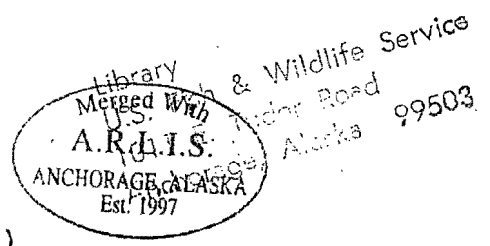


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ALEUTIAN CANADA GOOSE SURVEY  
AT ALAID AND NIZKI ISLANDS,  
NEAR ISLAND GROUP,  
ALEUTIAN ISLANDS, ALASKA  
SPRING 1984



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ALEUTIAN CANADA GOOSE SURVEY AT ALAID AND NIZKI ISLANDS  
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Arctic foxes, introduced to Alaid and Nizki islands in 1911, 1920 and 1935, were removed from the two islands in 1975 and 1976 by means of shooting and trapping (Frank and Trapp 1975). Aleutian Canada geese raised at Jamestown, North Dakota and Laurel, Maryland were liberated at Camp Cove near the east end of Nizki Island (Fig. 1) on 16 August 1981. Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge personnel visited Nizki and Alaid islands in 1982 (Klett 1982) and in 1983 (Zeillemaker 1983) to document the presence of any transplanted and released geese. The 1984 survey was conducted to further record returning geese and determine if breeding was occurring on one or both islands. On the evening of 26 May 1984 the authors arrived at the eastern end of Alaid Island where a tent camp was established (Fig. 2). Transportation to the island was provided by the chartered Fishing Vessel (F/V) Vestfjord. Weather conditions during the survey allowed field activity on all but one day (Table 1). The survey was conducted concurrently with thorough migratory bird investigations on both islands and near-shore waters.

METHODS

Joined by a 450-m (1,500-ft) sand spit, 594-ha (1,468-acre) Alaid Island and 691-ha (1,707-acre) Nizki Island are of small enough size to allow thorough coverage by foot in a few days time. During this 10-day project, the interior and shoreline of each island were thoroughly covered in 3 to 4 days each (Figs. 3 and 4), with numerous additional visits to areas of observed Aleutian Canada goose use. The date, time, location, habitat, number of birds and observed leg bands were recorded for each encounter with geese. Evidence of grazing by geese was also recorded whenever encountered. The observers were restricted to their tent on 1 June due to gusting northwest winds and continuous rain.

OBSERVATIONS

The following observations were recorded (all times are Bering Daylight Savings Time):

- 27 May, 1330 hours -- one bird, north shore of Alaid northeast of North Lake (east of Cormorant Cape), flew toward the northwest along north facing slopes and sea cliffs; no bands observed due to brevity of observation and position of bird slightly below observers.
- 28 May, 0830 hours -- two birds, passed directly over camp while flying over sand spit between Alaid and Nizki; vocalizations heard from inside tent.

29 May, 1100 hours -- one bird, along the Jeep Trail on Alaid, flew east toward sand spit and Nizki; no bands observed due to brevity of observation.

1250 hours -- one bird, flew over ridge south of Transect Lake on Alaid, moved westwardly toward southwest shore, then followed shoreline northeasterly to the vicinity of The Pinnacle where encountering the birds reported below and landing on the tundra inland from Ole Head; no bands observed due to distance.

1300 hours -- two birds, airborne inland from Ole Head on Alaid, wheeled around and landed on the tundra where joined by the bird recorded at 1250 hours; distance too great to allow detection of bands.

1500 hours -- one bird, flew southeasterly along western portion of Long Beach southeast of The Pinnacle on Alaid, perhaps the same bird observed at 1250 hours; metal band observed on left leg as bird passed overhead. No color band was observed.

30 May, 1330 hours -- one bird, stood on ridge running toward south shore of Nizki from Jack Hill near west end of island, unable to see legs due to grass; was flushed prematurely while observers attempted closer approach, then circled above observers several times before disappearing in the fog; no bands observed due to movements of bird and poor lighting conditions.

2015 hours -- one bird, on same ridge as at 1330 hours in vicinity of a small pond west of the ridge; was flushed before observers realized its presence in steady rain, no bands detected.

