

Canadian Wildlife Service
Arctic Ecology Map Series
Critical Wildlife areas

Descriptive report

Viscount Melville Sound

VISCOUNT MELVILLE SOUND
(Sheet #2035)

This map sheet encompasses some 94,000 square miles of marine area and the Arctic Islands. The major land areas on the sheet include the northeast corner of Victoria Island, the southeast corner of Melville Island, the southern portion of Bathurst Island and the northern three quarters of Prince of Wales Island.

With the exception of the Shaler Mountains on the north of Victoria Island, most elevations on this sheet are less than 500 feet above sea level. The four major islands are interlaced by streams, and the low lying areas of Victoria and Prince of Wales Islands are dotted with numerous lakes.

Barren-Ground Caribou and Muskoxen are found on all four islands. Moderate to high numbers of both species have been recorded on Prince of Wales, Bathurst and Melville Islands. Tener (1963) estimated a total population of 1,161 for the four islands with the highest populations (523) around and south of Bracebridge Inlet.

Seals, Beluga Whales, and Narwhal occur in several areas with the largest population found around Prince of Wales and Bathurst Island. Herds of walrus have been observed in the northeastern region of the map sheet.

Waterfowl breeding populations include Eider Ducks,

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Black Brant and Lesser and Greater Snow Geese. A large breeding population of King Eiders (65,000) occurs on Prince of Wales Island. (Manning and Macpherson 1961)

Colonies of Kittiwakes, Gulls, Murres, Fulmars and Guillemots are found at various locations along coastal areas.

Arctic Char occur in most river systems with access to the sea. On Prince of Wales Island such areas produce one pound per acre of nursery area. Most of the river systems on Melville Island are intermittent and char production on this island is generally poor.

Arctic Foxes are common throughout the islands with the best populations likely on Bathurst and Melville Islands.

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

UNIT NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

- 1 Caribou are numerous in this region. The ecological importance of this area is similar to that described for Polar Bear Pass in Unit 5. (Kerr)
- 2 This is an important Muskoxen range. Animals from this unit interchange with animals from other areas on Bathurst such as the Polar Bear Pass area. (Gray)
- 3 Arctic Foxes are plentiful in this region and denning is suspected. (Kerr)
- 4 Polar Bear denning in this area. (Jonkel)
- 5 This area has been named Polar Bear Pass. A migration of Polar Bears occurs during the summer increasing in numbers in late summer. Up to one dozen Polar Bear have been observed moving through this area during the summer. The movements are westward, apparently corresponding to the availability of seals on one coast as opposed to the other.

A few caribou and Muskoxen (100+) are frequently observed in this same region. Eider Ducks nest in Polar Bear Pass all summer and are numerous. Plant life is rich and diversified. This area is considered ecologically unique and no movement of vehicles should be allowed without extreme caution. (Kerr)

A great variety of species of considerable interest are found here. (Macpherson)

Harrington has observed Peary Caribou and Muskoxen grazing together in this pass. Brant (Branta bernicula) and Lesser Snow Geese nest in the general region of Bracebridge Inlet during June. The population is small. (Harrington), (Tener 1963)

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
6	Muskoxen range south along the coast from Polar Bear Pass and Bracebridge Inlet. These animals concentrate in the Pass at certain times. This herd of Muskoxen is non-breeding at present. No new young have been observed in the last two years, although conditions are excellent for breeding. (Gray)
7	The shores of Goodsir Inlet are a concentration area for Polar Bear and Walrus during the summer. (Kerr)
8	Muskoxen range. (Gray) No further information.
9	A Kittiwake nesting colony is located on Houston Steward Island. (Thorsteinsson)
10	An important area for caribou. (Macpherson) No further information.
11	Brooman Point is a concentration area for Beluga Whales during the winter time. There is also a Tule Eskimo culture site located on this point. (Harrington, Gray)
12	This is an area of critical winter range for Allison Inlet Caribou. (Macpherson) Inlets such as Allison Inlet are good for caribou all year round. Eskimos from Resolute Bay hunt this area. (Harrington)
13	Numerous Beluga Whales are seen moving from Bathurst Island to Cornwallis Island and back during the summer. (Kerr)

