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NATURAL RESOURCES

Reports and Notes for the use and benefit of researchers, planners, managers, and interpreters of Natural Resources in the National Park System

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Richard G. Prasil, Management Biologist, Alaska Field Office

General:

The Anchorage area felt the effects of a 6.5 earthquake on December 17 at 2:00 a.m. A number of people did not notice the quake, but most residents did.

Cooperative Activities:

During this period, the Natural Landmark Report for the Peters-Schraeder Lakes and Buldir Depression were submitted. Additionally, a Natural Landmark interpretive program was partially prepared. The purpose of this program is to acquaint Alaskans with what the program is and what has occurred in Alaska. The intent is to obtain newspaper, radio, and TV coverage of same. A submission was made to the Regional Office for their annual report on the Natural Landmarks program.

Dr. Virginia M. Page, Stanford University, submitted identifications on the petrified wood samples from Unga Island. The material provided her initially was insufficient for close identification, but with these materials she identified 2 genera as being present - Taxodium and Picea. Additional material will be provided in the hopes that more specific taxonomic work can be done.

Discussions were held with Deputy Commissioner of Game & Sport Fish Loren W. Croxton, and Game Biologist Sterling H. Eide, relative to the McNeil River and Walrus Island proposed dedications. We also met with Mr. Frank Stefanich, Regional Supervisor Sport Fish Division, about Katmai fishing regulations.

Assistance was given to Park Planner Breedlove in the preparation and draft review of the Katmai Wilderness Study Plan.

Master Plan narrative material was provided to SSC for the McKinley Master Plan narrative. This included materials on flora, fauna, and geology.

Research and Management Biology:

The Superintendent's Annual Research Report and the supplementary Investigator reports were submitted for McKinley and Katmai during this period. Additionally, the IBP material for McKinley and Katmai was also provided, and additional work was begun on the interpretation of aerial photos of Katmai for more precise determination of vegetation types.

As requested by Western Regional Office, RSP reports, revisions, and a priority list of Alaskan projects were forwarded.

Preparations were also made for the forthcoming wolf-caribou studies. It is anticipated that the initial investigations will begin during the last week of February. Contacts were made with BLM and ADF&G to solicit their participation in this venture. The \$2000.00 provided for this study will be utilized not only for wolf-caribou work, but will be extended insofar as possible towards obtaining additional information about moose, bears, and Dall sheep.

The Annual Bear Report for Katmai was submitted on January 17th.

A draft of a revised Long-range Wildlife Management Plan for McKinley was prepared, and a draft of the Long-range Management Plan for Katmai was also prepared. These will be submitted in the near future. We replied to several requests for support on wolf studies and requests for permission to photograph wolves. The zeal of those interested in the wolf is truly admirable. It is unfortunate that the easiest way to obtain photographs is at the den site. Although it is desirable to portray the wolf in its natural setting, and to depict the wolves' extremely acceptable social activities, pressure on known dens could cause a disruption of habits. It does not appear that we should place additional stress upon a species that already has considerable pressure placed upon it. Thorough analysis is being given to all requests.

All, or portions, of 10 days were spent in attendance of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game Commission meetings. Attached is a memorandum indicating the most significant happenings before this group. However, the memorandum did not indicate the significance of the recent efforts of the State to lower the take of brown bears on Kodiak Island and the Aleutian Chain. Although we are in agreement with this move, it is felt that additional pressure will be placed upon Katmai by unscrupulous guides and their clients as a result. There are indications that a number of brown bears from the general area are being taken in Katmai.

Several meetings were held with Alaska Department of Fish and Game personnel relative to interchange of reports and cooperative studies on Dall sheep, caribou, bears, and moose. Involved in these talks were Messrs. Nichols, Erickson, Lentfer, Miller, Hemming, and Glenn.

The annual U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service Workshop on Game Management was attended for $2\frac{1}{2}$ days.

