Canadian Wildlife Service
Artic Ecology Map Series
Critical Wildlife areas

Descriptive report

Kogaluk River

KOGALUK RIVER
(Sheet #2145)

The Kogaluk River map sheet includes the coastal and mainland area between Richmond Gulf to the south (56°15'N) and Povungnituk to the north (60°N). In addition to the coastal and mainland areas of Ungava the mapsheet encompasses numerous island groups distributed throughout eastern Hudson Bay.

The coastline between Richmond Gulf and Port Harrison is bold and rugged rising to heights of from several hundred feet to 1000 feet. Two major island groups, the Nastapoca and Hopewell Isalnds, adhere closely to the coastline in this area. At Port Harrison there is a changeover to a more intricate coastline with many adjacent islands.

The Belcher Islands, King George Islands, Sleeper Islands, and Ottawa Islands exist far offshore in Hudson Bay, and are discussed as discrete ecological units.

Tundra vegetation is dominant in the land area north of Richmond Gulf on the coast and north of the Leaf River on the mainland. The remainder of the land area is characterized by a scattering of Taiga and Tundra vegetation under the influence of altitude and drainage. The Belcher Islands, etc. exhibit typical tundra vegetation.

Regions of the mainland provide some important winter range for Ungava Caribou. Marshes along the coastline and vicinity are valuable breeding areas for waterfowl, particularly the Povungnituk area for Canada Geese. Beluga Whales are distributed along the coastline during the summer but prefer to concentrate in river estuaries. Ringed Seal are common to abundant in suitable areas along the coast.

The island groups in Hudson (Belcher Islands, etc.) support substantial sea mammal populations. They provide at least summer range for Walrus and Beluga Whale and provide nesting habitat for substantial numbers of waterfowl.

Arctic Char and Brook Trout are present in all suitable streams and rivers on the mainland, the Char being most abundant north of Port Harrison.

The following is the descriptive text for units mapped on this sheet.

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
1	This stream is very productive of Arctic Char (Stevenson).
2	The delineated area represents a major part of the current winter range for the western herd of Ungava Caribou. Approximately 5,000 animals utilize this area. The herd spends the summer north of this region (Brassard). Caribou formerly wintered in the Richmond Bay area. As a result of extensive forest fires which reduced available winter range, and excessive harvesting, the western herd was substantially reduced, and probably numbered between 200 - 300 in 1956 (Banfield). Present data indicate that tremendous recovery has occurred. The taxonomic status of the Ungava Caribou remains in doubt.
3	Freshwater populations of Harbour Seals are found in Lower Seal Lake, which drains into the Nastapoca River, and in the Upper Seal Lake which drains into the Little Whale River. The population for both lakes is probably in the tens. Their exists no evidence of migration; the Seals appear to be permanent residents. However, they are not "landlocked" in a strict geographical sense. The Seal Lake populations probably arose from Ungava Bay stock. Access is possible from Lake Minto (upper Leaf River drainage). Apparently, Harbour Seals were once widely distributed in the Leaf system and were present in Lake Minto (Mansfield). Harbour Seals were observed wintering at the outlet of Upper Seal Lake where rapids maintained open water (Stevenson). The taxonomic status of the population is uncertain. The Seal Lake complex should be considered a critical wildlife area due to the rarity of occurrence of fresh-water Harbour Seal populations and the present lack of knowledge concerning their biology and relation to marine populations.

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
4	Richmond Gulf is an extremely interesting area due to the diversity of its faunal components and the natural beauty associated with the surrounding tundra hills and wood valleys (Banfield). The gulf supports a small population of Habour Seals (Mansfield). Beluga Whales are present in the gulf in good numbers during the summer (Sergeant). Pods of 15 - 20 were seen frequently and population figures for the entire Richmond Gulf group have been estimated around 200 animals (Stevenson, Taylor). Richmond Gulf is well supplied with various species of fish. Anadromous Arctic Char are common on the west side and north end of the gulf, Brook Trout are dominant in all streams. Brook Trout, Cisco and Lake Whitefish are common in brackish waters. In addition Northern Pike and Lake Trout are found in river mouth along the east coast shoreline (Hunter). The commercial fishery in Richmond Gulf is based primarily on Lake Whitefish, Cisco and Brook Trout (Hunter). A population of Arctic Char which are apparently isolated from salt water exists in a lake situated along Richmond Gulf (Stevenson). Peregrine Falcon nesting occurs in the gulf area (Fyfe). The Richmond Gulf area would make an excellent choice for a protected natural area and should be assessed the status of a critical wildlife area (Banfield, Cooch, Hunter, Mansfield).
5	The Nastapoca Islands and Nastapoca Sound are combined as one unit and represent an important wildlife area.

