

Wildlife Inventory Plan
Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge
Protocol #28

Version 1.2

Parameter: Populations

Species: Seabirds and marine mammals at Walrus Island

PURPOSE

To census seabird and marine mammal populations at Walrus Island. Circumnavigational surveys of islands collect information on species abundance and distribution, which is necessary to establish baseline population data and subsequently to detect any significant fluctuations.

STUDY AREA

Walrus Island (57°11' N, 169°56' W) is approximately 10.5 km east of St. Paul Island (Figure 1). Surveys are conducted from skiff and sometimes from land. Walrus Island is rookery for Steller's sea lions (*Eumetopias jubatus*) and a haul out for Northern fur seals (*Callorhinus ursinus*) and harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*), so appropriate measures to avoid disturbance must be taken. When surveying from skiff, keep an eye out for marine mammals and stay far enough offshore that they do not react to your presence. If they start swaying their heads and moving to the water, you are disturbing them and you should back off: do not gun the engine and proceed at a slow even pace.

Do not land on Walrus Island unless given permission by the unit biologist. If you are given permission to land on the island, it is best to moor the boat where it is protected from surge and waves. Behind Murre Rock on the west side of the island has been an ideal place in the past (Figures 2 and 3): if sea conditions allow, you can motor the skiff (go real slow!) through the channel along the south side of Murre Rock, being careful not to flush murre off Murre Rock. (Keep an eye out for sea lions at all times; if you think you will flush or disturb them, especially pups, abort any landing attempt). Moor the boat by securing the anchor on shore among the rocks. Check and secure shackle connections on the anchor chain. Deploy a tube buoy or air roller to serve as a bumper against rocks. Do not moor the boat where it will be bumping against barnacles, they can pop the pontoons! If you are going to walk around the island put your survival suits on shore just in case your boat gets away.

PROCEDURES

Data collection.—Count all seabirds and marine mammals during nearshore circumnavigation survey of Walrus Island. Also record numbers of nests and chicks for any kittiwake and cormorant species. Try to distinguish between adults and pups for marine mammal species and record numbers of any branded sea lions you observe. If possible, also make notes of any other bird species observed for inclusion in an annotated list. For data recording, the island is divided into east and west sections (see Figure 1). Survey should be conducted between mid-July and early August for comparison with other years and can be in conjunction with second visit to Otter Island.

If you are given permission to land on Walrus Island, conduct a land-based count of murre on Murre Rock. Count using binoculars and a tally counter and distinguish between species if possible (since 2006, only common murre have been present). For comparisons with past years, counts must be conducted from a location directly opposite of Murre Rock where the boat is moored (see Figure 2). Take a photograph before leaving (from a position that will encompass all of Murre Rock).

While walking on the island, stay out of the sight of marine mammals, especially sea lion harems with pups. If an area of the island is blocked by marine mammals, do not go there.

Data analysis.—Present data in tables and annotated lists in the annual report.

Specific Requirements

Dates: Mid-July to early August (in conjunction with second visit to Otter Island)

Weather: Calm seas and low fog, both for counting ease and boating safety.

Equipment: All boating safety gear, 10x40 binoculars, plot maps, two sets tally counters, Rite-in-the-Rain[®] data notebook, two pencils, digital camera.

