



Environmental Imaging Solutions

Digital Aerial Wildlife Survey of BOEM Lease Area OCS-A 520

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1. Executive Summary

- A digital aerial wildlife survey of the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) Lease Area Outer Continental Shelf – Atlantic (OCS-A) 0520, off the Massachusetts coast was conducted on March 8th, 2020 using APEM Inc.'s high-resolution camera system to capture digital still imagery.
- Images collected have been analyzed by APEM Inc. (hereafter referred to as APEM) and quality assured by Normandeau Associates (hereafter referred to as Normandeau). Raw counts of all species and incidental observations recorded during the March 2020 survey are presented here.
- A total of 680 birds were recorded in the March 2020 survey area. The most abundant group recorded was auks (n=498), followed by waterfowl (n=146), gulls (n=22), fulmars (n=9), gannets (n=3), and loons (n=1) and cormorants (n=1).
- A total of 72 birds (11%) were recorded in flight during the survey. These consisted of murre / razorbills (n=25), long-tailed ducks (n=22), northern fulmars (n=8), herring gulls (n=7), great black-backed gulls (n=4), white-winged scoters (n=3), and northern gannets (n=3). There were 608 birds (89%) recorded as sitting.
- A total of 20 marine mammals were recorded, consisting of unidentified seal sp. (n=12), harbor porpoise (n=3), gray seal (n=3), unidentified dolphin sp. (n=1), and unidentified marine mammal sp. (n=1).
- No turtles, sharks, or rays were recorded during the March survey.
- No recorded species are Listed species (Federally or State Listed as Threatened or Endangered).

2. Introduction

APEM and Normandeau were contracted by Equinor Wind US to provide a full year of digital aerial wildlife surveys of the Massachusetts Lease Area OCS-A 0520. Surveys will be carried out on a monthly basis from December 2019 through November 2020, except for April, May, August and September, when two surveys per month shall be carried out in order to coincide with potential use of the area by roseate tern (*Sterna dougallii*).

The aims and objectives of the work are to assess the abundance and distribution of birds, marine mammals, sharks, rays, and turtles present in the Lease Area OCS-A 0520 over the course of a full year. The surveys will provide the baseline information required for conducting impact assessments and are consistent with the survey guidelines for providing avian, marine mammal, and sea turtle information for renewable energy development on the OCS (BOEM 2017 and 2019).

The Survey Area referred to herein is comprised of the Lease Area OCS-A 0520, plus a 2 km (c. 1 NM) buffer surrounding it with an approximately 4 km (c. 2 NM) buffer towards the northeast end.

Images were captured using a grid-based survey design with a 1.5 cm ground sampling distance (GSD). Images were analyzed by APEM and quality assurance was undertaken by Normandeau. This report describes the results of the March 2020 survey.

3. Summary of Survey

The survey was undertaken on March 8th, 2020 from 17:31 to 19:33 (UTC). Data collected were 1.5 cm GSD digital still images using a GPS-linked bespoke flight management system to ensure the tracks were flown with a high degree of accuracy.

The digital aerial survey captured images along nine lines spaced approximately 1.9 km across-track and 0.5 km along-track between image nodes within the survey area (**Figure 1**). Coverage of images analyzed was calculated to be approximately 10% of the survey area.

On March 8th, 2020, the cloud cover was recorded as 0-5% (clear to few), visibility was greater than 10 km (6.2 miles), and no precipitation was recorded. Wind speed was recorded as 15-20 knots from a west-northwesterly direction. The outside air temperature at the survey altitude was recorded as 38 to 43°F. The sea state was 2-3 (smooth to slightly moderate) and the water turbidity was 1 (slightly turbid). The survey was conducted at an altitude of approximately 1,350 ft at a speed of approximately 120 knots.

No health and safety issues were reported during the survey.

APEM analyzed the images to enumerate birds to species level, and to enumerate any other non-avian marine fauna. Normandeau provided quality assurance (QA) of the data to check for missed animals in 10% of images recorded as empty and quality assured 20% of the bird species identification undertaken by APEM (and 100% of Listed species). Normandeau also identified 100% of the species of non-avian marine fauna including marine mammals, turtles, sharks, and rays. Birds and marine fauna identified from the images were 'snagged' (i.e. located within the images) and categorized to species when possible, otherwise to the species grouping.

