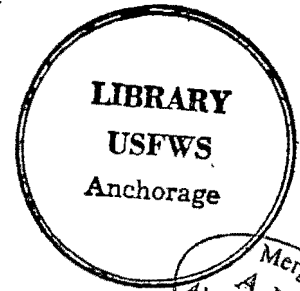


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~~FINAL REPORT,~~  
ALEUTIAN CANADA GOOSE SURVEY  
AT NIZKI AND ALAID ISLANDS,  
NEAR ISLANDS GROUP,  
ALEUTIAN ISLANDS  
- - SPRING 1983



by

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Near Islands Group  
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## ALEUTIAN CANADA GOOSE SURVEY AT NIZKI ISLAND, SPRING 1983

### OBJECTIVES

Jay E. Hamernick, Merlin S. ("Elzy") Eltzroth, and I established a tent camp near the east end of Nizki Island on 23 May 1983 after traveling to the island from Adak via the charter vessel "Western Pacific". The camp was maintained through the afternoon of 3 June 1983 to allow census of the entire migratory bird resource on the island and documentation of returning Aleutian Canada geese transplanted to the island in 1981 and Agattu in 1982. Records were kept of all geese observed, the numbers on colored leg bands whenever possible, locations used by the birds and any nesting activity.

### ISLAND DESCRIPTION

Nizki Island contains a planar area of 691 ha (1707 acres), measures 4.8 km (3.0 mi) long by 1.6 km (1.0 mi) wide and has an average shoreline of 19.0 km (11.8 mi). Its location (52°44'10"N, 175°59'00"E) is between Shemya Island to the east and Alaid Island to the west in the Semichi Islands group near the western end of the Aleutian Islands, Alaska (Fig.1). Nizki is joined to Alaid Island by a 450 m (1500 ft.) sand spit. Some features were named by John L. Trapp in 1975 and 1976. We named several others (Fig.2)..

### PROCEDURES

The entire coastline of Nizki was covered by foot, all inland water bodies were checked several times, most inland water bodies of Alaid Island were visited once and the east end and a portion of the south shore of Alaid Island was visited over a ten day period (Figs. 3-8). We were completely weathered in on 27 May due to strong winds, cool temperatures and snow mixed with rain and on 1 June due to dense fog (Table 1). Alaid Island was visited 29 and 31 May and 2 June (Fig. 9).

### RESULTS

Introduced Arctic foxes were eliminated from Nizki and Alaid islands in the late 1970's. Due to the unavailability of a support vessel, mainland reared Aleutian Canada geese were transplanted from an aircraft at nearby Shemya Air Force Base to "Camp Cove" at Nizki by inflatable boats on 15 August 1981. Regional Refuge Supervisor (S) Larry Calvert and Refuge Manager (AMNWR) John L. Martin visited Nizki briefly on 11 May and Assistant Manager (AIU) Evan V. ("Van") Klett and Refuge Volunteer Don Dragoo spent 22 May to 26 May 1982 there searching for returning geese. Thirteen banded and one unbanded geese were observed during those visits. This year no geese were at the release site when we landed late in the afternoon of 23 May, but birds were observed later that evening. Daily accounts of all observations follow:

- 23 May - A flock of nine Aleutian Canada geese passed over the bluff south of Camp (Fig. 3) at 2125 hours and disappeared to the south.
- 24 May - Two geese were on the Camp Cove beach at 0950 hours. Their blue leg band numbers were 728 and 734. All shoreline areas south of Camp Cove and west to Pinnacle Beach (Fig. 1) and inland areas from Eider Lake to Duck Pond were checked for geese with negative results, however, we located a single Aleutian Canada goose with blue band number 731 on the beach at the Eider Lake stream outlet at 1615 hours. While returning from a check of beaches northeast of Camp Cove, eight geese were observed flying south through Shemya Pass. The birds were kept under observation until they eventually turned west toward camp cove and disappeared behind some cliffs. The birds were then relocated on the relatively flat rock shelf adjacent to the beach and cliff at the northeast end of camp cove. All were closely approached, revealing blue band numbers 728, 734, and A92. The other five birds were unbanded. The only bird we knew of that wasn't present at that location was 731 on the north shore. Previously we had assumed that bird was the ninth individual observed on the evening of 23 May.
- 25 May - Goose 731 was located on the rocks in Eider Bay just a few feet from the spot it had been found on 24 May.
- 26 May - Only one pair of geese was observed flying in the vicinity of camp cove and Duck Pond in the morning and late afternoon hours, but they did not land and their bands were not read.
- 27 May - No observations were made due to severe weather conditions
- 28 May - One pair of banded geese and five additional birds that we were unable to check for bands were at Camp Cove in the early morning (0730). The banded pair was 728 and A92, which indicated a possible switch in "bonding".
- 29 May through 3 June - Geese 728 and A92 were observed daily at various times in the vicinity of Duck Pond and Camp Cove. They did not roost at Camp Cove. One other goose was occasionally observed during the same time frame, but its identity could not be ascertained. Goose 731 was once again found on the beach at Eider Cove 2 June in exactly the same spot that it had been found on 24 and 25 May, indicating it had not moved from that site for at least ten days. If it had been at that location prior to 24 May, the ninth bird observed in the evening of 23 May was never identified.

