

THE
ALASKA HUNTER'S GUIDEBOOK

State of Alaska
William A. Egan, Governor

Department of Fish and Game
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Division of Game,
Frank Jones, Acting Director

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The Alaska Hunter's Guidebook idea was conceived by Area Management Biologist Larry Jennings at Tok. Since then most of the Game Division staff in the Alaska Department of Fish and Game has contributed to making this an accurate, useful guide to hunters new in the 49th state.

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Photos by members of the Department of Fish and Game staff except where indicated.

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Drawings at the beginning of each chapter depict primitive weapons used for hunting by peoples of the Alaska region.



INTRODUCTION

Alaska, America's last great reservoir of wide open spaces, offers unique opportunities to the hunter. Game species rare, or even extinct, in the continental United States are plentiful in Alaska. A boy who dreams of stalking a monster moose, or an old hunter who still yearns to confront a golden-haired grizzly on a frosty alpine morning can yet fulfill those dreams in the 49th state.

"Where can I go?" and "How should I hunt?" are questions the Alaska Hunter's Guidebook attempts to answer. The guidebook should be especially helpful to new arrivals in Alaska, and to hunters planning their own expeditions to the last frontier.

Additional information about many of the species mentioned here can be found in the "Alaska Wildlife Notebook Series" leaflets and in the booklet, "Upland Game Birds of Forest and Tundra." The current Alaska hunting regulations booklet, including the map of game management units, is indispensable when planning a hunting trip. Waterfowl regulations and trapping regulations are also available. The "Alaska Fishing Guide" and sport fishing regulations, like the publications mentioned above, are available from Alaska Department of Fish and Game offices; regulations are also available at sporting goods stores and many community stores throughout the state.

THE HUNTER'S RESPONSIBILITY AND THE REGULATIONS

When a man takes his gun and ventures afield he automatically assumes the responsibilities of the hunt. Traditions nearly as old as human existence and modern laws that make good sense have been combined to insure plenty of game for another day's outing and a pleasant experience for the hunter and his companions.

In Alaska, knowing the hunting regulations is the hunter's responsibility. Before venturing afield he should read through the booklet of Alaska hunting regulations and become familiar with its contents. Seasons and bag limits often vary between game management units and should be checked when moving from one unit to another. Occasionally unusual field conditions in Alaska may call for emergency changes in seasons and bag limits. The changes are publicly announced by the Commissioner of the Department of Fish and Game in Alaskan news media.

A brief summary of the regulations is provided below. This list is by no means complete; the regulation booklet should always be consulted for specific and complete information. New regulations go into effect on July 1 each year.

A resident hunting license may be purchased by anyone who has resided in Alaska for 12 consecutive months. All others must purchase nonresident hunting licenses. Nonresident license holders purchase big game tags for the big game species they intend to hunt. Resident and nonresident hunters are both required to obtain, and use, harvest tickets. Consult the regulation booklet to determine current requirements concerning big game tag fees, harvest ticket requirements and related matters.

All licenses and big game tags are valid throughout the calendar year even though the "regulatory year" is July 1 - June 30. The harvest tickets are valid during this regulatory year.

Alaska has no minimum caliber restrictions, except that rimfire weapons may not be used to take big game animals. Centerfire handguns as well as crossbows, longbows and spears are legal weapons, with the exception that bows may not be used to take brown-grizzly bears in Units 1 through 5.

It is illegal to shoot on, from or across a highway or other public road.

Game may not be taken from a motor vehicle or with the aid of artificial lights or radio communications or with the aid of dogs. Dogs may be used to hunt black bears but a permit is necessary. There are no illegal shooting times in Alaska except for waterfowl hunting.

Skins and skulls of brown, grizzly and polar bears must be sealed by the Department within 30 days after the animal is taken.

Nonresidents are required to be accompanied by registered guides when hunting brown, grizzly or polar bears or sheep.

Helicopters cannot be used in any manner for hunting, including transportation of hunters, game or hunting equipment.

Meat of "wild food animals" (see under definitions in hunting regulation booklet) must be salvaged for human consumption.

Sheep, bison and brown or grizzly bears may not be taken in any unit on the same day the hunter is airborne. The same prohibition applies to black or glacier bears in Unit 5 and any big game in Unit 15(B).

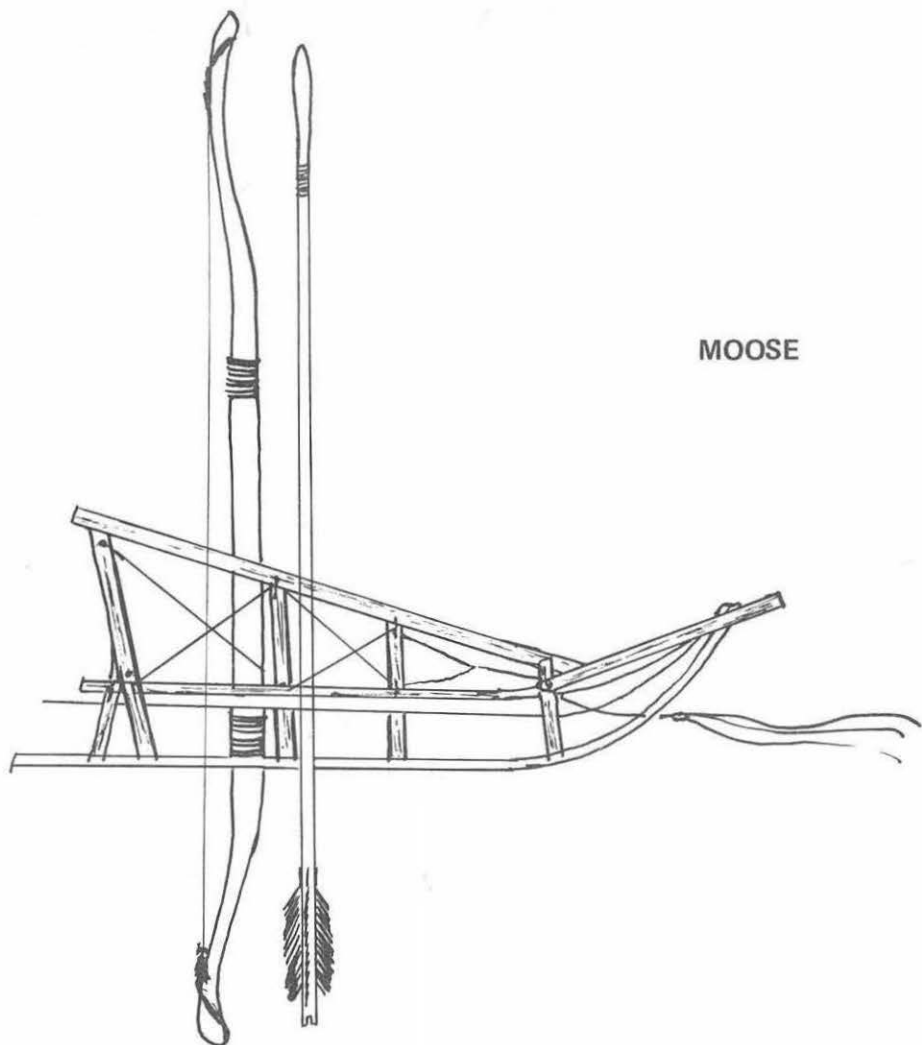
Certain fur animals, such as marten, otter and beaver, are protected and can be taken only during the open trapping season. A trapping license is required.

Wolf, wolverine, fox, coyote and lynx may be taken during the open season when the sportsman has either a hunting or trapping license.

When all or part of a season is restricted to the taking of one sex only, sufficient portions of the sex organs must be left naturally attached to conclusively indicate its sex (until the animal has been prepared for consumption).

With few exceptions, meat and skins of game cannot be sold or bartered.

It's worth stating again that the above is a summary only of some of the more important regulations. Read the regulation booklet thoroughly before hunting!



MOOSE

Moose seasons open in August in much of Alaska, and usually extend through November with part of September and October closed in some areas. The current hunting regulations list seasons in specific areas.

During August and early September, lakes and ponds are likely spots to find moose when they are feeding upon aquatic vegetation. While good hunting is possible early in the season, when the meat is generally considered to be in its

prime, the most productive hunting is usually in mid and late September. At this time, the bulls are entering the rut and are beginning to roam in search of cows. Also, deciduous trees and shrubs have lost most of their leaves and the animals are easier to see. By late September, moose in mountainous areas are often found above timberline in willow draws where they gather into "rutting herds." During November many moose are still at timberline, although deep snow will force them to

lower elevations. Some moose remain at lower elevations throughout most of the year.

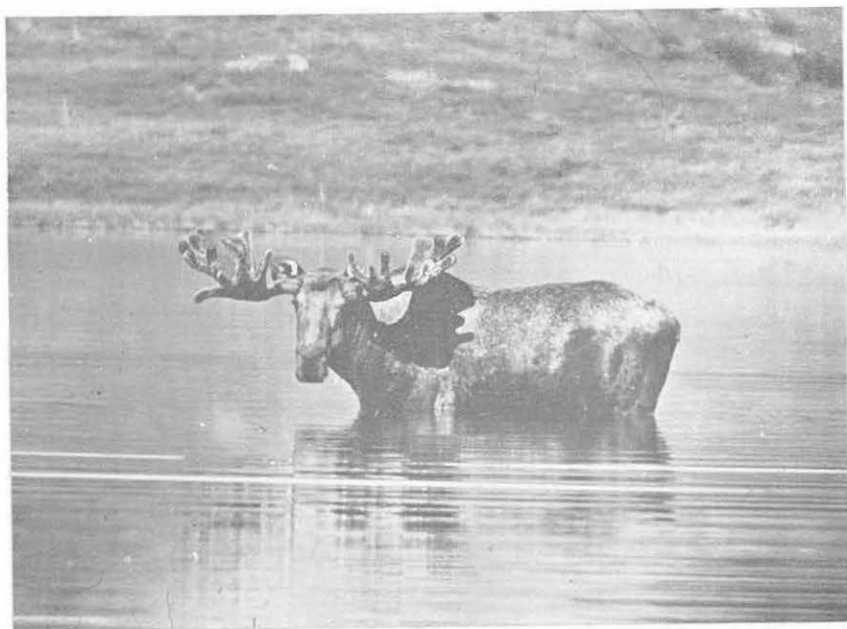
One favorite method of hunting at the beginning of moose season is to float down rivers and streams in rubber boats, canoes or riverboats. The hunter stops periodically in likely looking spots -- meadows, willow patches or shallow ponds -- and searches an area until he either locates a moose, or determines none are there.

Other hunters prefer to fly into good moose country and hunt out of a base camp, arranging to be picked up a week or so later. This method is often more successful and economical in the long run than the road-hunting technique utilized by many Alaskans.