Data reported are raw counts of animals that have not yet been subject to extrapolation for population estimates. Design-based population estimates will be provided in the annual report.

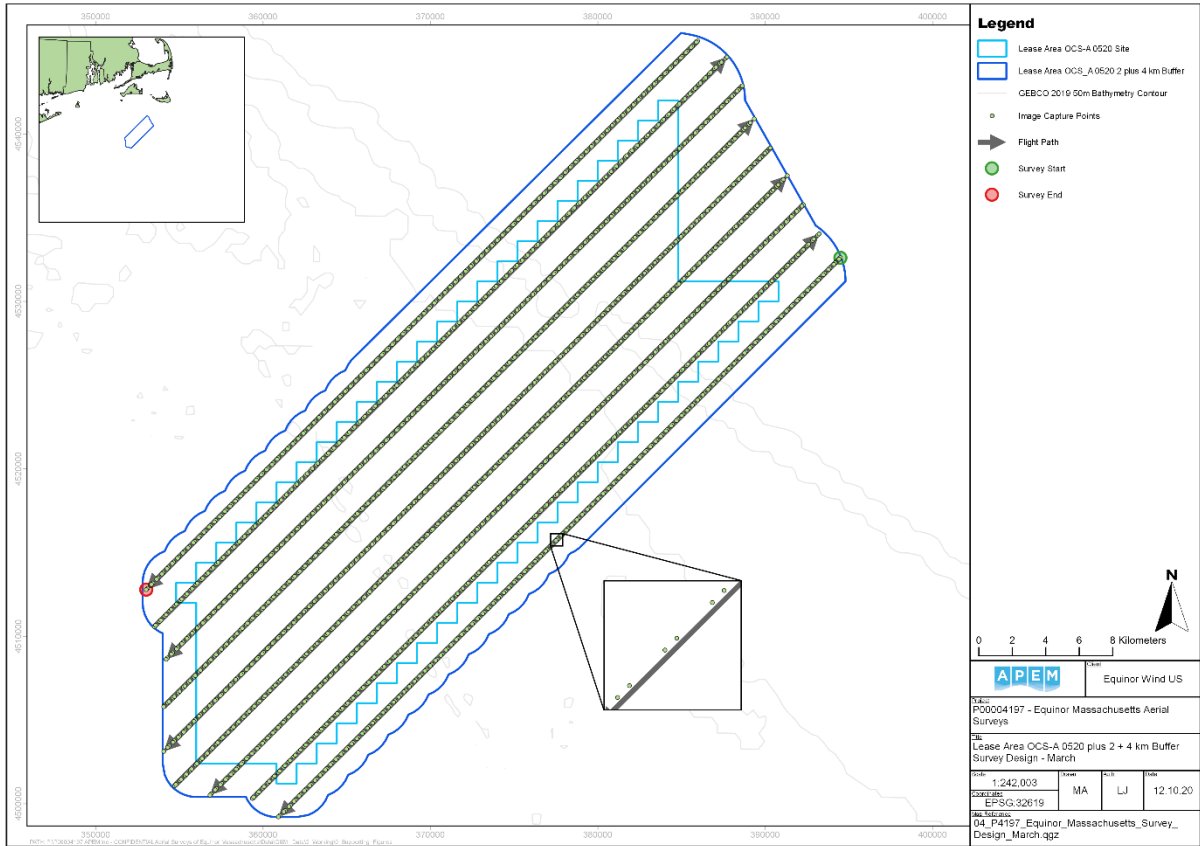


Figure 1 Survey design of Lease Area OCS-A 0520 plus 2 km / 4 km buffer

4. Abundance and Distribution

4.1 Species Abundance

The numbers of marine wildlife species recorded during the March 2020 survey are presented in **Table 1** and **Table 2**. Species scientific names are provided in Appendix I. Example individuals recorded during the surveys are provided in Appendix II.