31 May, 1010 hours -- two birds, flew east toward Nizki over camp at Alaid; no bands observed due to brevity of observation.

1012 hours -- four birds in two pairs, flew west over camp at Alaid toward North Midden or north shore of Lake Sterna; no bands observed due to brevity of observation.

1046 hours -- two birds, flew east over camp at Alaid toward West Midden on Nizki; no bands observed due to brevity of observation.

1128 hours -- two birds, flew toward the west over the south portion of Lake Sterna on Alaid, disappearing behind a ridge west of the lake; were too distant to allow a determination of the presence of bands.

1205 hours -- two birds, flying toward the east over the Jeep Trail on Alaid, then circling observers and landing on the Jeep Trail immediately east of the observers (300-m west

of camp) apparently out of curiosity, probed the soil on green grass (probably *Lashua rubra*) growing along the trail, male with blue band (on right leg) having white numerals "936" and metal band on left leg (transplanted "local" from Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center (NPWRC) stock, Jamestown, North Dakota released at Agattu in 1982); apparent female was unbanded.

1248 hours -- the pair reported above (1205 hours) flew over camp and alighted in the gull colony immediately adjacent to the east side of camp where fed on "beach greens" and approached very close to the tents and observers before departing toward the southwest along the south shore of Alaid.

2 June, 2055 hours -- two birds, circled over North Midden and landed in vicinity of Goose Pond on Alaid; were too distant to allow determination of presence of bands.

3 June, 0902 hours -- two birds, passed west to Alaid over the sand spit and camp; inadequate conditions to allow determination of presence of bands.

1510 hours -- two birds, bird "936" and unbanded mate, on a coastal ridge just east of the Long Valley Stream outlet on Nizki.

1512 hours -- a third bird arrived and attacked bird "936"; original pair then took flight, with the attacking goose attempting to grasp "936's" tail feathers and other extremities as the three flew toward the west above the beach and disappeared in the fog.

1715 hours -- one bird, "936" standing on a south shore ridge immediately to the east of the 1510 hours location at Long Valley on Nizki, sat down while under observation and remained in that position as the observers departed, his mate was suspected to be nearby.

1745 hours -- one bird, ran (or landed) up a south shore ridge on the west side of Long Valley on Nizki, then walked approximately 400-m to the next ridge to the west.

1755 hours -- three birds, the above bird joined by "936" and its mate remained together on the ridge as we departed toward the west at 1800 hours.

4 June, 0903 hours -- at least one bird heard overhead from inside tent at camp on east end of Alaid.

5 June, 2045 hours -- two birds, bird "936" and his unbanded mate, were encountered on the shallows of Mallard Pond outlet on Nizki where they had apparently been feeding on Carex festuca above the shoreline of the pond; after flying up to a knoll east of the pond, they spent several minutes "observing our progress" (allowing us to check for leg

bands) and then flew toward the east and disappeared over the ridge toward Niz Cove along the south shore of Nizki.

6 June, 0813 hours -- two birds, flying east toward Nizki across spit; vocalizations heard from inside tent.

1030 hours -- two birds, flying west over camp at Alaid; vocalizations heard from inside tent.

1300 hours -- two birds, approached observers along the west side of Lake Sterna on Alaid, from the west, circled and landed at a distance of about 35-m, apparently out of "curiosity"; male with blue band on right leg having white numerals "935" and metal on left leg (transplanted "local" from NPWRC stock, Jamestown, North Dakota released at Agattu in 1982), apparent female was unbanded; after a thorough "inspection" of the situation (about 10 minutes) the birds flew over Lake Sterna and landed on a small peninsula in the lake just south of Goose Pond where they remained for about 40 minutes.

1350 hours -- two birds, bird "935" and mate, departed peninsula at Lake Sterna on Alaid, and flew just east of North Pond and proceeded to South Lake, where they landed near the east shore.

1700 hours -- two birds, bird "935" and mate, were still feeding near the east shore of South Lake on Alaid.

7 June, 0832 hours -- two birds, passed directly over camp toward the spit and on to Nizki; vocalizations heard from inside tent.

0908 hours -- two birds, flying west just offshore along the north side of the spit and along Northeast Beach on Alaid, no vocalizations heard; insufficient observation time to determine presence of bands.

