

# Adak - Where to Go

The following is a list of some of the birding areas on Adak starting in the south and working north. See the maps for locations. The month and year in () indicates when a particular species was seen. Only records since 2004 are highlighted. Some of the names of the locations are names adopted by birders and not necessarily official names that you would find on a map.

## **Finger Bay and Finger Creek**

The bay harbors waterfowl, cormorants, alcids, and an occasional shorebird. Where the road initially hits the bay is an abandoned shack that sometimes has Winter Wren. As you drive along the shore, watch for two access points that you can drive down to get better views of the bay. Drive up the bay until you come to a road that switches back to the left (down the hill). Take that down to the bayside and follow it by car or foot upstream. Cars can only get so far depending on the wetness conditions. At the first ford, a trail goes to the left and follows the stream up to the second ford. This trail is the best area to look for shorebirds such as tattlers (both species) and Common Sandpiper. Continue walking upstream looking for passerines, etc.. This stream hosts a huge salmon run in the fall.

## **Quarries**

On the road between the marina and Finger Bay there are two quarries. The north one has nesting Winter Wren and is good for Snow Bunting. Brambling (Sept 2007). The south one is good for Snow Bunting.

## **Marina**

Check the marina for close alcids and the shoreline for shorebirds.

## **White Alice and Shagak Bay**

The road that goes west from the marina leads up to White Alice (the bluff on which the cell phone towers are located). It goes by several lakes and marshes. We get few birds here, but you never know. The bluff affords a great view of Shagak Bay and the islands to the west of Adak. You can hike down to Shagak Bay from several points on this road (or use an ATV - but not all the way). Shagak can have good birds, but is difficult to get to and takes most of the day to bird.

## **Crane Fields**

This area on the west side of the gas station can host Sandhill Cranes, shorebirds and passerines.

## **Sweeper Creek**

Sweeper Creek is divided into three portions. The section from Sweeper Cove to the second bridge is called the Sweeper Creek Estuary. The section from the second bridge to a dead end has road following the eastern side of Sweeper Creek for a hundred yards or so. We call this portion Sweeper Channel. Take the road just west of the bridges and turn right to go down to the western side of the creek where you can follow the creek looking for shorebirds and passerines. We call this area Sweeper Creek. Check all of these areas for shorebirds and waterfowl. Terek Sandpiper (May 2007). Brambling (May 2006 and May 2008), Common Greenshank (May 2006, May 2008, May 2015).

## **High School Willows**

There are several clumps of willows on the hillside just south of the old High School. Good for passerines. Also check the spruces behind the old High School.

## **Bering Hill**

Behind the barracks on the west side of Bering Hill are a few stunted pines worth checking.

## **Airport Ponds**

These ponds are good for waterfowl. Tufted Duck (most years). Smew (May 2007).

## **Marine Memorial**

This consists of a couple of large spruces worth checking for passerines.

### **Airport Escarpment**

This area can harbor an occasional shorebird in the small wet areas along the road side. It is also good for Snow Bunting. At the end, it provides a view of the creek that flows from the Airport Ponds.

### **Redpoll Building**

The double-fenced buildings at the southwest approach to Contractors Camp Marsh hosted a large flock of redpolls one year – hence the name.

### **Sweeper Cove**

Follow the road along the north side of sweeper cove and scan for alcids, cormorants, and waterfowl. The jetty (breakwall) at the mouth of the cove can be driven. Behind a salmon-colored building is Cormorant Jetty which can be driven upon to view the cove. Just east of there is Phalarope Cove, which usually harbors a flock of Red-necked Phalaropes in late May. Early morning is best for looking for alcids. You can also view the cove from the south side from the road that goes down to Finger Bay. There is also an overlook on the left (the road is hard to see), just past the road to the North Quarry. Slaty-backed Gull (Sept 2007)

### **Bayshore Highway**

Follow the road along Kuluk Bay stopping and scanning for alcids, gulls, cormorants, waterfowl, and shorebirds. One of the small rocky islands off this section hosted a Bristle-thighed Curlew in May 2007. Black-headed Gull (May 2007).