A red fox, in the McKinley Headquarters area, began displaying signs of mange. Within a relatively brief period much of the tail hair was lost. The cause is unknown. It could be a result of a dietary deficiency, or Scabies. The latter is thus far unknown in Alaska. If it is Scab, it is highly transmittable to other canines in the area. Obviously, we are most interested in attempting to determine the cause. The fox will be live-trapped and scrapings taken from the affected area. Dr. White of the U. S. Department of Agriculture Animal Health Division has provided materials necessary for samplings and has agreed to conduct necessary laboratory tests.

Other:

Review of the McKinley mini-folder was made. The all day meeting of the Alaska Interagency Housing Committee was attended. Findings and recommendations of the latter were forwarded to appropriate offices.

/s/ Richard G. Prasil

Memorandum dated December 12, 1968

To: Regional Director, Western Region

From: State Coordinator, Alaska

Subject: Alaska Board of Fish and Game Meetings, Anchorage

Three recent decisions by the Alaska Board of Fish and Game could be considered milestones in Alaskan conservation. First was the elimination of bounty on coyote and wolverine. Second was the limitation on areas where wolves can be taken. Third was the requirement for the salvage of pelt or meat of wolves, wolverine, and black bear.

The last Legislature gave approval to the Board of Fish and Game to decide how and where bounty payments would be made, and for what species, and where animals could be taken. Although the wolf is still subject to bounty hunting in a goodly portion of the State, the activity may be limited because of the restriction stating that the hunter must reside in the hunting unit where the wolves are taken. You will note from the enclosed game unit map that only the southeastern section of McKinley Park is protected. The most important area lies to the north in game management Unit 20c and Unit 19. The area around Katmai is still open to bounty of wolves.

It may appear that the regulation on the salvage of meat or pelt of wolves and wolverine does not afford too much protection to the animals. However, in certain areas the animals are shot from airplanes for the purpose of "protecting" game species, and no attempt is made to recover the relatively valuable hides. This regulation may help to stay this type of killing.

We are enclosing two copies of the press release which resulted, and the unit maps so a copy will be available for transmittal to WASO with your comments.

/s/ George A. Hall

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Y

Fish, Game Board Bans 2 Bounties

Wolf Bounty Limited; Elimination Proposal Fails To Win Approval

Wolf Hunters Must Salvage Pelt Or Meat

The Alaska Board of Fish and Game voted today to require hunter-killing wolves, wolverine and black bear to salvage either the pelt or the meat for human use.

The move places wolves and wolverine under the state's regulation prohibiting the wanton waste of wild animals. Bears had been under the regulation, but were accidentally left out when it was rewritten by the Legislature last spring. Brown grizzly and polar bears come under the wanton waste rules through another regulation.

Today's vote was apparently a change of heart by the board. Late Thursday afternoon it voted to allow the waste of wolves and wolverines, with some members citing as grounds the fact that the state pays a bounty for killing them.

Donald E. Smith of Kodiak and Ron Rettig of Anchorage said they objected to requiring anyone to salvage any part of a wolf or wolverine when the state pays a bounty on them. Wolves have a \$50 bounty and wolverine \$15.

Thursday's vote also allowed the shooting of black bears without salvaging the meat or pelts, but there were indications the board members were under the impression that black bears were protected by another regulation.

Thursday's vote was overwhelmingly against requiring the use of meat or pelts, but the only member to vote that way this morning was Glenn DeSpain of Fairbanks.

DeSpain noted that wolf fur is almost valueless if the animal is killed in late spring or summer. He said the state would save \$50 for every wolf left to rot, since the hunters and trappers are required to bring the pelt and left foreleg to the Department of Fish and Game before they can collect the bounty.

He said some Fairbanks area hunters shoot wolves from aircraft in the spring when the wolves are in mountain sheep country and a threat to sheep. He noted that it would be virtually impossible for them to land and retrieve parts of the wolves because of the terrain in which they are shot.

"They shoot them as a control measure," he said. "This is the type of predator control I like to see. I don't see any reason why they should be made violators."

