

Canadian Wildlife Service  
Arctic Ecology Map Series  
Critical Wildlife areas

Descriptive report

Slave River

SLAVE RIVER  
(Sheet #2114)

The Slave River map sheet (scale 1:1,000,000) encompasses a land area of approximately 82,000 square miles. The area lies between longitudes 112° West and 120° West and latitudes 60° North (the Alberta boundar) and 64° North.

Important geographic features of this sheet include the main basin of Great Slave Lake, the lower Slave River and the first 120 miles of the Mackenzie River. Most of the region is forested with white and black spruce, jackpine, birch and poplar and only the northeast corner is characteristic tree-line and tundra.

The area is rich in renewable resources including several species of big game and fur bearing mammals and large quantities of commercially valuable fish. All river deltas within the sheet have potential importance as muskrat and waterfowl production areas. The northern portion of Wood Buffalo Park falls within the boundary of this sheet and contains key habitat for Wood Bison and Whooping Cranes.

A large part of the human population of the Northwest Territories reside in this region in the major towns of Yellowknife, Hay River and Fort Smith or the settlements of Fort Rae, Fort Resolution and Fort Providence. The region is unique in containing the only railroad and highways within the

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Northwest Territories.

Mining developments are numerous in the region with most of the older mines centred around Yellowknife and one large recent development at Pine Point.

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

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
1	The Ghost Lake region is a caribou wintering area. (Kuyt)
2	This is a protected Beaver area which contains a thriving population of introduced Beaver. The population has increased since 1954 as a result of migration from adjacent areas. (Kuyt 1964)
3	The Mackenzie Bison Sanctuary. This is a major wintering area for Wood Bison (Hall, Stevens, Kelsall, Barry). Important grazing areas occur at Calais, Dieppe, Caen, and Falaise Lakes. (Stevens, Hall). The most important grazing species are the sedges <u>Carex rostrata</u> and <u>C. atherodes</u> . (Stevens)
	Whooping Cranes have been seen within the area (Barry), and it is considered potentially important for this species (Stevens). Loughrey states that the Dieppe Lake region is important for the non-breeding segment of the Whooping Crane population. For this reason, the entire area is critical and should not be disturbed. Novakowski reports that the area is not currently being used by Whooping Cranes.
	The entire area delineated is important from the viewpoint of the numbers and diversity of wildlife species which occur. It is one of the

UNIT NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

3  
(continued)

most productive wildlife areas in the north with populations of Wood Bison, Moose, Caribou, Beaver and waterfowl. Although their distribution is sporadic in the region, Woodland Caribou are frequently found offshore on the unnamed island straight west of Hardisty Island. (Kelsall)

Hall indicates that good moose populations are found throughout the unit.

4

Wintering Barren-Ground Caribou within this unit (Kelsall, Hall, Loughrey).

This is a critical wintering area for Barren-Ground Caribou, which has been burned over in the past. Caribou are found most frequently here, although they may move across the lake when the lake freezes (Kelsall).

Caribou move into this wintering range during fall and winter. Wolverine and Wolves are also common within the area (Kuyt).

The area around Campbell Lake, Hearne Lake and Francois Lake in this unit also contains wintering moose concentrations (Hall).

5

Bald Eagles nest along the cliffs on the islands in this area. Good populations were present in the early 1960's (Fuller).

6

Herds move in and out of the unit as shown by the arrow, across the islands of Slave Lake to join other herds on the south side of the arm of the lake. Movement takes place both ways across the lake and between Beverly Lake and the wintering area. (Kelsall)

7

Numerous ducks nesting in this region near Fort Resolution (Barry).

Muskrat are common in the Slave River Delta. Fort Resolution Indians trap this area to some degree (Novakowski).

Delta of the Slave River has been historically an important muskrat area (Bryant). Beaver are also important within this area (Hall). No further data available.

