

Summer tourists: The rare, amazing, and out-of-their-range visitors observed during seabird surveys in the Gulf of Alaska



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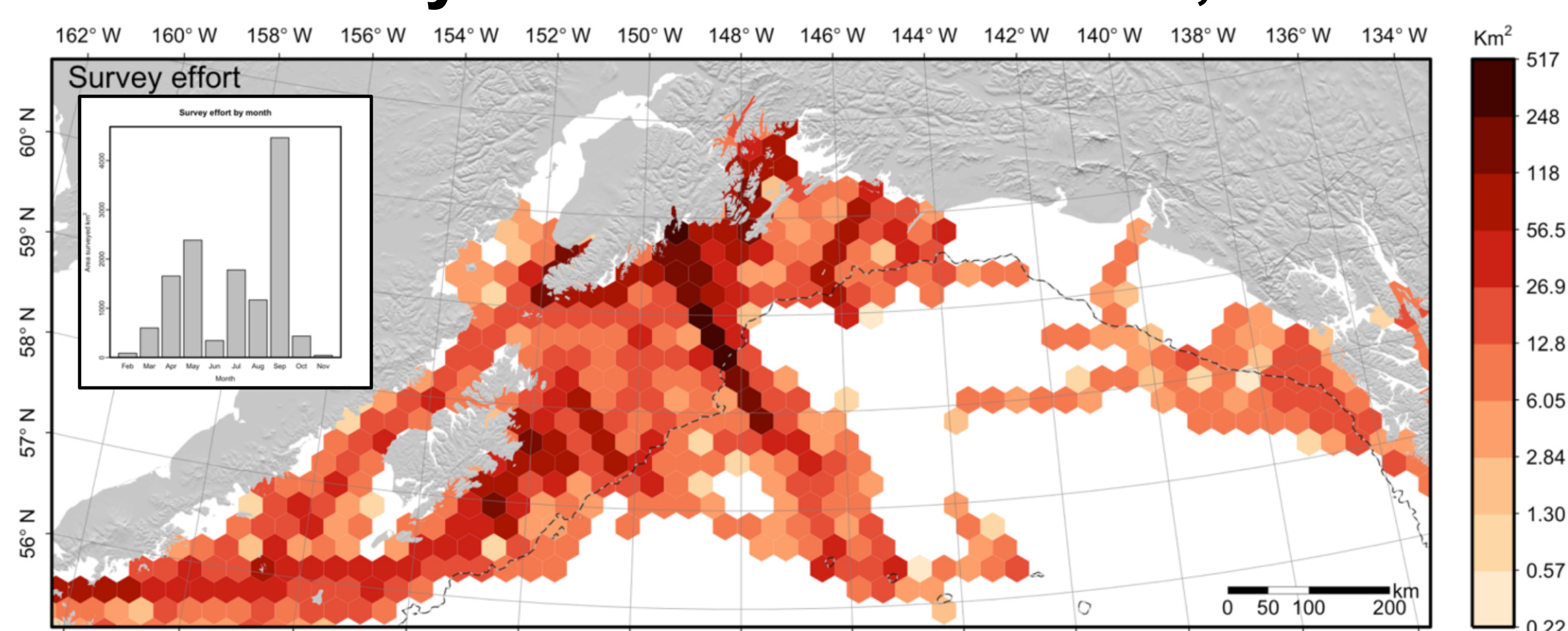
Overview

Offshore seabird surveys have allowed us to make surprising observations of marine birds, marine mammals, reptiles, and fishes. During vessel-based seabird surveys in the Gulf of Alaska over the past 15 years, we've recorded species on the fringes of their ranges, others that are exceedingly rare and have poorly understood distributions, and also extralimital records of species that normally inhabit temperate or even tropical realms.

- Most sightings of visitors from temperate and tropical latitudes were made during September, when Gulf of Alaska waters are warmest
- Sightings of species from the west or north (including several species of alcids and gulls) occurred across seasons
- In general, there were also more sightings of arctic or subarctic-breeding species in the earlier years of our data
- Many temperate and tropical visitors have been observed more frequently in recent years

As ocean temperatures rise, we may see more visitors from the south, and those on the northernmost fringes of their range could become more common.