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
14	Polar Bear are found along a crack in the ice during winter. The crack occurs annually and extends from Cape Airy past Baker Island towards the south of Bathurst Island. (Harington)
15	Caribou inhabit Cornwallis Island year round. The population is estimated to be 100 to 300. (Thorsteinsson) Muskoxen herds were seen on Cornwallis Island in May. It is suspected that approximately 50 animals remain here year round. (Harington) In 1950-53 Thorsteinsson observed 30 Muskoxen on this island, 114 in 1965 and 3 in 1968. He feels these animals move back and forth to Bathurst Island.
16	Sea bird colonies. (Jonkel) No further information.
17	Polar Bear are common on the west side of Lowther Island. This is a secondary area used for hauling out. No denning recorded to date. (Harington), (Manning and Macpherson 1958) Thorsteinsson observed three Muskoxen on Lowther Island in 1968.
18	Murre colonies occur on Griffith Island. Exact locations are unknown. (Macpherson)
19	A Polar Bear migration route. Bears moving west during the spring, being pushed back by the receding ice, and then return to their original wintering grounds in the fall. (Jonkel)
20	The sea ice is important in this area for female Polar Bears with cubs during the spring. (Jonkel)

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
21	Murre, Fulmars, Kittiwakes and Guillemots nest on Limestone Island (Barry).
22	Polar Bears annually congregate along a crack in the ice between Limestone Island and Russell Island. Polar Bears apparently hunt the seals which also frequent the area. (Harington)
23	Polar Bears are reported to be numerous on eastern Russell Island (Manning and Macpherson 1958).
24	This unit is critical for Polar Bear denning. The adjacent seas are important also since they are used as hunting grounds by the bears. (Jonkel) Manning and Macpherson (1958) found Polar Bears to be numerous at the northern end of Prince of Wales Island.
25	Muskoxen were observed in the following areas during the summer of 1970 (July 6th to August 25th). A total of 73 animals were observed north of Browne Bay, including 10 calves; 86 animals were counted south of Browne Bay including 3 calves. In addition, 6 adults and 2 calves were observed on Prescott Island. (Kerr, Christie, Thorsteinsson)
26	Aston Bay is a Beluga Whale concentration area (Barry).
27	Narwhal and Beluga Whale numbering in the hundreds are found off the northwest coast of Somerset Island. (Mansfield, Harington), (Manning and Macpherson 1961)

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
28	Greater Snow Geese, approximately 800, nesting in this unit. Snow Geese are also scattered throughout the island. (Barry)
29	Good sized Arctic Char are found in Stanwell Fletcher Lake. (Hunter)
30	This is an important area for sea bird colonies. (Macpherson)
31	Beluga Whale and Narwhal concentration area. (Barry) Barry observed 1,450 Beluga Whales here in 1958.
32	Landlocked Arctic Char are abundant in Fisher Lake. (Macpherson)
33	Very large concentrations of Beluga Whales are found in Young Bay, and as far along the coast as Savage Point. (Macpherson) Beluga Whales by the dozen in August 1962 in Young Bay. (Christie)
34	Muskoxen range year round in this unit, 25+ in number. (Barry)
35	Arctic Char migrate up the Dolphin River to spawn. (Barry, Macpherson)
36	This is a suspected Muskoxen winter range. Six skeletons were found here in 1970, and all were mature bulls. Their condition indicated that they died in different years. (Kerr)
37	Arctic Char spawn in the lake and river systems in this unit. (Barry)

UNIT NUMBER	DESCRIPTION
38	Approximately 40 Muskoxen were reported here in 1959. (Thorsteinsson)
39	Arctic Char are found in lakes and rivers in this general area. (Thorsteinsson)
40	A few Muskoxen have been observed in the Glenelg Bay region. (Thorsteinsson)
41	Peregrine Falcons nest in this general area, although no specific nesting locations are pinpointed. According to Thorsteinsson this is the only Peregrine Falcon nesting record north of Viscount Melville Sound. Tener (1963) reports that Peregrine Falcons were suspected to be nesting in the Winter Harbour and other areas on the Dundas Peninsula in 1961.
42	Brant nesting, approximately 500 in number. (Barry)
43	Muskoxen are found on the west side of Hecla and Griper Bay. (Barry, Tener). The total population for Melville Island was estimated to be 1,000 in 1961. (Tener, 1963)
44	Muskoxen have been reported on the south eastern portion of Melville Island, however no detailed information is available. (Jonkel)
45	Concentrations of Muskoxen are found on the lowlands along the Mecham River all year around. This area should be considered critical. (Harrington)
46	A number of caribou are found on Melville Island. (Thorsteinsson) No further information.

UNIT NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

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| 47 | Muskoxen are found in this region year round.
(Barry) |
| 48 | Peary Caribou are found on the Sabine Peninsula.
(Kerr) No further information. |

REFERENCES

Personal Communications

- T. W. Barry
C. J. Jonkel (Canadian Wildlife Service)
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- D. Gray University of Alberta
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A. W. Mansfield Canada)
- R. L. Christie
J. W. Kerr (Institute of Sedimentary and
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