No geese or goose sign was observed outside the Camp Cove, Duck Pond and Eider Cove areas of Nizki Island.

We did receive reports of two Aleutian Canada geese at Shemya Island on 26 May, six at Attu Island 30 May and four at Shemya Island 31 May.

## CONCLUSIONS

Only three geese from the 1981 release at Nizki Island (728, 731 and 734) were found in 1983. Those three birds were among the birds found on the island in May 1982. Although one of the birds was an apparent loner, birds 728 and 734 were found together with other birds until 28 May when 728 and A92 (from the 1982 Buldir-Agattu transplant) were found alone together at Camp Cove for the first time. They remained together until our departure from Nizki at 1700 on 3 June 1983. We observed no indication of nesting activity during our investigations. Data on each individual is shown in Table 2.

Some interesting questions develop when one attempts to understand why goose 731 remained in one small area throughout our 11 day visit. It is also interesting to contemplate the process whereby five unbanded birds were lured to Nizki by bird A92 upon its return to the Near Islands from California.

TABLE I. WEATHER OBSERVATIONS AT CAMP COVE, NIZKI ISLAND,  
24 MAY - 3 JUNE 1983

<u>Date</u>	<u>Low Temp.</u>	<u>High Temp.</u>	<u>Additional Information</u>
5/24	37	50	Wind NE 15-25 mph, Overnight rain, Day partly cloudy.
5/25	37	53	Wind NW 5-15 mph, Overnight Shower, Day mostly sunny.
5/26	39	59	Wind SW 10 mph, Overnight Showers, AM cloudy w. occ. showers, pm partly cloudy becoming cloudy w. occ. shower by eve.
5/27	36	42	Wind SE 15-35 mph, Rain mixed with snow began before sunrise and continued all day. Wind shift to NW by 1400.
5/28	37	49	Winds NW 20, Partly cloudy, few early AM snow showers.
5/29	35	46	Wind NW 15, gusting to 25 by PM, AM few showers, PM continued overcast.
5/30	38	51	Wind NW 15, Overcast all day.
5/31	37	54	Wind W-SW 15, Overcast all day. Drizzle began after noon. Wind shift to SE by late afternoon. Evening rain.
6/1	39	55	Wind SW 5-10, Predawn rain. Dense fog all day, wind gust to 14 afternoon.
6/2	39	54	Wind SE 5-15, Overcast and fog all day, light drizzle in afternoon, large swell in Camp Cove.
6/3	40	-	Wind SE 5, Overcast, AM seas very rough fm SE, some moderation by late afternoon.

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TABLE 2. BANDED ALEUTIAN CANADA GEESE OBSERVED AT NIZKI ISLAND 23 MAY -  
3 JUNE 1983

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<u>BLUE BAND NUMBER</u>	<u>RELEASE SITE</u>	<u>RELEASE DATE</u>	<u>SEX</u>	<u>HATCHING YEAR</u>	<u>SOURCE</u>	<u>OBS. ON WINTER GROUNDS</u>
728	Nizki	8/16/81	M	80	Patuxent	None
731	Nizki	8/16/81	M	80	Patuxent	None
734	Nizki	8/16/81	M	80	Patuxent	None
A92	Agattu	7/31/82	F	82	Buldir	20*

\*First observed at Colusa, CA, 11 NOV 1982 and observed for the last time  
at Crescent City, CA, on 14 April 1983.