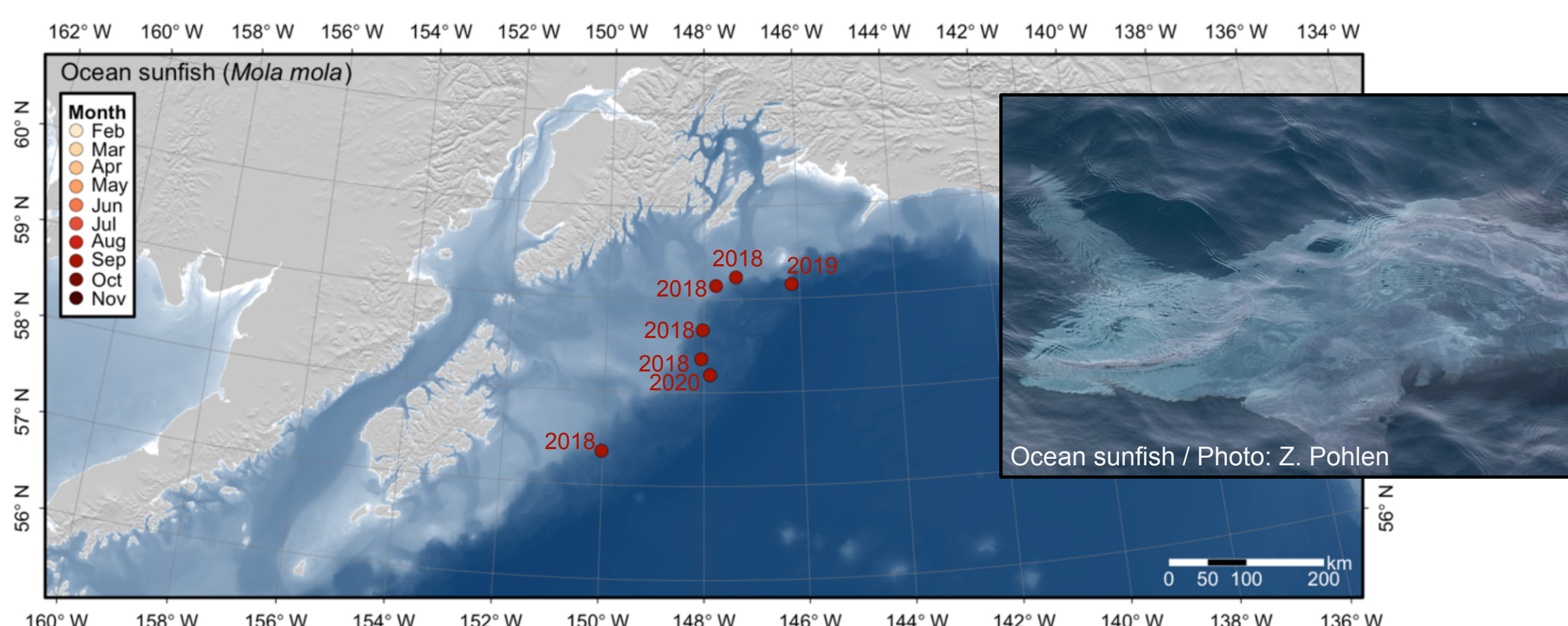
Seabird surveys in the Gulf of Alaska, 2006-2020



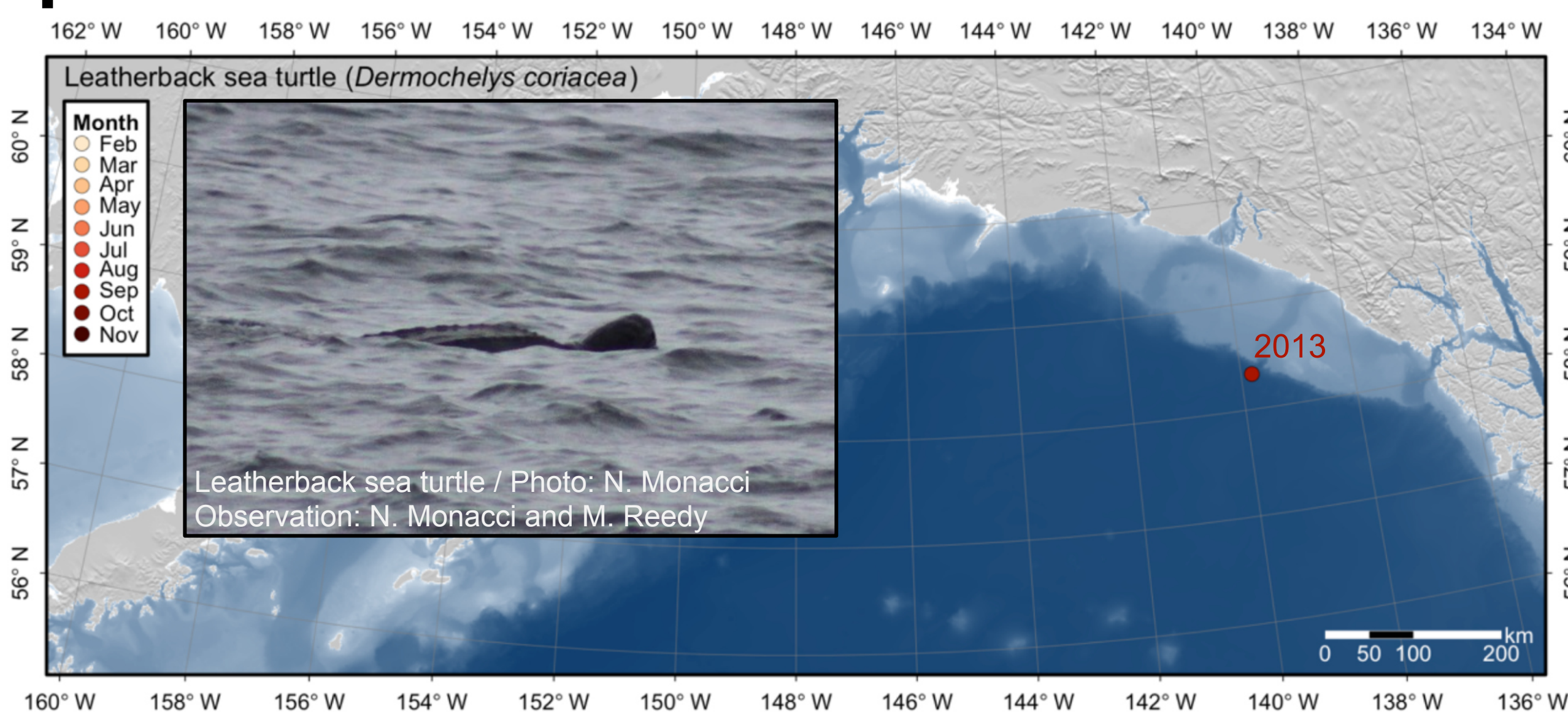
