

**Protocol for Handling Dead  
Spectacled and Steller's Eiders**  
Last Updated July 2010

**Introduction**

The Fish and Wildlife Service needs to document mortality of threatened species whenever possible. Fish and Wildlife Service programs that use this information include Endangered Species, Environmental Contaminants, and Conservation Planning Assistance (to aid in recovery plans and implementation) and Law Enforcement (for enforcing the Endangered Species Act and other wildlife-related laws), in addition to numerous related research programs. Every dead spectacled and Steller's eider can aid in its species recovery by providing evidence and samples. We have developed this general protocol to help you help us utilize every threatened eider found dead.

In the past, this protocol covered handling and transport of injured or sick eiders. Because of avian flu concerns, we cannot currently transport injured or ill eiders for rehabilitation, so we can no longer provide instructions or a protocol for handling them. To minimize your risk, we recommend that you do not contact or handle wild birds that appear to be ill or injured.

Due to concerns about contracting avian influenza from handling bird carcasses, please make sure that you have proper personal protective equipment (PPE) and training prior to retrieving a carcass. Collect carcasses under the assumption that an infectious disease or toxic substance is involved and other animals or humans may be at risk. Briefly, you need to protect yourself from fluids and feces by using impermeable gloves, safety glasses, a mask if necessary, and by decontaminating yourself and equipment with a bleach solution.

**Reporting**

Report all dead spectacled and Steller's eiders as soon as possible. If there is no reason to suspect that the bird(s) died as the result of any illegal activity, you should attempt to contact the following people, in the order listed, until you reach someone.

1. Angela Matz, USFWS, Fairbanks: (907) 456-0442 work, (907) 457-6723 home, (907) 456-0203 msg
2. Ted Swem, USFWS, Fairbanks: (907) 456-0441 work, (907) 474-9324 home, (907) 456-0203 msg
3. Ellen Lance, USFWS, Anchorage: (800) 272-4174 toll free, (907) 271-1467 work, (907) 351-8352 cell
4. Catherine Berg, USFWS, Anchorage, (907) 271-1630, (907) 244-1529 cell
5. Robert Suydam, North Slope Borough Dept. of Wildlife Management, Barrow: (907) 852-0350

If you encounter any dead spectacled or Steller's eiders which you suspect may have died as a result of an illegal act such as shooting, a Service Law Enforcement Officer should be notified immediately. This notification should occur prior to the disturbance or removal of any dead birds or other evidence. You should be prepared to report any observations and/or knowledge you might have regarding the incident and you will be provided with additional instructions regarding proper custodial handling techniques, which will allow a Special Agent to follow-up with an investigation into the incident.

USFWS, Office of Law Enforcement:  
Fairbanks: (877)-535-1795 toll-free, (907) 456-2335, (907)-496-3534 pager  
Cell numbers: 388-2853, 347-7704, 388-2854  
Nome: (907) 443-2479, (907) 443-2938 fax  
Anchorage: (800) 858-7621 toll-free, (907) 271-2828, (907) 268-1158 pager  
Regional Office, Anchorage: (907) 786-3311, (907) 786-3313 fax

Ensure that one of the individuals in the first list is also contacted in these instances.

Your report should include:

1. Species, age, sex, and number of birds; date, time and location (latitude and longitude and area name);

2. Suspected cause of death;
3. Circumstances under which found;
4. If known, the names of witnesses or suspects, and a description of any vehicles or boats involved (but, non-law enforcement individuals are not expected to conduct investigations or obtain information that is not readily available).

If a camera is available, photograph birds and other evidence such as shotgun shells or casings, and persons and vehicles involved. Note photo date, time, and location.

You should put all this information, plus any additional details you think important (such as location of nearest power line), in a short written narrative.

### **Transport**

If the person you contact from one of the lists above asks you to ship dead eiders, please follow the instructions below, shipping to the address they give you.

### Packaging

Place carcass in a large ziplock or other waterproof plastic bag. Tie or secure this bag. Attach a tag to this bag with the following information in pencil/waterproof ink:

- species
- date collected
- location (state, county, location name, and latitude/longitude if available)
- collector (name/address/phone)
- additional history or comments on back of tag

then wrap in a second waterproof bag. Tie or secure this bag. Thoroughly rinse the outside of the second bag with a 1% solution of household bleach [1.25 oz or about 8 teaspoons of bleach (5.25 % sodium hypochlorite) per gallon of water].

Dispose of your PPE correctly and wash your hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based ( $\geq 60\%$  alcohol) hand sanitizer.

### Storage

Keep the carcass refrigerated if the bird will be shipped within 48 hours, but freeze birds if the carcass is already showing signs of decay (stinks) or if shipping delays of more than 3 days are foreseen. When in doubt, refrigerate until you receive guidance. In remote field camps, place carcass in a pit dug down to permafrost.

### Shipping

Ship the carcass in a sturdy, hard-sided insulated container. Pack the carcass with frozen gel or blue ice packs; do not ship with wet ice or snow. Put additional insulation in the container (such as crumpled newspaper or packing peanuts) so that there is no airspace.

Ship using Alaska Airlines Goldstreak, FedEx, or other expedited service. Notify the receiver of flight arrival times or tracking numbers so that the package can be picked up.

### Expenses

If needed, USFWS (Anchorage or Fairbanks Field Offices, or the Office of Law Enforcement) will pay for shipping.