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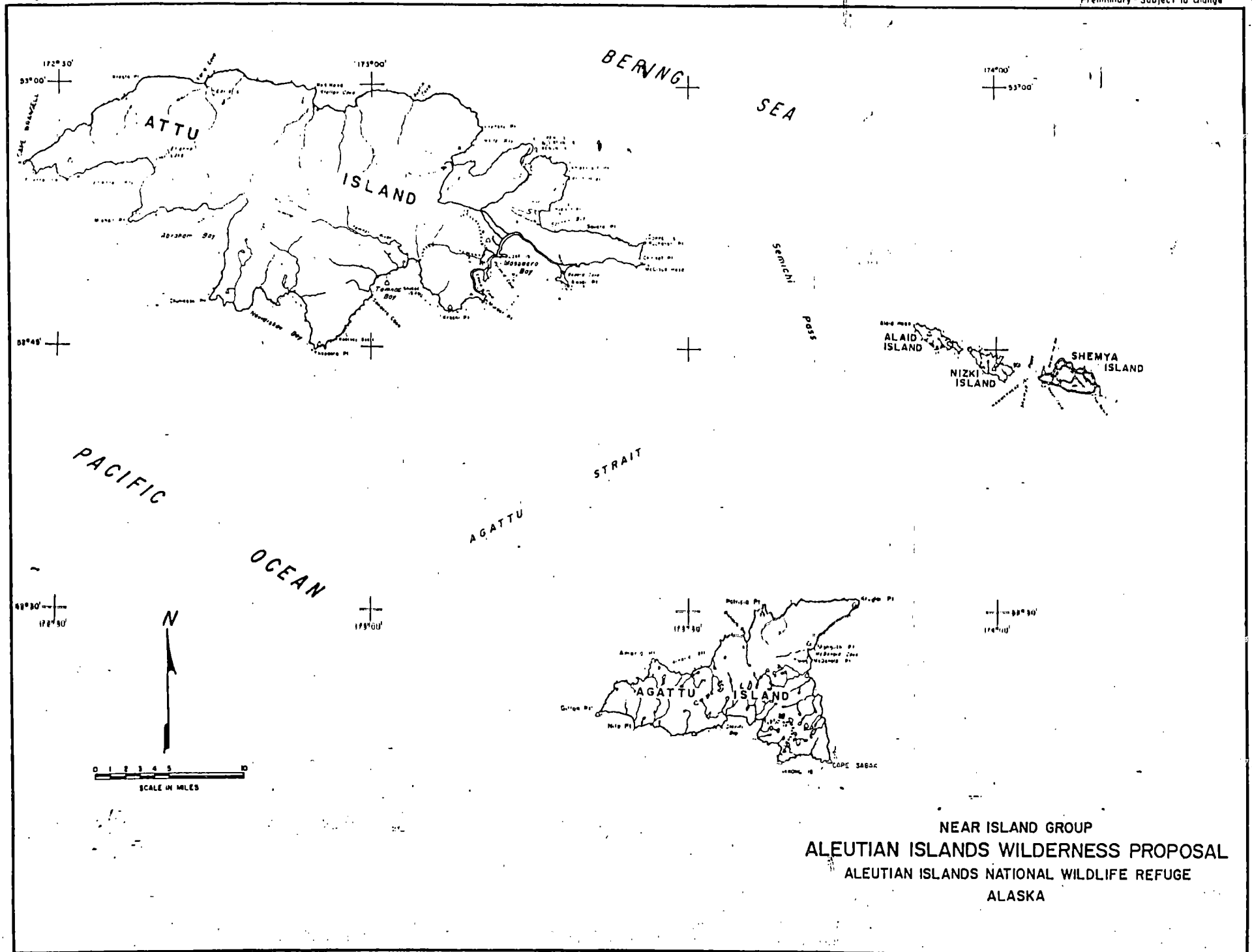
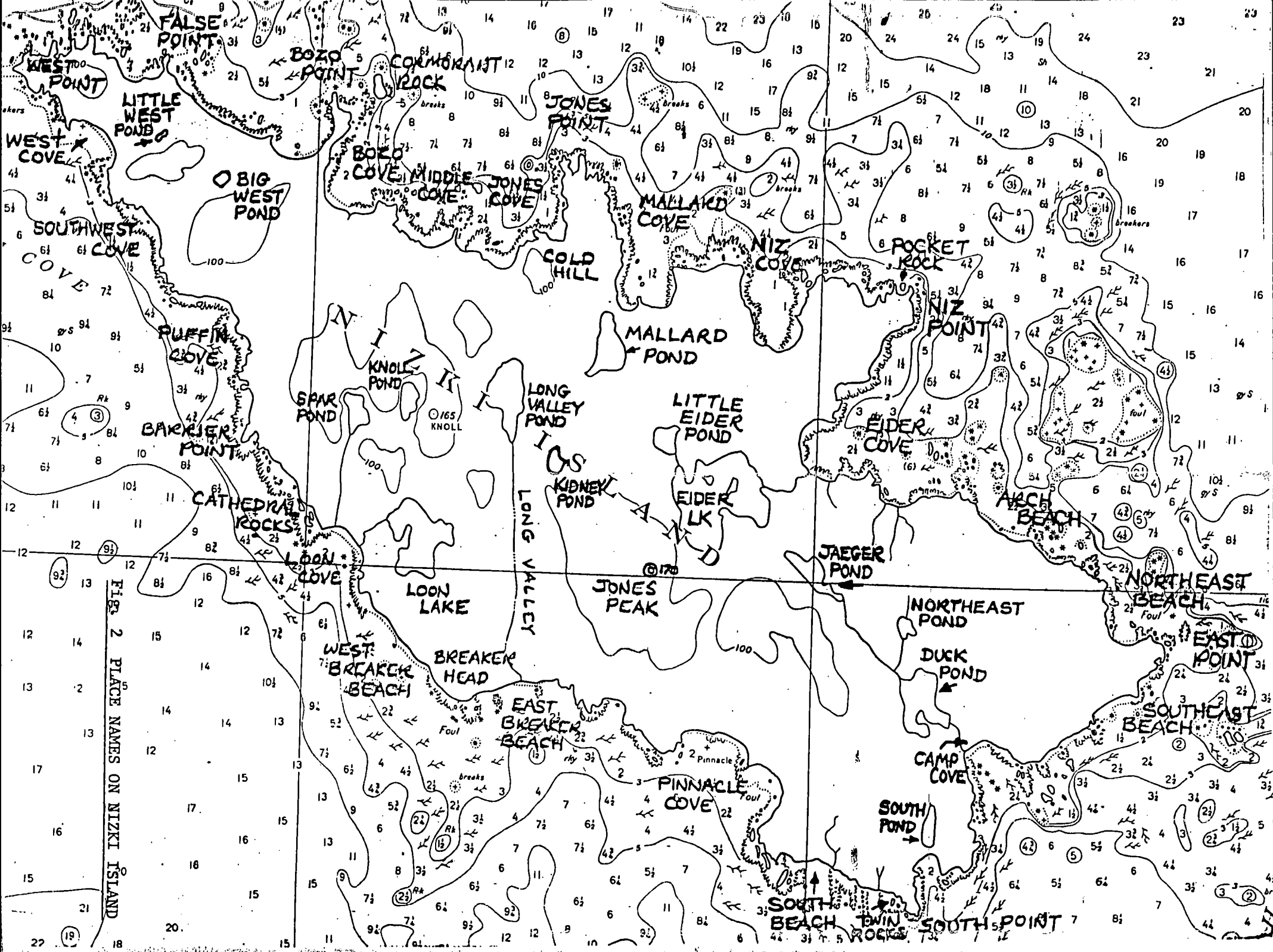


