

## Gulls — Qatayat

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### QATAYAT NERNERTUTAARTUT! – GULLS WILL EAT ANYTHING!

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Photo: Glaucous Winged Gull, Alaska Maritime  
Wildlife Refuge, Courtesy of the USF&WS National  
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Glaucous-winged gulls (*Larus glaucescens*) and Mew Gulls (*Larus canus*) are familiar residents of Kodiak's shores. These opportunistic scavengers eat almost anything. They range throughout the Gulf of Alaska and Bristol Bay, where they are particularly attracted to human settlements. Each spring, gulls lay many thousands of eggs on inaccessible cliffs and rocky ledges. This protects the eggs from foxes, but not from Alutiiq people, who have long gathered gull eggs from boats and by rappelling down cliff faces.

In addition to food, gulls provided mariners with important environmental information. Travelers know that gulls can help them predict bad weather, find schools of fish, mark currents, avoid rocks, and lead boaters to land in the fog. Elders from the Alaska Peninsula remember that Alutiiq hunters had at least two helping animal spirits, one for land hunting and one for sea hunting. These spirits provided luck and guidance and were frequently birds. In fact, bird imagery is widely used in Alutiiq art, particularly on the bentwood hats worn by Alutiiq men when kayaking.