By early September, bull moose may sometimes be called up by scraping with a stick on an old moose shoulder blade or dead tree trunk, or by imitating a lovelorn moose with a high-pitched nasal grunt. Later in the season, especially in November, hunters are usually aided by the presence of tracking snow. November weather can be very chilly. Minus 30°F temperatures are not uncommon.

Moose hunting can be hard work. An adult moose weighs from 800 to more than 1,400 pounds, and Alaska law requires that the meat be salvaged. A rule of thumb practiced by many experienced Alaskans is to never shoot a moose over one-quarter mile from where you can drive your truck, aircraft or boat. Off-the-road vehicles and a

Harry Merriam



strong back are a great help in getting into prime moose country, and for hauling the meat out.

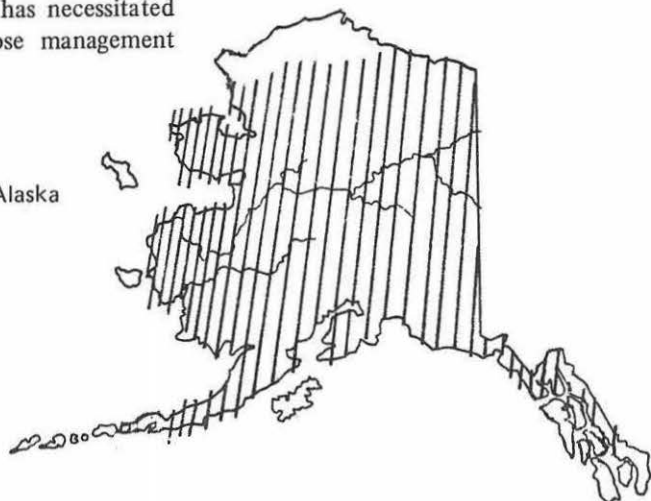
Rifles of the 30-06 class are generally recommended for moose hunting. A moose can be a tough animal to knock down and kill even if hit in a vital area with less powerful cartridges. Therefore, it is a good idea to carry plenty of gun. Hunting conditions vary considerably throughout the state and it is difficult to generalize on equipment needed. In some places scoped rifles are desirable since shooting may occur at any range the hunter believes he can make a clean kill. In other locations heavy timber makes scopes useless and iron sights are preferred for close-range shooting.

Since World War II, Alaska's human population has grown enormously. Because there are many more hunters in the 49th state than there were 30 years ago, and because many moose hunts are based from a limited Alaskan road system, hunting pressure has mounted to significant levels near the largest Alaskan towns. This vastly increased local hunting pressure has necessitated a closer look at moose management techniques.

Alaskans are beginning to realize that when maximum yield of huntable moose is a desirable goal, as it now is near Anchorage and Fairbanks, proper proportions of bulls and cows must be harvested each year. Cow moose seasons have been known for a long time by game managers as the thriftiest way for hunters to benefit from the most hunting without damaging a herd. Since many Alaskan hunters are more interested in moose meat than trophy racks ('you can't eat antlers'), cow moose hunting is becoming more popular all the time. Cow moose seasons also are useful and necessary management techniques.

The largest moose trophies are taken from the Kenai Peninsula and the Alaska Peninsula. Trophies with antlers exceeding 60 inches in spread may be taken most anywhere in Southcentral or Interior Alaska if a hunter is lucky and persistent.

Range of moose in Alaska

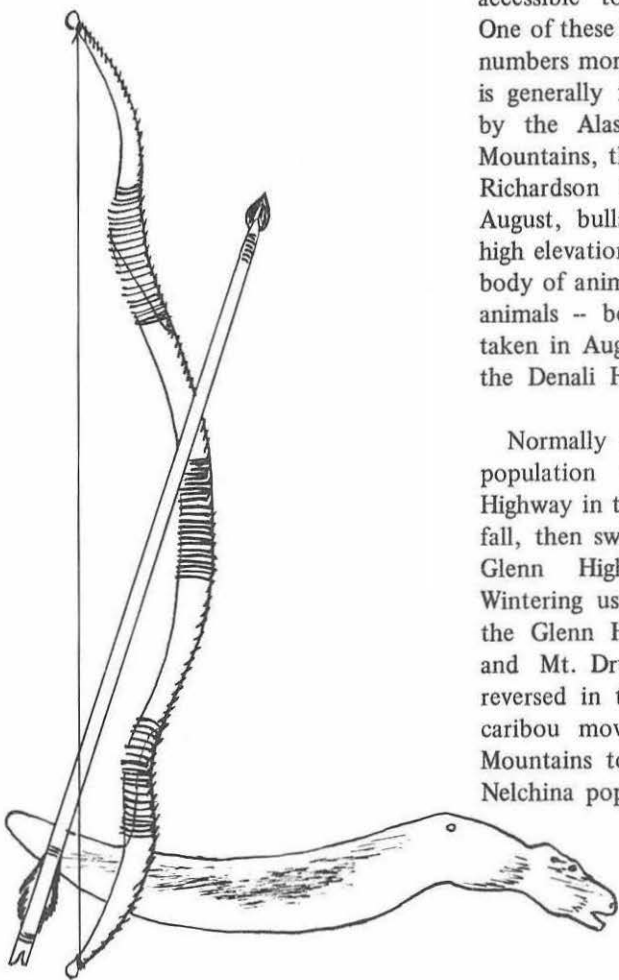


CARIBOU

South of the Yukon River the caribou season begins early in August and continues through the winter, usually until the end of March. Special openings and closures are enforced in certain game management units within this vast area. There are more than 12 distinct populations of caribou that include in excess of a quarter of a million animals in this portion of Alaska.

Only a few caribou populations are accessible to the average sportsman. One of these is the Nelchina herd, which numbers more than 60,000 animals and is generally found in an area bounded by the Alaska Range, the Talkeetna Mountains, the Glenn Highway and the Richardson Highway. During early August, bulls are usually scattered at high elevations and do not join the main body of animals until September. Some animals -- both bulls and cows -- are taken in August through October along the Denali Highway.

Normally a portion of the Nelchina population crosses the Richardson Highway in the vicinity of Paxson in the fall, then swings south and crosses the Glenn Highway near Chistochina. Wintering usually takes place south of the Glenn Highway near Mt. Sanford and Mt. Drum. This movement is reversed in the spring as the Nelchina caribou move back to the Talkeetna Mountains to calve. A portion of the Nelchina population does not cross the



Richardson Highway but, instead, moves south and is accessible from the Glenn Highway between approximately Eureka and Glennallen.

Further north, the Steese-Fortymile herd, when last counted, numbered more than 40,000 head. This population is generally located between the Steese and Taylor highways in Central Alaska. For many years, these animals summered north of the Steese Highway and crossed it during the fall migrations; however, this movement has not occurred for several years. Recently, individuals from the Steese-Fortymile population have summered south of the Steese Highway.

Steese-Fortymile caribou usually cross the Taylor Highway on their southerly migration to the winter grounds during October and November, although crossings occasionally occur during September. Because these animals usually winter near the Taylor, hunting is often good from late October until either the road closes, or severe winter weather confines most hunters closer to hearth and home.

Caribou movements are hard to predict. A change in movement patterns is not cause for alarm for the welfare of the herd even though changes can be annoying to hunters and spectators.

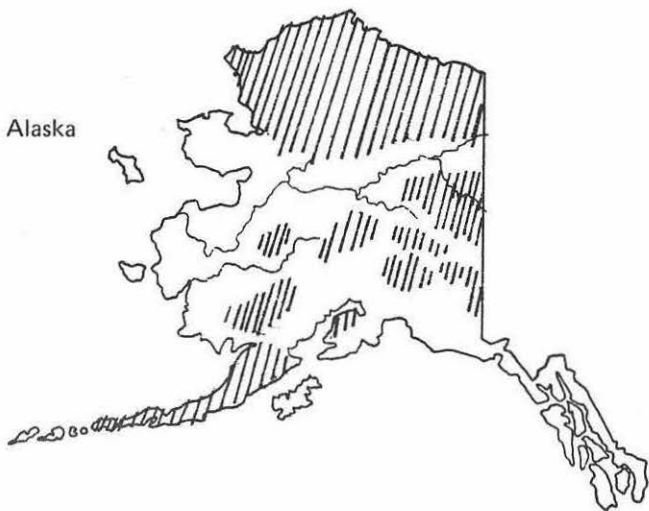
Most Alaskan caribou weigh from 150 to 400 pounds and are not particularly difficult to kill. Since they are often shot at long ranges in open country, a flat-shooting rifle, preferably equipped with a scope, is desirable. Under certain conditions, especially in the spring along the Richardson Highway when caribou are found in the spruce forests, a scoped rifle is not necessary and may, in fact, prove to be a handicap.

To Alaskans, caribou, like moose, are a prized meat animal as well as a sporting trophy. Many families still depend on moose and caribou meat to get economically through the winter.

Novice hunters should try to remember these facts when hunting caribou:

1. On treeless tundra, where

Range of caribou in Alaska





Harry Merriam

caribou are found, distances are hard to estimate. It is easy to underestimate shooting distances under these conditions.

2. Caribou are herd animals. Never shoot into a group of caribou, especially when they are moving. The result will almost always be more than one animal killed or maimed. Shoot only at single, isolated animals, preferably those that are broadside to you.

3. If you intend to backpack your caribou to the road, be very careful about where and how many of these tundra deer you shoot. It is a real man-sized job to lift and carry half of a bull caribou even a few yards. To try this more than one-fourth mile uphill is a killing and time-consuming chore. Remember, you are morally and legally obligated not to waste meat from the caribou you shoot.

4. Shoulder or neck shots may be best when caribou hunting. Caribou can travel a long way when wounded.

The snow machine has helped in providing access to caribou away from highway and in transporting the meat. This provides for a better distribution of the harvest.

The largest caribou trophies in Alaska are normally reported from the Alaska Peninsula and the Nelchina herd. The largest racks and heaviest animals, however, have been taken from a population of about 200 animals located on Adak Island in the Aleutians. Some of the Adak caribou bulls weigh more than 700 pounds. A world record may be awaiting some lucky hunter fortunate enough to hunt on Adak. Unfortunately, the island's remoteness and poor transportation facilities make public hunting there almost impossible.

