

Canadian Wildlife Service
Arctic Ecology Map Series
Critical Wildlife areas

Descriptive report

Robeson Channel

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ROBESON CHANNEL
(Sheet #2008)

The mapped area of the Robeson Channel sheet encompasses approximately 103,000 square miles of land and sea in the High Arctic. Canadian territory includes the northeastern portion of Ellesmere Island while Greenland comprises the remainder of the land area.

The part of Ellesmere Island included on this map sheet includes three different topographical regions. The central region extending northeast between Archer Fiord and the south side of the United States Mountain Range is the dissected upland of the northern plateau. Areas in the vicinity of Lake Hazen and Alert are relatively well vegetated. North of the plateau are the Northern Mountains which are ice-capped. The coastal area around Clements Markham Inlet is lower and vegetated. South of the plateau is a portion of the ice-covered central mountain region.

Muskoxen, Peary Caribou and Greater Snow Geese are found on the plateau and are most abundant in the Lake Hazen area and along the coast. Gyrfalcons nest near Lake Hazen. Muskoxen and Peary Caribou range is also found in the vicinity of Clements Markham Inlet. Ringed Seals, Harp Seals, and Walrus occur in Kane Basin and Ringed Seals probably occur in Kennedy and Robeson Channels as well since they have been observed at Alert.

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Other wildlife present on this part of Ellesmere Island include Arctic Fox, Arctic Wolf, Arctic Weasel, Arctic Hare, Brant, Old-Squaw, King Eider, and Rock Ptarmigan.

With regard to human habitation, no Eskimo settlements occur in this area although such a settlement occurred at one time at the historical site of Fort Conger. A military camp is located at Alert and camps have often been located at Cape Columbia as it was the point of origin of several polar expeditions.

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

UNIT NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

- 1 This unit delineates the northern limit of distribution for Walrus. The animals utilizing this range are part of a herd of thousands which occupy Smith Sound and Kane Basin between Ellesmere Island and Greenland (Mansfield).

The unit also delineates the most northern area to which some of the Harp Seals from the Gulf of St. Lawrence migrate (Mansfield, 1967).
- 2 Ringed Seals exhibit a scattered distribution along the entire coast of Kennedy Channel (Mansfield).
- 3 Both anadromous and freshwater populations of Arctic Char inhabit Lake Hazen (Hunter, Nassichuk, Curtis). The fish exhibit an extremely slow growth rate and the harvest quota has been set at 1000 pounds per year. The anadromous Arctic Char use the Ruggles River and Conybeare Fiord as a route for travel between the sea and Lake Hazen (Hunter). Since the river does not completely freeze during winter (Curtis), Char may overwinter in the river as well as in Lake Hazen.
- 4 Low numbers of Muskoxen have been observed in this area (Muir).
- 5 This area now supports small numbers of Muskoxen and constitutes a breeding area for small numbers of Greater Snow Geese. Historically, the people of Fort Conger lived on Muskoxen when the populations were higher (Muir).
- 6 This is a breeding area for small numbers of Greater Snow Geese (Muir).

UNIT NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

- 7 This area supports small bands of Muskoxen (Muir).
- 8 This area contains Muskox range (Muir).
- 9 Greater Snow Geese numbering in the hundreds use the area around Lake Hazen for breeding purposes. Approximately 230 Geese were seen here one summer (Heyland).
- Populations of Muskoxen and Peary Caribou occur in this area (Muir, Harington). The terraced platforms supporting growth of Puccinellia sp. and sedges on the northwest side of Lake Hazen constitute better range than occurs on the opposite side (Harington). The Muskoxen population is estimated at 50-100 animals (Muir) and Peary Caribou number in the dozens.
- White phase Gyrfalcons have often been seen around Lake Hazen and are suspected to nest in the highlands area on the northwest side of Lake Hazen (Harington).
- 10 This area contains year-round range for Muskoxen and Peary Caribou as well as breeding range for Greater Snow Geese (Muir).
- 11 This area is characterized by exceptionally good plant and animal productivity. Peary Caribou and Muskoxen are found in the area (Muir, MacDonald, MacDonald, 1952; Kelsall).
- A population of Turnstones and Sanderlings which winter in Portugal and Great Britain breed here in the summer (MacDonald).
- The bays and inlets near Alert used to be frequented by Ringed and Bearded Seals (Harington; MacDonald, 1952). However, there are not many left now as a result of the human population at the Military Camp (Harington).

UNIT NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

Brant breed here in some years (Harington).

Arctic Char are known to occur in streams in this area (Hunter).

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Scattered bands of Peary Caribou occupy the lowlands of watersheds entering Clements Markham Inlet (Inglis).

This area is also important Muskox range (Muir).

REFERENCES

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