NUNIVAK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Narrative Report

January 1, 1975 to December 31, 1975

Staff

Administered by the staff of the

Clarence Rhode National Wildlife Refuge

and

Richard Davis ---------- Maintenanceman M.A.E.

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CYA

Department of the Interior
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bethel, Alaska
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NUNIVAK NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

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INTRODUCTION

The Nunivak NWR received considerable state, national and international attention in 1975. This 3,655,700-acre island refuge was the scene of a much publicized U.S.-U.S.S.R. muskox transplant and Alaska's first muskox hunt since the animals became extinct in the 1850's. ?

Don't you mean near extinction or thought extinct

Summary of Activities

During the year, four trips totaling fifty-two days were made to Nunivak, all of which were related to muskox management. Dates of visits and activities are listed below.

March 21-April 16	Hout	U.S.-U.S.S.R. muskox transplant
August 11-14	Hout & Spencer	Muskox census
September 2-5	Hout & Frickie	Muskox hunt
September 14-30	Dau	Muskox hunt

In addition to the above, an orientation overflight at the refuge was made on May 28th with Department of the Interior officials, Russell Peterson, Roger Sant and Amos Eno.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES ON WILDLIFE

Birds

Normal field activities on Nunivak occur in late winter and early spring thus restricting observation primarily to resident species. This year while monitoring the fall muskox hunt, one of the staff members was able to make a number of bird observations and to witness a portion of the waterfowl migration.

Geese. Refuge Biologist Dau, who was on the island from September 14-30, reported that the major brant migration had occured prior to his arrival but that there was a rather steady movement of individual family groups and small flocks of brant along the northern and eastern coasts of the island. Counts of the family groups indicated an average of 2.5 young per pair. Two flocks of Snow Geese with fifty and twenty birds each were seen flying over Mekoryuk on September 21 and 22nd respectively. Young birds were seen in each of these flocks. Cackling and Taverner's Canada Geese were abundant on the south side of the island in the vicinity of Duchikthluk Bay from September 22 to 27. Several small flocks of Emperor Geese were seen along the east coast, west and south of Cape Manning from September 14 to 16. Additional observations are reported in Table 1.

Ducks. Dau reported a strong passage of King and Steller's Eiders from west to east along the north side of the island during the last two weeks of September. These flocks ranged in size from single family groups to flocks containing 200 birds. These flocks consisted entirely of adult females with young.

In addition to Dau's observation, Dave McCargo, an avid bird watcher, spent the period between June 4 and July 4 on the island and kindly provided us with a list of the fifty-two species he recorded (Table 2).

Mammals

Reindeer. Reindeer remain an enigma on the Nunivak NWR. The ancestors of these animals were brought to the island in 1920 by the Lomen Reindeer Company and in 1939 the herd was purchased by the U.S. Government. The herd remained under government control until 1970 when they were turned over to the residents of the island. Since its establishment the population of the herd was fluctuated from a high of 30,000 in the early 1940's to the present low of approximately 3,000 head. During this fifty year period several buildups and crashes have been recorded (see history of Nunivak Reindeer 1970-71 Narrative Report), but at no time, either when the animals were under the control of the Bureau of Indian Affairs or more recently by the residents, has the refuge had or exerted any responsibility in controlling the herd size.

At present the range is badly overgrazed and capable of carrying only a limited number of animals, probably no more than 8,000 to 10,000 head. If the village corporation (Bering Sea Reindeer Products) is going to be a financial success i.e., without heavy federal subsidy in marketing meat and skins, they will need at least a herd of 5,000 animals. Currently the Reindeer Corporation is slaughtering somewhat less than the recruitment rate in order to provide some income for the village. Harvest at this rate will hopefully allow the corporation to remain stable and give the range a better chance for recovery or at least minimize further damage.

Muskox Transplant. An introduction of Alaskan muskox to Russia became possible in 1972 following the signing of the Environmental Protection Agreement between the two countries, containing provisions for the exchange of biological expertise and wildlife species. Muskox were once native to Russia and the USSR was interested in reintroducing them to selected locations on Wrangell Island and the Taymyr Peninsula.

Following a number of delays, changes in plans and extended deadlines, the transplant operation got underway on March 21st and was terminated on April 14th, when forty muskox were loaded aboard a Russian airplane at Bethel, Alaska.

Personnel participating in the Nunivak phase of the operation are listed below:

Name	Title and Organization
Jerry L. Hout	Refuge Manager - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Dr. Peter Lent	Asst. Leader - Alaska Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit
Dr. Sava Uspenski	Biologist - USSR
Vadim Trachov	Biologist - USSR
Raisa Petroff	Interpreter - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Dan St.John	Interpreter - On contract to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Carla Kuhlmann	Refuge Clerk - Served as Acting Refuge Manager, expediter, Chief of Public Relations and muskox sitter (in Bethel)

In addition to the above, twenty-two residents of Nunivak Island were employed in the operation. The entire operation was filmed by Don Meier Productions for the Wild Kingdom TV Show. The TV crew consisted of two cameramen, Ralph Nelson and Rod Allin; host Marlin Perkins; and snowmachine mechanic Bob Thompson. A German TV cameraman Joseph Vilsmeier; a free lance photographer Dennis Cowals; Andrew Chikoyak, a TV cameraman from the Bethel station, KYUK, and Lael Morgan, a reporter from the Alaska Magazine, were also present to document and report on the transplant for their organizations.