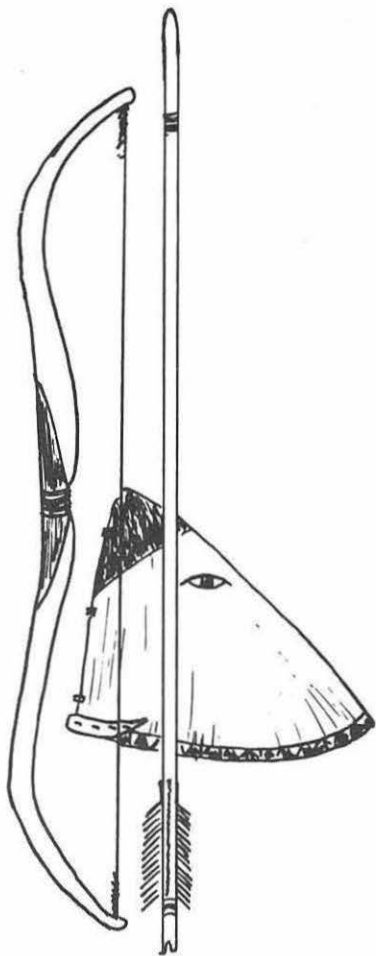
ROOSEVELT ELK

Elk hunting in Alaska is possible only on Afognak Island and nearby Raspberry Island where healthy populations of animals have developed from a 1928 transplant. There are seven main subpopulations on these two islands, with the so-called Interior population being the largest. Elk season usually opens in August and closes in December.

Elk hunting can be a very exasperating experience. Rough terrain, high winds, drizzling rain and fog are generally the conditions one is likely to encounter. Chartered aircraft available in Kodiak are the most popular means of transportation to Afognak. Because of poor weather, hunters should be prepared to spend several extra days waiting on weather. Boat hunts are popular and often productive; however, arrangements for boat hunts are often difficult to make and weather is always a problem.

The Roosevelt elk in Alaska is, on the average, the heaviest of the elk. Large bulls may exceed 1,200 pounds in weight. Though large in body, Afognak elk produce antlers that are somewhat shorter beamed and narrower in spread than those found in Oregon and Washington. For this reason, the Alaska Big Game Trophy Club has created a separate classification for Afognak Roosevelt elk.

During the early portion of the season, elk are often found on alpine meadows and brush-covered hillsides where they are easier to spot. Later in the fall, elk move to the lower elevations where they range in dense spruce forest until spring.





Ed Klinkhart

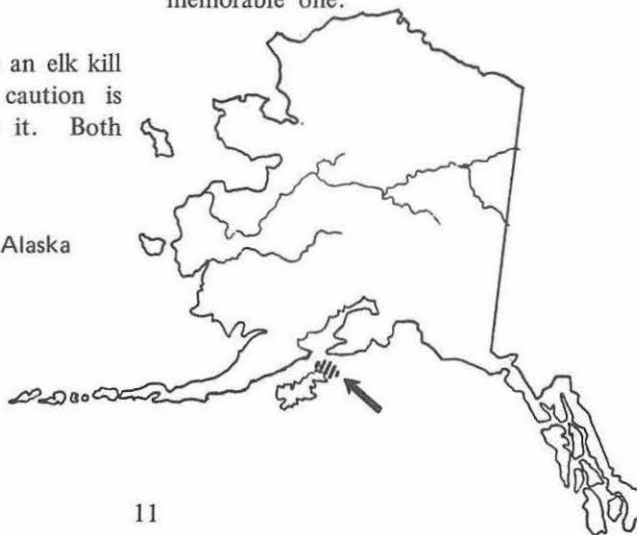
Any rifle .270-caliber or larger is adequate for elk hunting. High on the list of hunting gear should be sturdy rain gear, waterproof tents and fuel to start fires. Even the most experienced woodsmen have trouble building a fire during the rainy season. Packboards, meat saws, etc., are useful items as elk must be butchered to load into an airplane. Several cabins are available for hunter use in good elk hunting areas of Afognak. These cabins may be reserved by writing the U. S. Forest Service, Kodiak.

If it is necessary to leave an elk kill for any length of time, caution is advised when returning to it. Both

Raspberry and Afognak islands have substantial bear populations. It isn't unusual for a hunter to return to his kill only to discover that a bear has assumed ownership. Deer are also found on these islands, allowing a sportsman the opportunity to take home a black-tail in addition to a trophy elk.

Hunters may find weather, terrain and vegetation major obstacles to their hunts. But one thing for sure, successful or not, the hunt will always be a memorable one.

Range of Roosevelt elk in Alaska



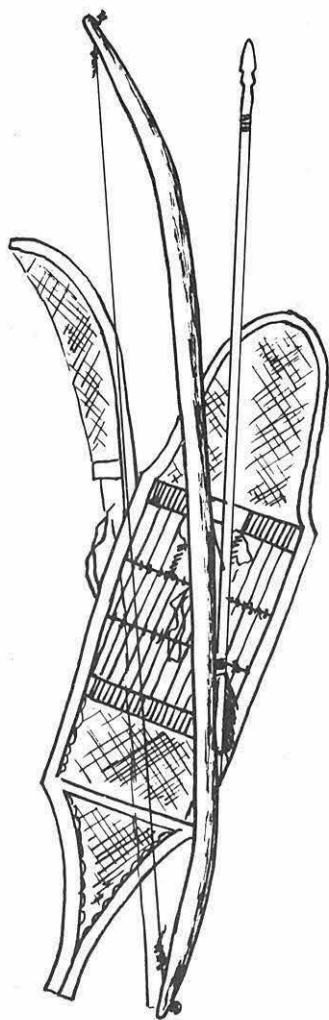
DEER

Sitka black-tailed deer are largely limited to Southeastern Alaska, some islands in Prince William Sound and parts of the Kodiak Island group. The Sitka black-tail is a small deer compared to the more familiar stateside white-tail, for it usually weighs well under 175 pounds.

During August, these Alaskan deer can often be found high in alpine meadows. As fall approaches and frost nips the high country plants, black-tails gradually move to lower elevations until, finally, snow drives them to low-lying ground near the beaches.

Alaskan seasons for this packing-size big game animal usually begin early in August and continue through November and December. Hunting pressure on Sitka black-tailed deer is light so bag limits are often generous, ranging from one to four animals, with antlerless seasons running 30 days or more.

Deer calls are effective and easy to construct.



Jay Massey



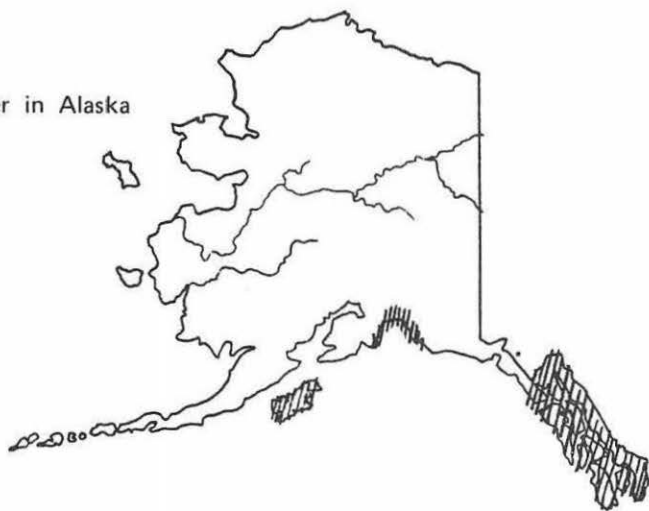
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The dense foliage and heavy rainfall typical of Alaskan deer habitat greatly limit the use of rifle scopes. Deer country is often brown bear country as well, and wise hunters carry a rifle capable of stopping a "brownie." The odor of fresh deer blood can be quite

attractive to bears.

Deer calls constructed from two flat pieces of wood and a rubber band are often used by Alaskans. When properly worked they are very effective.

Range of black-tail deer in Alaska



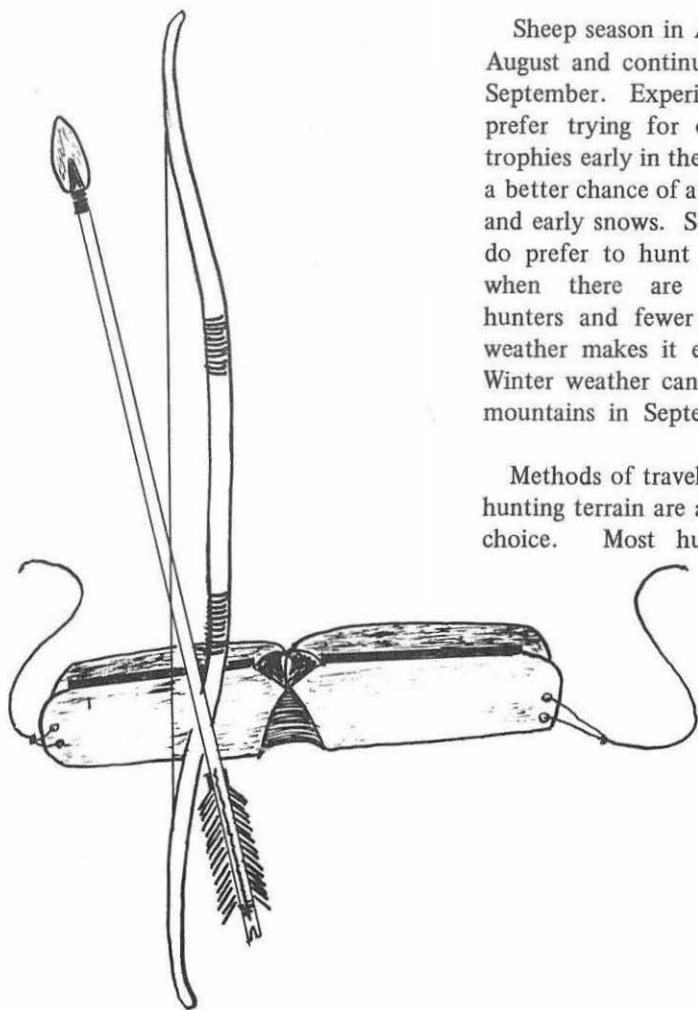
DALL SHEEP

The Dall sheep is the white king of Alaskan mountains. Dall sheep are found in the Wrangell Mountains, Chugach Mountains, Talkeetna Mountains, the Alaska Range, the Tanana Hills, the Brooks Range and on the Kenai Peninsula.

Sheep hunting is often hard work entailing much climbing. A sheep hunter should always be in good physical condition before embarking on his expedition.

Sheep season in Alaska opens early in August and continues through most of September. Experienced hunters often prefer trying for one of these white trophies early in the season when there's a better chance of avoiding soaking rains and early snows. Some veteran hunters do prefer to hunt sheep in September when there are fewer competitive hunters and fewer insects, and cooler weather makes it easier to keep meat. Winter weather can come to the sheep mountains in September.

Methods of traveling into good sheep hunting terrain are a matter of personal choice. Most hunters use aircraft,



MOUNTAIN SHEEP
3/4 HORN CURL



off-the-road vehicles or horses to get to good sheep habitat, then set up a comfortable base camp and hunt from there. A growing number of hardy individuals prefer to walk 20 to 40 miles from the road or riverboat to where the sheep are. Quality sheep hunting areas now exist in Alaska that, for at least part of sheep season, facilitate the "walk-in only" brand of sheep hunt.

