



## **NIRB Application for Screening #126441**

### **Marine Habitat Use of Black Guillemots at Pitsiulaaqsi and Eastern Canada Seabirds at Sea (ECSAS) Surveys**

**Application Type:** New

**Project Type:** Scientific Research

**Application Date:** Wednesday, April 29, 2026

**Period of operation:** from 2026-07-01 to 2026-08-31

**Project Proponent:** Julia Baak  
Canadian Wildlife Service  
301-933 Mivvik Street  
Iqaluit Nunavut X0A3H0  
Canada  
Phone Number:: 8672220875, Fax Number::

# DETAILS

## Non-technical project proposal description

English: Attached as document. Pasted below: Plain Language Summary: Marine Habitat Use of Black Guillemots at Pitsiulaaqsi and Eastern Canada Seabirds at Sea (ECSAS) Surveys Project  
Lead/Applicant: Dr. Julia Baak, Conservation Biologist, Canadian Wildlife Service Canadian Wildlife Service 301-933 Mivvik Street, Iqaluit, NU, X0A 3H0 Email: julia.baak@ec.gc.ca; Telephone: 867-222-5629 Project Collaborator: Dr. Kyle Elliott, Associate Professor, McGill University Dept of Natural Resource Sciences 21111 Rue Lakeshore, Ste Anne-de-Bellevue, QC, H3X 3V9 Email: kyle.elliott@mcgill.ca; Telephone: 514-398-7907  
Number of personnel and/or visitors that will be covered under the permit: Maximum of 8  
Project objectives and rationale: Black guillemots (*Cephus grylle*) are a widespread Arctic seabird, ranging from the Atlantic to the High Arctic in Canada. Importantly, Canada supports an estimated 440,000 individuals (approximately 58% of the global population), placing a high degree of responsibility on Canada to monitor and conserve this species. As pursuit-diving seabirds that forage in shallow, coastal waters or near ice edges and polynyas, these birds are particularly vulnerable to human activities such as shipping traffic, oil spills, and exposure to contaminants. Despite this, we know little about the movement ecology and threats of black guillemots in Canada, particularly in Nunavut, where there is no available tracking data for this species during the breeding and non-breeding season. As shipping and other human activities continue to increase in the Canadian Arctic, monitoring the movement ecology of black guillemots is important to better understand key habitats for these species, as well as potential threats that these species may be exposed to throughout the year. To address these critical knowledge gaps, we propose to deploy Global Positioning System (GPS) transmitters on 30 adult black guillemots to quantify fine-scale foraging movements during the breeding season. These data will provide the first detailed insights into the movement ecology of black guillemots in this region, which will support the identification of important marine areas and inform marine spatial planning. The resulting data will also establish a baseline for future monitoring and contribute to multi-regional seabird tracking efforts aimed at assessing cumulative impacts and conservation needs in a rapidly changing Arctic. Additionally, subarctic and arctic waters around Canada support millions of breeding birds. Although tied closer to land during the breeding season when they raise their young, seabirds exist mostly in the marine environment. Since many spend much of their lives out of sight of land, knowledge of their at-sea distribution has been difficult to obtain. Since 2006, the Eastern Canada Seabirds at Sea (ECSAS) program has monitored seabirds at sea using ships-of-opportunity, including Canadian Coast Guard vessels, cruise ships, and more recently, ships in local communities. The information from these surveys is used to identify important marine areas for protection, and understand the potential consequences of climate change and other threats on Arctic marine bird populations. Although the surveys were designed to count birds, observers collect information on all wildlife sightings, including marine mammals and plastic pollution. All data are made publicly available through the Open Government Data Portal. Although several trained observers exist in the Atlantic provinces of Canada, we lack the expertise in Arctic Canada where survey effort is needed most. Thus, our second objective is to train northern community members, including Inuit staff within CWS, to enhance our capacity to monitor seabirds across Arctic Canada.  
Project location: Pitsiulaaqsi (63.4624° N, 67.8421° W) and Frobisher Bay. Proposed date and duration of visit: We propose to take three daytrips to Pitsiulaaqsi (63.4624° N, 67.8421° W) by boat between July 1st to August 31st 2026. Eastern Canada Seabirds at Sea Surveys will be conducted on the boat ride to and from Pitsiulaaqsi.  
Project methods: Black Guillemot Tracking We will make two daytrips to Pitsiulaaqsi to capture, band, and deploy 30 GPS transmitters (Ecotone Alle, 6 g, < 2% of black guillemot body mass) on adult male and female black guillemots during the incubation and chick-rearing stages (between July 1st to August 31st, 2026). Birds will be caught by hand at their burrow, using a noose pole, and/or by using a noose carpet placed outside of their burrow. Upon capture, a small blood sample will be collected from the tarsus vein to obtain the sex of each individual. Birds will then be measured (mass, tarsus, wing length, head-bill, and culmen), and feather samples (breast and head) will be collected to estimate diet from stable isotope analysis. GPS transmitters will be affixed to the back or tail of black guillemots with Tesa tape. After deployment, we will return to Pitsiulaaqsi for another day trip (July 1st to August 31st, 2026) to remove the GPS transmitters. Upon recapture, we will collect a blood sample (1-2 mL) to measure contaminant levels in this species.  
Eastern Canada Seabirds at Sea Surveys For the Eastern Canada Seabirds at Sea surveys, marine bird observers will conduct surveys from the bridge of the vessel while the vessel is in transit in Frobisher Bay, scanning ahead to a 90° angle. Observations are limited to 300 m from the beam of the ship, and all birds observed are counted and identified. Each survey lasts five minutes and as many consecutive surveys as possible are