What we considered 'rare or unusual species'

- Species with a small number of occurrences in Alaska (or none at all)
- Species that regularly occur in Alaska, but for which a substantial portion of the Gulf of Alaska is beyond their normal seasonal range

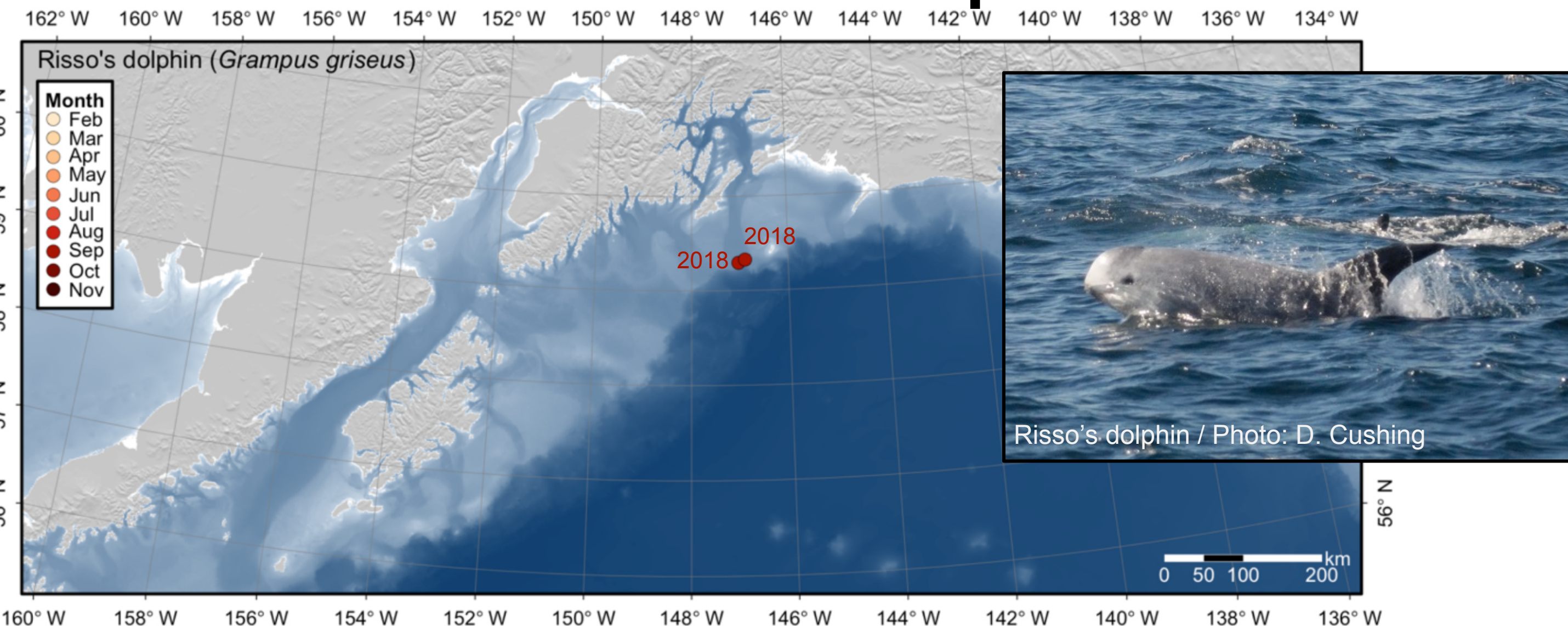
Fish: Ocean sunfish



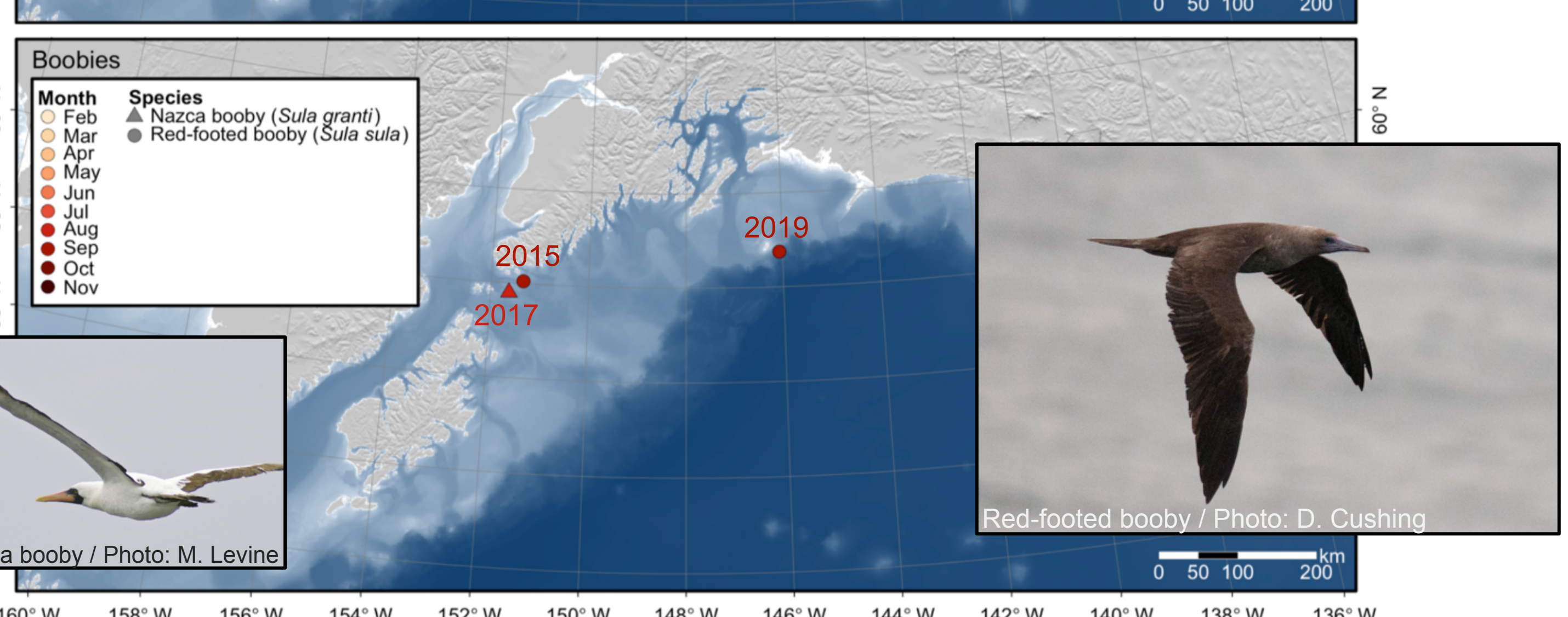
