

Tundra — Cailnguq

KAL'UT AWATIINI CAILNGUQ. – AROUND KARLUK IS TUNDRA.



Photo: Coastal tundra along the Ayakulik River,
southern Kodiak Island.

Across the northern hemisphere, tundra environments occur above treeline and below year-round snowpack. Although tundra is commonly associated with mountain slopes, it also occurs all the way to sea level. For example, extensive, low-lying areas of the southern Kodiak Archipelago contain moist tundra, a wet, hummocky environment dominated by grasses, sedges, and dwarf shrubs. Also known as tundra muskeg, this type of vegetation occurs around the community of Akhiok. In contrast, Kodiak's drier coastal regions and mountain slopes have a carpet of alpine tundra. This environmental zone holds small woody and herbaceous plants as well as an abundance of grasses. This type of vegetation is common around Old Harbor.

The Alutiiq people harvest a variety of resources from the tundra. They collect the leaves of the Labrador tea plant, a small evergreen herb, to treat colds and coughs. Many varieties of delicious berries can be found in these environments, including cloudberry, nagoonberry, crowberry, blueberry, lowbush cranberry, and bunchberry. Kodiak's tundra also provides habitat for waterfowl and game birds. Swans, ducks, geese, and willow ptarmigan frequent moist tundra, while rock ptarmigan are common in alpine tundra. Once hunted with bow and arrow or snares, Alutiiq people pursue these birds with shotguns today.