

UPPER YUKON RIVER INVESTIGATIONS, 1970

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INTRODUCTION

I have tried to be as informative as possible on all important events that have taken place this summer. Also, I have included any information that I feel helpful to the future Upper Yukon River biologists. Purpose of these investigations were to document commercial salmon catches in the Upper Yukon River above Ruby and to obtain age, sex and size samples of these catches.

INITIAL PROCEDURES

I arrived in Fairbanks the 2nd of July and spent the day getting into living quarters, becoming acquainted with job duties, procedures, checking on airline departure times and arrivals and charter flying information. A full day or even two should be allowed for these acquaintance procedures for next year's biologist.

After charter flying this summer with Al Wright's Flying Service, I would highly recommend him for future years.

On the 3rd of July I chartered to Rampart, Tanana and Nenana. I met and talked to some of the fishermen, collected tags, and looked for unlicensed fishermen. I contacted the fish buyers in Tanana and Rampart, Paul Beard and Ira Weisner respectively. The buyers as well as the fishermen had many questions pertaining to licenses and regulations that I tried to answer.

I feel that this initial introduction to these villages is very necessary for the field biologist. It gives him insight for the job at hand, lets him make acquaintances with the buyers and fishermen, and gives him a chance to find out what accommodations are available at the different villages.

FOOD AND LODGING

When in Rampart, I was able to stay in one of Weisner's cabins for one dollar a night. I brought my own food and camping equipment.

At Tanana I was able to sleep and eat at Paul Beard's place with no cost because I helped with odd jobs around the place. However, lodging is available for State employees at the hospital in Tanana.

In Fort Yukon I stayed at the Fort Yukon Hotel. Cost for room was \$9.00 a night while breakfast was \$2.50 and supper was \$4.00. This was about the cheapest lodging in Fort Yukon.

When at Nenana I slept outdoors at the campsite just outside of town. Again I brought my own sleeping and eating equipment.

Two purchases of food were made this summer by F.P.O. This food was used on trips away from Fairbanks.

CONTACTS

Good contacts in Nenana are: Thomas Albert, Reinhart Rupprecht and Reverend John Philips since he knows all the local town people.

At Tanana the buyer Paul Beard and the fishermen Lester Erhart and Tod Kozevnikoff are good contacts.

At Rampart the buyer, Mr. Weisner, and fishermen John Zeller, Jesse Evans, Daniel Wiehl and Peter Evans are good contacts.

Tom and Joe Carrol and Richard Strom are good contacts at Fort Yukon. At Fort Yukon there was subsistence fishing only in 1970.

SAMPLING

Two sampling trips were made this year to Rampart and Tanana. On the first trip I did not have any formaldehyde with me for preserving eggs

from king salmon. This was a big mistake, because on the second trip there were no female kings caught. It is highly recommended that the field biologist be fully prepared for obtaining fecundity samples on his first sampling trip. Formaldehyde can be obtained at the Fairbanks office from the Game Division.

The best time for the field biologist to arrive in the village for sampling is very early morning (7 or 8 a.m.), or mid-afternoon. This insures him of sampling either the morning or evening catch, since wheels and nets are checked in the morning and at evening.

I have found that a better relationship will exist between field biologist and fisherman if the biologist offers to help the fisherman pick his nets or check his wheel. This brings the two people closer together and the fisherman feels much more at ease when around the biologist. Also, the fisherman doesn't mind if you sample his fish and he passes the word on to other fishermen.

Since sampling at Nenana is somewhat convenient, I made five trips by auto to Nenana. Nenana is also very convenient for obtaining fecundity samples.

A total of 264 chum salmon were sampled this summer, while a total of 253 king salmon were sampled.

FAIRBANKS

Approximately one-half of my time was spent in the Fairbanks area. Besides arranging for flights, I was busy contacting buyers such as Raymond Accola, Pete Merry, Les Fickes and others. I contacted all the super-markets and local grocery stores to make sure they purchased fish from

licensed individuals. All roadside fish stands were checked out. I made periodic checks with Fairbanks commercial fishermen to find out when they would put their gear in for fishing.

When in town, I checked with the Fairbanks office for messages, did my paper work and made my phone calls there. I edited fish tickets and kept a current record of the total fish sold. I talked to all people who came into the Fairbanks office of Fish and Game wanting information or explanations on commercial fishing.

MISCELLANEOUS

The king salmon are much more red in coloration in the interior than at the mouth. The tip of the nose of the king salmon is white in coloration on about 95% of the fish. The fish definitely also have a greater amount of body slime in the interior than at the mouth. This is true for both king and chum salmon.