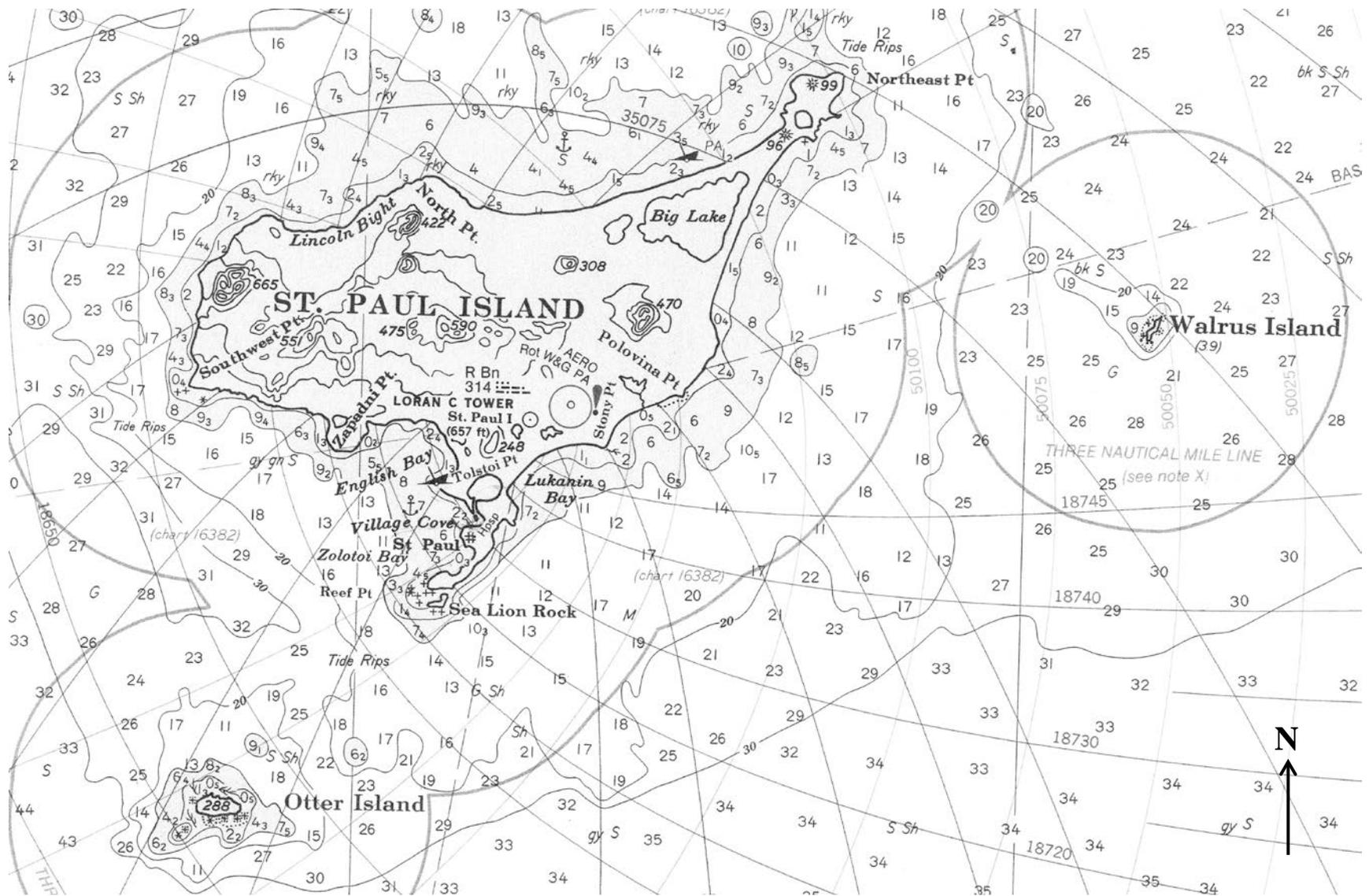


Figure 1. Map of St. Paul, Otter and Walrus islands.



Figure 2. View of skiff mooring location at Walrus Island with Murre Rock in the background.