Fig. 1 NEAR ISLANDS GROUP





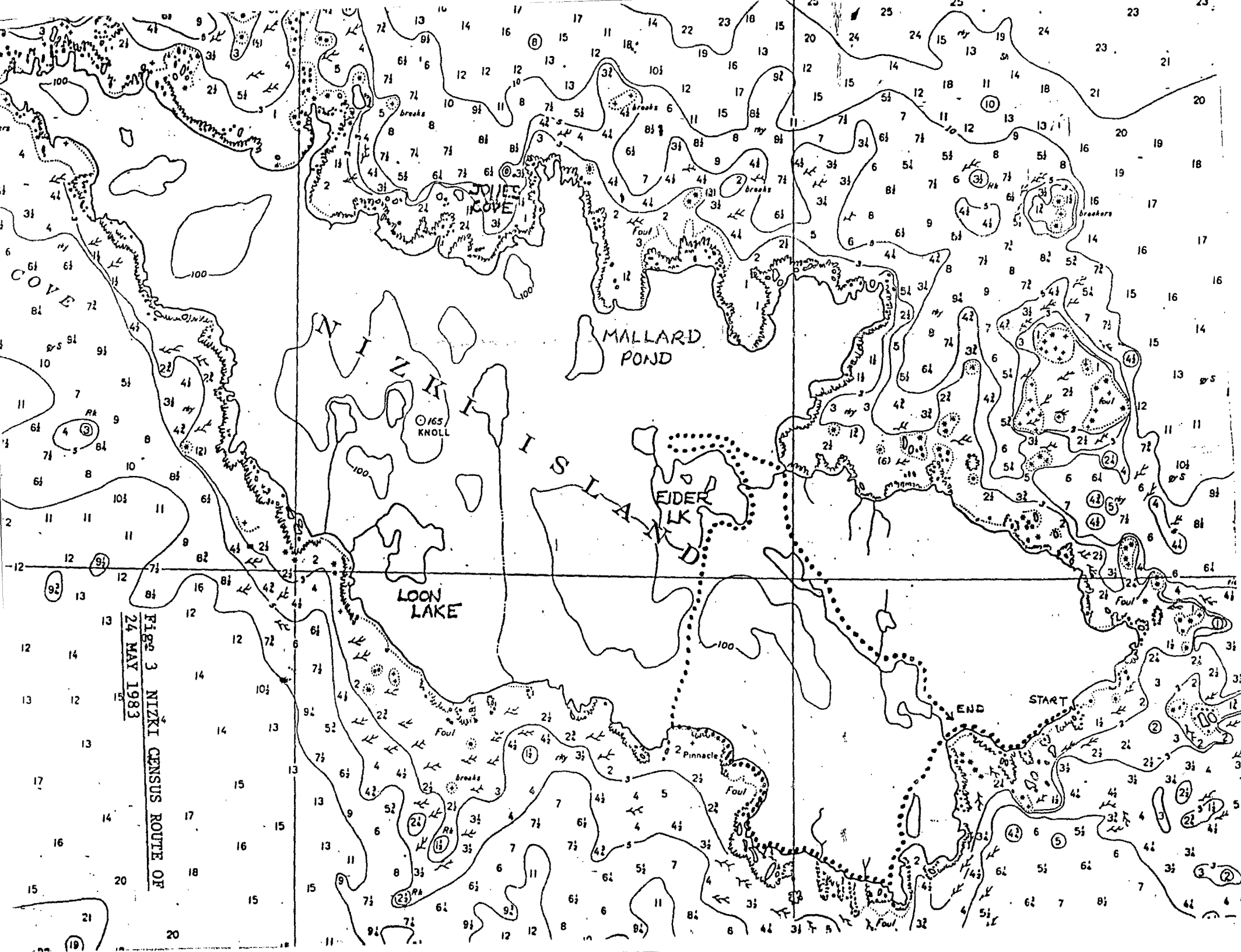


FIG. 3 NIZKI CENSUS ROUTE OF  
24 MAY 1983