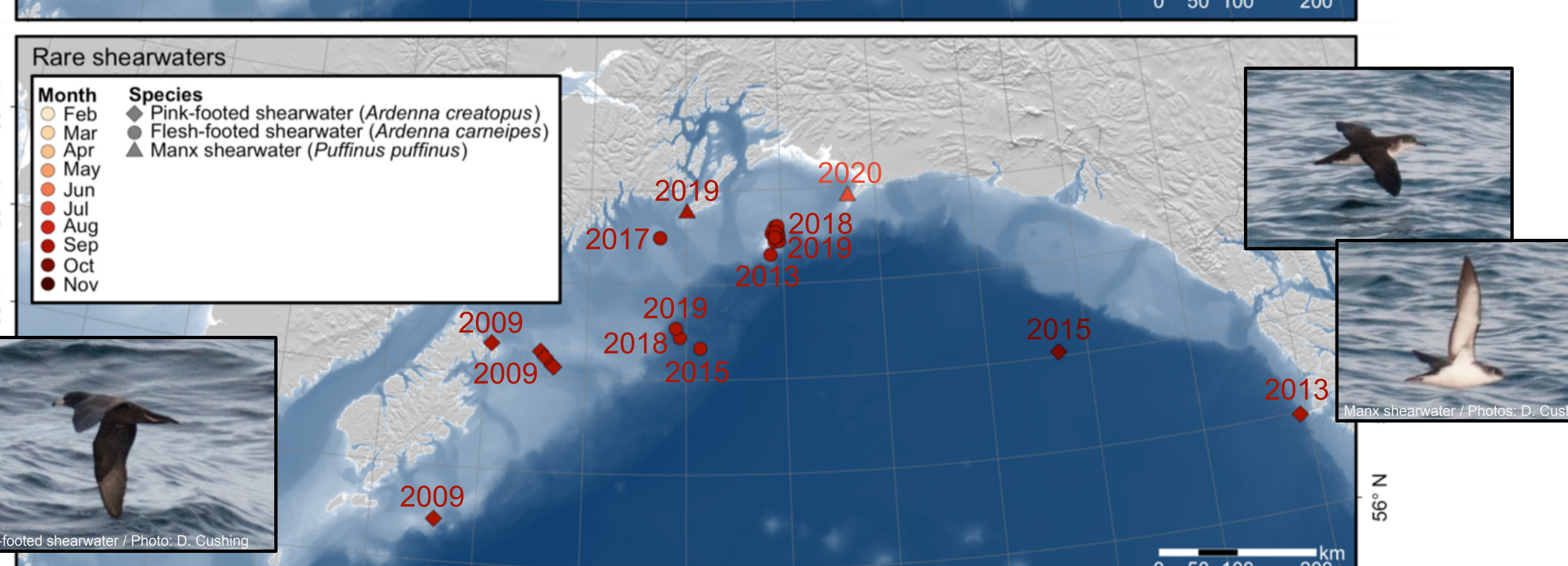
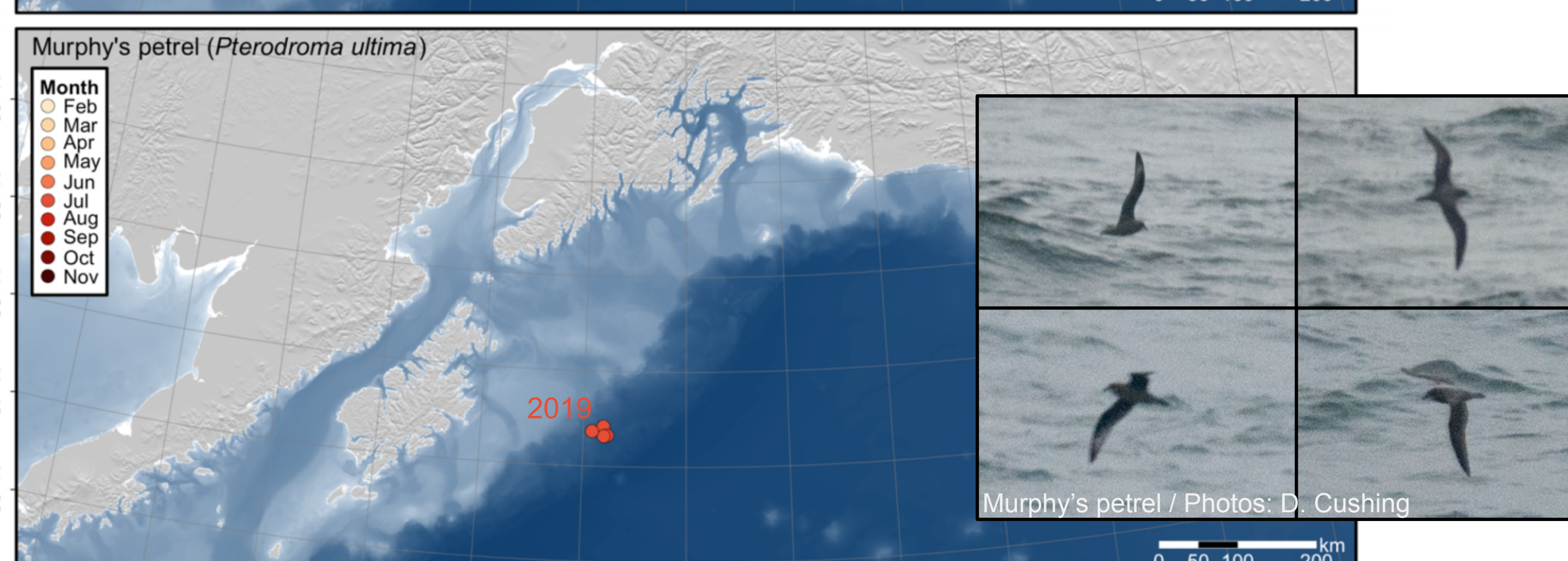
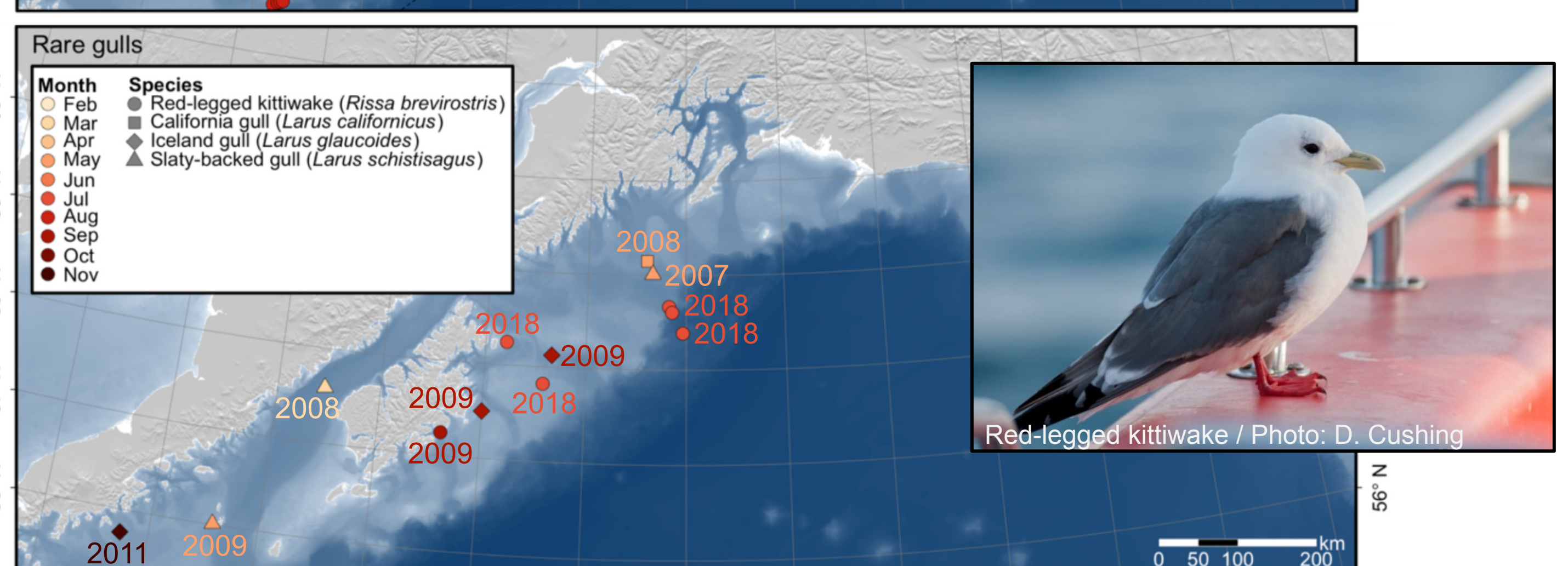