Some of the most useful items sheep hunters can have are a good pair of binoculars (preferably about seven power), a spotting scope of 20 or 30 power and a flat-shooting rifle equipped with a scope. Such equipment may save many hours of climbing by making it possible to size up horns from several miles away. While a high-velocity rifle is desirable for sheep hunting, it is often possible to stalk to within 100 yards of a sheep. Shots attempted at long distances too often result in wounded animals which are not recovered.

Although some experienced hands believe it is desirable to approach sheep from above, thus cutting off escape routes to nearby cliffs, another stalking method works well, especially with sheep that have not recently been spooked. Sheep can sometimes be approached from below by walking in plain sight, following a meandering path.

ADF&G



With the exception of specially announced hunts, only "three-quarter-curl" or larger rams may be legally taken. The horns must have grown through 270 degrees, or three-fourths of a full circle. A general rule of thumb is that in relation to the horn base, if the tip of a ram's horn points down when the head is in normal position, the horn has less than a three-quarter curl.

When the tip points up, the horn exceeds a three-quarter curl.

The largest sheep trophies in Alaska normally come from the Wrangell and Chugach mountains and the Alaska Range. Wrangell Mountain sheep are particularly noted for their wide, flaring horns. Brooks Range heads are normally smaller with a rather tight curl.

Range of Dall sheep in Alaska

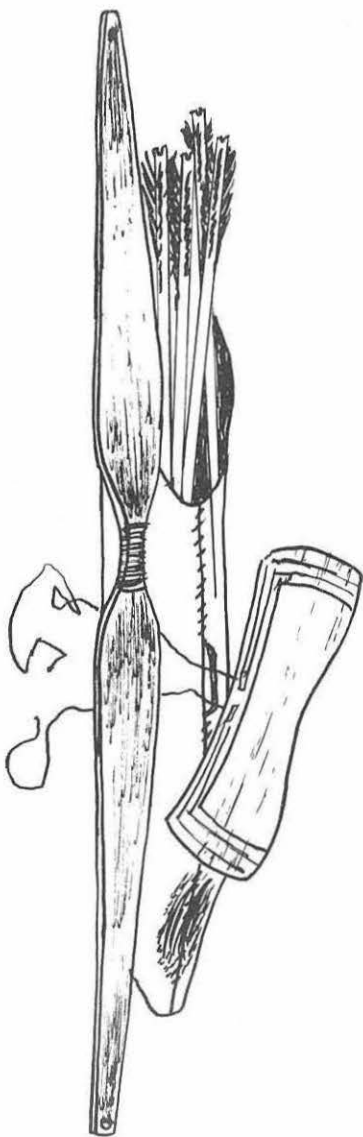


MOUNTAIN GOAT

Although they are sometimes found well inland, mountain goats in Alaska are largely dwellers of the coastal mountains from Ketchikan to the Kenai Peninsula. Goats also have been transplanted to Kodiak and Baranof islands. Goat season usually begins early in August and continues as late as the end of January.

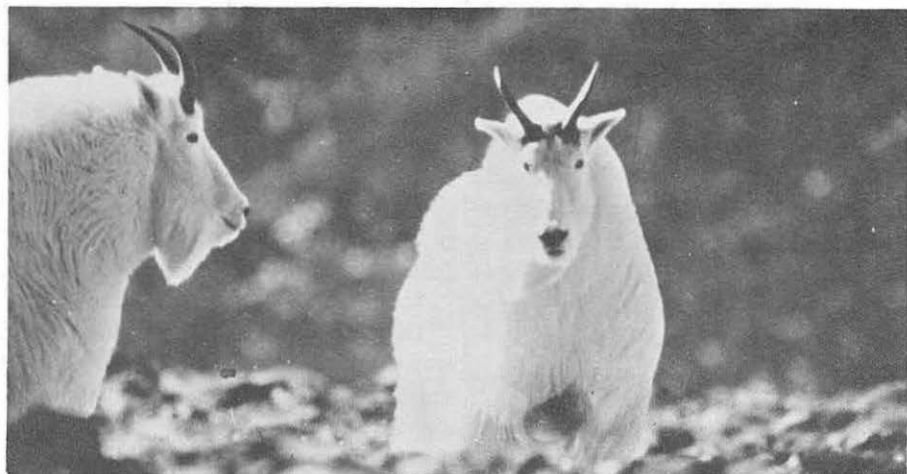
These altitude-loving animals frequent even rougher mountain terrain than sheep. Snow may drive them to lower elevations, frequently to timberline, but this might not occur until November or December along the temperate Alaskan coast.

Walk-in hunters can often find good hunting on the Kenai Peninsula. Along the coast, small boats are often used to travel to favorite hunting spots. Frequently goats can be located from the boat, and if they are in a favorable position for stalking, the long climb begins.



A scope is helpful in locating high-climbing goats.





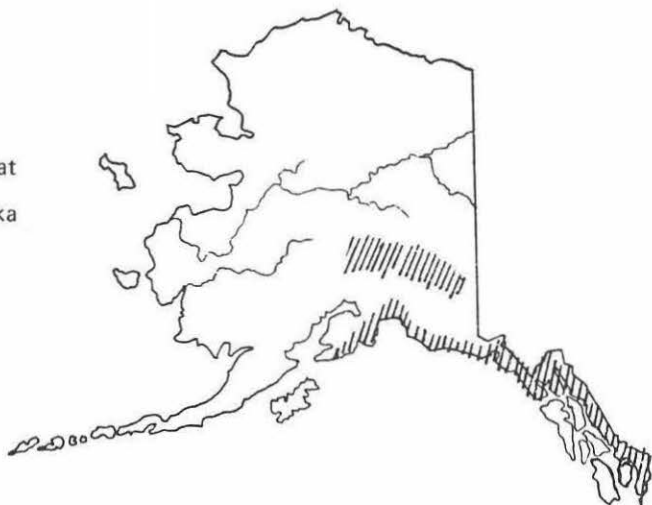
ADF&G

The optical equipment and firearms recommended for sheep are also suggested for the goat hunter. Goats are tough animals and can absorb a surprising amount of lead without immediate apparent effect. While a shot in the lung area will eventually kill a goat, the animal may meanwhile wander to a cliff edge and die. It may then tumble several hundred feet and ruin its head for a trophy. Goat country is often rain country as well, and the hunter should be prepared with good lightweight rain gear.

Trophy-size heads may come from any part of the goat's range in Alaska. Goats taken after the first of October have longer hair than those taken in August and early September, and are generally considered to be better trophies.

Goat meat makes excellent table fare. However, meat from older trophy-class animals has some reputation for toughness and is often converted into goat burger by experienced hands.

Range of mountain goat
in Alaska

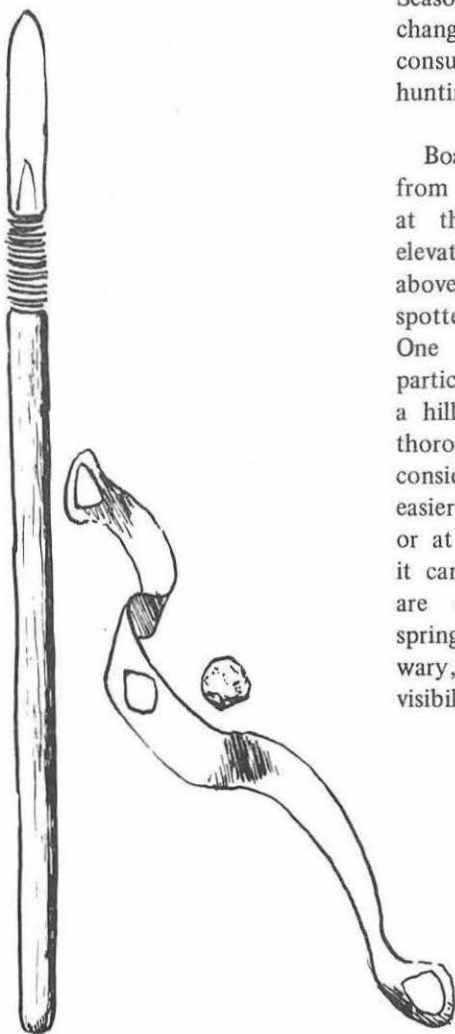


BROWN-GRIZZLY BEAR

Alaska's coastal brown bears, a form of the grizzly bear, can weigh up to 1,200 pounds. Grizzlies, which occur inland, seldom weigh more than 800 pounds. Both kinds can vary in color from peroxide blonde to deep chocolate and almost black. One form or the other occurs in most of Alaska.

Hunting seasons are usually in the spring or fall, and sometimes both. Seasons have been subject to frequent change and bear hunters should always consult a current issue of the Alaska hunting regulations.

Boars are usually the first to emerge from their dens in the spring and are at that time often found at high elevations, usually near the snow line or above it. Frequently bears can be spotted as they nap on a snowbank. One good method of hunting, particularly in the spring, is to sit on a hill and glass the surrounding area thoroughly with binoculars. Bears travel considerably in the spring and it is a lot easier to let one come to the hunter, or at least come close enough so that it can be stalked. Brown-grizzly bears are somewhat easier to hunt in springtime since they are usually less wary, and lack of leaves and grass aids visibility.



The ferocity of a wounded bear is legendary, and a hunter should use a rifle of at least 30-06 performance. Many Alaskans swear by their trusty .375 Magnums. A handgun has no place on a brown or grizzly hunt, at least not for attempting to take a bear.

Regardless of caliber, shot placement is extremely important. Most authorities agree that the best shot is through the shoulders. Animals so hit

The most famous areas in Alaska for hunting brown bear are Kodiak Island, Admiralty Island and the Alaska Peninsula. Kodiak and the Peninsula usually produce the largest trophies. Many blonde-colored specimens are found on the Peninsula.

Grizzly bears are widely scattered and generally are found at or above timberline in Interior Alaska. The Alaska Range, Talkeetna Mountains and



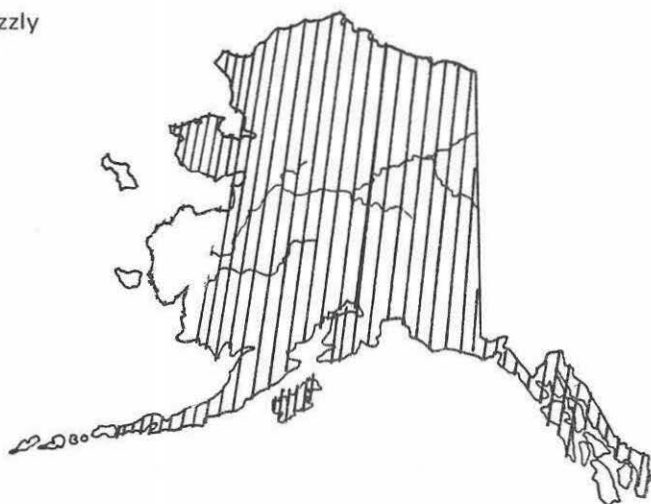
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are usually "broken down" and unable to travel, although such shots may not result in immediate death. Obviously, shots at animals that are distant or obscured by brush should be avoided.

south side of the Brooks Range are all good grizzly producers as are the other smaller ranges of mountains and hills.