### **Town of Adak**

Drive around town looking for passerines in the few shrubs and trees. Scatter bird seed at the few trees and shrubs located next to abandoned houses. Although you might see a birdfeeder or two, the people living on Adak usually do not bother to fill feeders. Hawfinch and Brambling (most Mays)

### **Sandy Cove Bluff**

The bluff between the town and Kuluk Bay is known as Sandy Cove Bluff. Towards the north end is a large flat rock that we put seed on. This sheltered area has hosted Brambling (2008) and Hawfinch (2010)

### **Landing Lights Beach**

Park next to the landing lights and walk out to the beach. The rocks under the pier frequently host Rock Sandpipers and Ruddy Turnstones. Ruff (May 2005)

### **Contractors Camp Marsh**

An extensive area that is good for marsh-loving shorebirds. However, you need to get your boots on and slog through the marsh if you want to see anything. Common and Wilson's Snipe (identified by underwing pattern and tail feather position or the different winnowing call), Wood Sandpiper (some years -- many, other years -- none), and Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (Fall) are fairly regular here. Park at the white building at the western end of the road and walk around from there. The area is quite extensive and some areas are deeper than others. Even the small wet areas next to the road can harbor shorebirds. Be sure to scope the large pond at the western end for waterfowl (most easily scoped from the road coming from the Airport Ponds).

### **Navfac Creek**

Where Navfac Creek empties into the bay, scan the beach for shorebirds and gulls.

### **Adak National Forest**

Check this clump of spruces and a clump of stunted spruces just down the road (dubbed the State Park) every day for passerines. A good place to put bird seed (on the steps and on the feeder in the willows). Oriental Greenfinch (Sept 2007), Brambling, Eurasian Kestrel (Sept 2012).

### **Pectoral Marsh**

Check this small wetland for shorebirds.

### **Haven Lake and Warbler Willows**

Check this lake (also known as Boy Scout Lake) for waterfowl from the upper road (east side) and for occasional shorebirds from the lower road (west side). Just west of the lake is a road to the left which goes down to some cabins with a willow-lined stream (Wood Warbler, Sept 2014). Upstream is a gorge with scattered spruces which looks enticing for passerines, but is not easy to access.

### **Lake Andrew and Lake Jean - south and west shore**

After passing Haven Lake, take the next right to go down to the southern tip of Lake Andrew (this cove is known as Lake Jean). After birding there, return to the road and continue on to the western shoreline of Andrew Lake. You can only go so far, as the area bordering Lake Andrew is off-limits because of unexploded ordnance. There are small ponds along this road which are good for waterfowl and phalaropes. The vegetation can harbor passerines and the lake has waterfowl (usually not many).

### **Elfin Forest**

This stand of small spruces should be checked for passerines. Oriental Greenfinch (Sept 2007) The small pond at the south end had a Baikal Teal.

### **Palisades Overlooks**

There are three overlooks of the palisades between the Elfin Forest and Clam Lagoon. Each affords a view of a different section. Be careful driving up to the Mid-Palisades Overlook as there is a serious pothole halfway up. Scan Kuluk Bay for waterfowl, gulls, alcids, etc.

### **Palisades Lake**

This lake occasionally has a duck or two.

### **Smew and Teal Ponds**

These long thin ponds, viewable from the road approaching Clam Lagoon, have occasional waterfowl (mostly teal, but at least once had a Smew!).

### **Clam Lagoon - south mud flats access**

This is THE place to check as often as possible. Scan the flats for shorebirds, waterfowl, terns, jaegers, etc. When the tide is out, the flats can be walked easily. Some of the shorebirds will allow close approach, but many will flush. Be sure to walk the marsh along the western shore (especially in the fall), as many shorebirds will hide in there. (Too many species to list!)

### **Clam Lagoon - Candlestick Bridge**

This bridge was closed a few years ago and prospects for its re-opening are poor. So going around Clam Lagoon means driving all the way around and then back again (What a pain!) Although you can drive to the bridge from the west side, be wary of the sand drift you have to drive through (not recommended)! Check the mudflats in the lagoon and the rips just off shore. You can also walk the shoreline of Kuluk Bay from there.

