

Canadian Wildlife Service  
Arctic Ecology Map Series  
Critical Wildlife areas

Descriptive report

Quoich River

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QUOICH RIVER  
(Sheet #2081)

The Quoich River map sheet encompasses a land and sea area of 137,000 square miles between longitudes 80°W and 96°W and latitudes 64°N and 68°N. Land areas included are an extensive area in northeastern Keewatin, the southern portion of the Melville Peninsula and the northern part of Southampton Island. The eastern side of this map sheet includes portions of Foxe Basin and Foxe Channel.

The area included in the Quoich River map sheet is in the transition zone between the eastern and western sectors of the Arctic. The entire area, which is physiographically within the Canadian Shield is north of tree line.

The southern half of the mainland in this map sheet includes the flattest and most homogeneous part of the Canadian Shield. The rolling terrain has more drift cover and fewer outcrops of bedrock than is common on the Shield.

The terrain of the northern half of the mainland becomes higher and rougher with much exposed bedrock. The Melville Peninsula, however consists mainly of a smooth, rather featureless plateau about 1,500 feet high.

Southampton Island is composed of two very different geographical regions. The northeastern part of the island is a plateau composed of precambrian granites and gneisses.

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plateau rises to 2,000 feet and is similar to the plateau on Melville Peninsula. The west and south sectors of the island consist of flat lowland well under 500 feet in elevation.

The wildlife resources of the Keewatin Mainland are primarily Barren Ground Caribou. Small herds winter along the coast of Roes Welcome Sound while greater concentrations of animals winter in the hilly country associated with several rivers in the interior. Peregrine Falcon breeding areas occur in cliffs bordering Baker Lake and Wager Bay. Most of the larger river systems support Arctic Char fisheries many of which are utilized by the natives. Examples include the Back, Murchison, Arrowsmith, and Kellett Rivers as well as several streams emptying into the north side of Baker Lake.

Southampton Island supports an extremely rich and diverse fauna. The use of the Precambrian Plateau for Polar Bear denning and of the remainder of the island as a summer sanctuary for the Bears probably warrants the designation of critical status to the entire island. Large numbers of Blue Geese, Lesser Snow Geese, Atlantic Brant, and Hutchins Geese nest in the East Bay area. Molting Lesser Snow Geese make use of a large part of the western lowlands as do breeding Canada Geese. The lowlands surrounding Ell Bay are an important Atlantic Brant nesting area. Caribou transplanted from Coats Island are becoming well established on the island, replacing the herd which died out in 1955. Peregrine Falcon breeding areas are common on the coastal cliffs.

Arctic Fox are common on the island and provide a basic source of income for the natives. Arctic Char are common in most of the larger rivers.

Sea mammals are abundant in bays and off most of the coasts represent in this map sheet. Repulse Bay and Frozen Strait are particularly rich with populations of Walrus, Seals, Belugas, and Narwhal.

Following is the descriptive text for units mapped on this sheet.

UNIT NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

- 1 Barren Ground Caribou numbering in the hundreds winter in the Ellice Hills region. (Loughrey) Muskoxen sightings have been reported from this area. (Loughrey, Macpherson)
- 2 Committee Bay provides important range for Ringed and Bearded Seals. (Mansfield)
- 3 Polar Bear denning is frequent on Wales Island. (Jonkel)
- 4 This area is used as winter range by Barren Ground Caribou. (Loughrey) In 1955, Loughrey stated that of the estimated 1,000 Caribou inhabiting the Melville Peninsula, the majority wintered in the Prince Albert Hills along the eastern shore of Committee Bay and spent the summer north of this area.
- 5 This unit indicates the southern extent of the range of the Foxe Basin group of Walrus. Walrus inhabiting northern Foxe Basin number in the thousands. Cape Jermain is the southern limit for Walrus hunters. (Mansfield)
- 6 Harbour Seals have been observed in this area. (Heywood)
- 7 An annual harvest quota of 10,000 pounds of Arctic Char has been set for the North Pole Lakes system. (Hunter)
- 8 This area is important as summer range for several species of sea mammals. Narwhal occur in Repulse Bay in the 100's in summer. (Mansfield) Belugas also occur in the area during the summer (Sergeant, 1962) as well as some Bowhead Whales (Sergeant, Heywood).  
Repulse Bay provides summer range for Walrus (Mansfield) and was historically very important for Walrus (Macpherson). Seals are plentiful in the Repulse Bay area, (Heywood) and the bay is an important sealing area for the people of Repulse Bay (Loughrey).