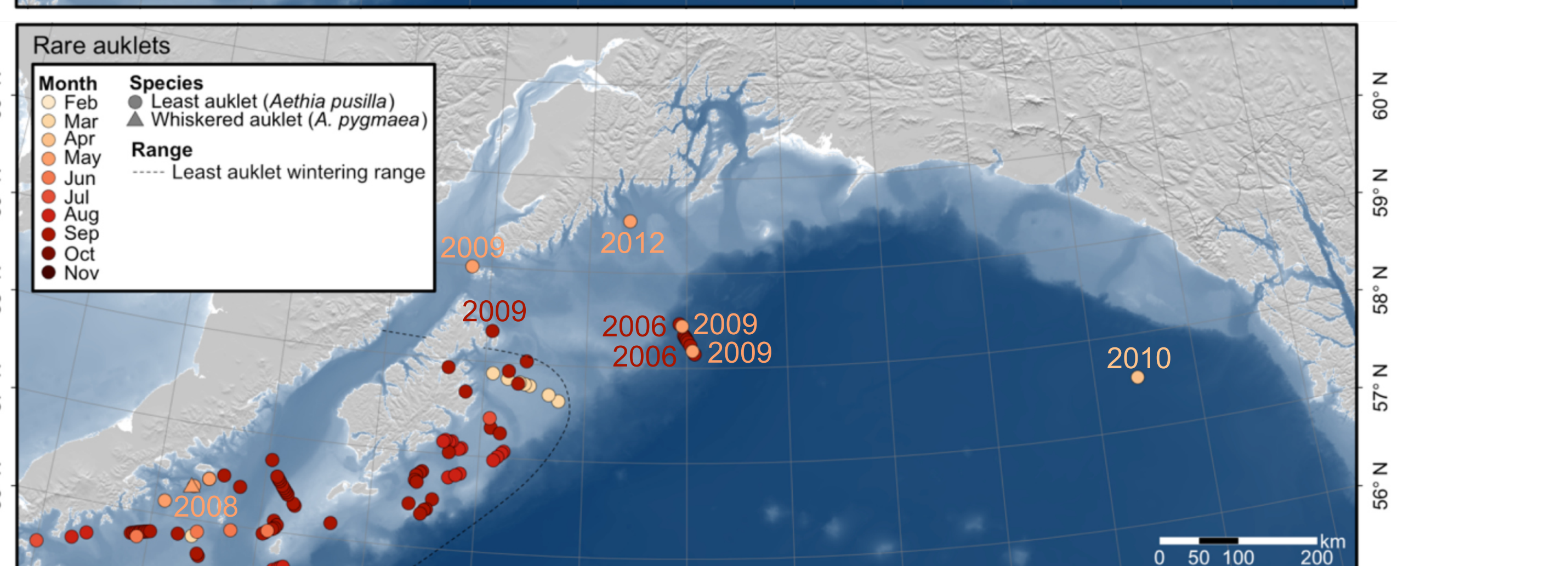
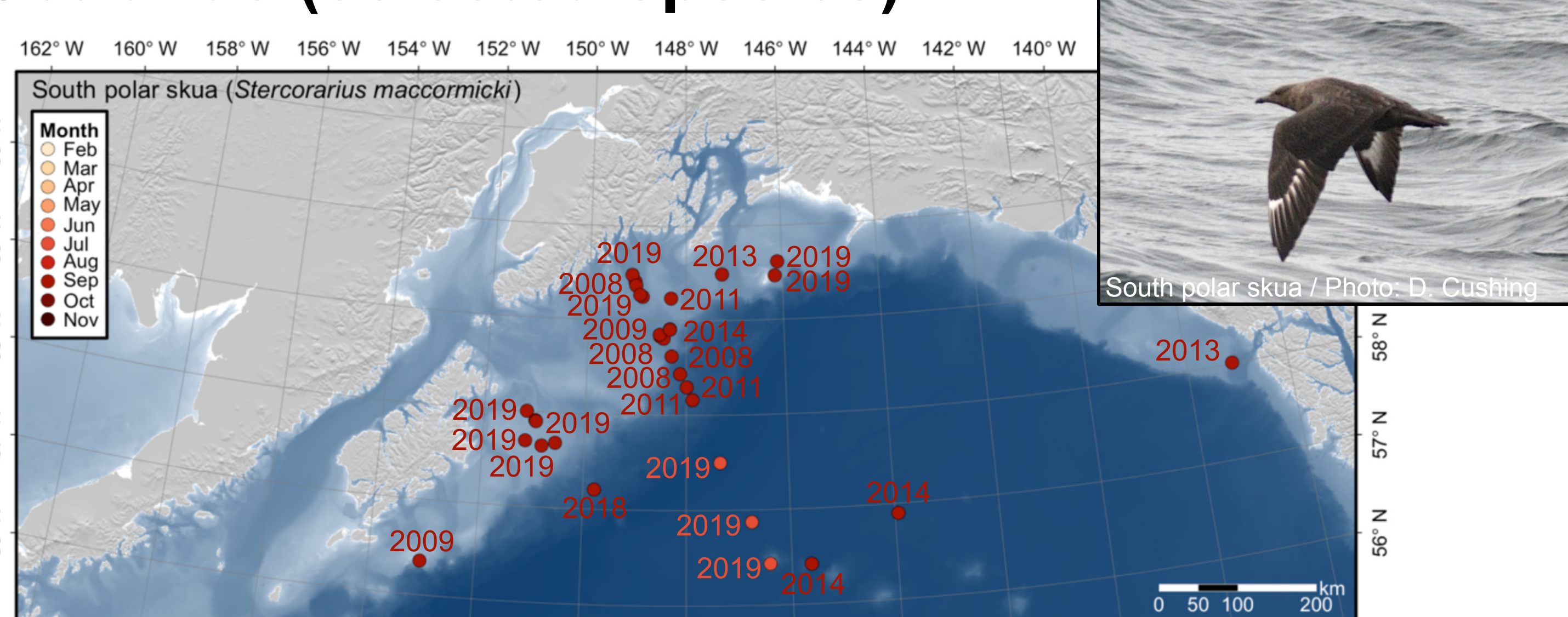
Reptiles: Leatherback sea turtle



Marine mammals: Risso's dolphin



Seabirds (selected species)



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