

Canadian Wildlife Service  
Arctic Ecology Map Series  
Critical Wildlife areas

Descriptive report

Koukdjuak River

KOUKDJUAK RIVER  
(Sheet #2082)

This map sheet encompasses a land and sea area of some 137,000 square miles. Approximately three quarters of the area consists of southwest and central Baffin Island.

Most of Foxe Peninsula and the region north and east to Cumberland Sound is below one thousand feet in elevation and most of the land adjacent to the sea shore is below the 500 foot contour. These regions contain hundreds of lakes and streams and extensive marshes. Large portions of Prince Charles and Air Force Islands are also low and marshy. These areas contain breeding and molting areas for thousands of Snow and Blue Geese, Lesser Canada Geese, Black Brant and Eider Ducks.

Peary Caribou are numerous between Cumberland Sound and Nettilling Lake as well as at heads of fiords along the south coast of Cumberland Sound. In addition, many are killed by Cape Dorset and Pagnirtung Eskimos in the area between Cumberland Sound and Foxe Peninsula.

Coastal areas contain abundant marine mammal populations which include several species of Seals and herds of Beluga Whales, Narwhal and Walrus. Several fiords are regular breeding areas for Beluga Whales, and Walrus utilize many islands as "hauling out" grounds. Polar Bear are common to



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numerous at many coastal points.

Anadromous and landlocked Arctic Char populations vary in abundance on this sheet. In general, all river systems along the coast of Baffin Island are good for Arctic Char production, particularly those rivers entering Cumberland Sound. Production is in the order of one pound per acre of fresh water spawning area.

Although substantial fisheries occur throughout this sheet most areas are not commercially important because of the lack of means of transportation to markets.

The human population of the region is high with settlements at Cape Dorset (Foxe Peninsula), Pangnirtung (Cumberland Sound) and Clyde River on the north coast of Baffin Island.

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


UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
1	These units are caribou migration routes utilized in early summer. (Loughrey)
2	Bowhead Whales are sighted regularly off Kangeek Point in Davis Strait. Ringed Seals numbering in the tens of thousands occur in this unit and along the northeast coast of Baffin Island. (Mansfield)
3	This unit, including the islands of Nettilling Lake is an important caribou wintering area. (Macpherson)
4	This unit encompasses an important area for marine mammals. A summer calving herd of a few hundred Beluga Whales utilizes this fiord. Occasional Bowhead Whales calve in this unit as well. (Mansfield)
5	This unit encompasses an Arctic Char system with a harvest quota of 6,000 pounds. (Hunter)
6	Pangnirtung Fiord is an important Arctic Char area. (Hunter)
7	Beluga Whales are plentiful during the summer in Nettilling Fiord and the head of Cumberland Sound. (Haller 1966)
8	Harp Seals and Bearded Seals are common to numerous along the southwest coast of Cumberland Sound from Kingmiksok to Popham Bay. (Haller, <u>et al.</u> 1966)

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
9	Walrus populations are found throughout the Lemieux Islands as well as on the south end of Cumberland Peninsula. These populations number in the hundreds and are resident all year round. (Mansfield)
10	Important caribou wintering area. This area is hunted by Frobisher Bay Eskimos. (Macpherson)
11	This river has a good population of Arctic Char. Annual yield is in the order of 25,000 pounds. (Hunter)
12	This unit encompasses an excellent Ringed Seal area. Populations number in the tens of thousands. The area of good populations occurs all along the southwest coast of Baffin Island adjacent to Hudson Strait. (Mansfield) Large populations of Ringed Seals have been observed on the sea ice until late June all along the Hudson Strait coast of Baffin Island. (Cooch)
13	The three areas delineated in this unit constitute part of the Cape Dorset Migratory Bird Sanctuary. Approximately 5,000 Eiders breed in this area and form the basis for the eiderdown industry at Cape Dorset. (Cooch) Eider Ducks nesting areas occur on southern Foxe Peninsula and adjacent islands. (Macpherson 1959)
14	This unit encompasses a Kumlien's Gull colony. (Macpherson)
15	This is a critical area for Peregrine and Gyrfalcon nesting. There is possibly 1 pair for every 10 miles of suitable cliff. (Cooch)

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
16	This area contains an important Arctic Char fishery for Cape Dorset Eskimos. (Macpherson)
17	This unit is a migration route for Polar Bear. A limited annual migration occurs through Hudson Strait. (Jonkel)
18	This system contains a large population of Arctic Char important as a native fishery. Char have been reported in this system in August and May. (Cooch)
19	These units are Walrus hauling out areas. (Cooch)
20	This unit is a breeding area for approximately 5,000 Snow Geese. (Cooch)
21	This unit encompasses a breeding area for approximately 10,000 Snow Geese and is considered critical. It is not within the Bowman Bay Game Sanctuary, but is part of the important goose nesting complex of this sheet. (Cooch)
22	Arctic Char probably spawn in Amadjuak Lake. No further information is available. (Jones) Amadjuak Lake has a generally low productivity for fisheries. (Hunter)
23	Arctic Char run up the Koukdjuak River into Nettilling and Amadjuak Lakes. (Jones)
24	This unit encompasses the Bowman Bay Game Sanctuary, a critical area for waterfowl.

UNIT NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

- 25 This unit encompasses the Dewey Soper Migratory Bird Sanctuary on the Great Plain of the Koukdjuak. This is an extremely critical area for nesting Blue Geese. Several additional species breed within this area as well, including Snow Geese, Lesser Canada Geese (approximately 50,000) and Black Brant.
- Approximately 500,000 breeding Blue Geese are found in this nesting colony, which is the largest in North America. The area contains fall populations of up to 1.5 million geese consisting of the breeding population plus the current annual production.
- Most of the nesting areas are within 15 miles of the coast. (Cooch)
- 26 This unit is a critical molting area for non-breeding Snow Geese, which are part of the populations of Units 25 and 28. (Cooch)
- 27  Nettilling Lake is the only place in Canada where Ringed Seals occur in fresh water. They are found in small numbers throughout the lake. (Mansfield)
- This unit contains large numbers of both sea run and landlocked Arctic Char. The fish are generally of small size, and the lake has a generally low productive rate.
- 28 This unit is part of the goose colony of Unit 25. It is a critical area for nesting and molting from June 1st to September 1st. This unit is also a possible staging area for Greater Snow Geese on their north-south migration. (Cooch)
- 29 This is an important late fall caribou migration route. While no exact data are available, the population passing through numbers in the thousands. (Macpherson)

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
30	The waters adjacent to Air Force Island may be important to Polar Bears as hunting range during the summer. (Jonkel)
31	Caribou are thought to summer on Prince Charles Island and move back and forth to Air Force Island. (Loughrey)
32	This is a very important Polar Bear area which may extend onto the Baird Peninsula to the north. (Macpherson)



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