

Critical site for migrating waterfowl

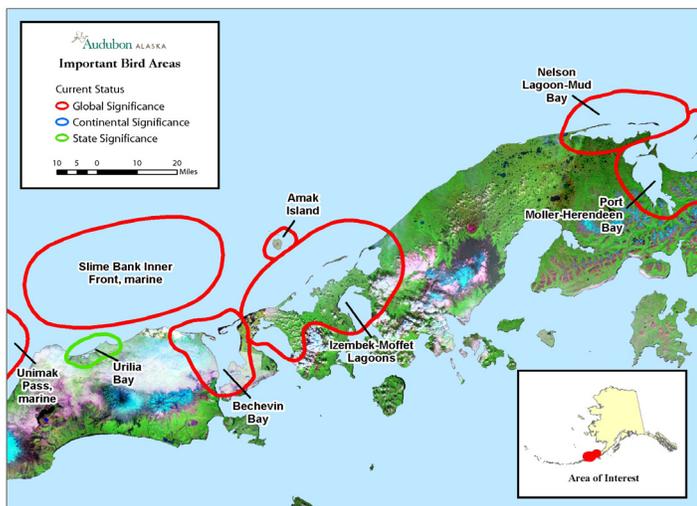
The Izembek National Wildlife Refuge lies along the Bering Sea side of the Alaska Peninsula. The location along traditional avian migration routes and the presence of large eelgrass beds make this site one of the most important migratory bird staging and wintering habitats in the world. Izembek's cold-water lagoons and internationally significant wetlands are critically-important resting places for migrating waterfowl. The Refuge is recognized as Wetland of International Significance in the U.S. under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands; and as an Important Bird Area of global significance by BirdLife International and the National Audubon Society.

More than 82 species of birds have been documented using habitats in the vicinity of Izembek lagoon. The area regularly supports about 98 percent of Brant that use the Pacific Flyway,

more than half of the world population of Emperor Geese, and a significant percentage of the world populations of Steller's Eider and Taverner's Cackling Goose.

OPPOSE DEVELOPMENT AT IZEMBEK

Building a road through wilderness and wetlands would sacrifice key habitats and bring about significant long-term degradation to bird and wilderness values. Since 1985, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has consistently found that a road across the narrow isthmus between Izembek and Kinzarof Lagoons would be incompatible with the purposes for which Izembek Refuge was established, and that a road would cause significant, long-term damage to important fish and wildlife habitat and the wilderness values of the Refuge. Strong evidence suggests that the underlying motivation behind the road is commercial in nature.



Important Bird Areas of the Izembek Lagoon Complex.



Emperor goose. Photo: Milo Burcham

Photo: Brynn Hagerly, USFWS

PACIFIC FLYWAY CONNECTIONS

The migratory ducks, geese, and shorebirds that rest and fuel at Izembek migrate south to states along the Pacific Flyway and beyond. For example, virtually the entire Pacific Brant population uses Izembek to refuel on the eelgrass beds, a type of aquatic marine vegetation. In today's warmer climate, about 30% of the Brant are remaining at Izembek for the winter, with an increasing trend over time, making Izembek ever more important for this species. Those Brant that do not overwinter at Izembek will migrate south along the Pacific coastline to winter in eelgrass habitat in waters off Washington, Oregon, and California. During the spring and fall, wildlife watchers may enjoy these Arctic visitors in conservation areas like Grays Harbor in Washington, Coos Bay in Oregon, and Humboldt Bay in California.

HOW TO PROTECT IZEMBEK

- Oppose legislating a road through Izembek.
- Any administrative decisions should consider past agency determinations.
- Studies of road impacts on birds and wildlife should consider long-term cumulative impacts.