UNIT NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

- Harbour Seals occur in the vicinity of Beach Point on Repulse Bay. (Mansfield, 1967)
- Polar Bears are plentiful around Repulse Bay and Ross Bay. (Heywood)
- The annual yield of Seals from Beach Point to Cape Fisher including Repulse Bay, Duke of York Bay, Frozen Strait, and Lyon Inlet was 3,290 Ringed Seals and 345 Bearded Seals. (Brack and McIntosh, 1963)
- Arctic Char are plentiful in Repulse Bay. (Manning, 1942)
- 9            Approximately 100 Narwhal move into Repulse Bay from Foxe Channel through Frozen Strait during July, August, and September and move back out just before freeze-up. (Jonkel) Observations of Narwhal have also been made by Parker and Bruemmer.
- 10           This area receives intermittent use as a summer sanctuary by Polar Bear. (Jonkel)
- Seals are plentiful in Lyon Inlet. (Brack and McIntosh, 1963)
- 11           Arctic Grayling and Arctic Char are found in the streams and lakes of Vansittart Island. The annual harvest quota has been set on the basis of an annual production of 1 pound per acre (Hunter).
- 12           Beluga Whales are found here in small numbers. (Sergeant, 1962) Walrus are common here in the summer in numbers exceeding 100. (Mansfield)
- 13           Polar Bear denning occurs on White Island. (Loughrey)
- The area can also be considered critical as it is used as a nesting area by Peregrine Falcons and Gyrfalcons. (Fyfe; Snyder, 1957)
- Canada Geese are known to nest on this island. (Cooch)

UNIT NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

- 14 Hansine Lake and the Thomsen River which drains it have large populations of Arctic Char, (Parker, (Loughrey) Lake Trout, and Lake Whitefish (Loughrey). The annual harvest quota for the Hansine Lake system is set at 20,000 pounds of fish (Hunter).
- The mouth of the Thomsen River on Duke of York Bay is the site of an historic settlement of the extinct Eskimo tribe, the "Thule Sadlermiuts" who died in 1902 of a smallpox epidemic. (Parker)
- 15 Peregrine Falcons breed along the coast of the Duke of York Bay. (Snyder, 1957) Gull colonies occur along the west coast of the Bay. (Bruemmer)
- 16 Approximately 100 Beluga Whales have been observed in Duke of York Bay in August. Eskimos state that the Whales spend the summer in the Bay. (Parker)
- Ringed Seals and Bearded Seals are found in Duke of York Bay. (Brack and McIntosh, 1963) Walrus feed in Duke of York Bay and haul out on the ice there during the summer. (Freeman)
- Polar Bears hunt Seals in Duke of York Bay and move between Battery Bay and Duke of York Bay during summer. As many as 72 Bears have been seen here in two weeks by one observer. (Barry)
- 17 Arctic Char enter this river. No further information. (Parker, Cooch)
- 18 This unit delineates a nesting area for Glaucous and Kumliens Gulls. (Macpherson, 1961)
- 19 Arctic Char are found in Canyon River. (Heywood, Manning, 1942)
- 20 This area is a Ringed Seal pupping area for thousands of Seals and is hunted by Polar Bears. (Jonkel, Harington, Parker) The yield of Seals along the east coast of Southampton Island from Leyson Point to Cape Welmsford was 770 Ringed Seals and 223 Bearded Seals. (Brack and McIntosh, 1963)

