

these species depend, thereby ensuring the future of healthy avian populations and communities (For more detailed information on the exact criteria used to select species for consideration and inclusion on the BCC lists, see FWS 2002).

Of the 106 species for which the Service proposes to establish regulations allowing subsistence hunting in Alaska, 22 are on BCC lists at one or more scales (e.g., National, FWS Regions, or Bird Conservation Regions—Alaska). The Service considers one additional species (Trumpeter Swan) to be “sensitive” because of its small population size and limited breeding distribution in Alaska. Of the 22 species on BCC lists, 14 are technically considered “gamebirds” (as defined by bilateral migratory bird conventions with Canada and Mexico), although frameworks allowing sport hunting seasons have never been established for any of them in the 85-year history of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. These species are included on the list of birds that could be hunted for subsistence at the request of the Co-management Council based on a continuing history of customary and traditional use, and the fact that they will continue to be taken for subsistence in the future. Although designation of these species by the Service as “birds of conservation concern” or “sensitive” does not automatically exclude them from consideration for subsistence hunting, we believe that it is incumbent upon the Service to make sure that appropriate conditions are in place to ensure that a limited subsistence harvest of these species will not worsen their conservation status.

The following 23 species are birds of conservation concern or considered sensitive for other reasons. We request public comments as to whether or not these bird species should be removed from the list of birds open for the spring/summer subsistence harvest in Alaska.

Family Gaviidae

Red-throated Loon (*Gavia stellata*)
Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*)

Family Phalacrocoracidae

Red-faced Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax urile*)

Family Anatidae

Trumpeter Swan (*Cygnus buccinator*)

Family Charadriidae

American Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis dominicus*)
Pacific Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis fulva*)

Family Haematopodidae

Black Oystercatcher (*Haematopus bachmani*)

Family Scolopacidae

Solitary Sandpiper (*Tringa solitaria*)
Upland Sandpiper (*Bartramia longicauda*)
Whimbrel (*Numenius phaeopus*)
Bristle-thighed Curlew (*Numenius tahitiensis*)
Hudsonian Godwit (*Limosa haemastica*)
Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*)
Marbled Godwit (*Limosa fedoa*)
Black Turnstone (*Arenaria melanocephala*)
Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*)
Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)
Buff-breasted Sandpiper (*Tryngites subruficollis*)

Family Laridae

Red-legged Kittiwake (*Rissa brevirostris*)
Arctic Tern (*Sterna paradisaea*)
Aleutian Tern (*Sterna aleutica*)

Family Alcidae

Whiskered Auklet (*Aethia pygmaea*)

Family Strigidae

Short-eared Owl (*Asio flammeus*)

In addition to whether or not these birds should be open for subsistence hunting, we specifically request information and comments from the public on the following four questions regarding the above list of bird species. Responses may reflect personal knowledge or opinion, or be based on a review of historical or contemporary documents and published literature.

1. What measurable impacts do you think a limited subsistence harvest would have on populations of these species?

2. Which bird species are more important in terms of food value and/or customary and traditional uses?

3. Apart from their designation as “birds of conservation concern,” are there particular reasons why subsistence harvest should be restricted or closed for any of these species?

4. In the event that subsistence hunting were allowed for some or all of these species, do you believe that certain conditions should be imposed to ensure that the population status of these species is maintained or improved? If so, what would you recommend?

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Public Comments Solicited

The Department of the Interior’s policy is, whenever practicable, to afford the public an opportunity to participate in the rulemaking process. If you wish to comment, you may submit your comments by any one of several