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Abstracts

FEATURE ARTICLES

POPULATION STRUCTURE OF PACIFIC COMMON EIDERS BREEDING IN ALASKA

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Abstract. We used satellite telemetry to study the migration routes and wintering areas of two allopatric breeding populations of Pacific Common Eiders (*Somateria mollissima v-nigrum*) in Alaska: the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, and the western Beaufort Sea coast. Only 6% (2 of 36) of females wintered within the wintering area of the other breeding population. Both breeding populations wintered in the closest available ice-free habitat, perhaps to minimize migratory distance. Two Beaufort Sea females wintered in areas used by Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta females, implying potential gene flow among breeding areas. Yet, we conclude that these two populations are largely geographically isolated throughout the annual cycle and the environmental factors influencing survival and reproduction likely differ between these groups of birds. Thus, regardless of the potential gene flow among breeding populations, we suggest that birds from these two breeding areas should be managed as separate populations.

Key words: Alaska, Pacific Common Eider, population structure, *Somateria mollissima v-nigrum*, winter.