Methods of capture which had been perfected in past transplants, employed the use of two six-man capture crews who were selected from the twenty-two men who signed up to work on the transplant. The remaining men with snowmachines and sleds were assigned to haul the captured animals from the field to the village of Mekoryuk. Each of the two capture crews was assigned an area on the island where concentrations of animals were known to occur. One crew going to the south side of the island, where they worked out of the Fish and Wildlife Service cabin at Duchikthluk Bay and the other crew to the west side of the island where they operated out of Nash Harbor and the Service cabin at Mikisagimiut.

The capture crews were instructed to catch the yearlings by hand (bulldogging) in the manner used in previous transplants. After the animals were captured they were taken to the base camps and put into improvised corrals. These corrals were nothing more than a pit dug into the snow. The snow corral at the Duchikthluk camp measured approximately 10 feet by 16 feet with six to seven foot walls.

Two-year- old animals were captured with use of a net made of nylon shroud cord by the Eskimos in the fashion of their seal nets; the net was either dropped over the animal or the animal was driven into the net.

After a number of animals were captured, word was sent to Mekoryuk for the hauling crew to come out and pick up the animals. Each member of the hauling crew was provided with burlap bags filled with hay to be used as pillows to protect the fragile horns of the yearlings. On arrival at Mekoryuk all the animals were unhobbled and released into the holding pen. The yearlings and two-year-olds were kept in separate pens to reduce injuries and to keep the older animals from dominating the feed troughs. Timothy hay, purchased in Anchorage, was fed to the animals both in Mekoryuk and during their stay in Bethel.

Prior to shipping each animal was checked again to determine its sex (initial sexing conducted in the field at time of capture), and tags and colored streamers put on each ear. The animals were then loaded into shipping crates and sledded to the airport. A Skyvan capable of hauling six yearlings or four two-year-olds was used to transport the animals to Bethel. In Bethel the animals were turned loose in a large warehouse to await the arrival of the Russian plane.

In the period between March 25 and April 5, a total of fifty-four muskox were captured (Table 3, Figure 1). Discounting the three days lost to weather, only seven days were required for the actual capture operation.

Only one animal, a two-year-old female, was lost as a direct result of the transplant. This animal was carrying a nearly full-term fetus and it is suspected that the animal died of ketosis. The hide, skull and fetus from the two-year-old female were given to the Russians. A femur from this animal was sent to the

Alaska Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit. One other animal, an adult bull, was found with a broken leg and in a very weakened condition; this animal was shot by one of the Eskimos. No parts were salvaged from the bull.

No problems were encountered in holding the animals in the pen at Mekoryuk. The yearling animals ate well, consuming approximately four bales of hay daily. The two-year-olds ate, but did not seem to have the appetite of the younger animals.

Prior to shipping to Bethel each animal was eartagged. A numbered ear tag and colored nylon streamer was attached to each ear tag. Different colors were used for each sex and age group (pink: yearling males; yellow: yearling females; blue: two-year-old males; orange: two-year-old females). A list of the tag numbers, streamer colors, date of capture and fate of each animal is recorded in Tables 4 and 5.

On April 8 the first load of animals was sent to Bethel. In all, eight trips were required to move all the animals with the last load reaching Bethel on April 11th. The Russian plane arrived in Bethel on April 12th. The animals were crated on April 13th and the plane departed for Russia with the muskox, Dr. Uspenski and Mr. Tarchov on board on April 14th.

In spite of a number of obstacles the operation was quite successful and all objectives were met. The cost of the transplant was approximately $27,800, this includes $4,500 for transportation of the animals from Nunivak to Bethel for which the Russians were obligated. Excluding transportation, cost of hay and permanent salaries the operation on the island cost $12,000 for the capture of fifty-four animals or $223.00 per animal. This amount could have been much less had there not been so many people involved nor the extra time and effort expended on the TV documentary. However the latter publicity for the Fish and Wildlife Service provided by the network show Wild Kingdom should be worth something. Another public relations benefit was the expenditure of $12,000, over $10,000 was spent directly on salaries.

Muskox Census. The summer aerial census was accomplished during the period August 11 to 14, and resulted in a count of 569 animals including sixty calves. The last summer census was conducted in 1971 when 549 animals including seventy-one calves were tallied. The last complete census was a winter survey in 1973 with 543 animals counted (Table 6).

The calf production of only 10.5% of the total population reflects the continued decline of production in the Nunivak herd as a result of deteriorating range and a distorted sex ratio. These factors, plus occassional hard winters and springs have resulted in a steady decline over the past ten years. In the period between 1955 and 1964 calf production averaged 20.4% and between 1965 and 1975 the production dropped to 15%. We anticipate this decline to continue until the herd size is brought down to the carrying capacity of the range and the sex ratio is restructured by reducing the number of adult males, which now make up nearly 50% of the herd. It now appears that the latter can be accomplished with the initiation of the first trophy bull hunt this year. However if transplants in which a ratio of two to three female yearlings and two-year-olds per male are selected, it will be sometime before an optimum ratio will be reached. The removal of the younger age classes will result in a herd composed primarily

of older age animals and a reduced vigor of the herd. The only advantage to this form of management is that the herd will be prevented to increase and further damage the range.

In the 1975 census, as in all summer aerial censuses, the principal objectives is to determine the number of calves and the total number of animals. Accurate sex and age composition counts can only be obtained from the ground and is done during the spring survey which employs the use of snowmachines. However, whenever possible an attempt is made to classify animals from the air. In the 1975 census 140 adult males, thirty-seven adult cows, one yearling, one subadult male and sixty calves were identified.