Alaska hunting regulations, in recent

Range of brown-grizzly
bear in Alaska

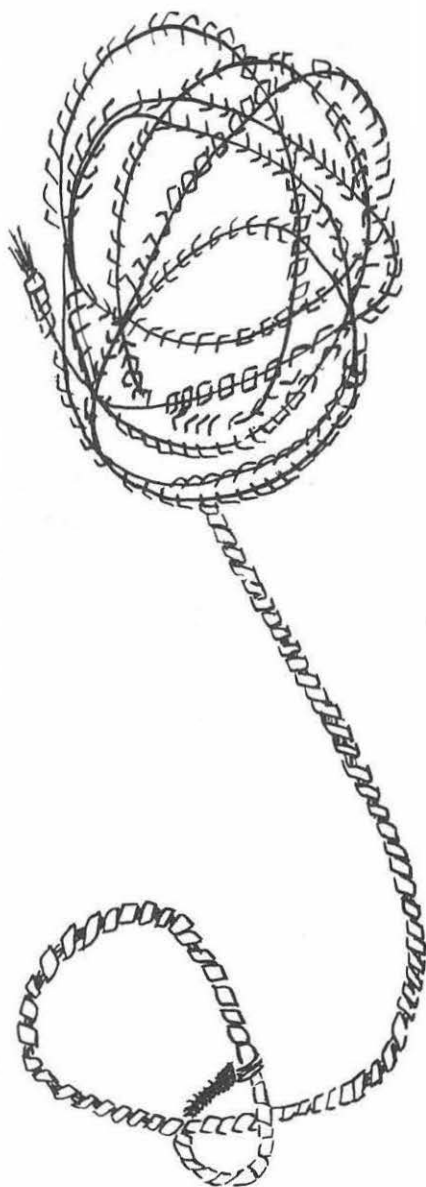


years, have required nonresident hunters to employ a guide when brown-grizzly bear hunting.

A rule of thumb in estimating a bear's size is that an animal that appears blocky is usually older and will have a larger hide and skull than a similar bear with a rangy build.

While spring pelts are sometimes superior to fall pelts, the incidence of "rubbed" hides is higher in the spring. Close observation before shooting will help prevent taking badly rubbed hides which are valueless as trophies, and also will prevent illegal taking of sows accompanied by cubs.

BLACK BEAR



Alaska's hunting seasons for the black bear are more liberal than seasons on the less numerous brown-grizzly. Black bears are found in most of Alaska with the exception of the Alaska Peninsula, Arctic Coast, some islands and a few other isolated areas.

Southeastern Alaska, with the exception of Admiralty, Baranof and Chichagof islands (where only brown bears occur), probably has as large a concentration of blackies as anywhere in the state. During the spring these bears may be found grazing on vegetation along tideflats. As salmon begin to fill the many streams, these bears concentrate along the banks to feed on fish. When fall approaches, black bears leave the salmon streams and begin feeding on berries.

Bears in Alaska's Interior do not depend on fish nearly as much as coastal bears, probably because few Interior streams have salmon runs. But like the coastal bear, the Interior black bear eats huge quantities of vegetation, especially in the spring, and open hillsides are often good locations for spotting them during May and June. During the remainder of the summer black bears can be found feeding in berry patches, often at high elevations.

Black bear hunting can be an exciting sport that requires more than average skill in seeking out and dispatching a trophy animal. Black bears are primarily forest creatures and a rifle that is handy in the brush is often an asset. Although many black bears have been killed with 30-30 rifles, a weapon in the 30-06 class will provide a greater margin



BSFW

of safety. As with brown-brizzly bears, a shoulder shot that immobilizes the animal is recommended for blacks. Seeking out a wounded bear in dense alder or willow growth is highly dangerous and reflects poorly on the hunter's ability to drop his quarry properly. Dogs can be used to hunt black bears in Alaska, provided that a permit is obtained prior to hunting from the Commissioner, Department of Fish and Game.

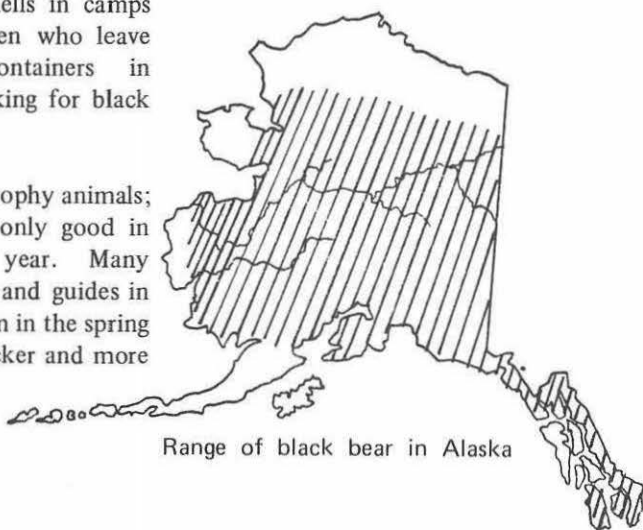
Black bears appear to be more inquisitive than other bear species and seem less prone to avoid humans. They are attracted to food smells in camps and cabins. Outdoorsmen who leave food in unsealed containers in unattended camps are asking for black bear trouble.

Black bears make fine trophy animals; however, their pelts are only good in spring and fall of each year. Many experienced bear hunters and guides in Alaska prefer hunting them in the spring when the pelt is even thicker and more

luxuriant than in the fall.

Because the nonresident black bear hunting tag is relatively inexpensive (\$10.00 in recent years), black bear hunting is favored by military and other nonresident hunters who have limited funds for big game hunting in Alaska.

Although it must be cooked thoroughly to avoid the possibility of trichinosis, black bear meat is very highly regarded by many longtime Alaskan residents.



Range of black bear in Alaska

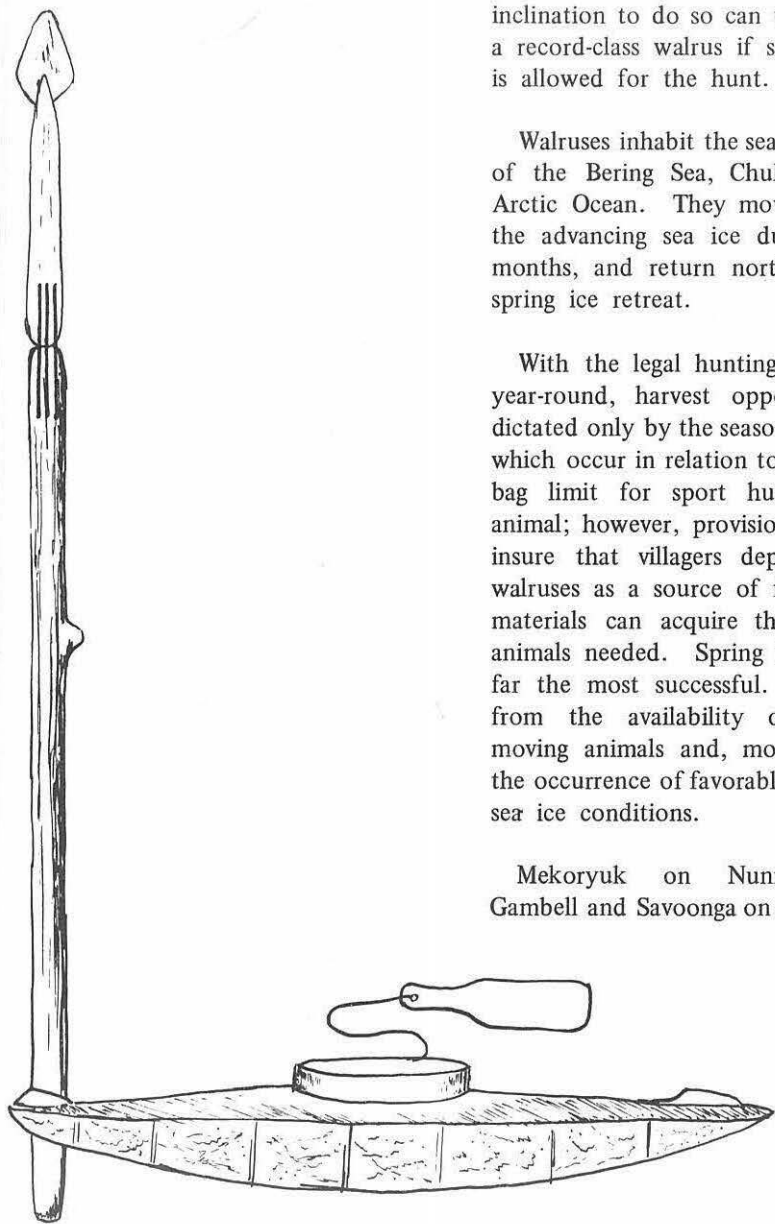
WALRUS

The Pacific walrus is a unique and very desirable big game trophy. Few hunters have had the opportunity to seek out this large animal in its natural environment. As a result, those with the inclination to do so can usually obtain a record-class walrus if sufficient time is allowed for the hunt.

Walrus inhabit the seasonal pack ice of the Bering Sea, Chukchi Sea and Arctic Ocean. They move south with the advancing sea ice during the fall months, and return north during the spring ice retreat.

With the legal hunting season open year-round, harvest opportunities are dictated only by the seasonal migrations which occur in relation to sea ice. The bag limit for sport hunting is one animal; however, provision is made to insure that villagers dependent upon walrus as a source of food and raw materials can acquire the number of animals needed. Spring hunting is by far the most successful. This results from the availability of northward moving animals and, most important, the occurrence of favorable weather and sea ice conditions.

Mekoryuk on Nunivak Island,
Gambell and Savoonga on St. Lawrence



Island and Wainwright are probably the most successful hunting sites. Hunting at Mekoryuk, Gambell and Savoonga is done primarily during May. Hunting at Wainwright in northwestern Alaska occurs in late July and early August. The difference in favorable hunting seasons results from the time required for walrus to pass from the Bering Sea through Bering Strait and reach the vicinity of northern Alaska.

Fall hunting also occurs at Gambell and Savoonga, but a combination of poor weather and unfavorable ice conditions often greatly curtails the walrus take at this time. In the spring, weather is also favorable for photographing walrus as well as the seals and whales which occur in the same area.

Transportation to these four hunting sites is both regular and reasonably reliable. Arrangements can be made at any travel agency.