conducted during daylight hours. At the beginning of each 5-minute survey, we record the ship's position, speed and direction, time of day, and a number of environmental variables (e.g., ice conditions, visibility, wind speed). These methods are standardized with methods used elsewhere in the North Atlantic and will allow us to compare data across survey years and regions. Program Logistics Transportation: Pitsiulaaqsi: Boat (3 landings) Community consultation and involvement: We will consult with the Amaruq HTA of Iqaluit requesting support for the project. We plan to hire Polar Outfitters for the day trips to Pitsiulaaqsi and the ECSAS surveys, which will include Alex Flaherty and 1-2 aids/bear monitors from Iqaluit.

French: Attached as document. Pasted below: Résumé en langage clair : utilisation des habitats marins par les guillemots à miroir à Pitsiulaaqsi et les relevés d'oiseaux marins pélagiques dans l'Est du Canada (Eastern Canada Seabirds at Sea; ECSAS) Responsable du projet/demandeur : Dr Julia Baak, biologiste de la conservation Service canadien de la faune 301-933, rue Mivvik, Iqaluit, NU, X0A 3H0 Courriel : julia.baak@ec.gc.ca ; téléphone : 867-222-5629 Collaborateur du projet : Dr Kyle Elliott, professeur agrégé, Université McGill Département des sciences des ressources naturelles 21111, rue Lakeshore, Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue, QC, H3X 3V9 Courriel : kyle.elliott@mcgill.ca ; Téléphone : 514-398-7907 Nombre de personnes et/ou de visiteurs concernés par le permis : 8 au maximum Objectifs et justification du projet : Les guillemots à miroir (*Cepphus grylle*) sont un oiseau marin très commun dans l'Arctique, de l'Atlantique jusqu'à le Haut-Arctique canadien. Il est important de noter que le Canada abrite environ 440 000 individus (environ 58 % de la population mondiale), le Canada a donc une responsabilité majeure de surveiller et de conserver cette espèce. Les guillemots sont des oiseaux marins plongeurs qui chassent dans les eaux côtières peu profondes ou près des bords de glace et des polynies, alors ces oiseaux sont particulièrement vulnérables aux activités humaines telles que le trafic maritime, les déversements d'hydrocarbures et les contaminants. Malgré cela, nous en savons peu sur l'écologie des déplacements et les menaces des guillemots à miroir au Canada, en particulier au Nunavut, où aucune donnée de suivi n'est disponible pour cette espèce pendant la saison de reproduction. Alors que le trafic maritime et d'autres activités humaines continuent de s'intensifier dans l'Arctique canadien, il est important de surveiller l'écologie des déplacements des guillemots à miroir afin de mieux comprendre les habitats clé de ces espèces, ainsi que les menaces potentielles auxquelles elles peuvent être exposées tout au long de l'année. Pour combler ces lacunes critiques, nous proposons de poser des émetteurs GPS sur 30 guillemots à miroir pour quantifier leurs mouvements pendant la saison de reproduction. Ces données fourniront les premiers aperçus détaillés de l'écologie des déplacements des guillemots à miroir dans cette région, ce qui facilitera l'identification des zones marines importantes et éclairera la planification de l'espace marin. Les données ainsi obtenues serviront également de référence pour les futurs efforts de surveillance et contribueront aux initiatives multirégionales de suivi des oiseaux marins visant à évaluer les impacts cumulatifs et les besoins en matière de conservation dans un Arctique en pleine mutation. De plus, les eaux subarctiques et arctiques qui entourent le Canada abritent des millions d'oiseaux nicheurs. Bien qu'ils restent plus près des côtes pendant la saison de reproduction, lorsqu'ils élèvent leurs petits, les