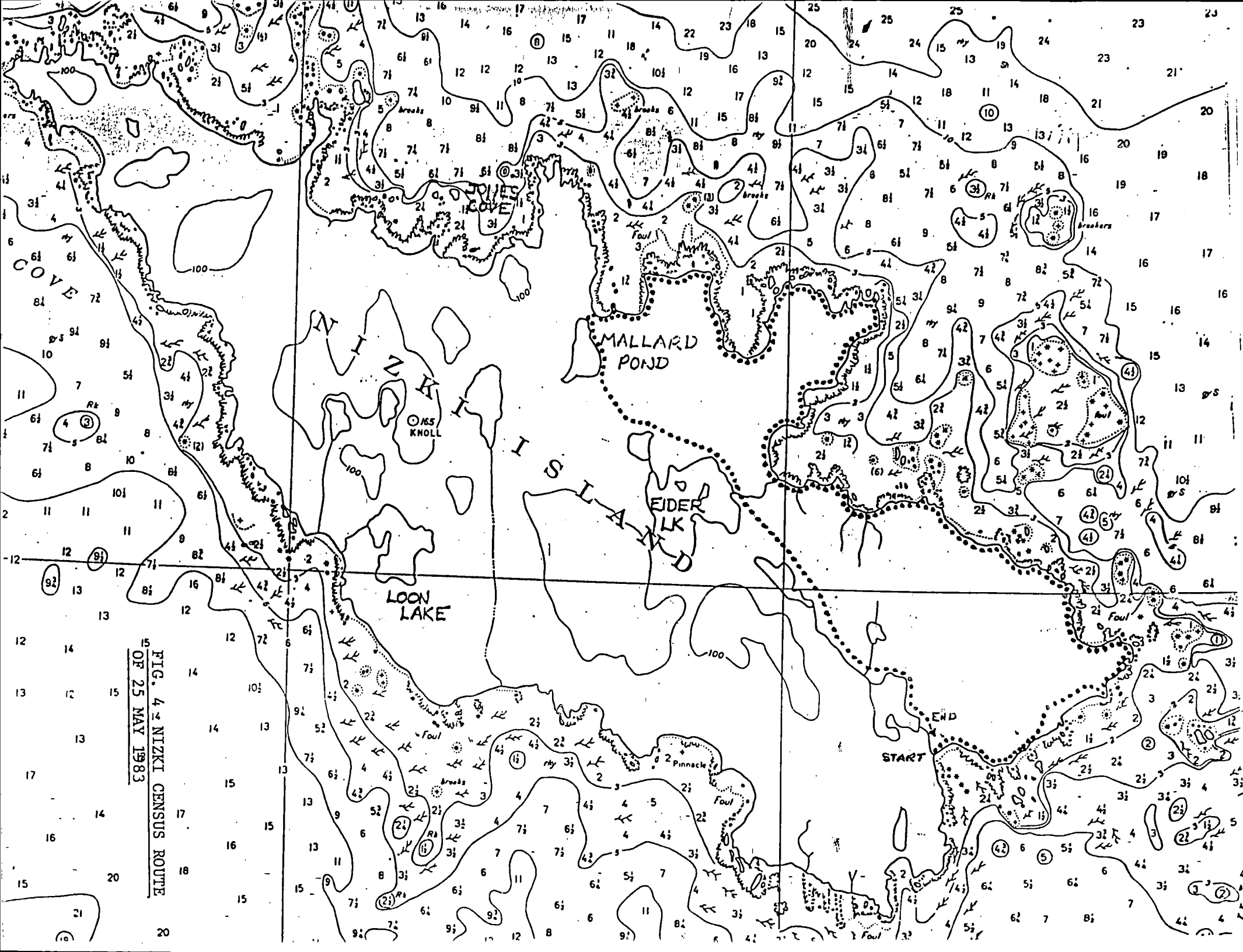


FIG. 4 - NIZKI CENSUS ROUTE  
OF 25 MAY 1983

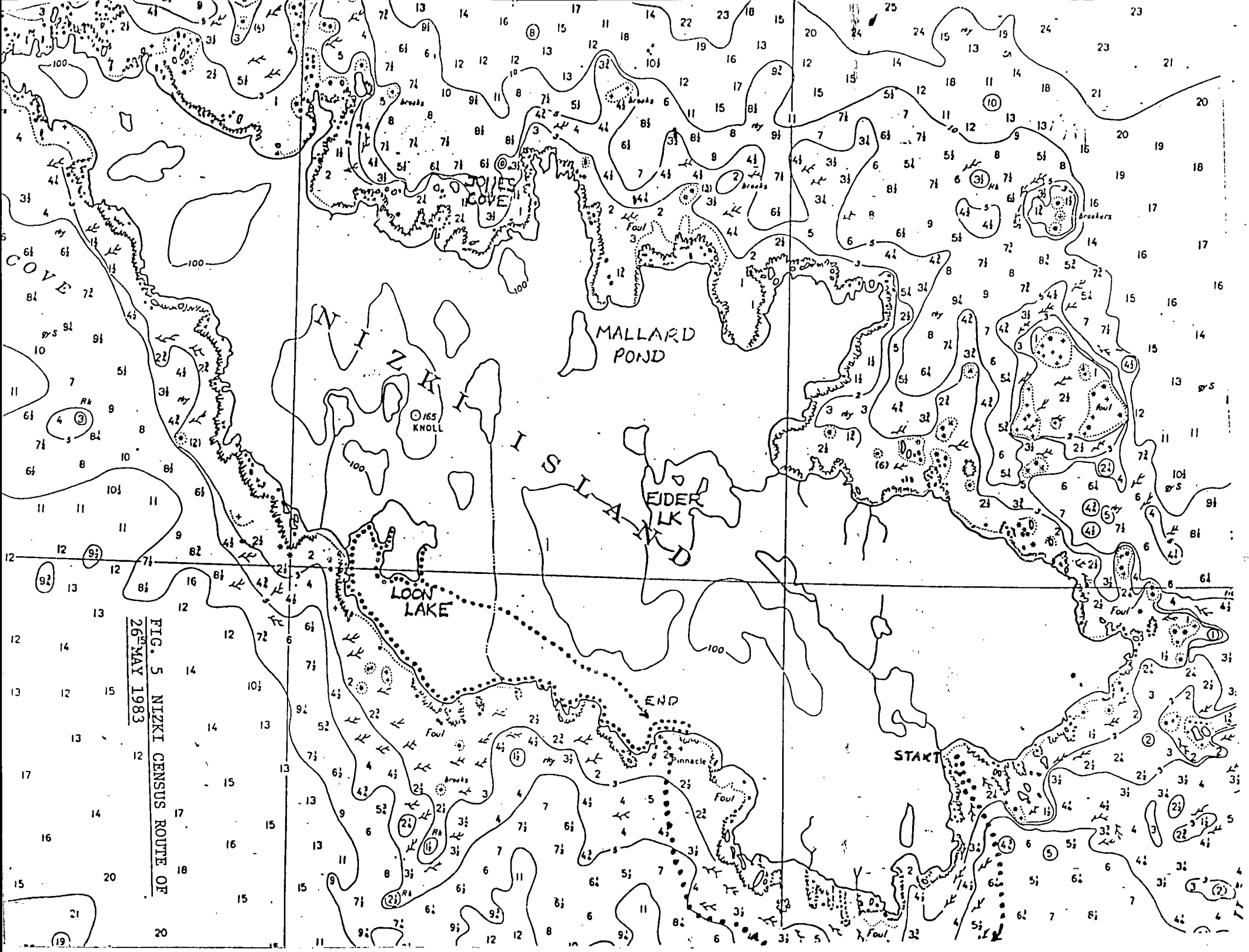