For practical reasons, all trophy hunters must make arrangements for guide services or equipment (skin boats, boat crew and hunting gear) with walrus hunters in one of the villages mentioned above, either directly or through the registered Alaskan guides who operate during the walrus "season."

Walrus hunting, even in the springtime, is a cold business by anybody's standards. Although hunters are not subjected to the low temperatures of an Alaskan winter, boating in an ice-covered sea, frequently

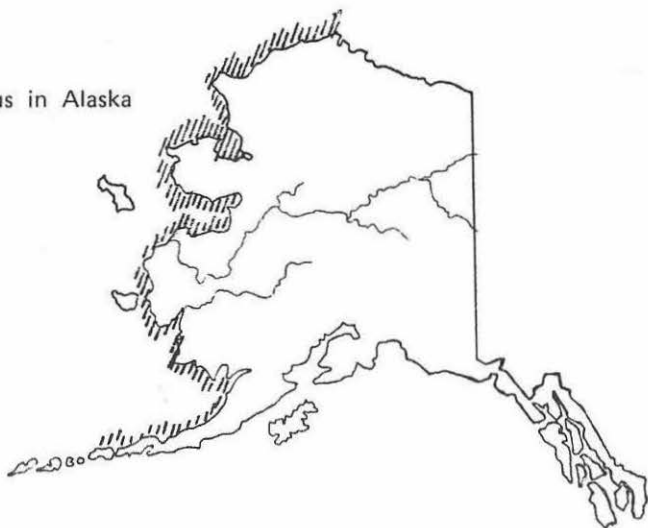
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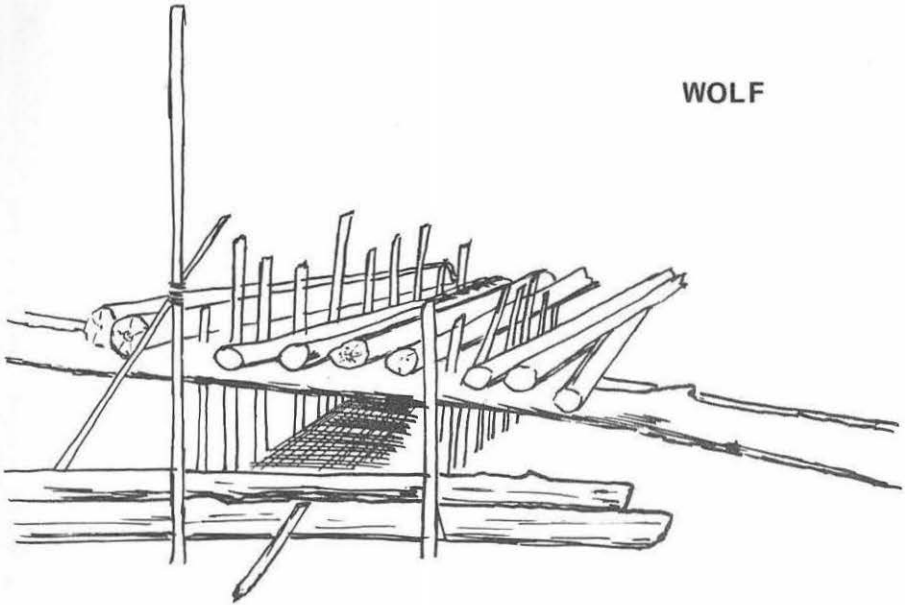
during overcast and foggy weather, can be quite uncomfortable. Proper clothing is vital to a good hunt. Necessary items include heavy long underwear, wool pants, heavy outer pants, a parka with hood, warm mittens and insulated boots. Usually Eskimo guides can provide part or all of the necessary outer clothing.

Walrus are big and tough. Shooting often occurs at close ranges but a fatal head shot is frequently required to keep a wounded animal from diving into the water from the ice and sinking. Any rifle with bullet penetration less than that of a 30-06 should not be considered. Local guides usually can provide all of the necessary hunting equipment and advice for a successful hunt.

Range of walrus in Alaska



WOLF



Wolves are “dual purpose” animals in Alaska since they may be taken either as big game or as furbearers. They may be taken with a hunting or trapping license. Each season begins at different times in the fall, but both usually close April 30.

The wolf is widely distributed throughout Alaska. Any place where there are moose or caribou will also likely support wolves. However, foot hunters rarely see this animal in the vicinity of roads. Sheep hunters or mountain travelers are generally more likely to see wolves than anyone else. Parts of the Brooks Range, the Alaska Range and the Nelchina Basin are among the better places to find wolves.

Wolves come in a variety of colors ranging from black to nearly pure white. They are considered to be a highly

desirable trophy as well as a valuable furbearing animal.

Wolves are pack-hunting animals and will generally be found in groups of two or three to 15 or more. They are wary and difficult to approach. Wolves are not difficult to kill, but the necessity for long-range and accurate shooting makes a flat-shooting rifle, preferably with a scope, highly desirable.

Wolves may be taken with a shotgun from an aircraft under terms of a permit issued by the Department of Fish and Game. A “Supercub” is the most widely-used aircraft for this type of hunting which generally involves a pilot and a gunner. Shooting from aircraft is frequently very difficult and sometimes dangerous, but has proved to be the most feasible way of taking wolves in remote areas where hunters would not otherwise have access to the



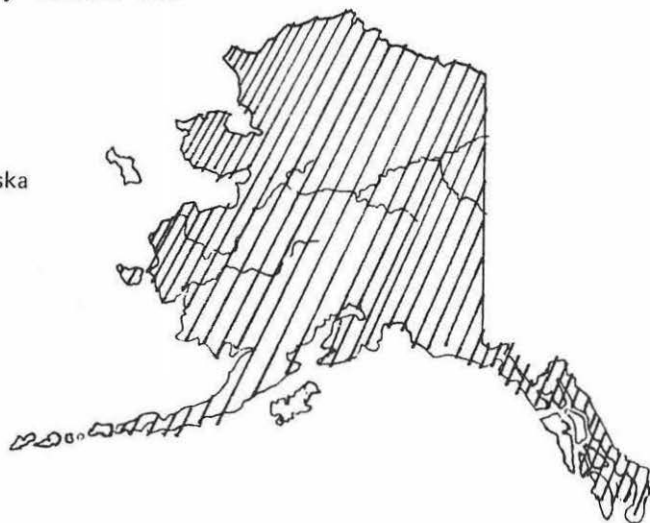
Harry Merriam

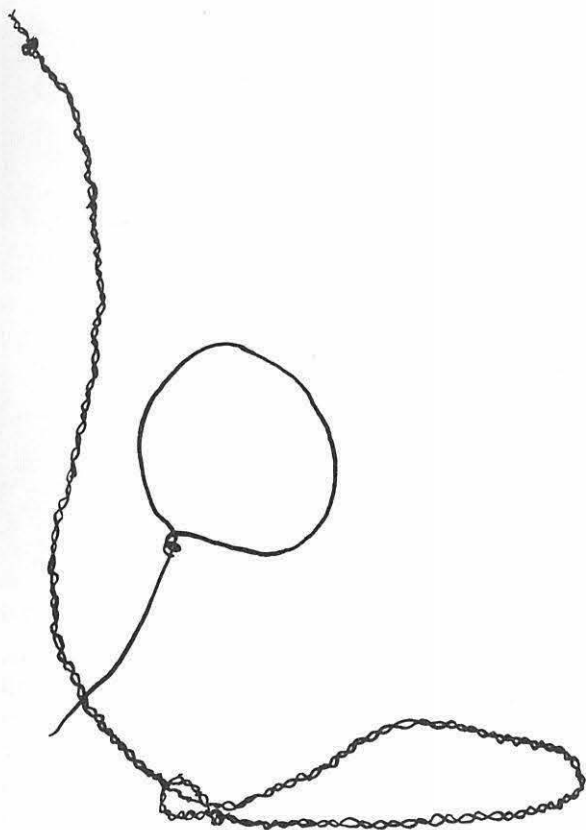
animals. A shotgun using No. 4 buckshot is most frequently used. Aerial wolf hunting is presently closed on the Arctic Slope, and the nonresident hunter is limited to one or two wolves on an aerial permit, depending on the unit involved.

In Alaska, wolves are steadily gaining the reputation as very valuable and

desirable trophy animals that must be managed scientifically in the same way as other game species. Beginning July 1, 1970, the bounty on wolves was stopped everywhere but in Southeastern Alaska. Hopefully, the "dark ages," when wolves were considered to be dangerous and undesirable vermin, are ending in Alaska forever.

Range of wolf in Alaska





HARES

An Alaska hunting license is required to hunt hares (commonly miscalled rabbits). Seasons and bag limits are very liberal, but hunters should check a regulation booklet before hunting.

Two species of hares occur in Alaska. The large Arctic hare has a spotty distribution on the north slope of the Brooks Range and along the entire western margin of the state, including the Aleutian Islands. Arctic hares are impressive bunnies. They can weigh up to 18 pounds although 12 pounds is a more common weight.

Hunters are more likely to encounter the three to five pound snowshoe hare which is present throughout Alaska,

with the exception of the area described above. Mixed forests, wooded swamps and brushy areas from sea level to timberline support this species.

Hares fluctuate greatly in abundance. Every ten or so years their numbers "peak" or reach their greatest density, then decline and build up to another "peak" in another decade. Fish and Game offices usually have information on the current status of local hare populations. During low years, hunting is very poor. Snowshoe fluctuations vary regionally. One part of Alaska may have a very dense hare population while in another part of the state, at the same time, "rabbit" numbers may already have crashed.



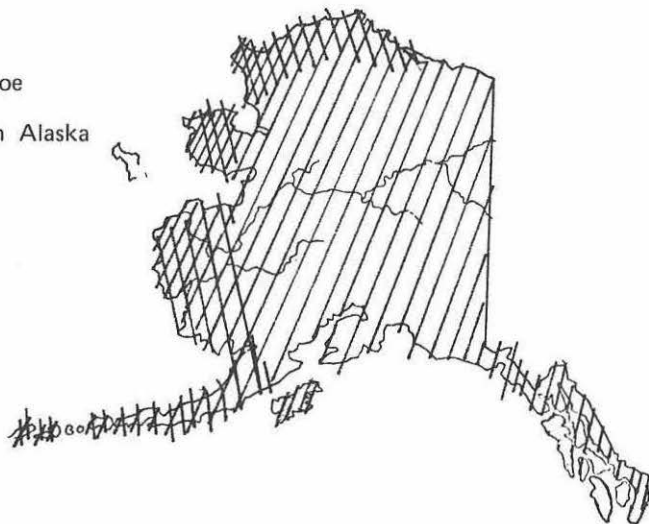
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In years of abundance, almost any wooded area will contain hares. Brushy terrain with large amounts of willow shoots is very productive. Periods of greatest hare activity occur at dawn and dusk, and hunters in the field at those times can expect the best luck. In the fall, hares start replacing their brown summer coat, and by the time heavy

snows cover the ground they are white. This white coat is maintained until mid-April. Cagery hunters sometimes take advantage of an early or late snowfall which catches hares wearing the wrong coat. These conditions provide excellent hunting, as the bunnies are easily spotted against a contrasting background.