Table 1 Total number of individuals of birds recorded during the March 2020 survey of the Lease Area OCS-A 0520 WEA plus 2 km / 4 km irregular buffer

| Group | Species | Flying | Sitting | Total |
|--------------------|------------------------------|-----------|------------|-------------------|
| Waterfowl | Surf Scoter | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | White-winged Scoter | 3 | 112 | 115 |
| | Long-tailed Duck | 22 | 5 | 27 |
| | Duck sp. – unidentified | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| Loon | Red-throated Loon | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Cormorant | Cormorant sp. – unidentified | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Fulmar | Northern Fulmar | 8 | 1 | 9 |
| Gannet | Northern Gannet | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Gull | Great Black-backed Gull | 4 | 6 | 10 |
| | Herring Gull | 7 | 5 | 12 |
| Auk | Murre* / Razorbill | 25 | 473 | 498 |
| Total Birds | | 72 | 608 | <u>680</u> |

*Murre refers to either Common or Thick-billed Murre

Table 2 Total number of individuals of marine mammals and other fauna recorded during the March 2020 survey of the Lease Area OCS-A 0520 WEA plus 2 km / 4 km irregular buffer

| Group | Species | Submerged | Surfacing | Total |
|---------------|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------------|
| Marine Mammal | Dolphin sp. – unidentified | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| | Harbor Porpoise | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| | Gray Seal | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| | Seal sp. – unidentified | 12 | 0 | 12 |
| | Marine Mammal sp. – unidentified | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | | 18 | 2 | <u>20</u> |

4.2 Spatial Distribution

Figure 2 shows the location of all species recorded throughout the Survey Area.