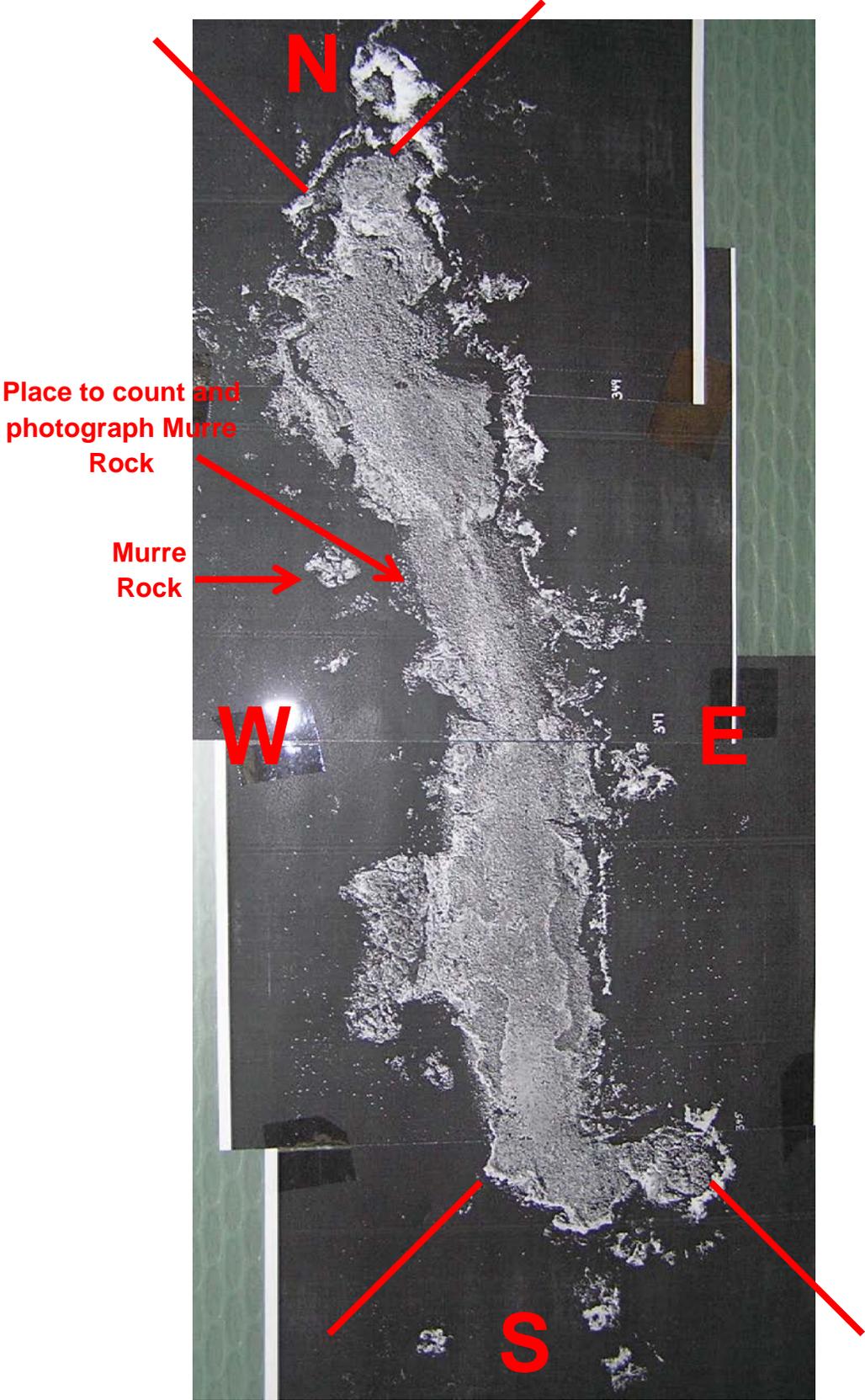


Figure 3. Aerial view of Walrus Island showing plot divisions.

Protocol Revision History Log

Revision Date	Changes made	New version #
April 2017	Renumbered protocol from #23 to #28, minor grammatical corrections	1.2
April 2014	Changed font to Arial, added revision history log, replaced revision date with version # on first page, added protocol # to first page, changed number format of tables and figures in island attachments, changed page number format to include protocol #	1.1
May 2011	Protocol developed in standardized format from historic St. Paul protocols	1.0
