

HAZEN BAY

NARRATIVE REPORTS

JANUARY - DECEMBER 1952

BRANCH OF WILDLIFE REFUGES

NARRATIVE REPORT

ROUTING SLIP

DATE March 17, 1953

~~Mr. Sawyer~~ \_\_\_\_\_

~~Mr. Dumont~~ PAD

~~Mr. Kraumes~~ \_\_\_\_\_

~~Miss Baum~~ \_\_\_\_\_

Section of Operations:

~~Mr. Ball~~ \_\_\_\_\_

~~Mr. Murray~~ RM

~~Mr. Regan~~ WJR

Section of Habitat Improvement:

~~Mr. Griffith~~ DDG

~~Mr. [unclear]~~ \_\_\_\_\_

~~Dr. Bourn~~ WBR

~~Mr. Stiles~~ \_\_\_\_\_

Section of Land Management:

~~Mr. [unclear]~~ CSA

~~Mr. Davis~~ DDD

Stenographers:

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REFUGE Hazen Bay Refuge

PERIOD September - December 1952

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## REFUGE NARRATIVE REPORT

September--December 1952

HAZEN BAY REFUGE

Marshall, Alaska

## I GENERAL

A. Weather Conditions

In general the weather has been exceedingly mild during this quarter. September was clear and calm. The temperature remained above freezing until the middle of October when the ice began running in the Yukon. By the first of November the shore ice had accumulated several feet wide and had stopped running on the fourteenth. Although the temperature rose above freezing several times during the latter part of November the ice had reached 8" in thickness by December 6 and the mail planes began landing on the river. On December 22 the ice measured 24".

Very little snow fell during the quarter. The tundra remained free of snow throughout December. The mildness of the winter caused the water levels to remain higher by several feet than last year at the same time.

No fires occurred during the quarter.

## II WILDLIFE

A. Migratory Birds

The fall migration from the coastal areas inland along the Yukon was the opposite of last years migration. The areas which were heavily populated last fall had very few birds in them this year and those that contained almost none last fall were alive with birds this year. The birds come inland to the higher grounds to feed on the cranberries and blueberries which are found by the ton over the higher tundra usually. This years berry crop was much less than that of last year and in some areas as in Marshall was practically non-existent. The reason for the failure of the berry crop is unknown, however, the berries were most plentiful on the highest ground which may indicate that the rainfall and drainage had much to do with it.

In the Marshall area, the Chupilinuk flats which cover an area of approximately 100 square miles and which were literally alive with waterfowl in the fall of 1951, were surveyed by plane in September and found to be barren of waterfowl of any kind. Water levels appeared to be low.

Hunting pressure was light in this area simply because the difficulties involved in finding birds were too much for the hunters. During the opening day and following week most of the men were out much of the time but from the second week on very little hunting was done by anyone.

The last Cackling goose was seen on October 14 although on October 30 two geese were reported seen on the river by villagers. Two ducks thought to be Pintails were seen on the river above Marshall on November 8 and a large flight of ducks, species unknown, was seen by an airlines pilot on the lower Kuskokwim on December 20.

#### B. Upland Game Birds

##### 1.) Grouse

The population of spruce grouse and ruffed grouse was less than during the same quarter in 1951. The gravel beaches along the river which are the only sources of grit were checked periodically during the fall. One half mile of beach ten miles below Ichogamuit was visited three times and only one group of three spruce grouse was seen. Many grouse were taken from this stretch of beach last year. No explanation was apparent for this decrease over last year. Food supplies appeared to be normal.

##### 2.) Willow Ptarmigan

Ptarmigan arrived on the Yukon about the first of October in scattered flocks. The fall moult was 3/4 completed by this time. By the middle of December the birds were very common in the willows along the small tundra streams. On December 28 a flock estimated to be 1000 to 1500 birds descended on the willows behind Marshall and literally covered the brush. Unlike last winter the birds are more common on the higher grounds than on the low densely covered flat lands south of the Yukon river. In 1952 it was not until late February that the ptarmigan appeared in any numbers north of the Yukon. This is probably due to the open mild winter which we have had so far. Food and cover are adequate.

#### C. Big Game Animals

No report this quarter.

#### D. Fur Animals

The quantity of fur sold in Marshall this fall is half that of last year. The Marshall Trading Company took in 67 mink and 13 otter last year while this season only 23 mink and 6 otter were purchased from the trappers. While these figures do not represent the entire catch for the village they do indicate the trend. The weather was very mild during the trapping season and conditions on the trap lines should have been ideal. Mink and Otter in this area are definitely on a downward trend.