REFUGE DEVELOPMENT

No construction or development of facilities were accomplished in 1975. However, since the last narrative (1971) a 12" by 16" Pan Abode field cabin was constructed at Mikisagimiut. The addition of this cabin on the north side of the island greatly facilitates the problem of finding suitable shelter during the winter snowmachine survey. The location of this cabin is also within hiking distance or a short boat trip in the summer of the seabird nesting colonies at Cape Mohican.

Two more cabins are needed for optimum coverage of the refuge during the winter survey. With cabins in the vicinity of Chakwakamiut (southwest coast) and Ingrimiut (east coast) there would be less than a days snowmachine travel between shelters. This is an important consideration due to the frequent blizzards that occur during the survey sometimes forcing us to dig into the snow for shelter. The additional cabins would also increase the efficiency and accuracy of the survey. Presently with only two cabins it is necessary to work out of one cabin for several days to cover a given area before moving halfway around the island to the other cabin. With this procedure it is possible to make duplicate counts as the herds may move considerable distance from the point where they were first observed and could be counted as a new herd on the following day.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Hunting. A muskox hunting season was announced in the Federal Register on July 31, 1975 with the regulations to take effect on August 31. (News Release - Muskox Hunt Scheduled in Alaska, Appendix A-1.) This culminated nearly ten years of effort to establish a hunt on this species.

The original hunt proposed the taking of fifty animals, twenty-five each in a fall and spring hunt, but the State requested the first hunt in the fall season (September 1 to October 31) to be limited to ten animals to test the ability of the residents to accommodate and guide the hunters. A total of eighty-two applications for a permit were received by the State from which the names of ten hunters and four alternates were drawn. Each of those selected received from the State a copy of the regulations on hunting conditions (Appendix A-2).

The first hunter arrived on September 7th and the last hunter departed the island on October 6th. All the hunters were successful in obtaining a bull muskox. The time each hunter spent in the field varied between one and four days. Each of the hunters was guided by an island resident who was assigned to the hunter by a muskox committee formed by the residents to administer the guiding and arrangements for food and lodging.

Hunters, who were transported to the field by outboard-powered skiffs, found that obtaining a trophy animal was not nearly as easy as many opponents of the hunt had prophecized. Some animals were stalked for a distance of four miles and most hunters were not able to approach closer than 100 to 150 yards. All the hunters interviewed by the refuge staff were generally pleased with the hunt.

The residents were also pleased with the hunt which brought in an income of over $20,000 into their economy. A news release, released by the State (Appendix A-3) sums up the Department of Fish and Game's feelings. The refuge staff felt that for a first hunt for a new species in a remote area utilizing guides from a different culture, the hunt went unusually well. Due to the success of this hunt another hunt has been scheduled from mid-February to the end of March in 1976. This hunt is programed for the harvest of forty animals.

In addition to the public relations value to the Wild Kingdom, an article on the transplant in the Alaska Magazine and numerous press releases, the transplant provided an excellant opportunity to display the animals to the residents of Bethel. Approximately 1,000 people, most of whom had never seen a muskox, visited the warehouse where the animals were kept in Bethel prior to the flight to Russia. Nearly all the school children and most of the local residents visited the warehouse where the staff member on duty answered their questions and explained the Service's muskox management policy.

VISITORS

Wilhelm Hanning and Martin Eimer, private film maker and photographer for German television, visited the headquarters in April enroute to Nunivak Island. After receiving messages from the villagers of Mekoryuk stating the German film crew was destroying personal property and had shot both cranes and fox, Special Agent J.W. Smith was dispatched from Anchorage. Insufficient evidence prevented prosecution, however, their permit to photograph was revoked and they were escorted from the village on May 23rd.

July began with public hearing (July 2nd) on the proposal to hunt muskox on Nunivak Island beginning the fall of 1975. Jim Huber and Michelle Latrinko, Solicitor (both with Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington, D.C. Office) and Gordon Watson, Bob Stevens, Marv Plenert and Mary Smith (all with Fish and Wildlife Service Area Office in Anchorage) were in attendance. The Bethel Office was represented by Jerry Hout, Carla Kuhlmann and Rex Mathlaw, Sr.

Gene Knoder (Western Representative for Audubon Society, Denver Office) accompanied Refuge Manager Frickie and Assistant Refuge Manager Hout on a trip to Mekoryuk on Nunivak Island to discuss the first muskox hunt.

Robert Hinman (Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Regional Game Supervisor, Fairbanks) visited the headquarters on October 23rd. He had just returned from Mekoryuk on Nunivak Island where he discussed the outcome of the first muskox hunt with the Muskox Committee.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acting Refuge Manager Hout prepared this Narrative Report as one of his last duties prior to his transfer to River Basins in Juneau, Alaska, effective on 29 February 1976. Without his knowledge of the activities and history of this station it would have been a most difficult and time-consuming preparation.

Temporary Clerk-Typist Denise Jack performed final typing.

Submitted by: Donald N. Frickie
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Refuge Manager

29 Sept. 1977
Date

Approved by; Don E. Redfearn
Don E. Redfearn
Alaska Refuge Supervisor

October 25, 1977
Date

FIGURES

TABLES

APPENDIX

Figure 1. Location of muskox captures - 1975 US-USSR Transplant.

