



Wildlife Watch

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COUNCIL (NORTH SLOPE)
COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

Volume 8, Number 4

June 1998

Snowmobile trip collects information

At the end of March, WMAC(NS) alternate member Danny C. Gordon of Aklavik traveled across the Yukon North Slope by snowmobile to gather information about moose, muskox, and snow depth. Accompanying him were Annie Gordon, Joe Allen, and Lawrence Rogers. Following are excerpts from Gordon's account of the journey.

... We have now been ready for the trip for a few days. Annie has been busy baking bread, tarts, ham and cooking caribou meat. I have been busy servicing all the equipment.... We waited for Lawrence Rogers who works for the Inuvialuit Communications Society (ICS). He will be documenting the whole trip on film....

March 20: It was a nice day so we decided to go to Police Cabin that evening. It is 120 km. from Aklavik. We loaded two big sleds and two toboggans with more gas, groceries, sleeping bags, caribou skins to sleep on, gas for stove and gas lamp, tent and tent poles, ski-doo parts, chain saw, axe, nails and hammer, and extra boots and clothing.... Off we went west to Alaska....

March 21: Plans were to go to Coalmine Lake and then 30 km. more inland to Mount Davis Gilbert. We know it as Whale Mountain. From here we went west following Rapid River.... On most all of our trips we take snow depth measurements. We stopped many times to do some scouting with binoculars. So far we haven't seen any game....

March 22: Going inland from Blow River cabin we traveled to Rapid River to do snow depth measurements.... We went to the highest peak on the land to take a look around. We spotted one moose lying down in the willows.... Saw some fresh caribou tracks going west....

March 23: Weather has turned bad overnight: snowing, overcast, blowing and drifting snow all at the same

Survey links Yukon, Alaska muskox

Scientists have suspected that muskox on the Yukon North Slope are part of a single muskox population shared between the Yukon and Alaska.

That is also the conclusion reached after an aerial survey in April spotted only 96 muskox on the North Slope. That's down from 121 in the 1996 count, and well down from the 1993 count of 157.

The change in numbers and a shifting mix of age groups indicate that the Yukon North Slope muskox are part of a larger population that moves back and forth across the Yukon-Alaska border. For example, only five yearlings were counted in 1993. Two years later, in 1995, 14 three-year-olds were spotted, clearly new arrivals from outside the Yukon North Slope.

The Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) had planned to recommend a harvest quota for muskox this year. However, the survey results suggest that muskox management might have to be undertaken jointly with Alaska, where the herd spends part of its time.

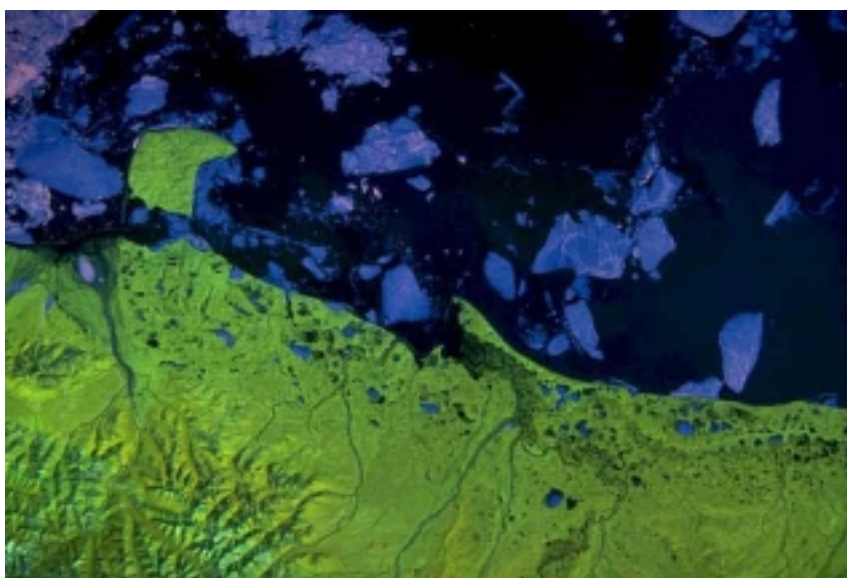
As a result of the information from this year's survey, WMAC(NS) has decided not to recommend a harvest quota on muskox at this time. Instead, the Council is trying to arrange a meeting this fall with Alaska muskox managers to discuss the possibility of joint population and harvest management of the transboundary muskox population.

time. We decided to move our camp to Shingle Point. ...Visibility was about one mile. Loaded up, time to go. We travelled under the Foot Hills, it was okay. For the next three days we were windbound at Shingle Point. It felt like a month.

March 26: In the evening the weather improved a little bit so we went inland for a short 10 km. trip. We noticed a thin black line some 3 km. away. We went to the top of a hill to take a better look with binoculars. The black line was caribou migrating west. The black line was approximately 7 km. long....

March 27: Weather improved some, no wind. Over a cup of tea we discussed whether to go or not. So it was, we decided to go.

Ptarmigan Bay, here we come.... We arrived at Ptarmigan Bay at 4:30 p.m. This would be our camp for the next 3-4 days. ...Off to Herschel Island to take a look. We spotted one muskox near the tower right on the wind blown hill and cliffs. We also noticed some fresh caribou tracks on the ice. On top of the hill we saw about 50 caribou....



March 28: Best subject, weather. For sure the weather is going to be better today. Some improvement from yesterday. It is - 15 and no wind. Today Firth River area.... We stopped often on all of our trips to scope the vast awesome land. Firth River looks so awesome. Oh what a land: hills, mountains, creeks, willows, grass and snow. All of this stuff intrigues me, stops me at my tracks. ...We are about 2000 feet high. ...What a sight!

We've seen foxes and we finally spotted two moose, a cow and a bull, near Roland Creek. ...Our plan was to go as far as possible towards Babbage River, as the daylight permits. But fog was rolling in over the mountains quickly. ...One thing I've learned so far from this trip is that 8-10 km. visibility is needed to do the job properly....

March 29: We planned to go to Komakuk Beach and just maybe to Alaska. ...Fresh caribou tracks are spotted. We stopped and walked checking the tracks. We noticed wolf tracks following in the same direction. ...We spotted 1 bull muskox below Malcolm River, near some short willows and some open grass,

travelling overland towards Komakuk Beach. ...The last stretch to the border is about 20 km. Travelling from here was very rough. The land was blown clean by the wind. [After stopping at the border] we headed towards the mountains looking hard for muskox. ...Travelling slowly we surprised

ourselves. We were very close to the herd. ... We counted 34 muskox: 4 bulls, 4 calves and the rest seem to be cows....

March 30: ...We saw many caribou on [Herschel Island]. ...We estimated the total number of caribou to be at about 300....

March 31: ...There seems to be caribou all over. We are returning back home by Walking River. This is about it!

Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope)

- **Inuvialuit Game Council:** Danny C. Gordon; Herbert Felix; Alternates: Billy Archie, and Carol Arey
- **Government of Canada:** Joan Eamer, Canadian Wildlife Service; Alternate: Alan Fehr, Parks Canada
- **Government of Yukon:** Brian Pelchat, Renewable Resources; Alternate: Dorothy Cooley, Renewable Resources
- **Chairperson:** Lindsay Staples
- **Secretariat:** Aileen Horler

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