

Bidarki Story Conclusion

What the Scientists and Villagers Learned Together:

A combination of scientific knowledge about the relationship of the bidarki to seaweeds and other marine invertebrates and traditional knowledge about the relationship of people to bidarkis was not enough to reach a conclusion. Scientific observations and longer-term traditional knowledge about sea otters was also needed.



Sea otters were absent from Kachemak Bay in the early 1900s. The Russian fur harvests had removed them. They began to increase in numbers in the 1960s.

Both the villagers and the scientists observed more sea otters in the areas where the villagers harvested bidarkis during the study. The scientists also documented more otters in areas where bidarki size and numbers were lower.

The final story or conclusions of the study:

1. People harvested more bidarkis in areas closer to the village. This contributed to the decline in size and numbers of bidarkis. Sea otter predation also contributed to the decline in the size and numbers of bidarkis. If people harvest bidarkis or sea otters eat them, the result will be less kelp. When there is less kelp, there is less habitat for some kinds of marine invertebrates.
2. As the village grew in size, an increase in subsistence harvesting and an increase in sea otter predation happened during the same time.
3. Both the sea otters and the villagers ate sea urchins, crabs, and clams in addition to bidarkis. When one of these animals became hard to find, both the otters and the villagers switched to another animal to harvest. Eventually, the bidarkis were one of the few animals left that both were harvesting so both people and otters contributed to the situation of fewer and smaller bidarkis close to the village.
4. What can the villagers do to sustain their harvest?

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