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
8	Important Beaver area encompassing the Talston River (Hall). The area also contains good muskrat populations.
9	Tsu Lake sport fishing lake for Lake Trout which are abundant. Sportsmen fly in from Ft. Smith to this lake (Fuller).
10	This area is an important wintering range for Wood Bison from Wood Buffalo Park (Hall). Wood Bison 2,000± in this unit year round (Novakowski).
11	The northern part of this unit has a resident Wood Bison population of some 500 animals which move towards and across the Slave River to the wintering area of Unit 20 (Hall). The southern portion of the unit from the Little Buffalo River to the Slave is Bison calving, summer and fall range for approximately 2,500 animals. Some migrate from the park. 1,000 to 1,500 are found in this area during the summer. Larger populations in the fall result from migration from the Wood Buffalo Park (Hall). This area contains a Bison population of approximately 1,000 animals (Novakowski).
12	Wood Buffalo National Park. The Sass River area contains the main nesting grounds for Whooping Cranes (Novakowski). Whooping Cranes occur throughout the area (Kuyt, Barry) as do Wood Bison (Stevens). Whooping Cranes have also been seen in the area south of Pine Point, and sightings are not uncommon around the Great Slave Lake area (Kuyt).

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
13	Inconnu spawn up the Buffalo River and into Buffalo Lake and all streams running into the Big Buffalo. Their upward movement is not too obvious but the downward movement takes place October 10th to 15th (Fuller).
14	Buffalo Lake utilized by White-Fronted Geese during fall migration from September 1st to October 20th (Barry).
15	Inconnu spawn up the Buffalo River and into Buffalo Lake and all streams running into the Big Buffalo (Fuller, Novakowski). Their upward movement is not too obvious but the downward movement takes place October 10th to 15th.
16	Whooping Cranes. A good population of Whooping Cranes are found in this area (Novakowski). The area is extremely critical and should be left undisturbed.
17	This large area delineates a Whistling Swan migration route which extends into the Great Bear River map sheet to the northwest. Migration occurs both in the spring and the fall during the periods May 1st to May 30th, and September 1st to October 15th. Swans use the small potholes and lakes that are found throughout this region. During the spring and fall, migrating Swans have presented a hazard to aircraft using this area (Barry). Approximately 2,000 Swans have been observed at Mink Lake (Novakowski).
18	Good populations of Beaver occurred in the Kakisa and the Laferte River systems in the 1950's (Fuller). This is considered an excellent Beaver area with high populations (Hall).

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
19	Good Beaver area of secondary importance surrounding Unit 18, an area of excellent Beaver habitat. In addition, it contains populations of Mink, Lynx and Marten. The area extends onto the Redstone map sheet and south of both sheets (Hall).
20	Canada Geese, Canvas Back and other ducks use this area as a fall staging area from approximately September 1st to October 15th (Barry).
21	This unit delineates an important sport fishery mainly for Grayling. It contains some Lake Trout and Walleye as well (Stevens)
22	Numerous ducks nesting May 1st to September 1st. May molt here also. White-Fronted Geese fall staging September 1st to the 30th. Few Snow Geese (Barry).
23	Fawn Lake. White-Fronted Geese fall migration September 1st to the 30th, and Whistling Swans fall migration September 1st to October 15th (Barry).
24	The Horn Plateau is an important Woodland Caribou range (Kelsall, Williams, Hall). Approximately 4,000 Caribou are found in this area which is also important for Marten (Hall). This area extends to the west on the Redstone River sheet.
25	Important area for Beaver (Bryant). The area between Lac la Marte and the Horn Plateau is good beaver habitat (Fuller 1952).

UNIT NUMBER

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- 26            Important commercial fishery. (Stevens).  
              Mostly utilized for White Fish, but some  
              Lake Trout present (Stevens, Novakowski).
- 27            Prime Caribou wintering area. Contains good  
              lichen range (Stevens).  
              Commonly used by wintering caribou (Kelsall).  
              This unit extends to adjacent map sheets to  
              encompass the glacially fluted area.



REFERENCES

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W. E. Stevens

R. B. Hall  
R. Williams (Northwest Territories Game Branch)

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