



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Sailing for Science

M/V Tiġlaġ

Conservation Work

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

The *Tiġlaġ* (TEKH-lah - Unangan or Aleut for eagle) and its crew work for the Refuge as its research and transportation support vessel. Each year the *Tiġlaġ* 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 *Tiglax* 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 *Tiġlaġ* 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.



Photographer/Al Grillo, Associated Press

M/V Tiġlaġ



Photographer/Steve Hillebrand, USFWS

Scientists use the *Tiġlaġ* 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 *Tiġlaġ* to get their job done.

Saving Rare Species

With help from the *Tiġlaġ*, 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 *Tiġlaġ* - 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.



Photographer Steve Ebbeert, USFWS

Evermann's rock ptarmigan

Oil Spill Response

Refuge biologists on the *Tiġlaġ* assessed oil spill damages from the Exxon Valdez and the Selendang Ayu shipwrecks.

Archaeology

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

Habitat Restoration

With support from the *Tiġlaġ*, 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.



Photographer/Steve Hillebrand, USFWS

M/V *Tiġlaġ* at Big Koniuji Island in the Aleutians

M/V *Tiġlaġ*

- 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



Captain Billy Pepper



Photographer/Carolyn Gudmundson

Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge
95 Sterling Highway #1
Homer, Alaska 99603
907/235-6546 (phone)
<http://alaskamaritime.fws.gov/>

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