FIG. 5 NIZKI CENSUS ROUTE OF  
 26<sup>th</sup> MAY 1983

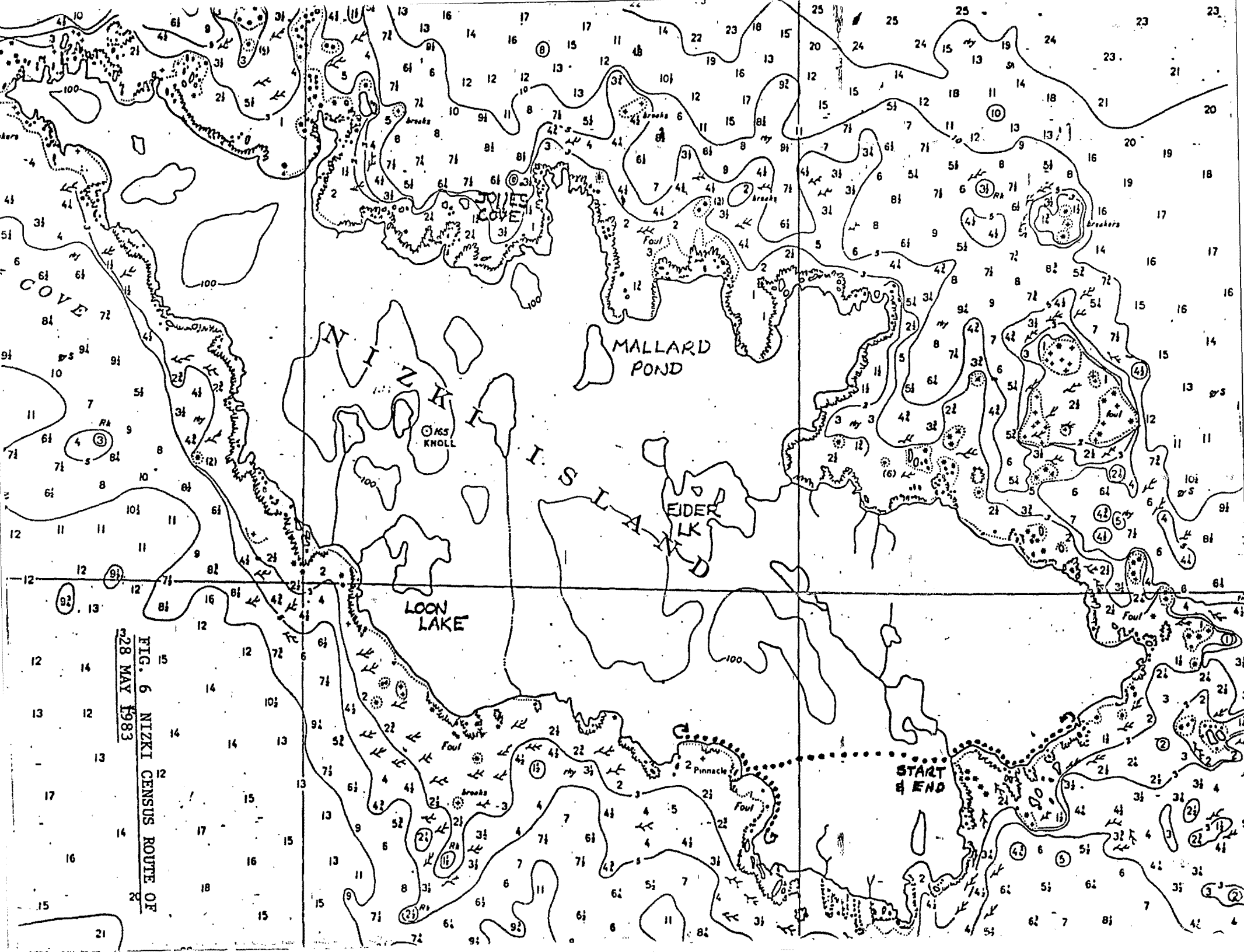


