



U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Region 7 - Alaska
1011 East Tudor Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
(907)786-3309 (TDD Available)

NEWS

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Contact: Andrea Medeiros 907-786-3695
Andrea_medeiros@fws.gov

USFWS Announces 12-Month Finding on Petition to List Yellow-billed Loon

Anchorage, Alaska—The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) today announced a determination that listing the yellow-billed loon (*Gavia adamsii*) as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act is not necessary at this time. The Service reviewed the best available information to evaluate the current status of the bird and stressors it faces throughout its range.

Geoffrey Haskett, Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Alaska Region, said “We’ve been working to provide for the conservation of yellow-billed loons in Alaska for a number of years, collaborating with the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, State of Alaska, North Slope Borough, oil and gas industry, and others. After careful consideration, we don’t believe yellow-billed loons meet the definition of an endangered or threatened species but we will still continue to work with our partners toward their conservation.”

In response to a petition from the Center for Biological Diversity and others in 2004, we published a 12-month finding in the 2009 *Federal Register* (74 FR 12932) that found listing the yellow-billed loon under the ESA was “warranted but precluded” by higher priority listing actions. Since then, annual analyses of threats to the yellow-billed loon, published in the Candidate Notice of Review, resulted in the species continually categorized as having a low to moderate listing priority status.

There are two primary reasons we have now determined that listing the yellow-billed loon is “not warranted” in contrast to our earlier determination.

First, following the 2009 finding, the Service and its partners expanded efforts to better understand yellow-billed loon harvest, abundance, and distribution in the Bering Strait-Norton Sound region with the goal of evaluating the reliability of reported subsistence harvest. The Service now has reliable information suggesting the yellow-billed loon is not a significant subsistence resource; and that the limited harvest does not have a negative impact on the population.

Second, additional years of survey data on the Arctic Coastal Plain in Alaska further support that the breeding population, which we believe to be representative of the other breeding populations, is stable or slightly increasing in abundance.

Though the Service is not listing the yellow-billed loon, it remains a conservation priority for the Service. The Service, working with Tribal, State and Federal partners, will continue to monitor and implement conservation measures for the yellow-billed loon in northern and western Alaska.

This finding and the Yellow-billed Loon Species Status Assessment Report (SSA Report; Service 2014) are available on the Internet at <http://www.regulations.gov> at Docket Number FWS-R7-ES-2014-0043.

Supporting documentation used in preparing this finding is available for public inspection, by appointment, during normal business hours at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fairbanks Fish and Wildlife Field Office, 101 12th Ave, Rm. 110, Fairbanks, AK. Please submit any new information, materials, comments, or questions concerning this finding to the above address.

More information about the yellow-billed loon may be found at:
http://www.fws.gov/alaska/fisheries/endangered/yellow_billed_loon.htm

For further information, contact Sarah Conn, Field Supervisor, Fairbanks Fish and Wildlife Field Office, at 907-456-0499.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information, visit <http://www.fws.gov/alaska/>, or connect with us through any of these social media at <http://www.fws.gov/home/socialmedia/alaska.html>.

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