oiseaux marins vivent principalement en milieu marin. Comme beaucoup d'entre eux passent la majeure partie de leur vie loin de la terre ferme, il a été difficile d'obtenir des données sur leur répartition en mer. Depuis 2006, le programme « les relevés d'oiseaux marins pélagiques dans l'Est du Canada » (Eastern Canada Seabirds at Sea; ECSAS) surveille les oiseaux marins en mer à l'aide de navires de passage, notamment des navires de la Garde côtière canadienne, des bateaux de croisière et, plus récemment, des navires appartenant à des communautés locales. Ces relevés servent à identifier les zones marines importantes à protéger et à comprendre les conséquences potentielles du changement climatique et d'autres menaces sur les populations d'oiseaux marins de l'Arctique. Bien que les relevés aient été conçus pour compter les oiseaux, les observateurs recueillent des informations sur toutes les observations d'animaux sauvages, y compris les mammifères marins et la pollution plastique. Toutes les données sont mises à la disposition du public via le Catalogue de données d'Environnement et Changement climatique Canada. Bien qu'il existe plusieurs observateurs formés dans les provinces atlantiques du Canada, nous manquons d'expertise dans l'Arctique canadien, où les efforts de relevé sont les plus nécessaires. Notre deuxième objectif est de former des membres des communautés nordiques, y compris le personnel Inuit au sein de la SCF, afin de renforcer notre capacité à surveiller les oiseaux marins dans l'ensemble de l'Arctique canadien. Lieu du projet : Pitsiulaaqsi (63,4624° N, 67,8421° O) et la baie de Frobisher. Dates et durée prévues de la visite : Nous proposons d'effectuer trois excursions d'une journée à Pitsiulaaqsi (63,4624° N, 67,8421° O) en bateau entre le 1er juillet et le 31 août 2026. Des relevés des oiseaux marins de l'est du Canada en mer seront effectués pendant le trajet en bateau vers et depuis Pitsiulaaqsi. Méthodes du projet : Suivi des guillemots à miroir Nous effectuerons deux excursions d'une journée à Pitsiulaaqsi afin de capturer, baguer et





## Activities

Location	Activity Type	Land Status	Site history	Site archaeological or paleontological value	Proximity to the nearest communities and any protected areas
Pitsiulaaqsi	Researching	Crown	Nesting site for black guillemots, Iceland Gulls and Glaucous gulls for many decades.	This site is not designated as a National Historical Site.	45 km

## Community Involvement & Regional Benefits

Community	Name	Organization	Date Contacted
Iqaluit	Sally Mikijuk	Amaruq Hunters and Trappers Association	2026-02-05

# Authorizations

Indicate the areas in which the project is located:

South Baffin

## Authorizations

Regulatory Authority	Authorization Description	Current Status	Date Issued / Applied	Expiry Date
Canadian Wildlife Service	Scientific Permit	Applied, Decision Pending		
Canadian Wildlife Service	Banding Permit	Applied, Decision Pending		
Hunters and Trappers Associations/Organizations	Project approval	Active	2026-02-11	
Government of Nunavut, Department of Environment	Wildlife Research Permit	Active	2026-04-10	2026-08-31

## Project transportation types

Transportation Type	Proposed Use	Length of Use
Water	Travelling by boat to and from Pitsiulaaqsi	
Land	Landing on Pitsiulaaqsi and walking by foot, day trips only	

## Project accomodation types

Other,

# Material Use

Equipment to be used (including drills, pumps, aircraft, vehicles, etc)

Equipment Type	Quantity	Size - Dimensions	Proposed Use
Boat	1	Unknown	To transport people to and from Pitsiulaaqsi (departing from Iqaluit). The boat size will depend on the number of personnel and availability of outfitters (to be determined). Boat will hold up to 8 personnel.