In addition to the preceding observations, goose droppings were recorded in the following areas:

Nizki: West Midden (Figs. 1 and 3)  
Jack Hill, south slopes  
Long Valley Stream outlet  
Pinnacle Cove wetlands, including Stilt Pond

Alaid: North Midden (Figs. 2 and 4)  
The Jeep Trail  
Lake Sterna, north shore  
Paradise Canyon  
Transect Lake, shore  
Midden Lake, east and west shores  
South Lake, east and west shores

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Unlike the springs of 1982 and 1983 when all Aleutian Canada goose observations were in the vicinity of Camp Cove on Nizki Island, geese were widespread over the two islands in 1984. Indications were that the birds frequenting the two islands were nearing or at breeding age, as four of the five identifiable birds were paired and even exhibited aggression on occasion. The fifth bird had no mate. Both pairs appeared to wander considerable distances. Most observations were of two pairs of birds with one or possibly two additional individual birds. No flocks of geese were observed as in 1982 and 1983.

The Aleutian Canada goose with band "935" was raised at Patuxent Wildlife Research Center banded as a "local male", and released on Agattu Island on 6 August 1982. It was subsequently observed ten times at Modesto and Crescent City, California from 14 December 1982 to 15 April 1983 and observed 21 times at Modesto and Crescent City, California, from 6 November 1983 to 10 April 1984 (P. Springer, pers. comm.). The bird with band "936" was also raised at Patuxent and was released at Agattu on 6 August 1982 as a "local male". It was subsequently observed 18 times at Modesto and Crescent City, California from 12 December 1982 to 15 April 1983 (P. Springer, pers. comm.). In the Aleutians it was observed at Agattu Island on 26 May 1983. Then it was observed 22 times at Crescent City, Colusa, Modesto and Crescent City, California from 13 November 1983 to 5 April 1984 (P. Springer, pers. comm.).

No Aleutian Canada geese from the 1981 Nizki Island release were detected at Alaid or Nizki in the spring of 1984. The five birds observed closely enough to allow detection of leg bands were either released on Agattu Island in 1982 (2) or were wild unmarked birds (3). Our observations indicated Aleutian Canada geese have accepted much of Alaid and Nizki islands as spring and summer foraging habitat. During this survey the birds were observed at a variety of sites and elevations. Birds were not observed in the highlands of northwestern Alaid or on the eastern half of Nizki. Aleutian Canada geese will likely be found nesting on one or both islands in the near future. Documenting future nesting at Alaid or Nizki may require considerable effort due to the apparent scattered distribution of summering Aleutian Canada geese there. It is important to avoid speculation on potential nesting sites based on "preferred" nesting habitat at Buldir Island. Buldir may have been the last stronghold of the Aleutian Canada goose, but may not be representative of nesting habitat or breeding conditions typically used by the species elsewhere in its former range.

