

Canadian Wildlife Service
Arctic Ecology Map Series
Critical Wildlife areas

Descriptive report

Murchison River

MURCHISON RIVER
(Sheet #2059)

This map sheet encompasses a total area of about 118,000 square miles. The major land areas are Boothia and Melville Peninsulas and the northwest corner of Baffin Island. These areas comprise approximately three quarters of the map sheet.

The varied terrain on this sheet with numerous lakes, streams, bays, and islands provides a wide variety of wildlife habitat. The chief terrestrial mammals are Barren-Ground Caribou, Arctic Fox and Polar Bear. Caribou are numerous during the summer on Melville Peninsula.

Muskoxen are thought to occur south of Pelly Bay and Barren-Ground Grizzly are found on the mainland.

Marine mammals found in this sheet include Square Flipper and Ringed Seals, Narwhal, and Walrus particularly in Foxe Basin which is ice free for long periods. The northern part of Foxe Basin is one of the best Square Flipper Seal areas in the Arctic, with populations numbering in the thousands. Bowhead Whales are commonly observed in Admiralty and Koluktoo Bay Inlets and Foxe Basin.

Large numbers of White-Fronted, Canada, Lesser and Greater Snow Geese and Black Brant breed in the region or use the coastal bays for staging areas. Approximately 40,000

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Greater Snow Geese breed in the Bernier Bay-Berlinguet Inlet area of Baffin Island.

Arctic Char, Lake Trout and Whitefish are found in several mainland lakes particularly Hall Lake (Melville Peninsula) and in the Netsilik Lake complex on Boothia Peninsula.

Human populations are high in this region with villages at Gjoa Haven (King William Island), Pelly Bay and Igloolik. Both residents of these villages and peoples from the Hudson Bay coast utilize the wildlife resources of the area mapped.

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

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
1	Atlantic Black Brant (200±). Some of these birds may move inland during summer. More information is required. (Barry)
2	This unit delineates a breeding colony of Greater Snow Geese. Total population is estimated to be 40,000 individuals. The area around Bernier Bay is considered critical while the remainder of the unit is important. This unit is suspected to be the major concentration point for this population. Due to a lack of data over much of this sheet, there may be other important areas which are not defined. (Cooch)
3	Robertson River is an excellent Arctic Char system. (Mansfield) The suspected annual production in this system is 10,000 pounds. (Hunter)
4	Calving area for several thousand Narwhal. (Mansfield)
5	Erichsen Lake is used by Eskimos for Lake Trout fishing. Cod are also reported here. (Hunter)
6	Barren-Ground Caribou winter around Steensly Inlet. This appears to be their northern limit of their range, and they move south during the summer. (Loughrey)
7	Good char system are found on Rowley Island. There is a good sport fishing potential in this area. (Hunter)
8	Walrus hauling out grounds; South Ooglik Island, (Loughrey, Mansfield), North Ooglik Island (Loughrey), and Manning Island (Mansfield).

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
9	Walrus are found in Foxe Basin year round. (Loughrey, Mansfield) Populations occur in the thousands throughout the Basin. During much of the year this region is ice free and there are local movements which take place. Walrus appear to prefer ice floes or ice edges as opposed to land for hauling out. (Mansfield)
10	Char and Lake Trout are found in Hall Lake. (Loughrey) This lake is renowned among the Eskimos of this region for its large Lake Trout. (Mansfield)
11	Calving takes place over a widespread area in this region of Melville Peninsula in the spring. There does not appear to be any major concentration during calving, as may be found in other parts of the Arctic. (Loughrey)
12	Caribou have been observed in this region. These are suspected to be Peary Caribou. (Mansfield)
13	A Barren-Ground Caribou migration route illustrating a northward movement in the spring. (Loughrey)
14	Barren-Ground Caribou are found on the Melville Peninsula. (Loughrey, Tener) The numbers are abundant and the animals winter in the hills in this region. (Loughrey)
15	Polar Bear denning frequent on Wales Island. (Jonkel)
16	The whole of Simpson Peninsula is considered critical for Polar Bear denning. The entire land mass is used year around, and dens are numerous. (Jonkel, Loughrey, Macpherson) Denning takes place October 1st to March 31st. The lee or sheltered sides of the hills are most important. (Loughrey)

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
17	A resident herd of Barren-Ground Caribou inhabit this region. No population data is available. These caribou are hunted by Pelly Bay Eskimos in the early winter. During the late winter the animals move south to Wager Inlet. (Macpherson)
18	An important Whitefish fishery for Pelly Bay people. (Macpherson)
19	An important Arctic Char river for Pelly Bay people. (Macpherson)
20	A minimum of one hundred thousand pounds annual fisheries production is expected from this area. It is considered extremely important. (Hunter)
21	Large colonies of Thayers and Glaucous Gulls are located here. The total number of nests for both colonies is approximately one thousand. (Macpherson)
22	Polar Bear denning. The entire land mass is used year around and considered critical. (Jonkel)
23	Barren-Ground Caribou are found here year around. The population is small. No detailed information available. (Loughrey)
24	Some Polar Bear denning occurs here, however it is not a major denning area. (Jonkel)
25	This is a spring staging area for White-Fronted Geese and Snow Geese. (Barry)

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
26	Lake Trout, Arctic Char, Whitefish and herring are found in this region. Expected productivity for fresh water lakes is $\frac{1}{2}$ pound per acre, and for rivers, 1 pound per acre. (Hunter) No further information available.
27	Small number of Atlantic Brant nest in this unit. (Barry)
28	An important Arctic Char run moves into Netsilik Lake. Lake Trout are also found in this area. (Barry) The annual production for this complex including Lake Trout, Whitefish, and Arctic Char is one-half pound per acre. (Hunter)
29	Seals are common here in the spring of the year. This is an important sealing ground for many Eskimo groups. (Loughrey)
30	Arctic Char and Lake Trout are found in this lake and river system. (Barry)
31	Bellot Strait is an important Narwhal concentration area. (Macpherson)
32	Beluga Whale and Narwhal concentration area. (Barry) Barry observed 1,450 Beluga Whales here in 1958.
33	This is an important area for sea bird colonies. (Macpherson)

REFERENCES

Personal Communication

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