

Canadian Wildlife Service  
Arctic Ecology Map Series  
Critical Wildlife areas

Descriptive report

Sutton River

0086480T

SUTTON RIVER  
(Sheet #2110)

The Sutton River map sheet encompasses an area of some 82,000 square miles. About three quarters of the sheet consists of the north central marine area of Hudson Bay. The major land areas are composed of the southern tip of Southampton Island, and Coats and Mansel Islands.

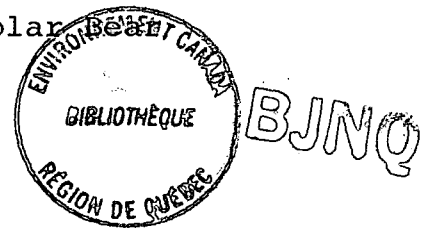
The islands are characterized by low elevations and flat to undulating topography interspersed with occasional highlands and escarpments adjacent to marine areas. Coastal shorelines are generally shallow and marshy with wide tidal flats.

Most of the land area occurring on this sheet contains critical wildlife habitat primarily for waterfowl, Polar Bear and Peary Caribou. Wildlife populations on this are extremely diverse and include a variety of waterfowl species (ducks, Snow and Blue Geese, Brant, swans), marine mammals and terrestrial mammals.

Marine mammal populations consist primarily of Walrus although Bowhead Whales have been observed in Roes Welcome Sound. Beluga Whales and seals occur at various localities, however no exceptionally large populations are found.

Southampton Island may be the largest Polar

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denning area in the world. This includes the northern portion of the island on the Quoich River map sheet. Although the whole of Southampton Island has not been mapped with critical cross-hatching (to avoid obscuring other critical areas where specific data is available) THE ENTIRE AREA OF SOUTHAMPTON ISLAND SHOULD BE CONSIDERED EXTREMELY CRITICAL FOR POLAR BEAR.

Coats Island is considered critical since it harbours an isolated sub-species of Peary Caribou, is a Polar Bear denning area, and important for other species.

Several important archaeological sites exist within the map sheet. These include a Tule Eskimo Culture site near Cape Kendall on Coral Harbour and Dorset Eskimo Culture sites on Cape Pembroke on Coats Island and at Native Point on Southampton Island.

The settlement of Coral Harbour is the major centre of human populations within the map area.

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

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
1	An Arctic Char river utilized for fishing by Southampton Island Eskimos. (Macpherson)
2	Ringed Seals are found year-round in Native Bay. 100-200 Beluga Whales are also found in this area. (Loughrey)
3	Polar Bear cross overland between Native Bay and East Bay during the summer. (Barry)
4	East Bay Migratory Bird Sanctuary. A critical area for waterfowl breeding. Snow and Blue Geese nesting and molting 25,000 individuals. Atlantic Black Brant Geese 4,000 nesting and molting, 1,000 non-breeding molting individuals. Populations of Canada Geese (Hutchins), nesting swans and numerous ducks including Eider and Old Squaw Ducks also utilize the area. (Barry, Cooch)
5	This unit is a critical area for Polar Bear denning. Numerous dens are found in this area. (Jonkel)
6	The area adjacent to Seahorse Point is used by Polar Bear during the summer as a "sanctuary". (Jonkel)
7	Walrus are common at Seahorse Point (Barry, Cooch). Peregrine Falcons also nest in this vicinity. (Mansfield)
8	These migratory routes are utilized by Walrus which move from Walrus Island to Bencas Island and Cape Pembroke during August and September. From these points they generally move to Seahorse and Gordon Bay in October, with some moving west again in the late fall. (Loughrey)

UNIT NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

- 9           Leyson Point is a Walrus "hauling out" ground. No further information available. (Cooch)
- 10           The area of Mansel Island delineated is a "sanctuary" for Polar Bears. "Sanctuary" describes the situation where the bears are stranded on an island during the summer due to the lack of floe ice near the island. This situation generally lasts for a period of two months during June and July. There is very little Polar Bear denning on Mansel Island. (Jonkel)
- 11           This unit is the most critical area of Coats Island for Peary Caribou which numbered 800± in 1964 (Harrington). During winter, caribou are confined to the wind blown beaches of the island, which contains deep hard snow in the interior portions. These caribou range throughout lowland areas during the summer. (Macpherson)
- 12           Polar Bear occur throughout Coats Island during the months of June through October. The area is also a Polar Bear "sanctuary" and should be considered critical for Polar Bear as well as Peary Caribou. Polar Bear denning occurs on the north end of the island. (Jonkel, Loughrey)
- Swans are common on the island (Jonkel, Cooch, Loughrey).
- Approximately 2,500 Peary Caribou were counted on the island in a 1970 survey (Hall).
- Extensive Kelp Beds on the west shores of Coats and Mansel Islands are important for migratory birds in late May and early June. These areas are utilized by Pintail and Eider Ducks, Whistling Swans, Turnstones and Longspurs. (Macpherson)
- Coats Island is of considerable scientific interest, since it contains an isolated sub-species of Peary Caribou, and is the only location in the Arctic devoid of lemmings. (Macpherson, Cooch)

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
13	2,000± Walrus have been observed in this area south of Cape Pembroke. (Cooch)
14	This general region of northern Coats Island contains Murre nesting colonies and a Walrus "hauling out" ground. (Barry) Several Murre colonies are found at Cape Pembroke. (Loughrey) Peregrine Falcons have also been observed south of the Cape. (Mansfield) Large herds of Walrus are found at the Cape Pembroke "hauling out" grounds during August and September. (Harrington) This unit also contains a colony of Glaucous Gulls. (Jonkel, Macpherson)
15	Bencas Island is a Walrus "hauling out" ground. (Cooch, Loughrey)
16	Walrus Island is used as a hauling out ground for Walrus. (Barry, Loughrey, Mansfield, Cooch) Walrus Island is critical for Polar Bear in June and October during the movement from Coats Island to Southampton Island. (Loughrey, Barry)
17	Arctic Char occur along the Sutton River. No further information. (Cooch, Barry)
18	This is an important nesting area for Black Brant and Snow Geese. (Cooch, Barry) Approximately 400 Brant nest in the area (Barry), and 5,000± Snow Geese (Cooch). Numerous Eider Ducks also breed in this area.
19	This unit encompasses nesting colonies of Sabine Gulls. (Loughrey)

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
20	Numerous seals "hauling out" at Cape Low. (Harington)
21	This unit is a critical Polar Bear denning area. (Cooch, Loughrey)
22	Beaches surrounding the Bay of Gods Mercy are important summer loafing areas for Polar Bears. River banks in this region are used for denning. (Jonkel, Cooch)
23	Seals are found throughout the Bay of Gods Mercy. (Barry)
24	Harry Gibbons Migratory Bird Sanctuary. A critical area. Snow and Blue Geese 45,000 nesting birds, Canada Geese (Hutchins) 1,000 nesting individuals, Atlantic Black Brant 5,000 individuals nesting, plus numerous swans, Eider Ducks and a few nesting Ross' Geese.
25	This unit is a critical waterfowl feeding and loafing area for populations from the Boas River breeding ground. (Cooch)
26	A breeding area for approximately 1,000 Atlantic Black Brant. (Barry)
27	Arctic Char are found within this system. (Loughrey)

REFERENCES

Personal Communication

T. W. Barry	
F. G. Cooch	
C. J. Jonkel	(Canadian Wildlife Service)
A. G. Loughrey	
A. H. Macpherson	
R. B. Hall	Northwest Territories, Game Branch
C. R. Harington	National Museum of Canada
J. G. Hunter	(Fisheries Research Board of
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