FIG. 6 NIZKI CENSUS ROUTE OF  
28 MAY 1983

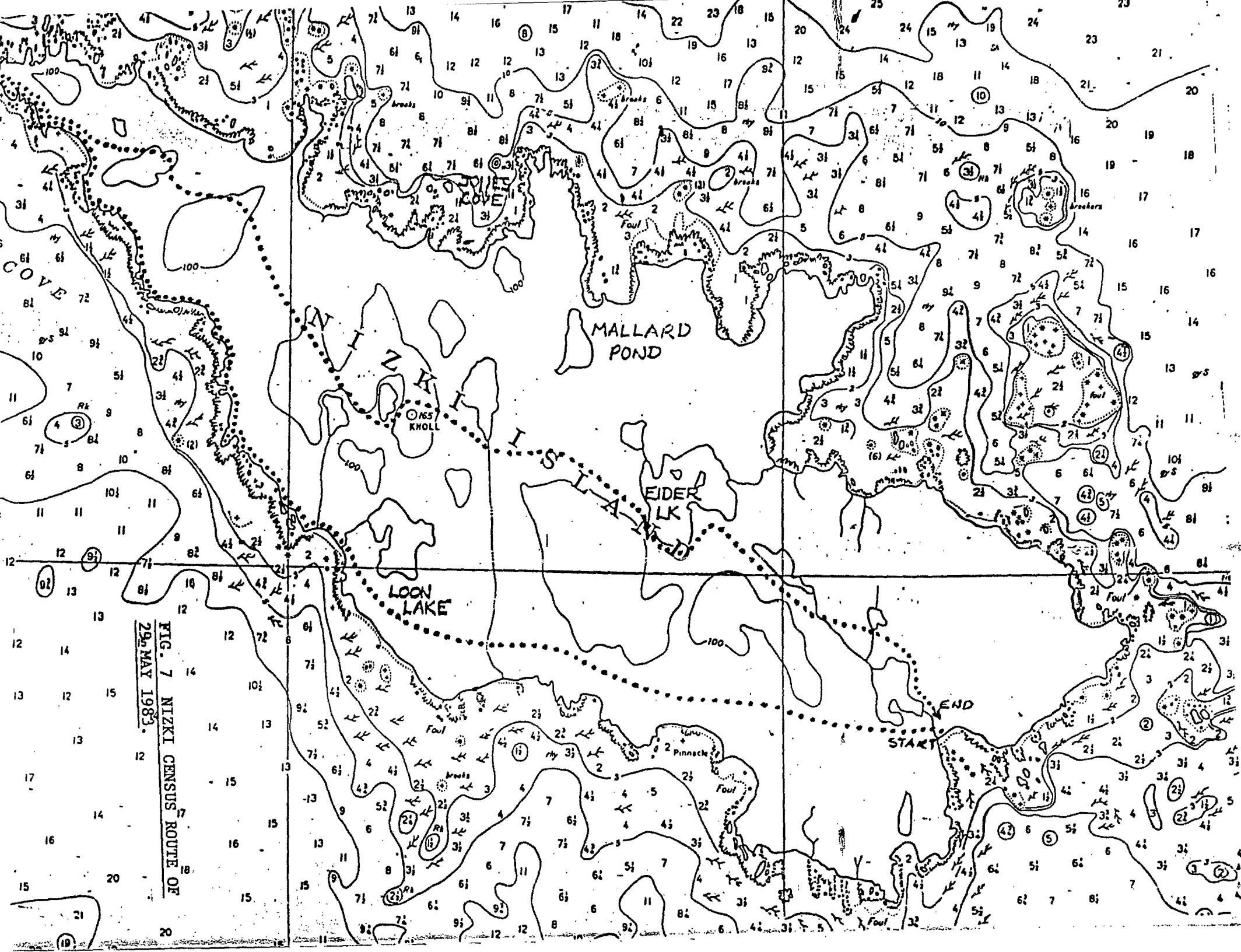


FIG. 7 NIZKI CENSUS ROUTE OF  