Range of the snowshoe

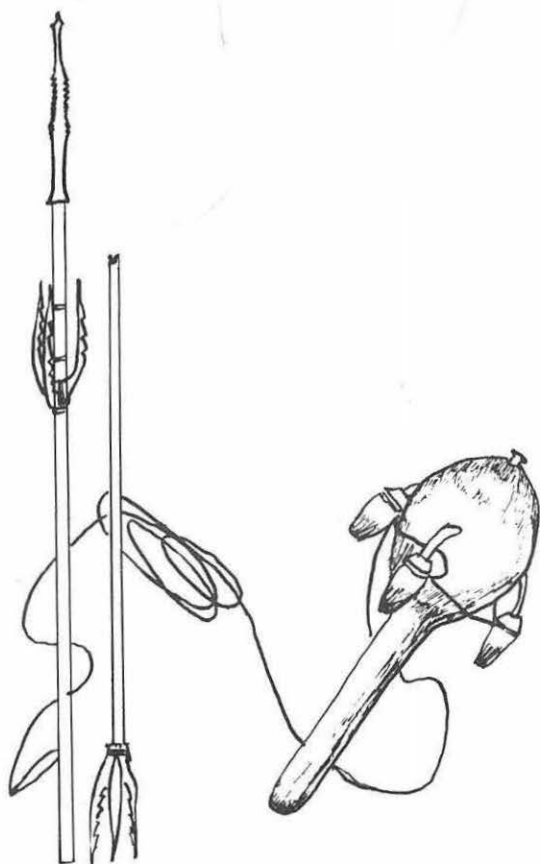
and Arctic hares in Alaska



Both .22-caliber rifles and handguns, as well as shotguns of any gauge, may be used to take hares. Care should be taken to be sure the animal is well within range before firing. Hares are remarkably strong, and wounded animals in thick willow brush can be hard to locate. No. 6 shot is recommended for scattergunners.

Tularemia is a bacterial disease found in hares and rodents throughout the world. It is probably present in all hare

populations in Alaska. Tularemia may be contracted by hunters while they are cleaning "bunnies." To guard against the possibility of getting tularemia, avoid shooting hares that appear "sick" or slow-moving. When you clean the hares you have bagged, wear rubber gloves. Thorough cooking of the meat destroys the disease-causing organisms.



WATERFOWL

Truly fantastic waterfowl hunting can be found in Alaska. Most hunters appear to concentrate on big game and neglect opportunities to shoot ducks, geese and cranes in the 49th state.

The waterfowl season begins in Alaska September 1 -- a time when many have already left or are in the process of leaving for wintering grounds in southern latitudes. Therefore, the first rule in Alaskan waterfowl hunting is to hunt early in the season. By November, extreme winter weather is in the offing and most waterfowl, especially dabbling ducks, are gone.

The regulations covering waterfowl hunting are presented in the Alaska Hunting and Guiding Regulations. Specific seasons and bag limits, and certain prohibitions, are published in Supplement No. 1 to these regulations. A special note should be made that because of federal regulations, waterfowl hunting is the only hunting in Alaska which has specific opening and closing hours each day. These hours are from one-half hour before sunrise to sunset. Timetables are generally available at all offices of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, or sunrise and sunset times can commonly

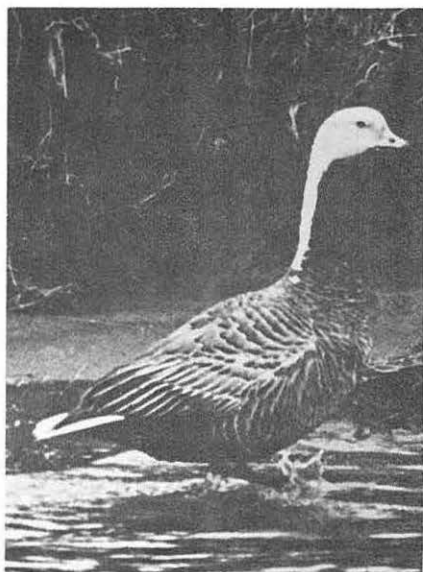
be found in the local newspaper.

Waterfowl and waterfowl hunting can be found throughout Alaska from Ketchikan on the "panhandle" to as far north as Barrow. Small bands of seasoned and dedicated duck hunters can be found in nearly every town and village. Available species and hunting methods vary considerably from area to area.

The bulk of the waterfowl harvest is composed of lesser Canada geese, mallards, pintails and widgeons. The variety of species available to the hunter in the Interior can seem endless. A mixed bag is to be expected. The dedicated waterfowler will have the opportunity to take species that he rarely sees in the "Lower 48," such as harlequin and old squaw ducks. He can also obtain excellent little brown crane and jacksnipe hunting. Other species available in some parts of Alaska include green-winged teal, a few blue-winged

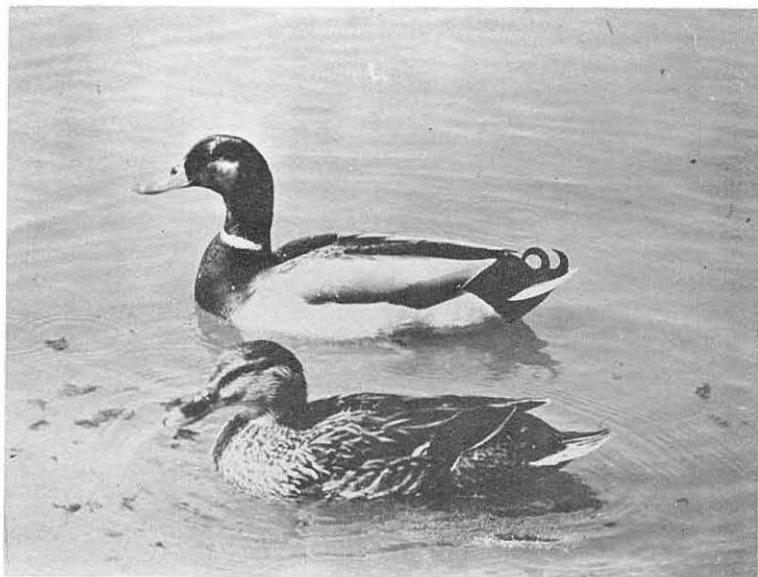
teal, redheads, canvasbacks, buffleheads, brant, white-fronted geese, emperor geese, snow geese, scoters, eiders and goldeneyes.

Emperor goose



Mallard ducks

BSFW



The identification of ducks is very difficult early in the season when they are still in their summer plumage. The hunter should learn to identify ducks by their summer or juvenile plumage.

Shooting over "deeks" is popular, although floating streams and jump shooting can also be productive. There is surprisingly good shooting close to major towns, but the very best waterfowl areas are farther away and require more air transportation expense. The Yukon Flats in central Alaska, the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta in western Alaska and the Alaska Peninsula are examples of these "faraway places."

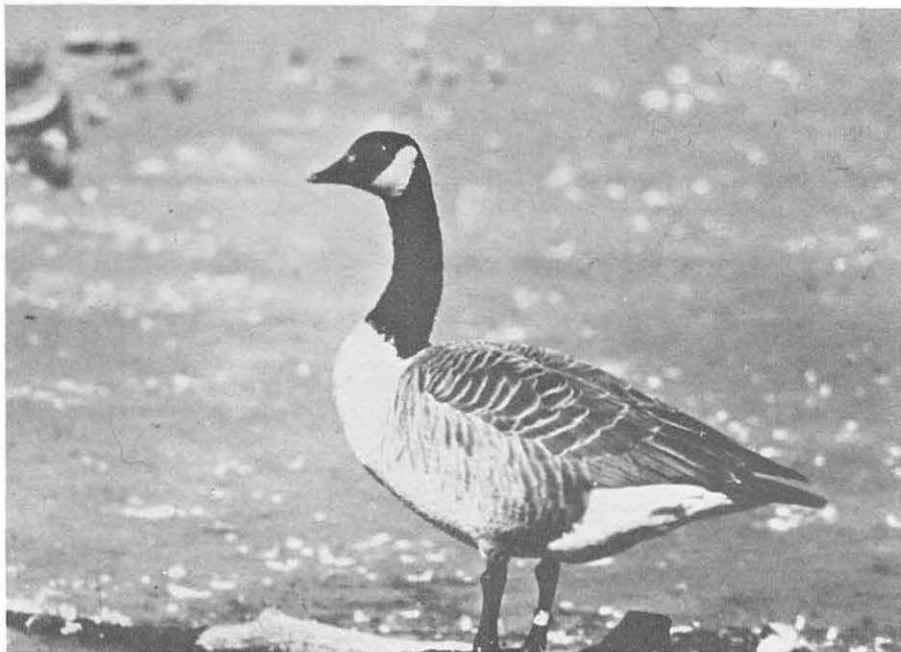
The Alaska Peninsula is claimed by the few who hunt there to excel shooting in the Central Valley of California at its best. At Pilot Point, on the Peninsula, from the last week of September up to mid-October, there is

probably some of the best snow goose and cackler hunting in the world. Cinder River, Port Heiden, Seal Islands and Nelson Lagoon have "untouchable" emperor goose shooting from mid-September until late October. Cold Bay, with black brant, geese and ducks, is legendary during early October.

The connoisseur of the art of cooking and eating waterfowl will be pleasantly surprised when he prepares and savors Alaskan waterfowl. Many species spurned in the "Lower 48" are delectable when harvested in Alaska. The most likely reason is that their diet changes as they proceed along the migration route. Many of the diving ducks, such as the white-winged scoter, scaup, bufflehead, ringed-necked duck and many others, are at their best when feeding in Alaskan waters. The food habits of any individual duck or goose,

Canada goose

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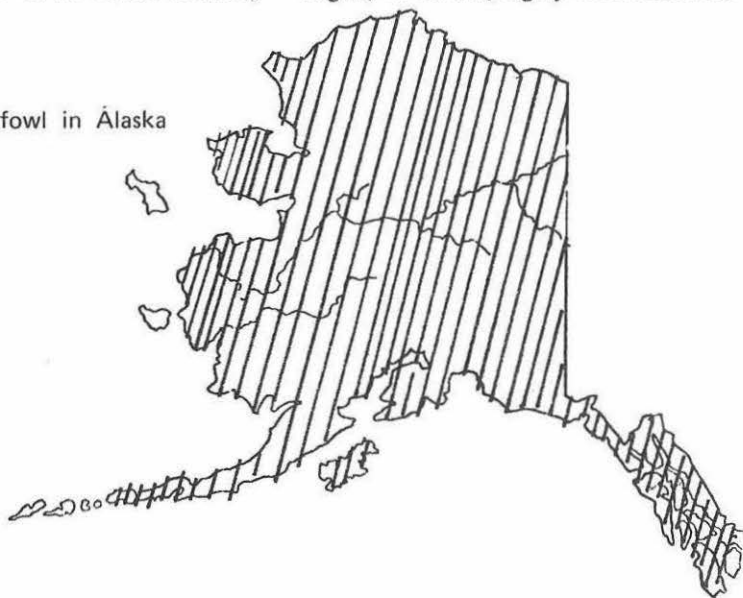
no matter where it is found, can always leave that particular bird with questionable eating quality, however.

