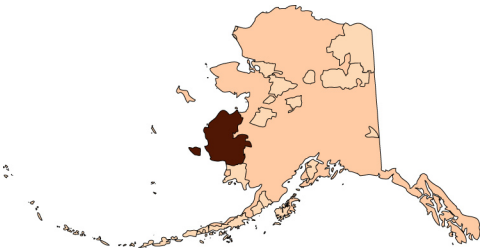
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge

A Special Place in Alaska!

- Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge was established to conserve shorebirds, seabirds, whistling swans, emperor, white-fronted and Canada geese, black brant and other migratory birds, salmon, muskox, and marine mammals.
- The refuge's more than 19.5 million acres give it an area larger than the state of Maine. It is the second largest refuge in the National Wildlife Refuge System after Arctic Refuge.
- The 1.1 million acre Nunivak Island portion of the refuge supports an introduced herd of muskox. The herd was used as a breeding stock to re-establish herds elsewhere in Alaska and Russia.
- Seventy percent of the refuge is below 100 feet in elevation, and consists of a broad, flat delta interlaced with countless ponds, lakes and rivers, streams, inlets, bays, and coastal areas.



The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service manages 16 national wildlife refuges in Alaska, or nearly 82% of the National Wildlife Refuge System acreage.

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Emperor Goose

- Millions of shorebirds use the refuge for both breeding and staging. In terms of both density and species diversity, Yukon Delta is the most important shorebird nesting area in the country.
- Alaska's two largest rivers, the Yukon and the Kuskowim, and their tributaries, flow through the refuge, creating hundreds of miles of spawning and rearing habitat for 44 species of fish (including 5 species of Pacific salmon).
- Two species of sea duck that frequent the refuge, the spectacled and Steller's eiders, are listed as threatened and are protected under the Endangered Species Act.
- The coastal waters of the Bering Sea support harbor, ribbon, ringed and bearded seals, and walrus. Several species of whales pass along the coast during their migration.
- The ancestral home of the Yup'ik Eskimo, the refuge includes more than 40 Yup'ik villages whose residents continue to live a largely subsistence lifestyle.
- The refuge covers a vast expanse and diverse topography from the Bering Sea, across subarctic tundra and rising to mountain peaks over 4,000 feet in height. Because of these topographical and ecological extremes, the refuge supports a variety of interesting large mammals including whales, seals, muskox, caribou, bear, and moose. In fact the refuge spans the southernmost latitude at which all three species of North American bears (brown, black and polar) can be found.
- While one third of Yukon Delta Refuge is covered in water, it has extensive shrub and forest habitat totaling over 2.5 million acres.
- The Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta supports one of the largest populations of water birds in the world. The abundance of water provides habitat for waterfowl from all four North American flyways. More than one million ducks and half a million geese breed here annually.