

Pintail Duck — Pamyurtuliq

Pamyurtulit tengaurtut.—The pintail ducks are flying around.



Photo: Pintail duck pair, photo by Peter Mickelson,
courtesy USFWS National Digital Archive

The northern pintail duck (*Anus acuta*) is a large, slender bird with a long neck and narrow wings. Males have a distinctive white breast and a brown head. Females are buff and brown, with speckled plumage on their backs. The pintail's summer breeding range covers most of coastal and interior Alaska as well as large areas in neighboring Russia and Canada. Most pintails migrate south in the winter. However, flocks of these ducks can be found year-round in the waters around Kodiak and Prince William Sound.

Male pintail ducks have distinctive black tail feathers that extend dramatically behind their bodies, stretching as much as 10 cm. The Alutiiq word for a pintail duck—*pamyurtuliq*—translates as “has a long tail”. The same word can be used to mean rat, mink, or sable—other animals with long tails.

Pintails are among the ducks harvested for food. Hunters across the Alutiiq world pursue these birds in the fall as they move through the region on their way to winter habitat. These ducks are popular on the Alaska Peninsula, but they are taken less commonly on Kodiak where scoters and mallards are preferred. Families have favorite duck hunting areas where they return each fall. Duck hunting is often part of deer hunting trips. Hunters unable to locate deer will stalk and shoot ducks in marshy areas, working from a skiff or a four-wheeler.