- West End

M	F	
12	13	Yearlings
1	1	Yearlings

- Twin Mountains

M	F	
1	5	2-year-olds

- VABM 789

M	F	
1	3	2-year-olds

- South Side

M	F	
11	6	Yearlings

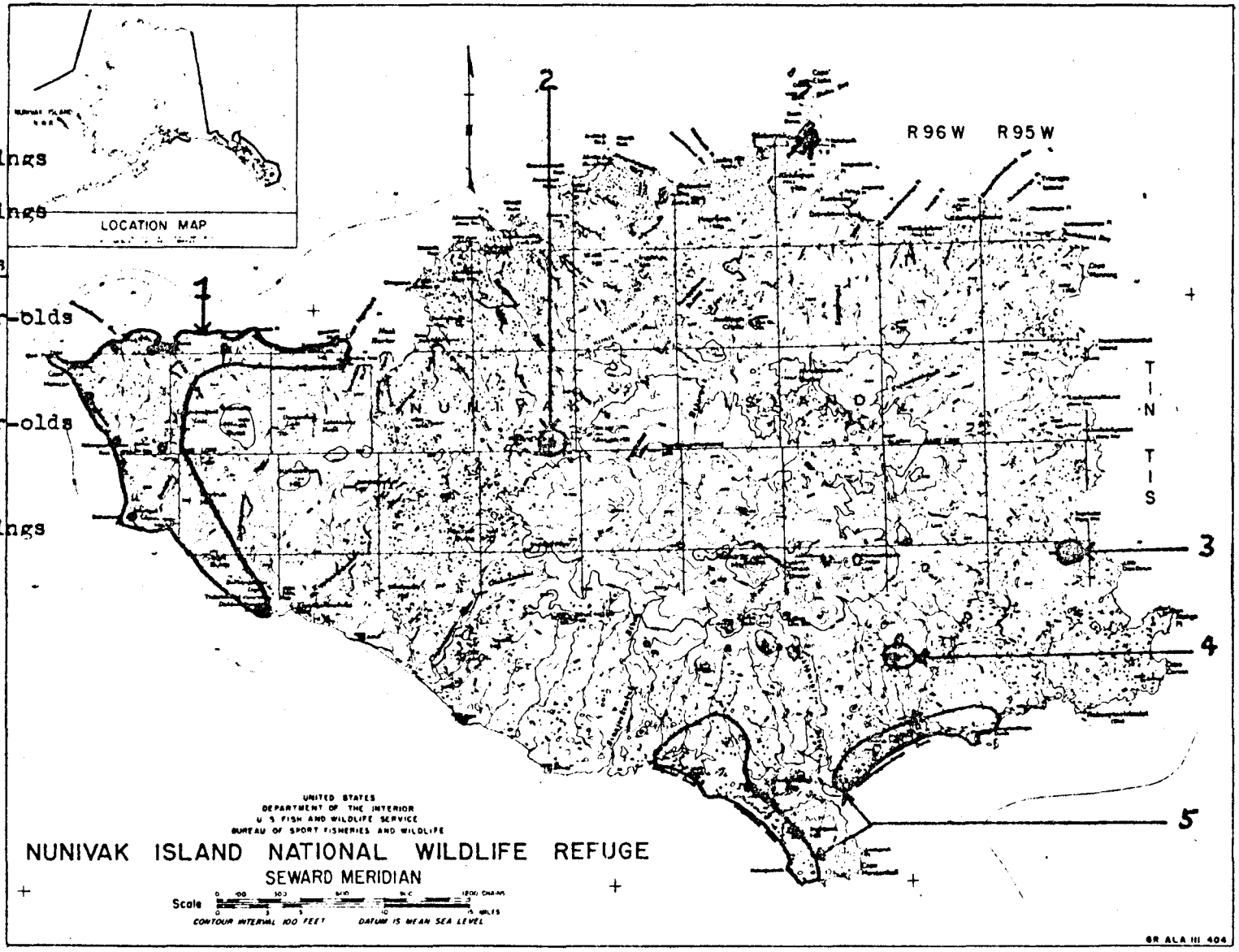


Table 1. Additional Species recorded form 14 September to 28 September 1975, (Dau), Nunivak Island.

Species	Number
Large loon (winter plumage, probably yellow-billed Loon)	8
Red-necked Grebe	1
Horned Grebe	1
Unidentified small grebe	1
Fork-tailed Petrel	3
Cackling Canada Goose	common
Snow Goose	15,20
King Eider	common
Spectacled Eider	4
White-winged Scoter	20
Pectoral or Sharp-tailed Sandpipers	13
Sanderling	10
Bar-tailed Godwit	2
Sabines Gull	1
Glaucous Gull	common
Black-capped Chickadee	1

Table 2. Bird Observations from June 4 to July 4, 1975 (Dave McCargo) Nunivak Island.

Species	No.	Species	No.
Arctic Loon	17	Dunlin	67
Red-throated loon*	1	Long-billed dowitcher	2
Pelagic cormorant*	80	Western sandpiper*	(2,580)
Whistling swan		Red phalarope	
Taverners Canada goose	38	Northern phalarope	58
Black brant	4	Pomarine jaeger	3
Emperor goose	21	Parasitic jaeger	12
White-fronted goose*	6	Long-tailed jaeger	22
Mallard		Glaucour-winged gull	(428)
Pintail	26	Slaty-backed gull	1
Green-winged teal	2	Black-legged kittiwake*	
Old squaw*	364	Arctic tern	157
Harlequin	9	Common murre	
Steller's eider	2	Pigeon guillemot	
Red-breasted merganser	3	Parakeet auklet	270
Common eider	101	Least auklet	65
Gyrfalcon	2	Horned puffin	100
Willow ptarmigan*	9	Tuffed puffin	30
Rock ptarmigan	8	Snowy owl (1)	1
Lesser sandhill crane*	53	Tree swallow	
Semipalmated plover	17	Robin (2)	1
American golden plover	26	Gray-crowned rosy finch	1
Black-bellied plover	2	Savannah sparrow*	230
Ruddy turnstone	4	Lapland longspur*	(3,800)
Common snipe	11	Snow bunting	131
Rock sandpiper	57		

* Nests
(1) observed by teacher
(2) observed by ADF & G Employee

Table 3. Sex, age and location of muskox captured in 1975 transplant.