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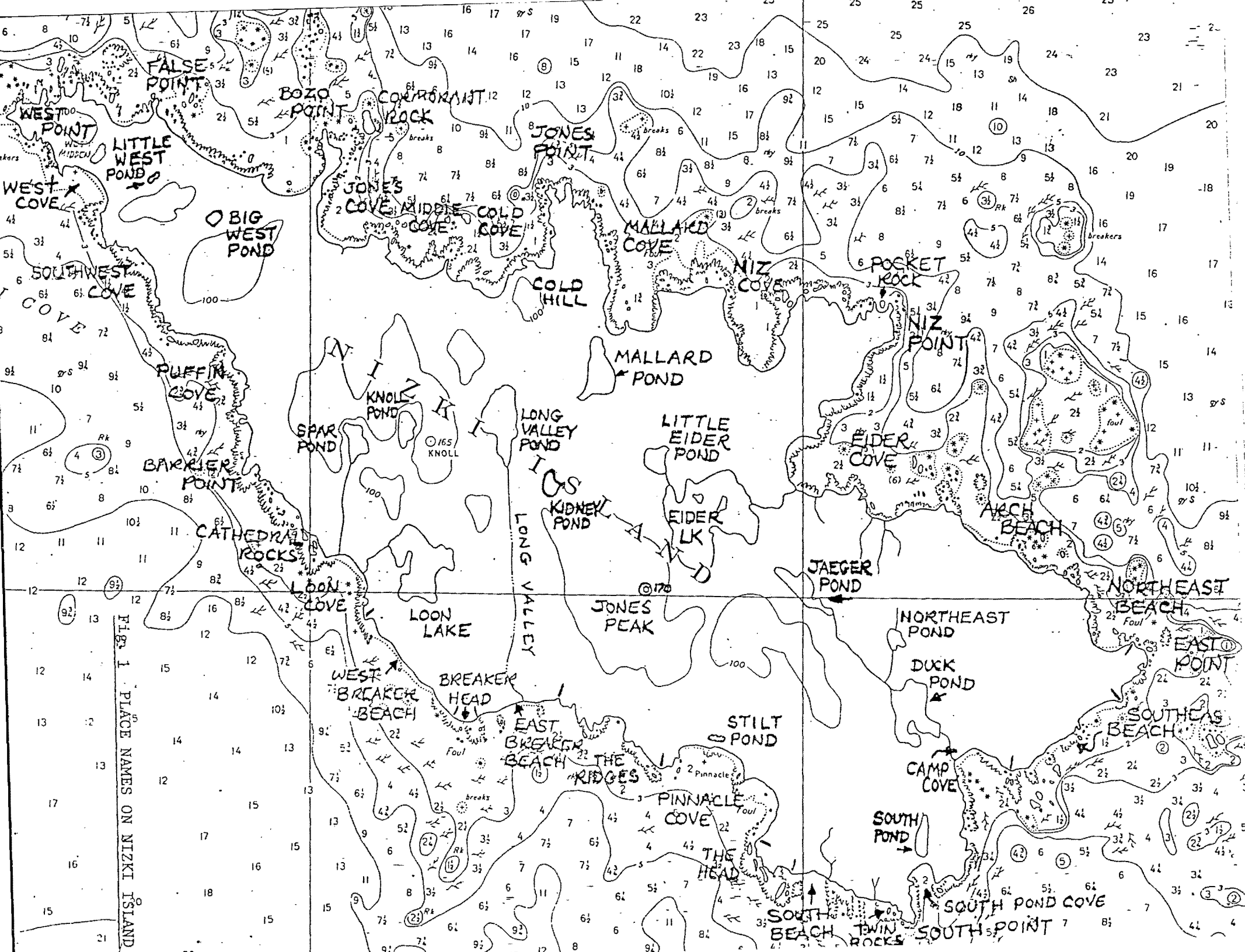