### **Clam Lagoon - West Shore Observation Platform and Peninsula**

Scan the flats from here. This is the access point for walking out the peninsula and mud flats. The peninsula is good for stints, but has to be walked as much of it is hidden from the road and too far to scope.

### **Clam Lagoon - West Shore**

Check for passerines as you drive along this stretch and waterbirds in the lagoon. Tattlers will hug the shore, so get out and scan the near shoreline when you can see it from the car.

### **Shotgun Lake and Pistol Lake**

A MUST STOP! These two small ponds frequently harbor waterfowl. As you drive up the road towards Shotgun take the small road to the right to view Pistol. If you continue on that road, you can drive around to the north shore of Shotgun where you can frequently get closer looks (especially for photography) by crawling up on the dike that lines that side. Garganey (Sept 2007) Smew, Tufted Duck.

### **Seal Rock Cove**

Just before the Blue Building Complex is a cove good for waterfowl and shorebirds (with a rock in the center that often hosts a seal).

### **Clam Lagoon - Blue Building Complex**

The blue-roofed building at the top of the drive has several small spruces in front that can harbor passerines. Good place for bird seed. Approach slowly and check the trees out before getting out of the car. Hawfinch (May 2005), Eye-browed Thrush (Sept 2007), Northern Wheatear (June 2008), Taiga Flycatcher (Sept 2015)..

### **Clam Lagoon - North Shore**

The pebble beach can harbor tattlers. Strong southerly winds churn up waves that offer fishing opportunities for gulls and terns. Slaty-backed Gull (Sept 2007)

### **Clam Lagoon - East Shore**

There are several small ponds lining the east shore of the lagoon that can harbor waterfowl and shorebirds.

### **Clam Lagoon Breaches - Sitkin Sound**

Towards the north end of the Seawall are several breaches where winter storms have washed away some of the dike. Walk up to these spots to view the beach and Sitkin Sound. When there is a lot of kelp washed up on shore, this can be a good place for shorebirds. The water off the east side is Sitkin Sound. Great place for sea-ducks, loons, grebes, alcids, gulls, terns, and kittiwakes. Frequently, shearwaters, albatross, or petrels can be seen from shore here (but way out!).

### **Clam Lagoon - Goose Rocks and Cormorant Rocks**

These little rocky islands usually have Pelagic and Red-faced Cormorants and other stuff. Although common in winter, occasional early-spring and late-fall Emperor Geese seem to prefer the many rocky islands off shore, so check them regularly. Also, the rocky islands just south of here have nesting Common Eider.

### **Clam Lagoon - Seawall**

This beach is topped with large boulders and pebbles, but when the tide is low, you can clamber over the rocks and get down to the sandy beach to walk along it. Good shorebird spot, especially if a lot of kelp has washed up on shore. The rotting kelp attracts bugs, which attract birds.

### **Clam Lagoon - Lake Shirley**

This lake is good for scaup, wigeon (both), gulls, terns, and occasional shorebirds. Just before the lake, a road goes up the hill to the east. You can drive part way up it and then walk to the edge of the escarpment to scan Sitkin Sound and the many rocky islands just off-shore.

### **Clam Lagoon - Southeast Shore**

This stretch of road, from Lake Shirley to Candlestick Bridge, can have passerines (Siberian Rubythroat sept 2007). It is also a good vantage point to scan the flats.

### **Zeto Point and Lake Ronnie**

Just before Candlestick Bridge, two roads go to the left and join on their way up to an overlook where you can scan the bay and rocky islands. Just before the top, a path goes to the left, leading to a bluff from which you can scan

Lake Ronnie (a scope is needed)(Smew). This lake frequently harbors interesting waterfowl. An Eye-browed Thrush was seen on this road in May 2006.

### **Lake Andrew - East Shore**

The road that leads west from the Blue Building complex goes to the east shore of Lake Andrew where there is an old recreation area. There are a few small spruces and a couple small wet areas. Check this area for shorebirds and passerines.