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
	Beluga Whales are distributed in small numbers along the coast during the summer, but are most abundant in Nastapoca River estuary and Richmond Gulf. Nastapoca Sound is an important calving area for this group of Whales (Sergeant). The Nastapoca Islands provide breeding habitat for Common Eider (Cooch, Gillespie). Harbor Seals occur sparingly in association with the Nastapoca Islands; Ringed Seals are common along the entire coastline of this unit (Mansfield).
6	A known breeding area for Peregrine Falcons (Fyfe, Snyder, 1957).
7	A Glaucous Gull colony occurs in this area. (Macpherson, 1961).
8	The Belcher Islands possess a rich bird fauna due to their proximity to the Hudsonian life zone and their being a low-latitude extension of the Arctic tundra biome. The Islands are typically low-lying, large areas of which are covered by tundra vegetation, and nowhere do trees occur (Freeman, 1970). The Belcher Islands support breeding populations of Canada Geese (Bruemmer, Cooch, Freeman, Jonkel). They play "an important role in the subsistance economy of the Eskimos from early May to September" (Freeman, 1970). They breed throughout the islands but are scattered in distribution and probably number between 2,000-3,000 birds (Cooch). Hudson Bay Eider, an endemic population of the Common Eider, breed in substantial numbers, although locally, along the coastline of the Belcher Islands (Bruemmer, Cooch, Freeman, 1970). The Eider population has been estimated to number around 35,000 birds (Cooch). The Eider winter at the floe edge and in open water areas between the islands (Freeman, 1970).

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
	Peregrine Falcons have been observed on the Belchers (Freeman, 1970) and are known to breed here (Todd, 1963).
	Rock Ptarmigan are present but not abundant on the Belchers (Freeman, 1970).
	The Belcher Islands supports excellent populations of sea-mammals. Ringed Seal populations have been estimated at 50,000 and Bearded Seals at 13,000. Populations of this order should yield, on a sustained basis, an annual harvest of about 4,000 Ringed Seals and 650 Bearded Seals (McLaren, Mansfield, 1960).
	A resident population of Harbor Seals occurs in Kasegalik Lake, which is some 40 miles long and drains into Robertson Bay (Freeman).
	Arctic Char are abundant in suitable streams in the Belcher Islands (Dunbar, Hunter). An annual harvest quota of 20,000 pounds has been set for Arctic Char (Hunter).
	Good populations of Walrus occur around the Belcher Islands (Dunbar). Bakers Dozen Islands, which are included in this unit, also support a Walrus population (Bruemmer).
	There is a small but regular influx of Beluga Whale into the area during the summer (McLaren, Mansfield, 1960). Large numbers of Beluga have also been reported in the region (Bruemmer).
	Kugong Island and North Belcher Islands provide summer sanctuary ("waiting areas") for Polar Bear. Populations are variable but probably number in the tens for each island group (Jonkel).
9	The King George Islands provide summer sanctuary for Polar Bears (Cooch).

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
10	The Sleeper Islands unit supports populations of Walrus (Bruemmer, Jonkel, Loughrey, Mansfield). The islands are a summer "hauling out" area for Walrus numbering in the hundreds (Jonkel). Walrus are present in the fall and probably over winter here. The population for the two island groups (including the Macropeet Islands) is approximately 200 animals. The animals are members of the Cape Herietta Maria population of western Hudson Bay (Mansfield). The Sleeper Islands provides excellent Ringed and Bearded Seal habitat, and are the southern limit of summer range for the Harp Seal (Mansfield).
11	The Hopewell Islands unit encompasses the summer range for small numbers of Beluga Whale (Sergeant). Breeding areas for Common Eider are found within this unit (Gillespie).
12	A Glaucous Gull colony occurs in this area (Macpherson, 1961).
13	A Glaucous Gull colony occurs in this area (Macpherson, 1961).
14	A principal migration route for Harp Seals between breeding and molting area in Newfoundland and Labrador and summer range in Hudson Bay (Mansfield, 1967).
15	The Ottawa Islands provide summer sanctuary ("waiting areas") for Polar Bear numbering in tens (Jonkel, Cooch). Walrus have been observed in this unit during the summer (Cooch, Loughrey). A Thick-Billed Murre and Gull colony is present on the northern tip of Bronson Island (Jonkel).

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
16	This unit encompasses nesting territory for tens of thousands of Canada Geese, and a molting area for Canada Geese from the south-west coast of Hudson Bay (Heyland, Cooch). The area is an important staging area for Lesser Snow Geese as well (Cooch). The breeding area extends inland and along the coast northward to Hudson Strait and southward to the Belcher Islands. Surveys have indicated that the total area supports approximately 300,000 breeding birds. (Chamberlain, Kaczynski, 1965). However, this unit represents the area of most concentrated breeding in the map sheet and in the Ungava region (Heyland, Cooch, Stevenson). Ringed Seal are common along the coastline of the entire map sheet, however, the coastline within this unit is extremely good Ringed Seal habitat (Mansfield, Stevenson). Beluga Whales are also found along the coastline of this unit (Mansfield). Some of the best Arctic Char and Brook Trout streams occur in this unit (LeJeune, Jonkel). The Kogaluk River is particularly productive of Anadromous Arctic Char, and Anadromous Brook Trout (LeJeune, Heyland). Povungnituk Lake also has excellent Char and Brook Trout populations. The streams below Port Harrison are not as productive for Arctic Char due to the higher slopes; however, they support excellent populations of Brook Trout, many of which are non-anadromous (LeJeune). The Kogaluk River supports a small population of land-locked Atlantic Salmon or Ouananiche (Longitude 77°18', Latitude 59°34'), which is well isolated from the nearest Atlantic Salmon populations in Ungava Bay (LeJeune). Lake Trout and Brook Trout are common in lakes and streams throughout the interior of the map sheet (LeJeune, Taylor). Lake Minto is particularly productive of Lake Trout (Stevenson).

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