## Detail Fuel and Hazardous Material Use

Detail fuel material use:	Fuel Type	Number of containers	Container Capacity	Total Amount	Units	Proposed Use
Gasoline	fuel	1	200	200	Liters	Fuel for the boat

## Water Consumption

Daily amount (m3)	Proposed water retrieval methods	Proposed water retrieval location
0		

# Waste

## Waste Management

Project Activity	Type of Waste	Projected Amount Generated	Method of Disposal	Additional treatment procedures
Researching	Non-Combustible wastes	1 small garbage bag	We will only be landing on Pitsiulaaqsi for day trips, thus we do not anticipate any environmental impacts at that location. All waste accumulated from this project will be brought back to Iqaluit to appropriate processing.	All waste accumulated from this project will be brought back to Iqaluit to appropriate processing.

### Environmental Impacts:

We will only be landing on Pitsiulaaqsi for a few hours, thus we do not anticipate any environmental impacts at that location. All waste accumulated from this project will be brought back to Iqaluit to appropriate processing. In the event of a fuel spill, the Canadian Wildlife Service and the 24-hour Nunavut spill report line (867- 920-8130) will be notified of any spills.

# **Additional Information**

**SECTION A1: Project Info**

**SECTION A2: Allweather Road**

**SECTION A3: Winter Road**

**SECTION B1: Project Info**

**SECTION B2: Exploration Activity**

**SECTION B3: Geosciences**

**SECTION B4: Drilling**

**SECTION B5: Stripping**

**SECTION B6: Underground Activity**

**SECTION B7: Waste Rock**

**SECTION B8: Stockpiles**

**SECTION B9: Mine Development**

**SECTION B10: Geology**

**SECTION B11: Mine**

**SECTION B12: Mill**

**SECTION C1: Pits**

**SECTION D1: Facility**

**SECTION D2: Facility Construction**

**SECTION D3: Facility Operation**

**SECTION D4: Vessel Use**

**SECTION E1: Offshore Survey**

**SECTION E2: Nearshore Survey**

**SECTION E3: Vessel Use**

## **SECTION F1: Site Cleanup**

## **SECTION G1: Well Authorization**

## **SECTION G2: Onland Exploration**

## **SECTION G3: Offshore Exploration**

## **SECTION G4: Rig**

## **SECTION H1: Vessel Use**

## **SECTION H2: Disposal At Sea**

## **SECTION I1: Municipal Development**

### **Description of Existing Environment: Physical Environment**

### **Description of Existing Environment: Biological Environment**

### **Description of Existing Environment: Socio-economic Environment**

### **Miscellaneous Project Information**

### **Identification of Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures**

Predicted environmental impacts of undertaking and proposed mitigation measure: We will only be landing on Pitsiulaaqsi for a few hours, thus we do not anticipate any environmental impacts at that location. All waste accumulated from this project will be brought back to Iqaluit to appropriate processing. In the event of a fuel spill, the Canadian Wildlife Service and the 24-hour Nunavut spill report line (867- 920-8130) will be notified of any spills.

### **Cumulative Effects**

# Impacts

## Identification of Environmental Impacts

	PHYSICAL	Designated environmental areas	Ground stability	Permafrost	Hydrology / Limnology	Water quality	Climate conditions	Eskers and other unique or fragile landscapes	Surface and bedrock geology	Sediment and soil quality	Tidal processes and bathymetry	Air quality	Noise levels	BIOLOGICAL	Vegetation	Wildlife, including habitat and migration patterns	Birds, including habitat and migration patterns	Aquatic species, incl. habitat and migration/spawning	Wildlife protected areas	SOCIO-ECONOMIC	Archaeological and cultural historic sites	Employment	Community wellness	Community infrastructure	Human health
<b>Construction</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
<b>Operation</b>																									
Researching	-	P	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	P	-	-	-	-	P	-	-	-	
<b>Decommissioning</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	

(P = Positive, N = Negative and non-mitigatable, M = Negative and mitigatable, U = Unknown)

Project Location



List of Project Geometries

1	point	Pitsiulaaqsi
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