Date	Location	Yearlings		Two-year-olds	
		Male	Female	Male	Female
3/25	West Side	1	1		
3/25	South Side	1	1		
3/28	West Side	2	4		
3/29	South Side	3	4		
3/30	West Side	7	9		
3/30	South Side	1	1		
3/31	West Side	3			
3/31	South Side	6			
4/1	Twin Mountains			1	5
4/5	VABM 789			1	3
	Totals	24	20	2	8

Table 4. Tag numbers, sex, age and weight of muskox cantures in 1975 US-USSR transplant, Nunivak Island.

Tag No. Right	Tag No. Left	Streamer Right	Streamer Left	Sex	Age (Months)	Weight (lbs.)	Date Transported to Bethel
3	4	Yellow	Yellow	F	11	100	4/8/75
6	7	"	"	F	11	109	"
8	11	"	"	F	11	138	"
10	22	Pink	Pink	M	11	148	"
12	13	"	"	M	11	178	"
14	15	Yellow	Yellow	F	11	135	"
16	17	"	"	F	11	210 ?	"
18	19	Pink	Pink	M	11	202	"
21	20	Yellow	Yellow	F	11	173	"
23	24	"	"	F	11	100	"
25	26	Pink	Pink	M	11	206	"
28	27	Yellow	Yellow	F	11	155	4/10/75
30	29	Pink	Pink	M	11	170	"
32	31	"	"	M	11	177	"
33	34	"	"	M	11	155	"
5	35	"	"	M	11	?	"
36	38	Yellow	Yellow	F	11	?	"
39	40	"	"	F	11	182	"
42	41	"	"	F	11	136	"
43	44	Pink	Pink	M	11	185	"
45	46	Yellow	Yellow	F	11	?	"
48	50	"	"	F	11	181	"
52	51	"	"	F	11	217	"
53	55	"	"	F	11	126	"
56	57	"	"	F	11	225	"
59	58	"	"	F	11	145	"
60	61	"	"	F	11	157	"
62	63	"	"	F	11	?	"
64	65	"	"	F	11	168	4/11/75
66	67	Blue	Blue	M	23	278	"
69	68	Orange	Orange	F	23	?	"
72	71	Blue	Blue	M	23	330	"
73	74	Orange	Orange	F	23	?	"
75	76	"	"	F	23	?	"
78	80	"	"	F	23	?	"
81	82	Pink	Pink	M	11	206	"
85	83	"	"	M	11	211	"
91	92	Orange	Orange	F	23	?	"
94	93	"	"	F	23	?	"
95	96	"	"	F	23	?	"

Table 5. Muskox tagged and released on Nunivak Island, 1975.

Tag No. Right	Tag No. Left	Streamer Color (Right Ear Only)	Sex	Age (Months)	Date Released	Location
C809 1/	C810	Yellow	M	11	4/2/75	Duchikthluk Cabin
C811	C812	"	"	"	"	"
C813	C814	"	"	"	"	"
C815	C816	"	"	"	"	"
C817	C818	"	"	"	"	"
C819	C820	"	"	"	"	"
84 2/		Orange	"	"	4/14/75	Dunes at North Side Duchikthluk Bay
87		"	"	"	"	"
88		"	"	"	"	"
89		"	"	"	"	"
90		"	"	"	"	"
101493/		"	"	"	"	"
10150		"	"	"	"	"

1/ Metal ear tags marked Alaska Game Commission - Juneau
2/ White plastic ear tags
3/ Metal ear tags (large - marks ?)

Table 6. Summer Census of Muskox 1965-1975, Nunivak Island.

Year	Total Muskox counted	Calves Number	Calves Percent	Removals (1)
1965	514	108	21.0	29
1966	569	110	19.3	10
1967	651	120	18.4	13
1968	714	100	14.0	19
1969	(593) (2)	(84)	14.2	63
1970	497	50	10.1	94
1971	540	71	13.1	
1972	(534)	(74)	13.9	
1973	(543)	(85)	(15.6)	
1974	No Census			
1975	569	60	10.5	42 (3)

(1) Animals removed in transplants and known mortalities.

(2) No summer census was conducted in 1969, 1972 and 1973 for which counts in the following spring are substituted. Data for 1973 are based on an incomplete census in March 1974 and may be inaccurate.

(3) An additional ten animals were removed during the fall hunt.

APPENDIX A-1

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release

McGarvey 202/343-5634

MUSKOX HUNT SCHEDULED IN ALASKA

Public hunting of muskox on the Nunivak National Wildlife Refuge will be permitted in a split season this fall and next winter, Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced in the Federal Register July 31.

The regulations take effect August 31, 1975.

No more than 50 bulls may be taken during two hunting seasons--10 from September 1 to October 31, 1975, and the rest from February 1 to March 31, 1976.