The upper river was very high this year and fishermen were late getting out nets and fishwheels for fear of damage from driftwood.

Paul Beard said the chums started hitting Nenana fairly strong the 13th of July.

Fishermen commented that the chum run was much better this year than last.

Records of the catches of five upper Yukon fishermen are enclosed. From these the peak of the run through each village can be seen.

Observations made by Ron Regnart, July 16:

1. "Saw two operating fishwheels (wheel approximately one mile below Chena River mouth on the north bank; wheel approximately

two miles below Chena River on south bank--Howard Luke's fish-wheel); also saw six other nonoperating wheels in a ten-mile stretch below Chena River. I also saw four short gill nets along this stretch of river.

"At Nenana I observed five operating fishwheels and two nonoperating wheels.

"The five operating wheels are: two of Thomas Albert's, two of Edmond Lord's and one R. Reinhart. Nonoperating ones: one is Coghills's and the other belongs to a relation of Ed Lord's.

- 2a. "Ruby fishwheel catches average eight to nine pounds each (kings). Excellent catches, but many small kings. Good chum run as sufficient numbers are taken by running wheels during night only. Billy Captain purchased commercial fish license.
- b. "Overall there didn't appear to be any increased effort over previous seasons in Ruby, Rampart and Tanana. By talking to the fishermen I found out there has been no increased effort in Nenana or Fort Yukon but a slight increase in Rampart.
- c. "Two possible controls: (1) establish quota for combined commercial and subsistence harvest; (2) allow fishing for 3-5 days a week only, to 'boost' escapement."

Gilbert Stephens says the peak went through Stephens Village July 8-10. Two fishwheels are in Stephens Village this year. One is across the main channel and one-half mile upriver from the village. The other is two miles upriver from the village.

William Pitka's camp is at the mouth of the Ray River.

I noticed that all summer a majority of small kings were taken and only in set nets were the larger kings taken.

Ed Lord and Reinhart say that a fish loses half its weight by the time it is made into strips.

I noticed four fishwheels in the vicinity of Fort Yukon. One belongs to Richard Strome, one each to Tom and Joe Carroll, and I don't know the owner of the last. Richard Strome thinks the peak of the king run came through Fort Yukon between July 19-22.

Ed Milam obtained an intent to operate form--he is from 12-mile Richardson. Miss Stress obtained an intent to operate form, but really is only a helper of Thomas Albert and does not actually buy or sell fish.

I was not able to check out wheels and nets on the Chena and Tanana Rivers because Protection was busy and couldn't spare a man. When they could spare a man I was busy with a Geophysical Services, Inc., survey project. I went to Stephens Village and observed G.S.I. testing on July 31.

The weights for fish recorded on the fish tickets are weights given for dressed fish. There are no whole weights because buyers buy only dressed fish.

REGULATIONS

In the commercial fishing regulations it says that commercial, gear and vessel license applications will be sent to the village postmasters before the fishing season begins. This was not the case in Nenana because fishermen had to write, and in some cases, go to Fairbanks for application forms.

I also found that the commercial fishermen were ill informed on the deadline date of June 1 for the purchasing of gear licenses. Since the

Alaska commercial fishing regulations booklet is one that may be very hard to read for Native and white fishermen alike, I suggest that a shortened version of the fishing regulations be sent to the village postmasters. Also, since there are only about 31 commercial fishermen on the Yukon, each one should be sent this shortened version (two pages, like we had this year is nearly sufficient).

A number of fishermen were drastically concerned about the 2,000 quota for kings. Their main fear came from the fact that it was possible for 1,500 kings to be caught and sold commercially at Ruby, Galena and Tanana. This would leave only 500 to be sold at Rampart and Nenana and upriver. Thus, a person like Thomas Albert or Edmond Lord, who depend solely on fishing and trapping for a living, may not be able to sell enough fish to make a living before the quota is reached.

It is my belief that most of the commercial fishermen do not record all sales. They are afraid of the 2,000 quota. Also, the buyers this summer (early) were buying only the large king salmon to keep the quota number down. By large king I mean in excess of ten pounds dressed. Therefore, I am sure that if all kings would have been bought this summer, the 2,000 quota would have been reached.

I have no immediate suggestions as to what the regulations (possible controls) should be because there will be problems arising no matter what is decided upon. The present situation is fine if the 2,000 limit is not reached and everyone has his chance to catch fish, but this will not be the case in a good run of fish.

