

Canadian Wildlife Service
Arctic Ecology Map Series
Critical Wildlife areas

Descriptive report

Davis Strait

DAVIS STRAIT
(Sheet #2083)

This map sheet encompasses a land and sea area of approximately 104,000 square miles. The marine area of Davis Strait comprises the majority of the area. The only Canadian territory included on the map is the tip of the Cumberland Peninsula on Baffin Island. Part of the west coast of Greenland also appears on the map.

The entire area of the Cumberland Peninsula included on this map sheet is very mountainous. The cliffs along the coast are ideal locations for seabird colonies. Thus, Thick-billed Murres and Fulmars numbering in the hundreds of thousands of breeding pairs are the chief wildlife species represented on this map sheet.

Inland, the Barren Ground Caribou distribution is scattered among the suitably vegetated valleys.

The complex indented coast is favored by Ringed and Bearded Seals. On such a coast, fast ice remains longer than on a simple coast with the result that newborn Seals have a better chance of surviving the critical suckling period. The abundance of Seals attracts the predatory Polar Bear to the area. Walrus and Beluga Whales occur along the coast during the summer.

An area in the northern part of Davis Strait extending into Baffin Bay remains open during the winter. This area,

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known as the "North Water" is wintering area for sea mammals including Walrus, Narwhal, Beluga Whales and Bowhead Whales.

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

UNIT NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

- 1 This unit describes the northern part of Davis Strait. This area together with much of Baffin Bay is known as the "North Water" and has large areas of open water year round. It is therefore an important wintering area for sea mammals, including Belugas, Narwhals, Bowhead Whales and Walrus. Polar Bears are thought to hunt the fringes of the open water areas (Jonkel).

- 2 This unit describes the pattern of Harp Seal migrations from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to the coast of Greenland and the Arctic Archipelago. Hundreds of thousands of Harp Seals move into Davis Strait in May and June. The Seals are deflected by ice to the open water areas of South Western Greenland, and the bulk of the Seal population arrives here in mid-June. As the ice retreats later in the summer, the Seals move northward and westward, and penetrate into Lancaster and Jones Sounds. The movement back to the south begins in September and by early November, the Seals have passed back through this area (Mansfield, 1967).

- 3 Kumlien reported a large Thick-billed Murre colony at this point in 1879. The population of birds in the colony is thought to number in the tens of thousands of breeding pairs (Tuck, 1970).

Beluga Whales are common in Cumberland Sound (Bruemmer). Ringed Seal pups move into this area in the summer (Mansfield). An annual harvest quota of 16,000 pounds of Arctic Char has been set for Cumberland Sound (Hunter).

- 4 Walrus are reported to be summer inhabitants of this general area. No further information. (Mansfield, 1959)

UNIT NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

- 5 Hoare Bay, and its associated Fiords are used in April and May by Ringed Seals as a pupping area (Anders, 1968; Jonkel).
- 6 Walrus are summer inhabitants of this area (Mansfield, 1959).
- 7 A large Thick-billed Murre colony numbering in the tens of thousands of breeding pairs is located here (Tuck, 1970).
- 8 Padlie Island, in Exeter Sound is the site of Fulmar and Thick-Billed Murre colonies (Tuck, 1960; 1970).
- 9 This is an excellent area for Ringed and Bearded Seals. The unit describes the winter distribution of the Ringed Seal and corresponds therefore with the winter hunting range of hundreds of Polar Bear. Female Polar Bears move inland in the spring to den (Mansfield). There is thought to be a movement of young Ringed Seals into Cumberland Sound from this area (Mansfield).
- 10 This unit describes the location of a large Thick-Billed Murre colony numbering in the hundreds of thousands of breeding pairs (Tuck, 1970; Jackson).
- 11 The Cape Searle Fulmar colony is thought to be one of the largest in the world (Macpherson, Bruemmer, Tuck, 1970). The population has been estimated in the range of hundreds of thousands of breeding pairs (Tuck, 1970).
- 12 Walrus are summer inhabitants of this area (Mansfield, 1959).

REFERENCES

Personal Communications

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