



EIDER JOURNEY

About the Communities

About Barrow

The North Slope Borough is one of the most remote and sparsely populated areas of Alaska. It is also the also the largest borough in Alaska, over 15% of the total land area, encompassing 88817.1 sq. miles of land (the size of Minnesota) and 5945.5 sq. miles of water. The Borough is north of the Arctic Circle and includes both the north and northeastern coast of Alaska, and extends south to the Brooks Range. Barrow, the northernmost community in North America, is located on the Chukchi Sea coast, 10 miles south of Point Barrow, from which it takes its name.



The vast majority of the North Slope's people are Inupiat Eskimos. They reside in eight villages, with populations ranging from 139 to 4,500, with Barrow being the largest. In total the region includes 6,290 residents, of which over 70 percent are Inupiat. There are no roads within the region or connecting the region to urban centers; all travel is by air, both to and within the borough, by small bush plane (Cessna 206/207). Barrow, 725 air miles from Anchorage, is the economic center of the North Slope Borough, the city's primary employer, and numerous businesses

provide support services to oil field operations. State and federal agencies also provide employment. The midnight sun has attracted tourism, and arts and crafts provide some cash income. Many residents rely upon subsistence food sources: whale, seal, polar bear, walrus, duck, caribou and grayling and whitefish are harvested from the coast or nearby rivers and lakes.

About Cold Bay

The Aleutians East Borough comprises the westernmost portion of the Alaska Peninsula, and includes several Aleutian Islands. Seven communities are found within the 6988.1 sq. miles of the Borough. The area's rich resources have cultivated an extremely diverse population of non-Natives, Unanga Natives (Aleuts) and Asians. About 2,600 people live in the Borough.



Cold Bay, with a population of 88, is adjacent to the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge, 40 miles off of the



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About the Communities

western end of the Alaska Peninsula. It lies 634 miles southwest of Anchorage, and 180 miles northeast of Unalaska (Figure 2). Cold Bay houses a number of federal offices with services focused on Aleutian transportation and wildlife protection. Subsistence and recreational fishing and hunting are a part of the local culture. Visitors access Cold Bay and the Refuge by commercial airline and the Alaska State Ferry System. Forty miles of gravel roads and trails provide very limited access to the refuge from Cold Bay. The remaining three million acres of wild lands can be accessed only by foot, boat, or small aircraft.

About Izembek National Wildlife Refuge

Probably the most visited part of Cold Bay is the Izembek National Wildlife Refuge. Izembek Refuge which is adjacent to the community. The Refuge spans across the tip of the Alaska Peninsula and is 417,000 acres. Izembek Refuge protects the watershed of Izembek Lagoon, a State Game Refuge containing one of the largest eelgrass beds in the world. Eelgrass beds are the primary producer in shallow seas and form the food-base for fish, shellfish, and waterfowl, as plankton does for marine life in deeper waters.

This estuary serves as an international crossroad to migrating waterfowl and shorebirds. The world's population of Pacific brant, thousands of Canada geese, and other waterfowl congregate on the lagoon from late August through early November. Each spring and fall the entire population of emperor geese migrate through Izembek, with several thousand wintering here. The colorful Steller's eider, a threatened species that nests on the arctic coast of Alaska and Siberia and molts in Izembek Lagoon in the fall, is the most common wintering duck. Izembek Refuge provides the final opportunity for many migrating shorebirds to feed and rest before their long over-water flights to wintering areas as far away as South America, Polynesia, and New Zealand.

Numerous species of seabirds and marine mammals inhabit the surrounding marine environment. Harbor seals and sea otters frequent estuarine and coastal waters and congregate in rookeries along sand and rock beaches. Steller sea lions are seen occasionally in estuaries and use offshore rocky islands for haul-outs and rookeries. Gray, killer, and minke whales migrate along the coastline and make occasional visits to bays and lagoons.

The refuge is also home to many species of land birds and mammals. Tundra swans, ptarmigan, and bald eagles inhabit the uplands along with snow buntings, gray-crowned rosy finches, Lapland longspurs, and other migratory songbirds. Brown bears are abundant, feeding from streams rich with thousands of spawning sockeye, chum, coho, and pink salmon. Other mammals on the Arctic-alpine landscape include caribou, wolves, red fox, river otter, mink, and wolverine. Small mammals



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such as arctic ground squirrels, voles, and shrews flourish in the tundra. Less common are tundra hares, jumping mice, and lemmings.