Since many of the fishermen have presented to me the problem presented in the previous paragraphs, and many others (mostly general questions), I

think a trip to each of the villages of Tanana, Rampart and Nenana by the area biologist might be helpful in answering some of the questions and learning some of the difficulties the fishermen have.

It has been mentioned to me that the second week in November would be best for Tanana and Nenana, but for Rampart I don't know because of their ever-changing population.

COMMERCIAL FISHERY INFORMATION

Tables 1, 2 and 3 are lists of commercial fishermen, buyers and Fairbanks retail fish outlets, respectively. Table 4 presents commercial catch data by buyer and type of gear. Table 5 presents commercial catches made by each fisherman. Finally, Table 6 shows daily salmon catches made by fishermen in various locations.

CONCLUSION

I believe one man can handle the sampling on the upper Yukon if the operation is run in much the same way as it was this year.

I feel that we have been very successful this year in obtaining information on the upper Yukon and if it doesn't rain so much next summer, we can accomplish so much more.

Table 1. Upper Yukon commercial fishermen, 1970

<u>NAME</u>	<u>Y NUMBER</u>	<u>GEAR</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>ADF&G NO.</u>
<u>Healy</u>				
John M. Zeller	Y-644	Set Net (8-1/2 & 5-1/2)	Fished at Rampart	7348
Lorena Zeller	-	-		
<u>Ruby</u>				
Albert Yrjama	Y-512	Fishwheel		2976
John W. Honea	Y-745	Set Net	Ruby + 20 miles	7363
Billy Captain	?	Fishwheel		?
<u>Manley Hot Springs</u>				
William Burk Jr.	?	Fishwheel		2628
<u>Stevens Village</u>				
Charles A. Evans	?	Fishwheel	Did not fish	7365
William Pitka Sr.	Y-526	Set Net	Mouth of Rodo River above Rampart	2989
<u>Tanana</u>				
Lee Edwin Sr.	Y-500	Fishwheel	Did not fish	?
Paul D. Beard	Y-503	Fishwheel & Set Net	Uses Fishwheel	7362
Wilfred C. Kozevnikoff	Y-505	Set Net (8-1/2 & 5-1/2)	Uses Set Net only	2977
Eileen L. Kozevnikoff	-	Fishwheel		
Lester Erhart	Y-527	Fishwheel		?
<u>Nenana</u>				
Rupprecht Reinhart	Y-502	Fishwheel & Set Net		1645
Thomas M. Albert	Y-504	Fishwheel (2)		2978
Edmond Lord	?	Fishwheel (2)		?

Table 1. (continued) Upper Yukon commercial fishermen, 1970

<u>NAME</u>	<u>Y NUMBER</u>	<u>GEAR</u>	<u>OTHER</u>	<u>ADF&G NO.</u>
<u>Rampart</u>				
Daniel Wiehl	Y-749	Set Net		NONE
Henry Wiehl	Y-522	Set Net		1642
John Wiehl	?	Fishwheel		7905
Alfred Wiehl	Y-524	Set Net		9540
Kilbourn George	Y-514	Set Net		7364
Peter T. Evans	Y-518	Fishwheel		1767
Jesse Evans	?	Fishwheel		?
Otto Amman	Y-702	Set Net		?
Ann R. Taylor	Y-642	Set Net		2618
Georgianna Lincoln	Y-748	Set Net	Fish in Rampart resides in Fairbanks	7366
Turak J. Newman	Y-519	Set Net		2972
William Carlo	Y-507	Set Net	2111 Southern, Fairbanks sometimes in Rampart	7355
<u>Fairbanks</u>				
Edward Mayo	Y-746	Fishwheel		?
Raymond G. Accola	Y-744	Set Net	Does not fish	?
Felix F. Rasmus	Y-516	Fishwheel	On Tanana	2984
Charles H. Anderson	Y-743	Fishwheel		7360

Table 2. Upper Yukon fish buyers, 1970

Glenn Miller - 226 Northward Bldg., Fairbanks, AK.

Pete Merry - 1206 Coppet, Fairbanks, AK.

Les Fickes - Box 2618, Fairbanks, AK.

Paul Beard - Tanana, AK.

Mr. Weisner - Rampart, AK.

Ed Milam - 12 Mile Richardson

Raymond Accola - 6-1/2 Mile Steese Hwy., Fairbanks, AK.

Table 3. Retail fish outlets in Fairbanks, 1970

Safeway: Buys king salmon from R.P.M. Fisheries Anch., and
W.P. Johnson Jr., Anch. A little from Glenn Miller.