FIG. 1 PLACE NAMES ON NIZKI ISLAND



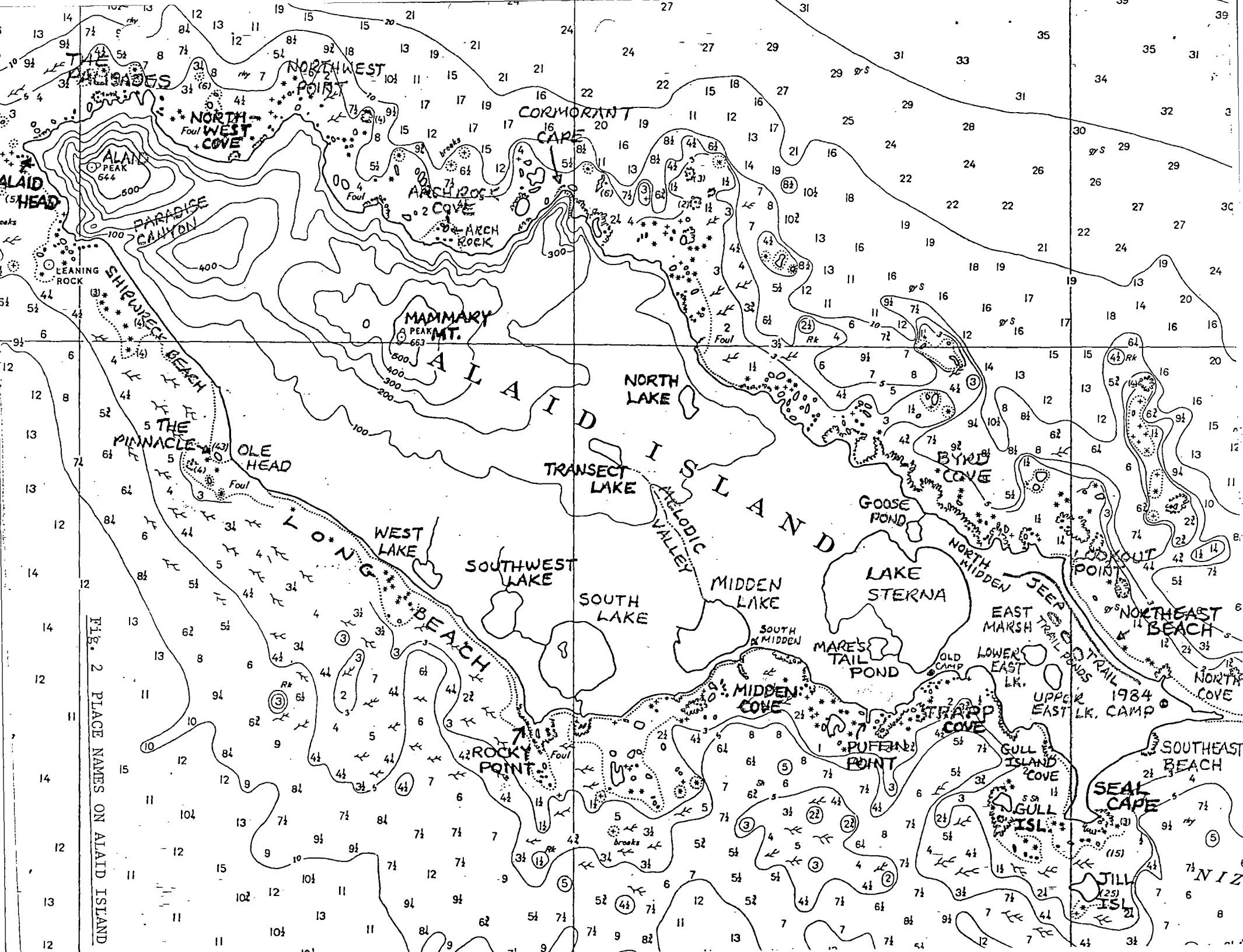


FIG. 2 PLACE NAMES ON ALAID ISLAND

Table 1. Weather Observations at Campsite, Alaid Island, 27 May to 7 June 1984

Date	Degrees Fahrenheit		Additional Information
	Low Temp.	High Temp.	
5/27	39	60*	AM overcast, wind SW 20 MPH. PM partly cloudy, wind SW 20.
5/28	40	66*	AM high cloud layer, wind E 5. PM high broken clouds, wind E 5-20. Clouding up by 5PM, wind E 25+. Precipitation began at 6:50 PM. Pacific swells/waves crossing spit.
5/29	41	54	AM overcast, light rain (0.05" up to 11 AM). PM overcast w/fog & occasional drizzle. Wind E 10. Pacific waters continued to cross spit.
5/30	41	59	AM fog (0.01" during night), light S breeze. PM fog becoming rain by 7 PM, wind S 10.
5/31	41	56	AM solid clouds (0.09" last eve.), wind S 10. PM cloudy, becoming foggy by late afternoon, rain began 8:30 PM.
6/1	41	47	Rain all day (0.47" 24 hr. ending 8:30 PM), wind NW 20-25. Bering Sea now rough, Pacific calm.
6/2	41	49	AM overcast (0.02" last eve.), wind NW 5-10, Bering Sea rough. PM overcast w/patchy fog, wind N 15.
6/3	41	48	AM overcast, rain began 8:50 AM (0.02" by 11 AM), wind N 10-15, fog/drizzle by noon. PM overcast w/fog, wind N-NW 25, gusts to 30.
6/4	40	54	AM partly cloudy (brief periods of sun) w/occasional light showers by noon (0.01" by 11 AM), very light variable breeze. PM cloudy, winds calm, increasing rain showers by 3 PM then stopped, fog from S at 5 PM, light SE breeze by 5:40 PM.
6/5	39	59	AM low overcast w/fog, showers began at 1 AM (0.04" by 11 AM) N 5-10. PM rising ceiling, patches of sun, then a delightful afternoon, partly cloudy, high ceiling, considerable sun, winds N 5, gusts to 10. Both seas calm.
6/6	42	57	AM overcast, winds NW 5-10. PM mostly cloudy, some hazy sun, warm in protected areas, wind NW 5-10, both seas calm. Evening dead calm, considerable sun, nice sunset behind thin clouds to west, comfortable to midnight.
6/7	32	N/A	AM cool, few low & few high clouds, considerable blue sky, 41 deg. F. by 7:45 AM. Departed island in early afternoon.