UNIT NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

- 21 The routes marked indicate a general movement of Polar Bear in April into Foxe Channel to hunt Seals. (Harington)
- 22 This is a critical denning area for Polar Bear. (Harington, Jonkel) The majority of dens in this area are located within five to ten miles of the sea. (Harington) The whole of the east coast of Southampton is trapped for Polar Bear.
- This area can also be rated as critical on the basis of the extensive use it receives by nesting Peregrine Falcons. (Fyfe, Parker)
- 23 This unit delineates a hauling out area for Walrus. (Loughrey, Harington) This is the northernmost hauling out location used by the Coats Island group of Walrus which numbered 3,000 animals in 1961. (Mansfield)
- 24 This unit is a critical area for Polar Bear as numerous dens are found here. It is also particularly important as a summer sanctuary. (Jonkel)
- The area is used by breeding Peregrine Falcons. (Fyfe)
- The unit is a favored nesting area for Whistling Swans. (Parker)
- Eskimos trap in this area. (Loughrey)
- 25 This unit comprises a major portion of the East Bay Migratory Bird Sanctuary. This is a critical area for waterfowl breeding. Snow and Blue Geese nesting and molting individuals number 25,000. There are 4,000 nesting and molting Atlantic Brant and 1,000 non-breeding molting individuals. Populations of Hutchins Geese (a small race of Canada Geese), nesting Swans and numerous Ducks, including Eider, (500+ pairs, Fyfe), and Old Squaw Ducks also utilize the area. (Barry, Cooch) Some Ross Geese nest on the coast of East Bay, generally farther inland than the other species of Geese.



UNIT NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

- An estimated 500 Belugas use East Bay as summer range. (Barry)
- 26 This unit delineates the yearly range of a present population of approximately 200 Barren Ground Caribou. The original population was exterminated in approximately 1955 as a result of overhunting. The original population wintered on the eastern highlands and summered on the lowlands between East Bay and Native Point. When the original population died off, so did the Wolves. Wolves have not returned to Southampton Island. The absence of predators is allowing a rapid reestablishment of the present population of Caribou which was begun when 50 animals from Coats Island were introduced on Southampton Island in 1967. (Parker)
- 27 A breeding colony of Herring Gulls is located in this area. (Macpherson, 1961)
- 28 The Kirchoffer River is an excellent Arctic Char river (Loughrey, Macpherson) and also contains Lake Trout. (Parker) Eskimos from Coral Harbour fish for Char in this river. (Jonkel) According to Heywood, Char do not travel upstream past the falls. The Kirchoffer River and Sixteen Mile Brook produce 10,000 - 15,000 lbs. of Char annually. (Brack, 1962).
- The Kirchoffer River area is also a breeding area for Peregrine Falcons. (Barry; Snyder, 1957)
- 29 Observations of female Polar Bears with cubs indicate the possibility of denning in this area. (Harrington)  
Concentrations of Lesser Snow Geese are found in this portion of the Boas River lowlands. (Bruemmer)  
This is part of a larger area described in #31.
- 30 Salmon Pond is an excellent Arctic Char lake presently utilized by natives, (Cooch) and also contains Lake Trout. (Parker)

UNIT NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

- 31 This area is intermittently used by up to 50,000 Lesser Snow Geese as a post-hatch feeding area. (Cooch) Kerbes noted that Geese use this area as well as most of the remainder of the western half of Southampton Island for molting.
- Nesting Canada Geese are scattered over these lowlands as well. (Parker) An estimated 2,500 Canada Geese nest along the Boas River valley. (Barry)
- 32 This unit delineates a migration route used by hundreds of Polar Bears. (Jonkel) Observations have been made during July of a movement of Polar Bears, primarily immatures with a few adults, from Cape Low, Cape Kendall and the Bay of God's Mercy across the Island to Duke of York Bay and the Eastern Highlands and then onto the ice in Frozen Strait and Foxe Channel to hunt Seals. (Parker) The Bears also spend a great deal of time in the interior of Southampton and its use as a summer sanctuary is important. (Parker, Jonkel)
- 33 This is a breeding area for 3,000-5,000 Atlantic Brant. (Barry)
- 34 Offshore leads kept open by wind and tides are used by 100's of wintering Belugas comprizing an indigenous population. (Jonkel)
- Harp Seals occur in Roes Welcome Sound. (Mansfield, 1961)
- Belugas and Bowhead Whales are found in the area in the summer. (Sergeant)
- The yield of Seals in Roes Welcome Sound between Cape Fullerton and Beach Point was 570 Ringed Seals, 30 Harbour Seals, and 260 Bearded Seals. (Brack and McIntosh, 1963)
- Walrus haul out on several islands in Roes Welcome Sound. (Fyfe)