### 1) Muskrats

Muskrats appear to be more numerous this year than last. Reports from throughout the area indicate a rather widespread increase. More pushups were found on Onglukpuk Lake in December than last year--21 as compared to 16. On December 15 ice had formed to a depth of 20". The drop in water level which occurs shortly after freeze-up had not reached the low of past years. This plus the slow late freeze-up is thought to have increased the chances of survival considerably, particularly for those individuals in smaller lakes and sloughs. Trapping conditions this fall season have been excellent although this is not apparent in the fall catch of 'rats. The native trapper is not interested in trapping 'rats inspite of the fact that other fur is scarce and trapping conditions good. Less 'rats have been taken this year than last. We hope, but doubt, that the weather continues mild throughout the winter and that these 'rats can be "shot" in the spring.

### 2.) Fox

No apparent change in population over last year. Very few are taken.

### 3.) Weazel

Weazel are more abundant this year as evident from the number of tracks in the snow.

### 4.) Beaver

Five new beaver houses have been built within five miles of the refuge headquarters where there were only two last year. Wilson Creek which had two houses last year now has five and Wahpoo Creek which had none now has two. The closed season has caused the animal to deplete much of the willow stands on the upper drainages of the south fork of the Andreaafski, Chuilinuk and Nigithluk Rivers and has produced a migration downstream nearer the Yukon. Several small streams such as Wilson and Wapoo have beaver on them which did not have a few years back. The closer the beaver move to the Yukon the more accessible they become to the trapper--the distance the trapper must travel is less and the trapping conditions become less difficult. The depth of the snow is considerably less on the Yukon than in the hills and the snow is less packed and more easily removed than that in the hills. While the greater part of the beaver population was in the hills some 50 miles from the Yukon the distance and trapping conditions protected it better than any law. Since this migration that protection has been removed and the beaver is at the mercy of the trapper.

### E. Fish

Fishing was very poor. The runs of Northern Pike which usually occur during October and November were very small. The manager was able to take 23 in five hours on November 1st. Ordinarily it is nothing to take 100-150 pike in the same length of time. This fish is dog food. A few are eaten by the people but they consider it poor food and feed it to the dogs. The Northern Pike fills in between the salmon runs and the Ling cod runs and is important only during this time. However, a month is a long time for a dog to eat little or nothing, on second thought not so long here.

The lamprey runs were also very small. Last year many tons of lamprey were dipped from the Yukon while this year there was much less than a ton taken by the entire village. It appeared as though the run had spread over the entire channel instead of concentrating along the banks and for this reason could not be located.

Ling cod were taken regularly from the traps. An average trap 4'x6'x10' yields from 50 to 75 ling cod in two days. This fish is important as native food as well as dog food. The liver is considered a very fine food. The fish is eaten head, guts, fins and all.

The blackfish take has been normal while there have been no runs of whitefish or chee as yet this season.

### III REFUGE DEVELOPMENT

No report this quarter

### IV ECONOMIC USE OF THE REFUGE

The following table shows the estimated harvest of wildlife and fish which occurs in and around the refuge. The population involved is 1216 people 205 of whom do the hunting, fishing and trapping. The figures are not complete but are the best possible estimates. The village chief, trader and as many men as possible were interviewed with varying results. The fur prices are the average paid.

## ESTIMATED ANNUAL WILDLIFE HARVEST OF AREA IN AND NEAR REFUGE

White fox	18	@ \$10.00	\$ 180.00
red fox	19	@ \$ 3.00	\$ 57.00
Mink	1724	@ \$30.00	\$51,720.00
Otter	5	@ \$22.00	\$ 110.00
Weasel	36	@ \$ 1.50	\$ 54.00
Muskrat	10,500	@ \$ 1.50	\$15,750.00
			<u>\$67,871.00</u>

Arctic Hare	20
Seal (hair)	1666
Walrus	30
Beluga	36

Ptarmigan	605
Geese	1265
Ducks	659

Salmon	53,800 fish
Whitefish	104,200 pounds
Tom Cod	27,000 "
Northern Pike	few
Blackfish	45,000 "
Needlefish	154,000 "

180 tons of fish other than salmon

VI PUBLIC RELATIONS

A. Refuge Visitors:

W. Achernecht	Fish and Wildlife Service	2 days
J. Ball	" " " "	"
D. Spencer	" " " "	"

B. Refuge Participation

No report this quarter

C. Refuge Violators

None

December 31, 1952

*Paul Adams*  
 Submitted by: Paul Adams  
 Refuge Mgr.

Approved By:  
*David H. Spencer*  
 Refuge Supervisor

Approved By: