012 from Zapadni, 10 were sub-adult males and one was a sub-adult female.

Table 2: Shows the dates and serial numbers on the documented tags and the rookery where the seal with tags were discovered.

Date Observed	Haulout	Harvested	Tag Number	Both Tags	Both Flippers
7-21-2012	Zapadni	Yes	G0392	No	Yes
7-21-2012	Zapadni	No	G0170	Yes	Yes
7-21-2012	Zapadni	No	G00736	Yes	Yes
8-3-2012	Northeast	No	G0587	Yes	Yes

Note: Tagged animals were not captured or weighed. However they were let out of the groups to ensure no harm was done to them.

The tagged seal that was clubbed had only the tag located on the left front flipper. The right flipper tag was missing with no damage to the flipper. The tag was retrieved and stored in the same bag as the tagged animal's collected upper canines.

Additional Information

-By-products and Waste

No waste of significant edible portions of harvested northern fur seals occurred during the 2012 season.

-Males 124.5 cm or More in Length and Female Seals Harvested or Struck

Based on our observations at every harvest, we estimate no male fur seals 124.5 cm (49 in) or more in length were struck and harvested. One female was accidentally harvested on 21 July 2013 from Zapadni hauling ground.

-Heat Strokes: No deaths of any fur seal occurred due to heat stroke during the 2012 subsistence seal harvest.

-Entanglement: One female was encountered on August 3rd but not pursued and disentangled. The female was located at Northeast rookery with a white packaging band located around its neck. The packaging band lay loosely around the neck with no visible lacerations. No other entanglements were encountered throughout the season.

-Oil Contamination:

No oil contamination was encountered on any of the harvested animals.

-Other Mortality:

No other fur seal mortality occurred.

-Anomalies

There were no anomalies observed.

-Research

Additional research was done with the seal harvests.

100% of the upper canine of each harvested Sub-adult male was collected, bagged and tagged.

100% of nasal swabs were taken and frozen in the basement freezer located at Cottage C.

-Start Date of Harvest

The actual date for the start of the harvest season begins June 24th of every summer according to the current regulations. The main reason for the late start is due to two factors (1) an overall reduction in seals due to the long-term decline, and (2) the smaller harvestable males do not begin to haulout until the first week of July. This reason is also to be within accordance to the regulations of males harvested within 124.5 cm.

-Acknowledgments

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