### **Loran Station**

The farthest north point that is accessible on the island. Good spot for a seawatch, as you are a hundred feet or so above the sea. The final mile of the road is currently blocked by a rockslide, but you can park where shown on the map (P2) and scan the sea from there or hike the final mile. The parking area shown as P1 is good for puffins. If you are adventurous, at P1 you can clamber down the cliffside, work your way around to the left to a Hot Spring. There is a rope that goes down the cliff here to facilitate going up and down.

### **Other Areas**

There are numerous other roads and trails that can be explored. The sites above have been the most productive in the past, but who knows? The two thirds of the island south of Finger Bay is only accessible on foot or ATV and has been little-birded.

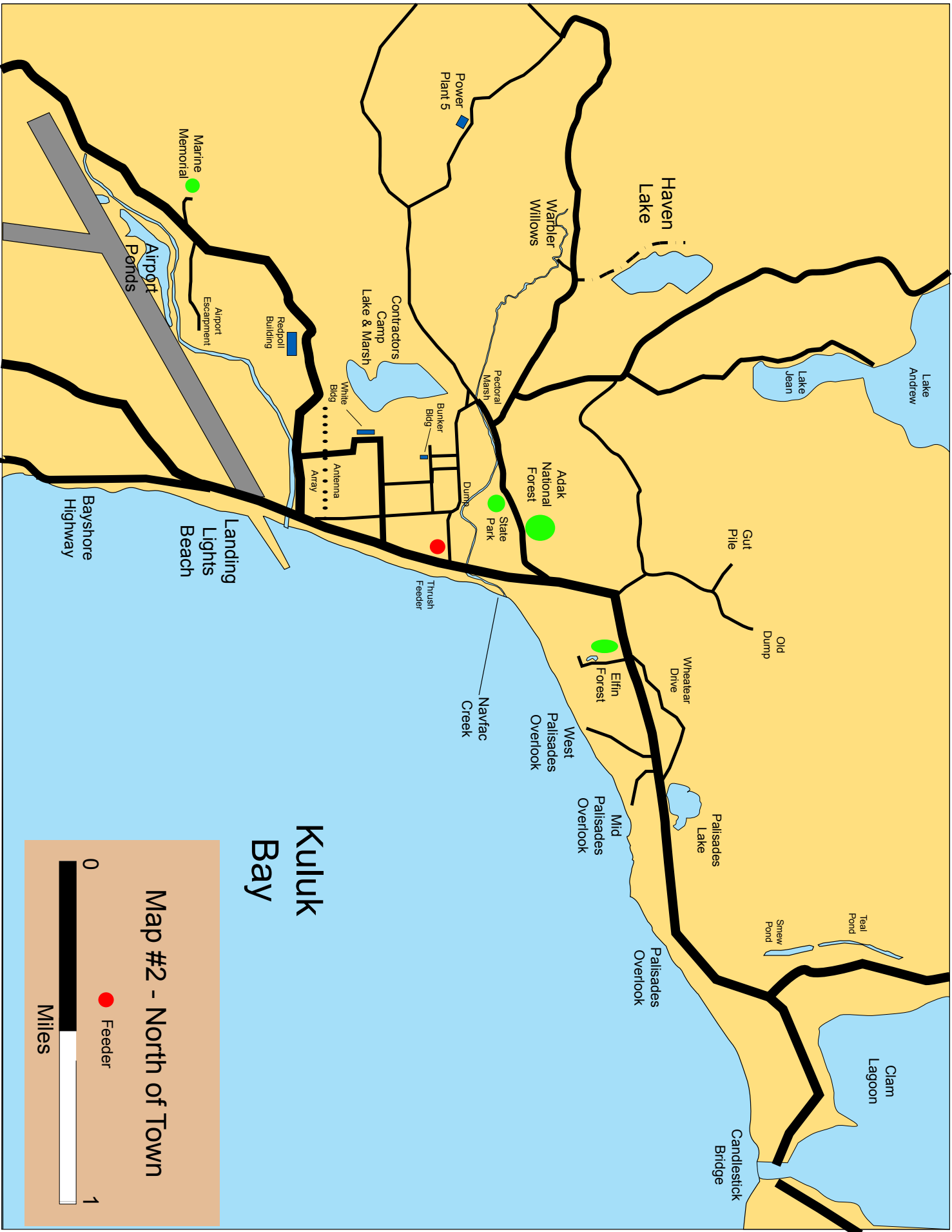


Map #1 - North

0 1 2

Miles





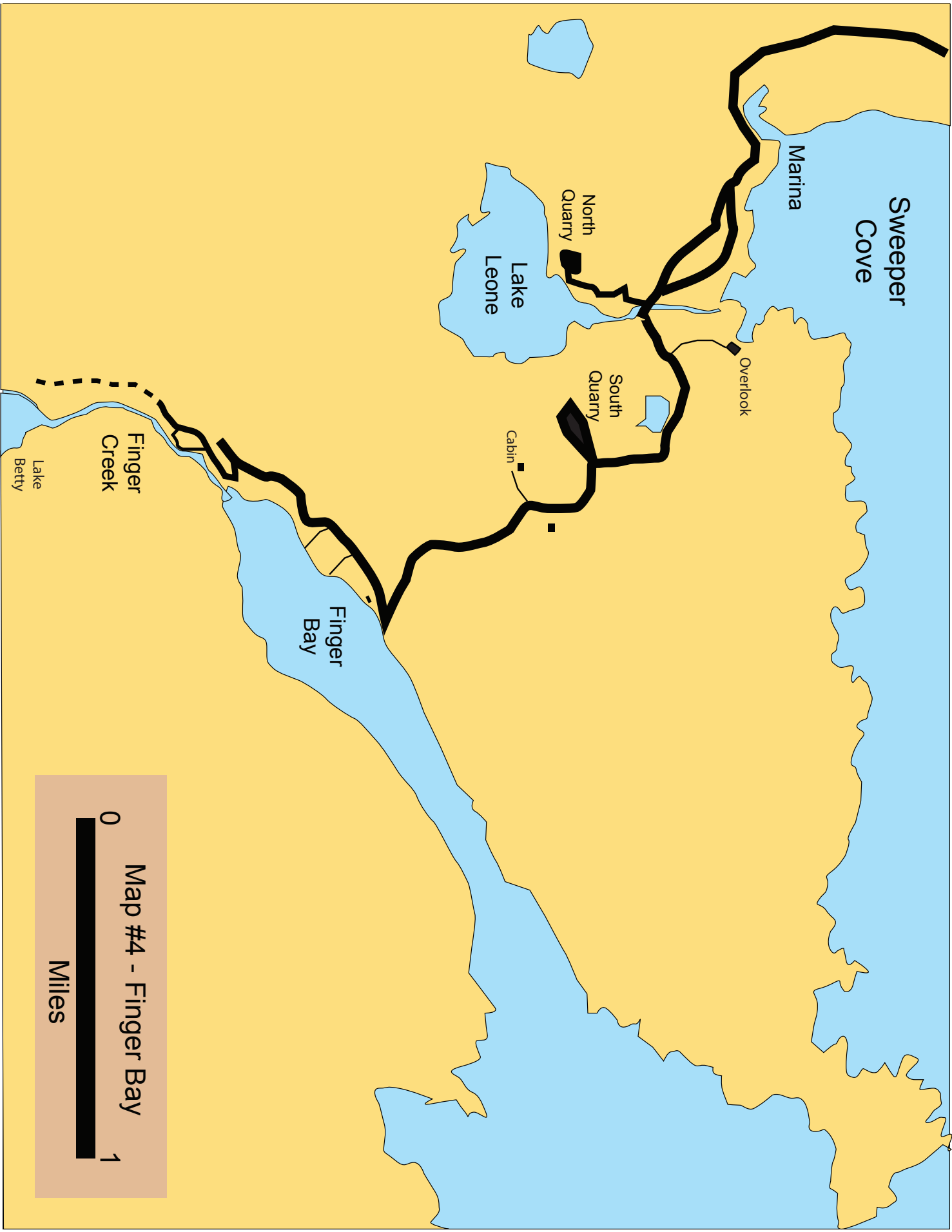
Map #2 - North of Town

● Feeder









Sweeper Cove

Marina

North Quarry

Lake Leone

Overlook

South Quarry

Cabin

Finger Bay

Finger Creek

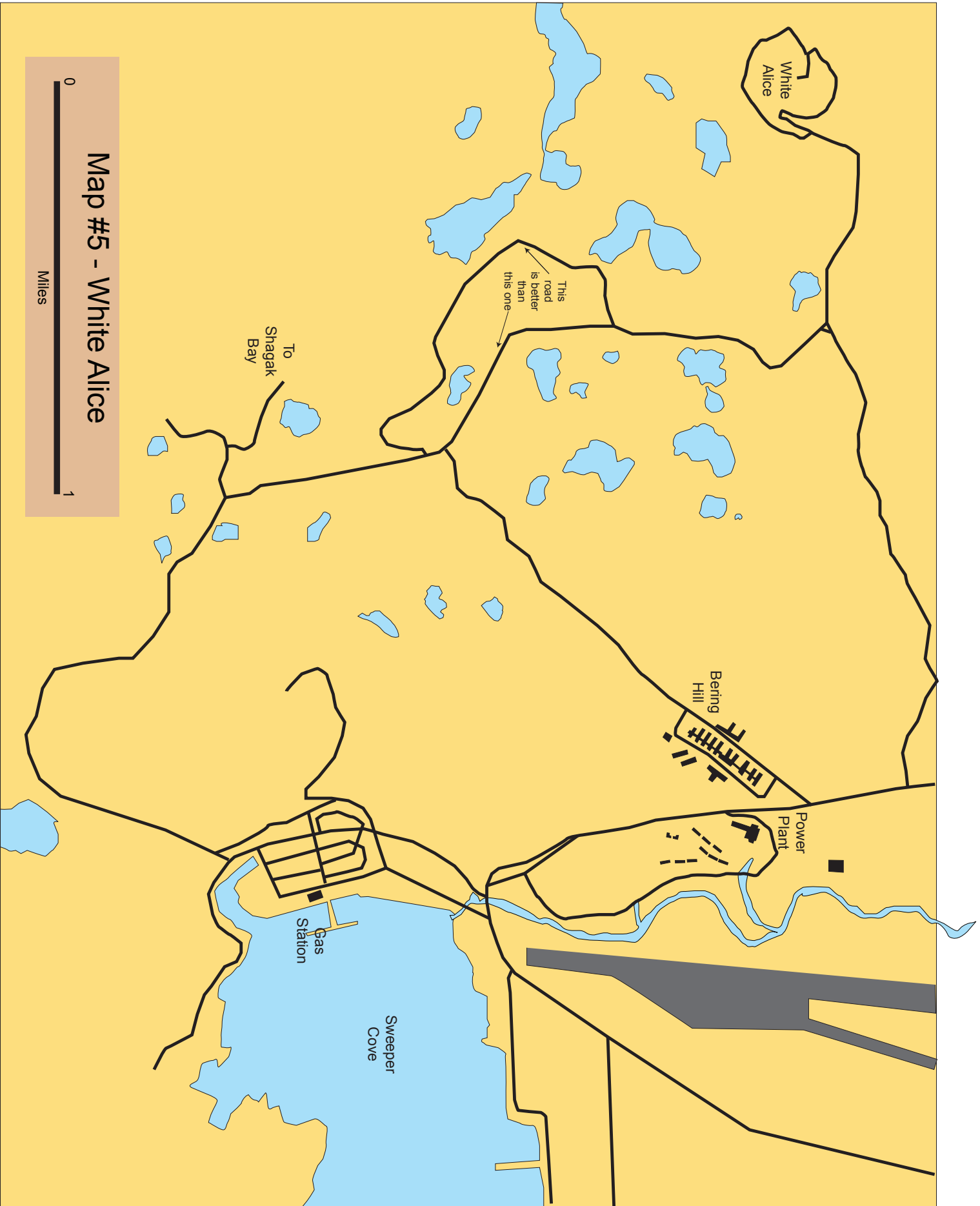
Lake Betty

Map #4 - Finger Bay

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Miles



Map #5 - White Alice