Smith noted that wolf fur is valuable during much of the year. "If it has a valuable hide, there shouldn't be a bounty on it," he said. Wolverine are protected during part of the year, but wolves can be taken year-round everywhere except on the Kenai Peninsula.

Loren Croxton, deputy commissioner for fish and game, noted that the state's staff of game biologists takes the position that "there is no biological justification for bounties."

The board also voted to establish a closed area including 100 square miles of land and some water near the village of Cold Bay on the Alaska Peninsula. The area would be closed to the taking of brown bears.

The closing of the area was opposed by the Department of Fish and Game staff on the grounds that it would cause conflicts between bears and residents of the area.

The Alaska Board of Fish and Game voted today to discontinue payments of bounties on wolverine and coyote throughout the state.

The action removes the long-standing \$30 paid for each coyote killed and \$15 for each wolverine. Board member Don Smith of Kodiak tried to have wolves taken off the bounty list also, but the motion failed by a 7-3 vote.

The board also voted to discontinue payment of the \$50 bounty on wolves taken in much of Southcentral Alaska and in the Chichagof-Baranof-Admiralty Islands area of Southeastern Alaska, but approved the wolf bounty system for the rest of southeastern, the Fairbanks-Arcade area and Western Alaska.

Elimination of the coyote and wolverine bounties and reduction of the area in which wolf bounties could be paid was made under a law passed by the last session of the Legislature allowing the board to determine in which game management units bounties will be paid.

The vote allows payment of bounties for wolves killed in all game management units except No. 4 (Sitka area), No. 7 and No. 15 (Kenai Peninsula), No. 8 (Kodiak-Afognak), No. 10 (Aleutians-Préhibilofs), No. 13 (Neldina Basin), No. 14 (Anchorage - Matanuska - Susitna Valley) and No. 16 (west of Susitna River).

Staff biologists of the Department of Fish and Game indicated earlier in the board meeting that they feel there is no biological justification for the bounty system.

Another law passed by last spring's Legislature requires that bounties can only be paid if the animal is killed in the game management unit in which the hunter or trapper resides.

Today's action by the board will apparently rule out Anchorage pilots who shoot wolves from aircraft based at Merrill Field.

A Tradition Of The North

AND SO THE OLD order
changeth.

After many years of debate, in
which tempers often were fiery,
the payment of bounties for the
killing of wildlife in Alaska seems
on the wane.

The State Board of Fish and

Game, meeting here, wiped out
Saturday the bounty payments on
wolverine and coyote and sharply
reduced areas in which bounties
would be paid on wolf kills.

In years gone by, the bounty
control was a matter that rested
in the hands of the legislature.

And the fights over bounties in
the Halls of Wisdom were some-
times fierce, dating far back into
Territorial history.

FOR A LONG time, both sides
on the bounty question admitted
there was not much biological
argument in favor of killing ani-
mals as predators.

But the bounty system was a
time-honored adjunct to the wel-
fare system, in fact if not in name.

Many a homesteader, many a
native, many a trapper made ends
meet over the long winter by col-
lecting bounty kills.

But an eventual change was in-
evitable.

The last legislature finally ap-
proved the way — leaving it up
to the Fish and Game Board to
decide how bounty payment could
be made good for what species and
from what part of the state.

Walter H. Kittams, Research Biologist, WASO (Carlsbad Caverns - Big
Bend - Guadalupe)

Preparation of the proposed 1970-72 research programs and new supporting
RSP's for Carlsbad Caverns, Guadalupe Mountains and Big Bend caused a
squeeze on time. Interest and good cooperation of superintendents and
staffs a real help.

Big Bend

Very fortunate in obtaining participation by Dr. Warnock in mapping plant
communities over most of park. I completed coverage of remote areas on
one plane flight.

Learned from Texas Parks & Wildlife people that Barbados sheep have spread
from a ranch adjacent to the north end of the park and could constitute a
threat to Desert bighorns which may disperse from the Black Gap Management
Area.