B and B Center: Pete Merry only.

Market Basket: Pete Merry only.

College Inn Grocery: Pete Merry only.

Foodland: R.P.M. Fisheries Anch., Les Fickes.

B and M Food Mart: Does not sell salmon.

Steese Market: Pete Merry only.

Food Market near Hamilton Acres: Does not sell salmon.

Fish Stands: Three, owned by Felix Rasmus.

Table 4. King salmon commercial catch statistics by buyer and type of gear, 1970 (through August 2)

Buyer	Fishwheel			Gill Net			Combined Gear		
	Total fish	Total pounds ^{1/}	Av. wt.	Total fish	Total pounds ^{1/}	Av. wt.	Total fish	Total pounds ^{1/}	Av. wt.
Raymond Accola	31	482	15.5	251	2,500	9.9	282	2,982	10.6
Pete Merry	179	1,607	8.9	337	4,409	13.1	516	6,016	11.6
Les Fickes				57	951	16.7	57	951	16.7
Glenn Miller	43	<u>2/</u>	<u>2/</u>				43	<u>2/</u>	<u>2/</u>
Ira Weisner	183	1,201	6.5	167	1,470	8.8	350	2,671	7.6
Paul Beard	36	395	11.0	113	2,298	20.3	149	2,693	18.1
Paul Beard				73	<u>2/</u>	<u>2/</u>	73	<u>2/</u>	<u>2/</u>
Reinhard Rupprecht				18	302	16.8	18	302	16.8
Wilfred Kozevnikoff				23	392	17.0	23	392	17.0
Thomas Albert	105	689	6.6				105	689	6.6
Edmond Lord	6	64	10.7				6	64	10.7
Edmond Lord	9	<u>2/</u>	<u>2/</u>				9	<u>2/</u>	<u>2/</u>
Relix Rasmus	5	41	8.2				5	41	8.2
Totals with weights	545	4,479	8.2	966	12,322	12.8	1,511	16,801	11.1
Totals without weights	<u>52</u>			<u>73</u>			<u>125</u>		
Grand Totals	597			1,039			1,636		

^{1/} Dressed weights.

^{2/} Information unavailable

Table 5. Commercial catches by fishermen in subdistrict 334-40, 1970 (through August 2)

Fisherman	King Salmon	Chum Salmon
Thomas Albert	105	356
Dan Wiehl	85	
Peter Evans	304	
Turak Newman	183	
George Lincoln	18	
Ann Taylor	40	
Arthur Mayo	219	
John Zeller	216	
Reinhard Rupprecht	18	
Wilfred Kozevnikoff	193	
Jesse Evans	101	
John Wiehl	31	
Kilbourn George	4	
Lester Erhort	36	
Felix Rasmus	5	205
Paul Beard	73	
Ed Lord	15	346
Totals	1,646	907

Table 6. Daily salmon catches for selected fishermen, upper Yukon River, 1970

Date	Billy Captain ^{1/}	John Honea ^{2/}	Tod Kozcynnikoff ^{2/}	Richard Strom ^{1/}		Thomas Albert ^{1/}	
	Ruby King	Ruby + 20 miles King	Tanana King	Ft. Yukon King	Chum	Nenana King	Chum
6/21		1					
6/22							
6/23			1				
6/24			1				
6/25	1		1				
6/26	2		1				
6/27	5	2	1				
6/28	4	8	1				
6/29	9	3					
6/30	15	5	6				
7/1	19	5	6	1			
7/2	17	11	9	1			
7/3	64	22	12				
7/4	122	29	18	1		1	
7/5	14	12	17				
7/6	86	20	19	7		3	
7/7		16	32	7		1	
7/8	42	17	28	7		1	
7/9	39	33	12	4		4	
7/10		20		9		6	
7/11	30	11	4	8		16	
7/12	10	11	14	7		1	
7/13	13	7	8	4		8	
7/14	7	5	12	8		22	
7/15	5	6	10	13		23	3
7/16				5		19	4
7/17				9		22	6
7/18				3		23	15
7/19				41		53	112
7/20				6		26	40
7/21				9 (morning check only)		13	50
7/22						12	52
7/23						2	93
7/24						5	?
7/25						5	142
7/26						4	78
7/27						3	66
7/28						4	76
7/29						1	61
7/30						3	86
7/31							40
8/1							91

^{1/} Fishwheel operated.

^{2/} Gill net operated.