 29 MAY 1983.

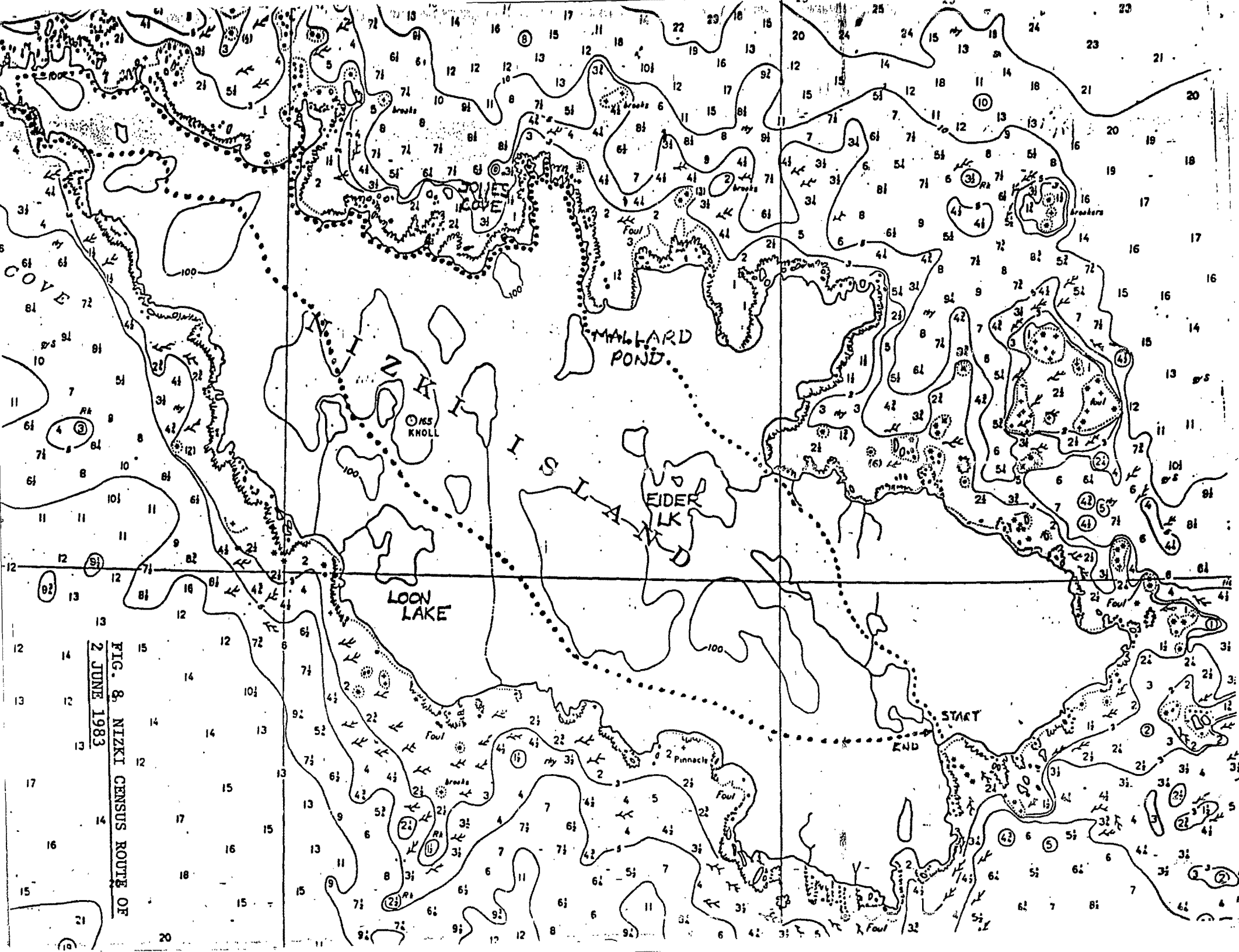


FIG. 8. NIZKI CENSUS ROUTE OF  
2 JUNE 1983