Hunting will be allowed only by permit issued by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and validated prior to the hunt by the refuge manager at the Nunivak National Wildlife Refuge.

Motorized vehicles are prohibited on Nunivak National Wildlife Refuge except during periods of complete snow cover. They may not be used within one mile of any shoreline or within one mile of any muskox or area known to be occupied by muskox. Motorized snow vehicles or boats may be used to remove legally harvested muskox. Boats are prohibited from approaching or landing on the island shoreline on Nunivak National Wildlife Refuge within one mile of any muskox or area known to be occupied by muskox.

Proposed special regulations concerning muskox hunting on Nunivak National Wildlife Refuge were published in the Federal Register on June 27, 1975. At that time it was proposed to allow the killing of 25 muskox during a fall hunt and 25 in a spring hunt, for a total of 50 muskox.

The final regulations still allow for a maximum of 50 muskox to be killed but the State of Alaska decided to limit the fall season kill to 10 animals to insure that the Nunivak Island residents can provide accommodations and visitor services on this remote island while only a limited number of visitors are present. Further minor adjustments for future hunts may be required, once these logistical questions have been answered, after experience gained during the first hunting season.

The current muskox population on Nunivak Island is approximately 600. The island can only support about 400 animals. It is proposed to reduce the herd over several years by four methods: (1) transplants to other suitable ranges in cooperation with Alaska State authorities, (2) donations to zoos and museums, (3) permit hunting under joint supervision with State authorities, and (4) slaughter of excess animals not removed by the three foregoing methods.

x x x

INFORMATION FOR FALL 1975 MUSKOX HUNT APPLICANTS

In comparison with other Alaskan hunts, this first muskox hunt will be quite different.

Hunters will find this hunt will be fairly expensive. For instance, trophy tag fees are relatively high--$500 for residents, $1,000 for non-residents. Likewise, transportation to and from the remote village of Mekoryuk (mah-KOH-ree-uk) is expensive, and support (housing, food, transportation, and perhaps guiding) by Nunivak (NEW-nah-vak) islanders will cost an amount to be determined by the hunter's negotiations with them. Some hunters may pay as much as $4,000 to $5,000 for their hunt.

The climate of Nunivak Island can be severe. Particularly in the fall, the island is likely to receive frequent storms accompanied by strong winds and rain. The climate is maritime, frequently cloudy and cool, and usually windy. Visitors should be prepared with heavy clothes, rain gear, waterproof foot gear, and adequate protection for hunting gear.

Nunivak Island is the home of a small group of Eskimos who have had only minimal contact with western society, particularly sport hunters. Mekoryuk is the only village on the island.

Most of the people speak English, although some speak it only with difficulty. Visitors will find that much of their everyday conversation is in their native language, Yupik (YOU-pik).

Nunivak is a national wildlife refuge, and as such, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has imposed certain restrictions on travel, and access on the island. They also suggest hunters check in with their office in Bethel, Alaska before going to Nunivak for the hunt. There, they will brief hunters on any refuge requirements and current conditions on the island.

As all hunts will begin at Mekoryuk, those hunters who are drawn will need to make prior arrangements for housing and logistical support. The Department of Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have worked closely with the Nunivak people in teaching them to assist hunters and the villagers will choose a number of persons for this purpose. They will be prepared to transport the hunter by boat to the hunting area, take him to where the animals are, assist in the stalk and in caring for the meat and trophy, including storage of meat in freezer equipment on the island. The hunter will be responsible for making all such arrangements with these people.

All meat from muskox taken by permittees must be salvaged for human use. Hunters may donate to the Mekoryuk villagers any meat surplus to their needs.

Hunters will be responsible for their personal transportation to Mekoryuk and return. Transportation is available on commercial jets from Anchorage or Fairbanks to Bethel, and also Wien Air Alaska flies twice weekly from Bethel to Mekoryuk. Charter aircrafts are also available in Bethel to fly to Mekoryuk.

By way of background about muskox in Alaska, you should know that they have been on Nunivak Island only since 1935. Generally, they have thrived since that time.

The problem is they have done too well. There is a serious over-population of muskox at Nunivak. This sport hunt has been designed to help solve the problem.

Mature bulls are about five feet high at the shoulder and weigh around 600 pounds. Cows average about four feet, and weigh from 350 to 400 pounds.

Muskox are gregarious and are often found in groups containing over 100 individuals, but old bulls frequently lead solitary lives. Both sexes vigorously defend the young, usually by forming a circle or line. The circle usually makes the animals safe from their traditional enemy, the wolf.

The early explorers were able to take muskox for subsistence with ease, probably because they used dogs -- which may have caused the muskox to form a circle to protect them from what appeared to be their chief predator. Sport hunters should not expect such an easy hunt, as muskox in the wild are often quite elusive.

Hunts will begin about September 1. Hunters should expect to spend from one to three weeks on the Island, depending upon weather.

The drawing to select permittees will be in Fairbanks August 18. All applicants will be notified of the results. Successful permittees will be given more information at that time.

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
GAME DIVISION

Fairbanks, Alaska
Regulation No. III-6-75 July 18, 1975

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT

The 1975-76 Alaska Fish and Game regulations 5 AAC 81.320(10) provide for an open season on bull muskoxen on Nunivak Island and provide that conditions governing the removal of animals will be publicly announced. The following conditions are hereby established to govern the taking of muskoxen in the fall 1975 hunting season on Nunivak Island.