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
35	Beluga Whales from the Churchill region migrate through Roes Welcome Sound into Repulse Bay during the summer and probably move through Frozen Stait to winter in Foxe Basin. (Parker) Harbour Seals migrate up Roes Welcome Sound from Chesterfield Inlet and southern Southampton Island to Beach Point on Repulse Bay. (Mansfield, 1967)
36	Beluga Whales were observed in Bernheimer Bay in late August, 1970. (Gordon)
37	Peregrine Falcon breeding area. (Snyder, 1957)
38	Walrus occur in this area with the largest herd numbering 60 animals. (Mansfield)  Ringed Seals are very numerous in the summer in Wager Bay, particularly in the channel. (Macpherson)  Beluga Whales occur during the summer in Wager Bay. (Sergeant, 1962).  The coastal area of Wager Bay is heavily populated by Arctic Hare. (Macpherson)
39	This unit is important as a post-calving area for the Kaminuriak Barren Ground Caribou herd. (Parker, Macpherson) It is also an important denning area for Arctic Fox. (Macpherson)
40	At an estimated average annual production of approximately 1/2 pound per acre, the annual harvest quota for Baker Lake has been set at 50,000 pounds of Lake Trout, Lake Whitefish, and Arctic Char. (Hunter) Eskimos from the settlement of Baker Lake net Arctic Char in rivers flowing into the north side of Baker Lake. (Parker)
41	Peregrine Falcon breeding area. (Snyder, 1957)

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
42	Muskoxen have been sighted in this area. (Cooch)
43	<p>This unit delineates Barren Ground Caribou winter range. (Loughrey) The area at the head of Wager Bay has been used by small bands of Caribou totalling an estimated population of 500. The Caribou winter in the hills and summer on the grassy plains of the valleys. Since both winter and summer range are available, the animals probably do not migrate. (Loughrey, 1955)</p> <p>In the eastern part of this area, Brown Lake and the river joining it to Ford Lake have large Arctic Char up to 15 pounds. (Manning, 1942)</p>
44	<p>A traditional fishing camp of natives is located on Franklin Lake. (Muir, Loughrey, Heywood) Lake Trout in Franklin Lake reach trophy size--27-43 pounds. (Muir) The lake is very productive of Arctic Char, Lake Whitefish and Lake Trout. (Macpherson)</p> <p>Some Muskoxen sightings have been reported from the Back River area. (Parker)</p> <p>Canada Geese are plentiful in lakes on low ground in the lower Hayes River region. (Heywood)</p>
45	Chantry Inlet has a good population of Ringed Seals. (Mansfield)
46	<p>The hilly country at the headwaters of the Hayes River constitutes winter range for Barren Ground Caribou (Loughrey) and has been used by an estimated 500 animals (Loughrey, 1955).</p> <p>Some Muskoxen sightings have been reported from this area as well (Macpherson).</p>
47	<p>An estimated 500 Barren Ground Caribou winter in the hills along the Murchison River. (Loughrey, 1955)</p> <p>This river, together with the Arrowsmith and Kellett Rivers contributes 100,000 pounds annually to the Pelly Bay Char fishery. (Hunter)</p>

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
48	The Arrowsmith River together with the Kellett and Murchison River contributes 100,000 pounds to the Pelly Bay Char fishery. (Hunter)
49	A few hundred Barren Ground Caribou winter in the Kellett River area. (Loughrey) In the early winter, Eskimos from Pelly Bay hunt Caribou here. (Macpherson)  The Kellett River is an excellent Char river and together with the Arrowsmith and Murchison Rivers contributes an annual yield of 100,000 pounds to the Pelly Bay Char fishery. (Hunter)

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