

Fox Lagoon — Awa'uq

AWA'UMEN TAATEN NUTEGYARTAALL'IAKUT SAQUL'AANEK. – WE USED TO GO SHOOT DUCKS IN FOX LAGOON.



Photo: Winter in Partition Cove and Fox Lagoon,
AM715

Wildlife abounds in Fox Lagoon. Harbor seals are found in its waters throughout the year, and crabs are abundant on its gravelly bottom. Herring spawn on the inner coast in spring. Puffins concentrate around the lagoon mouth and wading birds feed along its shore in summer. Waterfowl are common in the fall when emperor geese, Canadian geese, black brants, Steller's eiders, and mallards flock to area waters. But where is this productive place?

You will not find Fox Lagoon on a map of the Kodiak Archipelago. This long narrow inlet on Sitkalidak Island is called McDonald Lagoon on marine charts and topographic maps. Fox Lagoon is a local place name, one used by Alutiiq people to describe the waterway. Alutiiq place names often refer to a resource harvested in an area, and the English place names used by Alutiiq people follow this convention.

Fox Lagoon cuts deeply into Sitkalidak Island. This narrow inlet stretches about 7.5 km south from its entrance on Sitkalidak Passage to a small isthmus that separates it from Partition Cove on the southern coast of Sitkalidak Island. The waterway is only about half a kilometer wide, but it nearly cuts Sitkalidak Island in two, providing access to the outer coast of the archipelago. Russian traders took advantage of Fox Lagoon's geography to sneak up on Alutiiq families assembled on a fortress rock in Partition Cove. Here, a brutal siege led to the death of hundreds of Alutiiq and was a major step in the loss of Native sovereignty. An older, Alutiiq name for Fox Lagoon is *Awa'uq*. This term means "it is numb." It refers both to the fortress rock and to the area more generally.