\* Thermometer exposed to direct sun.

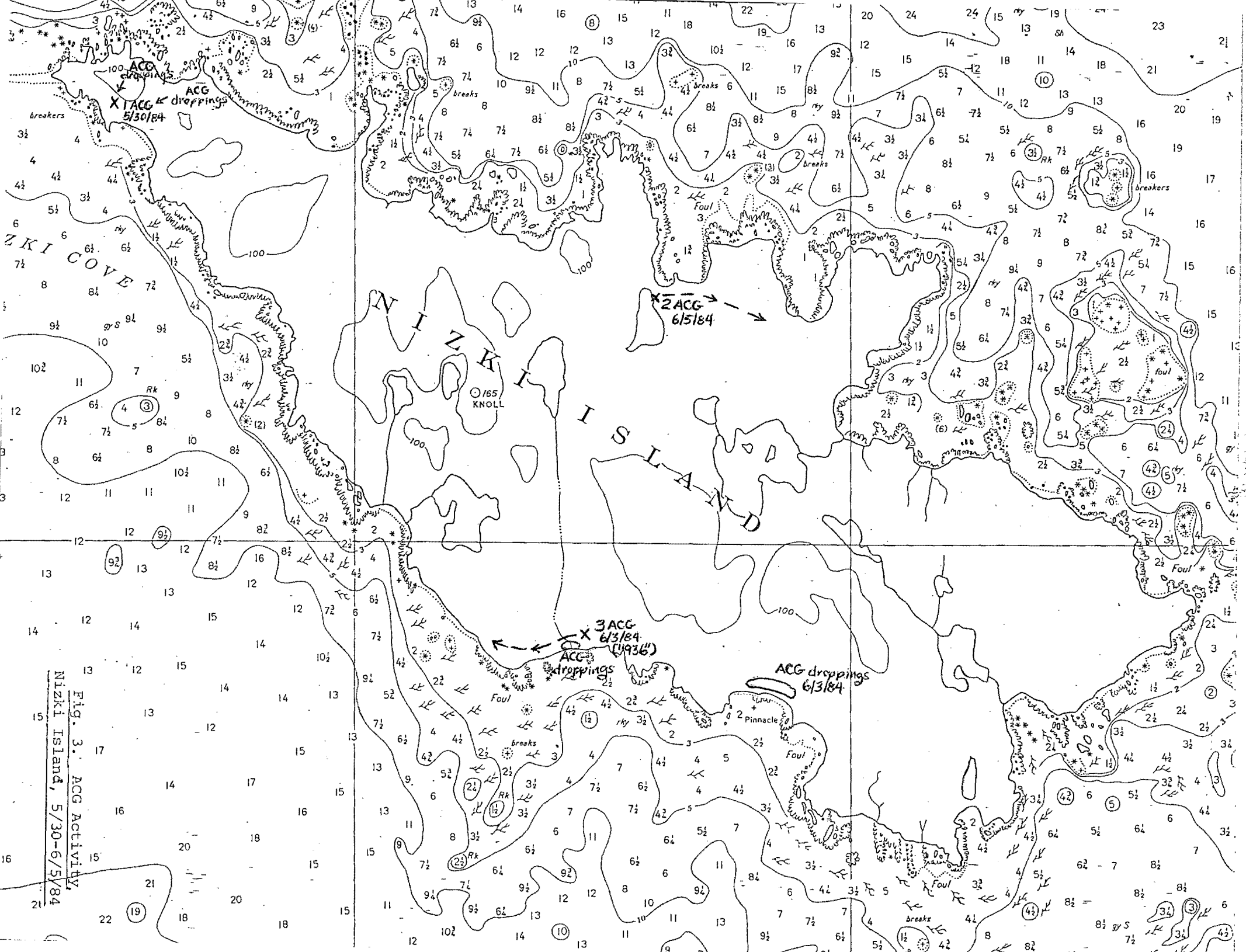
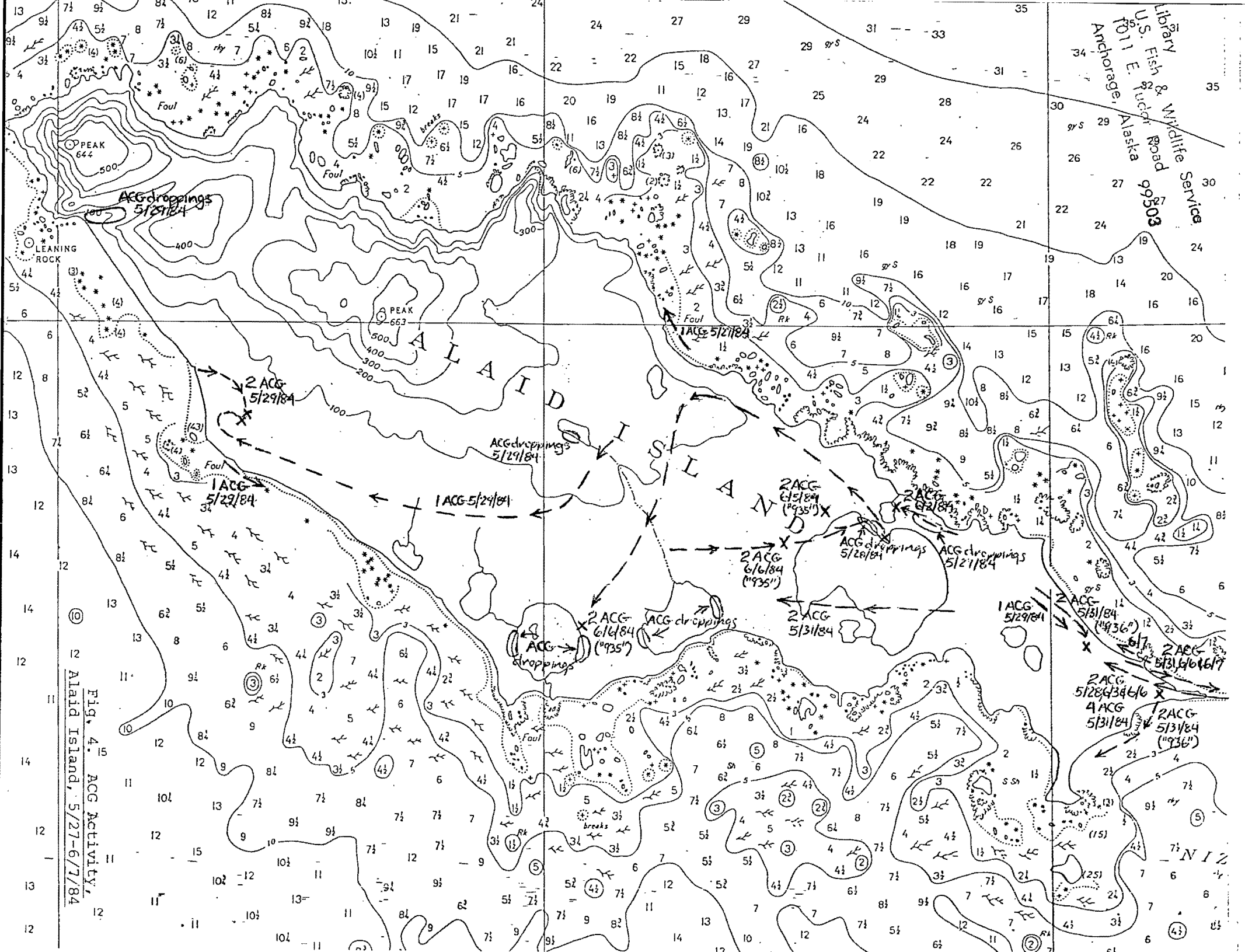


Fig. 3. ACG Activity,  
Nizki Island, 5/30-6/5/84



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