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CWS-38-52

52-38

Fuller, W.A.

Aerial buffalo counts 1952. Fort Smith,
1952.

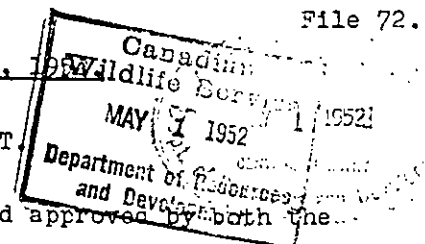
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1. Buffalo - Aerial surveys - Wood
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AERIAL BUFFALO COUNTS.

W.A. Fuller,
Fort Smith, N.W.T.



As recommended last winter and approved by both the Wildlife Service and Northern Administration & Lands Branch, an attempt was made at an aerial count of Bison, using a modified technique and counting only over the winter ranges.

It was planned to make two such counts- one in early winter and one later on.

On December 27, 1951, enroute Chipewyan to attend a trapper's meeting, nine strips were flown. It was intended to complete the survey (17 strips), the following day, but several days of bad weather intervened. Following this, Heavy demand for the aircraft, and lack of service from the Charter Company, combined to prevent us finishing this count.

The second attempt was begun March 18, and completed March 19th. Quite unexpectedly, we found that the westward migration from the Salt Plains had already begun, and so we believe the figures obtained are too low.

The strips were flown at 4 mile intervals instead of 8, as in previous years. We thus hoped for 50% coverage. Then, assuming 80% of the animals to be on the winter ranges, it would be a simple matter to estimate the total population.

RESULTS.

The results were disappointing. The findings are set out in Table 1, in which a comparison is made with 1949 & 1951 results.

Since the coverage was doubled, it was anticipated that we would see twice as many animals. This was decidedly not the case, except that on strip one to nine, which cover the Salt Plains and Murdock Creek, the March 1952, count was about double the 1949 count.

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TABLE 1. BISON STRIP COUNTS, 1949/52.

Strip No.	1949	1951	1951-1952.	
			Dec 27	Mar 18-19
1	71	64	0	86
2			22	105
3	121	8	21	36
4			27	234
5	197	99	434	237
6			11	157
7	220	179	76	3
8			0	0
9	10	109	81	59
Sub-Total	619	459	672	917
10				24
11	145	80		0
12				30
13	335	88		68
14				257
15	446	729	695	464
16				210
17	7	203		223
	1552	1525	672	2193

Strips 15 to 17 represent the Lake Claire meadows.

The Totals for this area are: 1949--1183

1951--898

1952--897

The observed 1952 count is much too low.

No calf counts were obtained on the 1952 counts.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

It is felt that a large part of the blame for the disappointing results lies with the unavailability of the aircraft. The loss of pilots familiar with the Mackenzie district and substitution of men without this knowledge, slowed up service, which coupled with the heavy demand by all government departments

meant restricted service for any individual. Reserving the aircraft ahead of time is unsatisfactory for this work since the appointed day may not be suitable for the job. It is to be hoped that conditions will be improved by next winter when another attempt should be made.

W. A. Fuller

W. A. Fuller
Mammalogist.

CWS

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