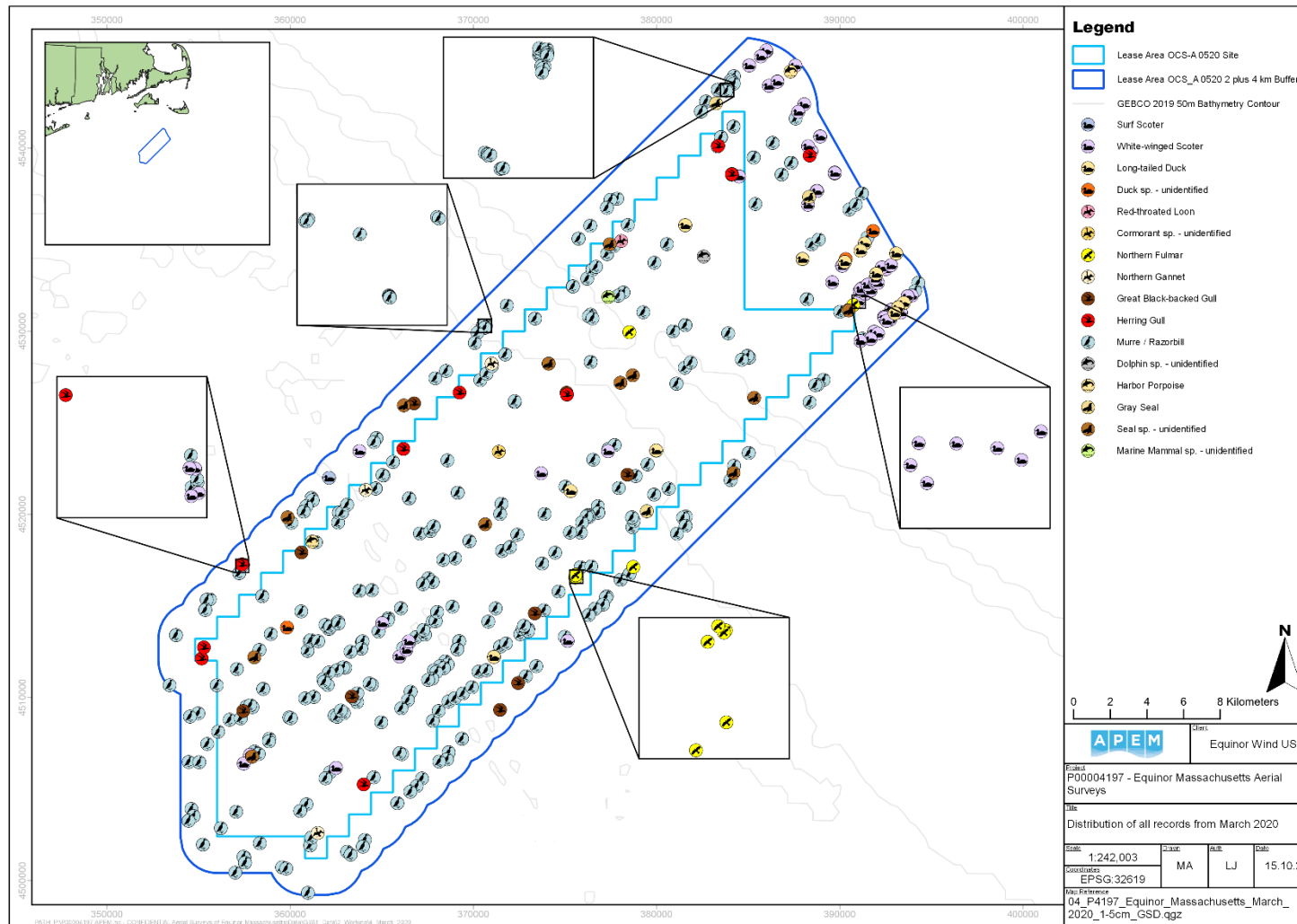


Figure 2 Distribution of all records from the March 2020 survey of Lease Area OCS-A 0520 plus 2 km / 4 km irregular buffer

Note: Individuals may appear to overlap if they are in close proximity to each other.

5. Shipping Observations

No vessels were recorded visually from the aircraft or in the imagery during the March 2020 survey.

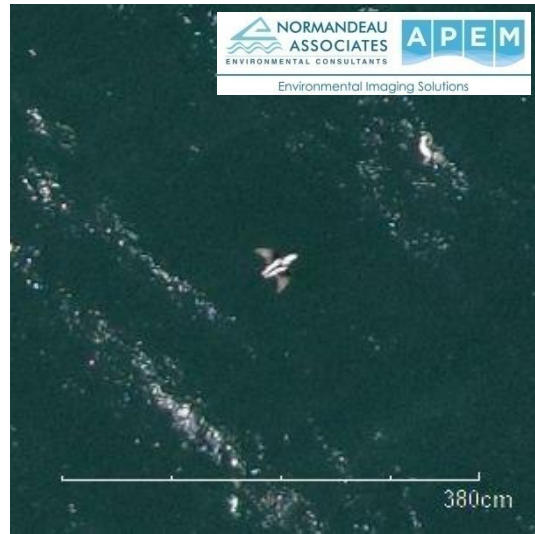
Appendix I Species List

| Common Name | Scientific Name | Family | Class |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|----------|
| Surf Scoter | <i>Melanitta perspicillata</i> | Anatidae | Aves |
| White-winged Scoter | <i>Melanitta deglandi</i> | Anatidae | Aves |
| Long-tailed Duck | <i>Clangula hyemalis</i> | Anatidae | Aves |
| Red-throated Loon | <i>Gavia stellata</i> | Gaviidae | Aves |
| Northern Fulmar | <i>Fulmarus glacialis</i> | Procellariidae | Aves |
| Northern Gannet | <i>Morus bassanus</i> | Sulidae | Aves |
| Great Black-backed Gull | <i>Larus marinus</i> | Laridae | Aves |
| Herring Gull | <i>Larus smithsonianus</i> | Laridae | Aves |
| Thick-billed Murre | <i>Uria lomvia</i> | Alcidae | Aves |
| Common Murre | <i>Uria aalge</i> | Alcidae | Aves |
| Razorbill | <i>Alca torda</i> | Alcidae | Aves |
| Harbor Porpoise | <i>Phocoena phocoena</i> | Phocoenidae | Mammalia |
| Gray Seal | <i>Halichoerus grypus</i> | Phocidae | Mammalia |

Appendix II Example 'Snags' from the Survey



a. White-winged Scoter



b. Long-tailed Duck



c. Great Black-backed Gull



d. Herring Gull



e. Murre / Razorbill



f. Gray Seal