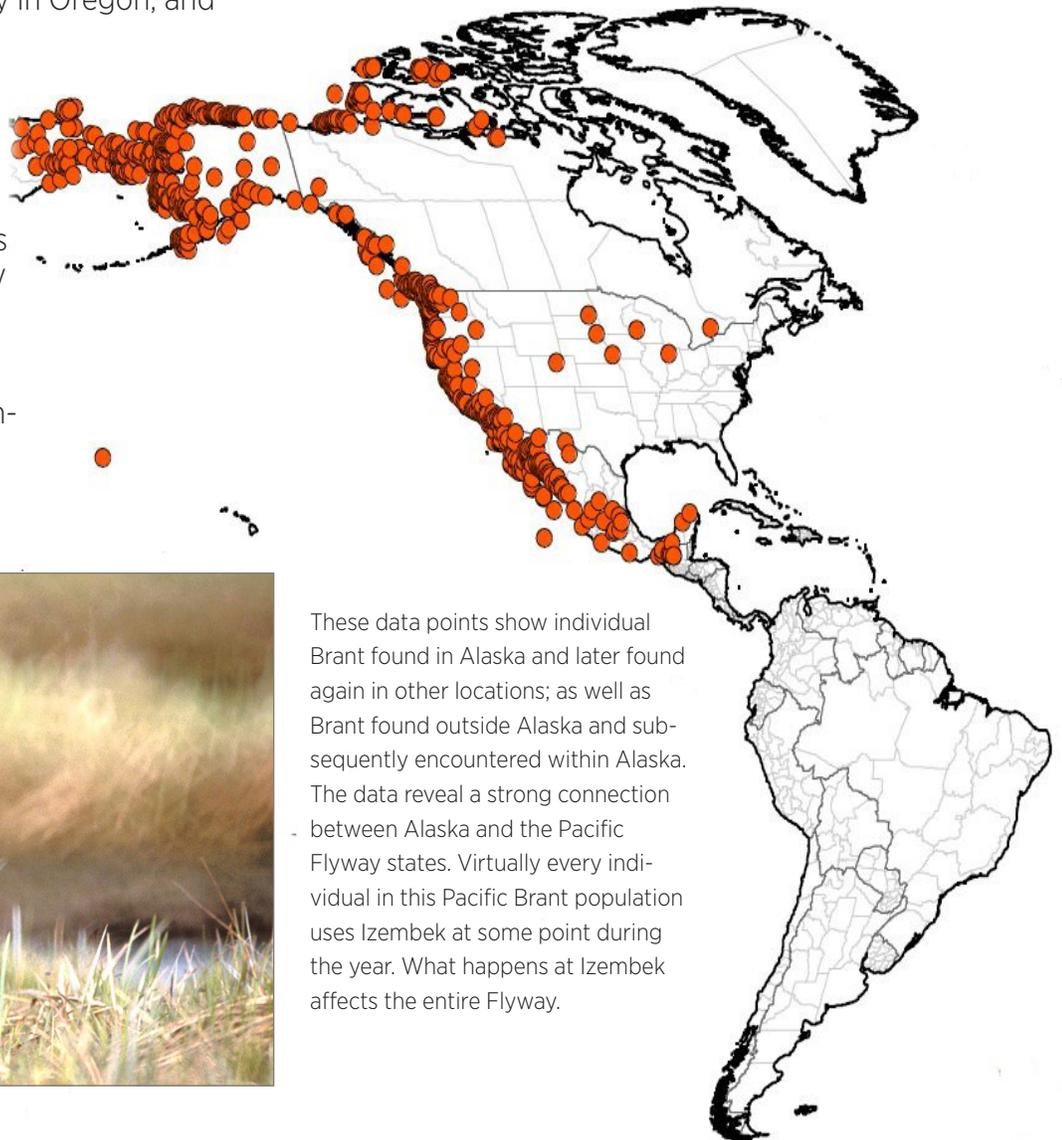


Black Brant Photo: Tim Bowman.

98% of the Pacific Brant population uses Izembek for the eelgrass habitat and sheltered lagoons.

AUDUBON ALASKA

Established in 1977, as the Alaska state office of the National Audubon Society, Audubon Alaska conserves the state's natural ecosystems, focusing on birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. Audubon uses innovative science and mapping technology to identify ecological hotspots and focuses policy efforts to protect sensitive wildlife habitats in Alaska. Audubon Alaska is led by a state board of directors and responsible for raising all of the funds needed to support Audubon's work in Alaska.



These data points show individual Brant found in Alaska and later found again in other locations; as well as Brant found outside Alaska and subsequently encountered within Alaska. The data reveal a strong connection between Alaska and the Pacific Flyway states. Virtually every individual in this Pacific Brant population uses Izembek at some point during the year. What happens at Izembek affects the entire Flyway.