1. Ten permits will be issued for the fall season, September 1 through October 31, each permit allowing the taking of one adult bull muskox.
2. Stipulations regarding permit application and allocation are as follows:

   a. Applications for permits will be received by Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 1300 College Road, Fairbanks, Alaska 99701 from July 20 to August 15.

   b. All applications must be made on ~~muskox~~ permit application forms available at Fish and Game offices in Fairbanks, Anchorage and Juneau.

   c. Each application must be accompanied by a non-refundable permit application fee of $10 in the form of a money order or certified check, made payable to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (A.S. 16.05.345).

   d. A public drawing will be held at the Fairbanks office of the Department at 4 p.m., August 18, to determine 10 permittees plus four alternates.

   e. Permittees will be notified that their names have been drawn and that the permits must be picked up in person from the department representative

at Mekoryuk, Nunivak Island.

Before the permit is issued to the permittee, permittee shall provide evidence: 1) that he has a valid hunting license, 2) that he has purchased the appropriate big game tag, 3) that he has made arrangements with residents of Mekoryuk, Nunivak Island for housing, food and transportation on Nunivak Island.

4. Regulations governing the hunt are as follows:

   a. Permittees must check in at the office of the Refuge Manager, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Mekoryuk, Alaska for permit validation.

   b. A valid permit must be in the personal possession of the permittee at all times the permittee is hunting muskox.

   c. Only those persons possessing a valid muskox hunting permit are allowed to take muskox.

   d. Permittees must check out with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game representative on Nunivak Island after hunting is completed and prior to leaving Nunivak Island.

James W. Brooks, Commissioner
ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

BY: Robert A. Hinman

Robert A. Hinman
Regional Supervisor
Division of Game

APPENDIX A-3

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
James W. Brooks, Commissioner

NEWS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

October 9, 1975
Contact: Dave Johnson
1300 College Road
Fairbanks, AK 99701
Phone 452-1531

MUSKOX HUNT SUCCESSFUL

The first ever muskox sport hunt in Alaska concluded successfully October 4th with the last of 10 authorized hunters taking his trophy bull on that day. Department of Fish and Game officials termed the hunt "surprisingly successful" in light of the many difficulties experienced and anticipated.

Robert Hinman, Regional Game Supervisor who was in charge of the hunt, credited the smooth operation of the hunt to the cooperation of the natives on Nunivak Island and the sportsmanlike behavior of hunters.

"The people of Nunivak generally applied a lot of effort to seeing that hunters had a good all-round experience, and cared for the hunters' needs very well," Hinman said. Hunters were housed in native homes and were, according to Hinman, offered a variety of experiences in village life, waterfowl hunting and fishing.

Hunters were taken by natives in open boats from Mekoryuk, the only village on the Island, along the shoreline of the Island to find their animal. Rough seas often made such travel risky, Hinman said. A few hunting trips were concluded in one day, but most occupied two to four days.

Much of the criticism of proposed hunts in the past has centered on the lack of sporting quality of the hunt - claims were made that a hunter could walk up and "put a gun in the muskox's ear" he said. "I talked to all the hunters after their hunt, and everyone of them said the hunt was satisfactorily sporting."

"Several hunters had difficulty approaching within 150 yards of their animal, and certainly no one was able to walk up to one," he said.

The hunt was also an economic boost for the Nunivak people, who provided support and assistance to hunters. According to Hinman, gross income to the village from the hunt probably exceeded $20,000.

The "history-making" muskox hunt was approved this year after years of controversy, and is part of a joint federal-state program to decrease the population to its range capacity, and to make the herd more productive and healthy, Hinman said. Nunivak Island is a National Wildlife Refuge administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"We hope to conduct another hunt for trophy bulls in February and March," Hinman said. "With the experience gained in this one, it may be possible to allow the take of 35 or more bulls in the next hunt," he concluded.

The Department expects to announce conditions of the spring hunt by December 15, 1975.

# # #



Once the herders reach Mekoryuk with the herd all the residents turn out to drive the animals into the corral. (Dau)



Animals to be butchered are selected and driven into small holding pens. (Dau)



From the holding pen the animals are forced up the chute to the pithing station. (Dau)



The Bering Sea Reindeer Corporation has the only State and Federal inspected reindeer slaughter plant in Alaska. (Dau)

Don't let the Friends of Animals see this!



The Eskimo capturing crews caught two-year-old animals with a net and the yearlings by bulldogging. (Hout)



Captured animals were transported by sled and snowmachine from the field to the Fish and Wildlife Service corral at Mekoryuk. (Hout)



Wild Kingdom photographers filming departure of a capture crew from Fish and Wildlife Service barn and corral. (Hout)



Russian delegation discussing transplant with Marlin Perkins and Fish and Wildlife Service representatives: (L-R) Dan St. John (Interpreter), Peter Lent (Alaska Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit), Sava Uspenski (U.S.S.R.), Vadim Tarchov (U.S.S.R.), Marlin Perkins (Host of Wild Kingdom Show). (Hout)



Muskox hunters were transported in open boats by their Native guides. (Hout)



Few hunters were able to approach this close to trophy bulls. (Hout)



One of the ten successful hunters measuring his trophy. It is anticipated that a number of the heads will "make the book". (Dau)



The wives of the guides were hired to flesh hides. Over $20,000.00 was spent on the island by the hunters. (Dau)

