**Conservation Work**

Since 1987, the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge M/V Tiłgalax has been plying the wild waters of coastal Alaska, ferrying biologists to remote camps and serving as a platform for nearshore research.

The Tiłgalax (TEKH-lah - Unangan or Aleut for eagle) and its crew work for the Refuge as its research and transportation support vessel. Each year the Tiłgalax may sail to islands in Southeast Alaska, the far western end of the Aleutian Chain, and into the Bering Sea, typically traveling 12,000 to 20,000 nautical miles.

The map below shows the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge in orange, comparing the scale of the Refuge lands with the lower 48 United States. If the Refuge were in the lower 48 states, it would span from California to Georgia!

25 years of conserving Refuge resources:

**Seabirds and Marine Mammals**

Researchers use the Tiłgalax as a floating research platform to study ocean conditions and the marine food web in the nearshore waters adjacent to critical seabird and marine mammal breeding colonies in the Gulf of Alaska and Bering Sea.

Watching for change is critical to understanding species decline and possible causes including climate change. The Tiłgalax sets out and picks up seabird monitoring field camps and visits periodically during the summer bringing news and fresh food to the uninhabited islands where the work is carried out.

Scientists use the Tiłgalax to gather data and document the collapse of sea otter populations in southwest Alaska to try to assess why this is occurring and what, if anything, can be done about it.

The ship has supported Steller sea lion research throughout the Aleutians - from pup counts to sea lion capture for radio transmitter application. National Marine Fisheries Service, responsible for sea lion research, is just one of the many agencies that uses the Tiłgalax to get their job done.
Saving Rare Species
With help from the Tiīlaḵ, Refuge staff have been able to safely get to remote areas to save rare species. Two birds were brought back from the brink with help from the Tiīlaḵ - the endangered Aleutian Cackling Goose and Evermann’s Rock Ptarmigan. The goose came off the Endangered Species List as fully recovered in 2001. The ptarmigan was reintroduced to Agattu Island where it is now successfully breeding again. The ship was involved in all aspects of the projects from supporting fox trappers who made the islands safe for birds again to transporting geese and ptarmigan to the now fox-free islands, reintroducing them to their historic range.

Oil Spill Response
Refuge biologists on the Tiīlaḵ assessed oil spill damages from the Exxon Valdez and the Selendang Ayu shipwrecks.

Archaeology
Archeologists supported by the Tiīlaḵ over the years have contributed to our understanding of early Unangan (Aleut) history and culture.

Habitat Restoration
With support from the Tiīlaḵ, the Refuge removed foxes from over 40 islands, restoring more than one million acres of habitat. The ship also transported people and supplies for the first rat eradication in Alaska. Norway rats had been killing native birds and altering habitat on Rat Island since they arrived by shipwreck in the 1700s. The now rat-free island has reclaimed its Unangan name of Hawadax.

M/V Tiīlaḵ
- Built - 1987
- Home Port - Homer, Alaska
- Length - 120 feet; Weight - 415 tons (unladen)
- Crew - 6; Passengers - 14
- Facilities - fully-equipped galley; lounge/mess for up to 20 people, 4,800 cubic feet of cargo space; fore and aft crane for loading.
- Skiffs - Four 17-foot outboard-powered inflatable boats transport gear or workers
- Fuel Capacity - 37,000 gallons. Can travel 10,000 miles (without refueling)
- Speed - cruises at 10 knots
- Navigation Equipment - X and S-band radar, sonar, GPS, depth sounders
- Communications - satellite phone, HF sideband, marine VHF, WxFax
- Wet and Dry Labs for examining and preparing specimens
- Sampling Equipment - Simrad bioacoustic transducers and data processors for sampling fish/plankton densities; Midwater and bottom trawls; Neuston and vertical plankton nets

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