IN	OUT	REFUGE	COMMENTS	SIGNATURES
	11/30/77	Clarence Rhode Complex – routed within Alaska		Carla J Dau
	12/19/77	Arctic National Wildlife Range	Well done ... very readable	Mike Jacobson
	1/23/78	Izembek Natl. Wildlife Range		Mike Unior
	1-26-78	Kodiak NWR		
	1-30-78	KENAI NWR	GOOD REPORT!	
	3/10/78	Hawaiian Is. NWR		Gegentanner
3/30	4/03/78	Nisqually NWR		
4/1	4/7/78	LOWER COLUMBIA RIVER NWR		
	5/1/78	Willapa	Good Show	J Welch
	6/5/78	CWTD		Hugh H. Nell
		Ridgefield, Wash. NWR		
5/10	5/24/78	Wm. L. Finley NWR		Fatima Sekka
5/26	5/30	Malheur NWR		
6/1	6/23	Umatilla NWR	Interesting	
6/2	6/28	Klamath-Tule Lake Refuges	Good EEB	Russ Hoffman
7/7	7/13	Camas		
7/19	7/24	Crane Lake		Ed Loth
7/24	7/26	Bear Lake NWR		
8/2	8/7	Ruby Lake NWR	Excellent Report	
8/15	8/30	Malheur NWR.		
9/13	9/18	Klamath Basin	Interesting well done.	Bob Fields
9/20	9/26	Sheldon-Hart mt-Modoc	Excellent & Interesting program	
19 23/78	12/20	San Francisco Bay NWR	1/10/79	Bob Perryman
11/24/79	1/30/79	Sacramento	Well done!	Jack Helvie
2-2-79	2/6	DESERT NWR C		
-12	2-12	Salton Sea	Rej	
3-1	4/23	KOFA		
3/8	3/9	Imperial		
3/19		Cibola		
4/5		HAVASU		Ty Berry

IN	OUT	REFUGE	COMMENTS	SIGNATURES
5/3	5/4	Bosque		Don Perkins
5/14	5/14	Muleshoe		Bill Long
5/17	6/19/79	Wichita Mtns.		K Anges
6/14/79	6/25/79	Sequoyah NWR.		J. Klein
6/26		WASHITA	Hello, Mike & Lee CH	E Klett
7/25/79	7/31/79	Buffalo Lake NWR	R2	Larry D. Wynn
8/2	8/3/79	Valla Bend		Cecil E Mayfield
8/22	8-27-79	BIG LAKE		Mary Hodges
8/28	8/30	HATCHIE		J. C. Bryant
9/1/79	9/6/79	Wapanocca		Bill A Grabill
9/10/79	9/26/79	White River	Good writing	R. P. McMaster
9/27/79	10/5	Felsenthal		W H Julian
10-8	10-9	D'Arbonne		
10-12	10-16	Catahoula		S. K. Joyner
10-22	10-23	Delta		Ted Heuer
11-1	11-16-	Choctaw		Jerome Carroll
11/23	11/28	Wheeler		Thos. Z. Atkeson
11/30	12/3	Eufaula		Larry Ivy
12/1/79	12/6/79	ST. VINCENT		Robert C. Fabis
12/6	12/7/79	St Marks		Jerold Edds
1/14	1/22/80	Big Oaks		Don Kosin
1/24	1-25/80	Natl. Key Deer		Don Kosin
1/29	2-4-80	Caribbean Islands		Sean Furniss
2/10/80	2/11/80	Okefenokee NWR	Well Done	Tom Martin
2/21/80	2/23/80	Merritt Island		Howard Patterson
2/29	2/29/80	Lake Woodruff	interesting	Bruce Bibbs
3/5		Jacksonville Area Office		
3/6	3/8/80	Okefenokee		John Eadie
3/26	4/22/80	Chickasaw Complex		Jill Mann
4/24	4/25/80	Piedmont		Ronnie Shell

IN	OUT	REFUGE	COMMENTS	SIGNATURES
	5/2/80	Cape Romain	Interesting Report	[signature]
5/80	5/12	Santee NWR	Alaska is where it's at! Nice Job of Reporting - Hope to see you	Paul E. Ferguson
5/14	5/19/80	Carolina Sandhills		[signature]
5/21	5/22/80	Pungo		[signature]
5/23	5/26	Mattamuskeet		[signature]
5/13	5/28	Mattamuskeet N.C.	Envy you	[signature]
6/17	7/1	Back Bay	Glad someone enjoys that landscape	Glen Bond
7/2	7/7	Dismal Swamp		Ralph Keef
7/7	7/9	Presque		A Olson
7/11		Chincoteague		[signature]
7/17	7/17	Blackwater		[signature]
7/28	7/31	Mason Neck		[signature]
8/4	8/7	Eastern Neck		Phillip J Feige
8/8	8/12	Prime Hook		[signature]
8/14	8/20/80	Bombay Hook		[signature]
8/24	8/24/80	Brigantine		[signature]
8/26	8/27/80	Ninigret		Don V. Tiller
8/29	9/8/80	TARGET ROCK		Roger Spaulding
9/10	9/19/80	Great Swamp		J. Killian
9/24	9/29/80	Iroquois		[signature]
10/1	10/6/80	Erie		Bill McCoy
10/14	10/21	Iroquois		Ed Chandler
10/22	OCT. 30 1980 MONTEZUMA N W REFUGE			Bill Hey
11/10	11-25-80	Massasoit		[signature]
11/28	12/2/80	Rosehorn		Doug Mull
12/4	12/11/80	Parker River NWR.		
	12/19	Great Meadows		David Ball

IN	OUT	REFUGE	COMMENTS	SIGNATURES