Warm clothing is essential for Alaskan duck hunters. Insulated hip boots, wool pants, down vests and coats, first quality rain gear, warm gloves and head gear are all essential. Cabins can sometimes be rented from the U. S. Forest Service,

guides and air taxi operators. Otherwise a tent that can be heated will do a sufficient job.

A 12-guage scatter-gun is recommended for goose and crane hunting, otherwise a waterfowler in Alaska will do best with whatever "piece" he is most familiar with. Use of a well-trained dog is, of course, highly recommended.

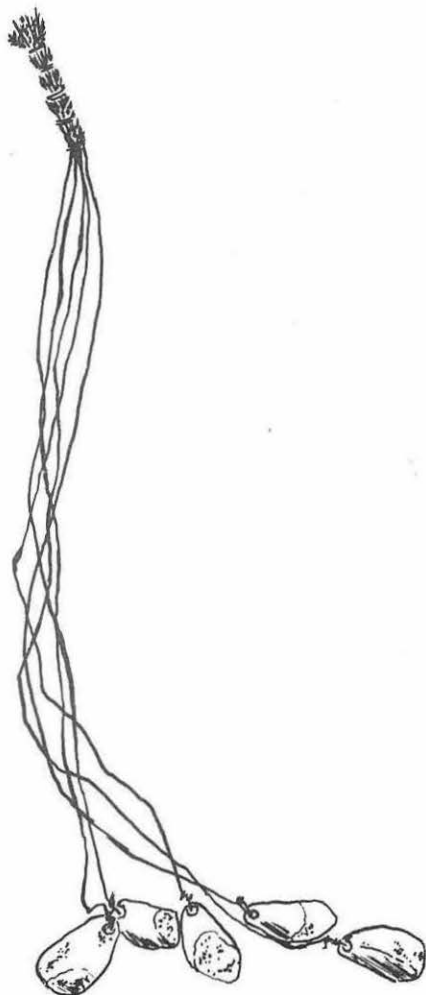
Range of waterfowl in Alaska



UPLAND GAME BIRDS

Alaska has seven species of upland game birds. The hunting season for all opens in late summer and continues until the following spring. Daily bag and possession limits are liberal, but hunters should check a current regulation booklet before taking to the field. Excellent hunting areas exist close to larger cities, and often an afternoon in the field can offer plenty of action. Bird hunting can also add to the enjoyment of a longer big game hunting trip.

Grouse are birds of the forest, and with a little experience hunters can determine what species are present in a specific area by noting the type of vegetation. Blue grouse inhabit the dense Sitka spruce and hemlock forests of Southeastern Alaska from Glacier Bay southward. Spruce grouse are common further north wherever spruce or spruce-birch forests prevail. Ruffed grouse, also known as willow grouse by many Alaskans, are found in woodlands along the Yukon, Tanana, Kuskokwim and Upper Copper rivers of the Interior. The Taku and Stikine drainages of Southeastern also support this species. Sportsmen seeking ruffed grouse should work hardwood forests containing an abundance of aspen. Sharp-tailed grouse occur in the Yukon River Valley from Canada to Holy Cross, the Tanana Valley and upper portions of the Koyukuk, Kuskokwim and Copper River drainages. Alaskan sharp-tails may be found in a variety of habitat types, including birch and aspen groves, muskegs and open spruce forests. This species frequents clearings and open forest.



Ptarmigan are found at, or above, timberline in alpine areas and on the Arctic tundra during much of the year, but some descend below timberline in winter. Willow ptarmigan occur throughout the state near the timberline where tall spruces give way to alder, willow and dwarf birch. Rock ptarmigan are also found throughout most of Alaska, but prefer more open areas above the timberline where low dwarf birch and scattered alder and willow provide the main plant cover. The white-tailed ptarmigan is restricted to high elevations well above timberline in mountains from the Alaska Range southward.



Range of the ptarmigan in Alaska

Early in the mornings during September and October, spruce, ruffed and sharp-tailed grouse come to places having exposed gravel to eat grit. At this time of the year a short walk on a trail where gravel is available can yield birds.

Such hunts should start shortly after sunrise, as the birds retreat deeper into the forest by midmorning. Later in the fall and throughout the winter, tracks or snow roosts give clues to good hunting locations. While spruce grouse



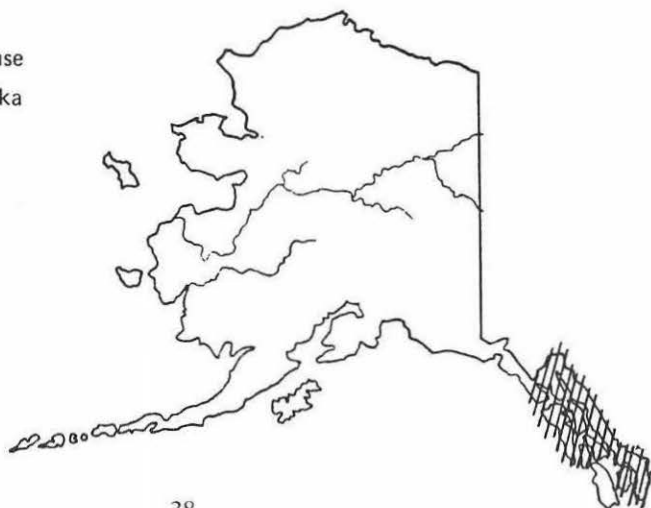
Larry Jennings

are difficult to locate in winter and are less desirable table birds at that time, ruffed and sharp-tailed grouse are often seen eating buds in tree tops at dusk during this season. In April and May, Southeastern sportsmen often hunt blue grouse by stalking the hooting males.

Early in the hunting season ptarmigan can be found in small groups on many

of the summits in Alaska. Once on a ridgetop, walking is easy on the brush-free tundra, and much country can be hunted in a day. By mid-September flocks that will eventually number in the hundreds are forming. These flocks will remain intact until spring, making ptarmigan easy to locate throughout the winter. Late March is an excellent time to take to

Range of the blue grouse
in Alaska

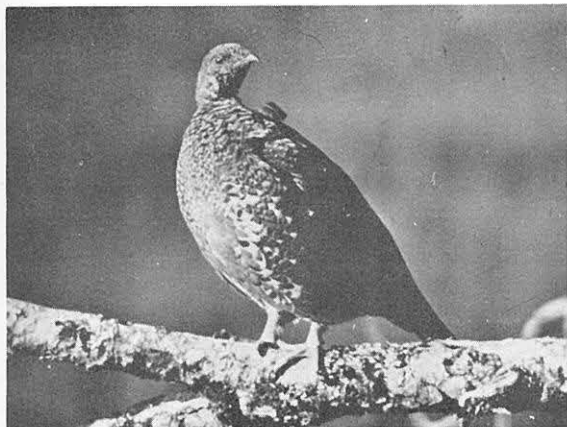


Many hunters prefer to carry a .22-caliber rifle or handgun and stalk their birds, while others enjoy the excitement of wing shooting with a shotgun. A fairly open choke is especially good for taking grouse on the wing; often a tighter pattern is desirable for downing ptarmigan in open country. Distance is deceiving in alpine areas, but with a little stalking practice any gauge-choke combination can prove effective. A light 20-gauge with field loads of No. 6 shot makes a nice bird hunting companion. Ptarmigan hunters

should remember that mountain weather changes rapidly, so even in early fall a windbreaker and light gloves are welcome.

The most valuable asset to a serious bird hunter is a well-trained dog. Any of the popular breeds can work Alaskan game birds in the fall, but for winter work the more hardy retrievers are ideal. A Labrador, golden or Chesapeake retriever, trained to locate birds as well as retrieve, is probably the best all-round Alaskan bird dog.

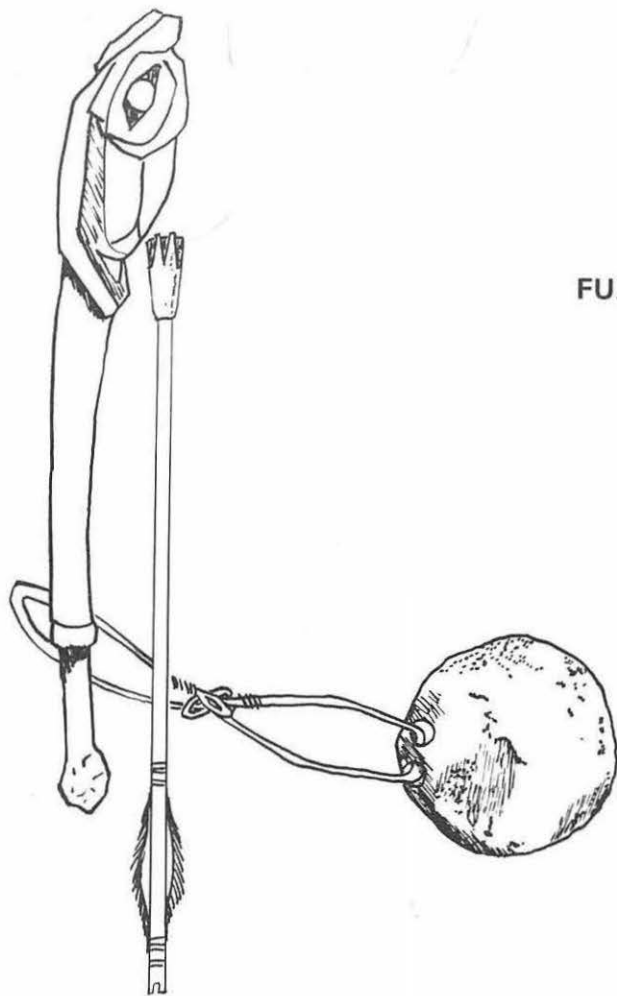
Harry Merriam



Range of the spruce grouse
in Alaska



FURBEARERS



Sportsmen are often uncertain about what fur animals they may take with a firearm when licensed for hunting and/or trapping.

Fur animals that may be taken with a hunting license are listed in the fur animal hunting seasons part of the hunting regulations. Those animals listed with hunting seasons such as the

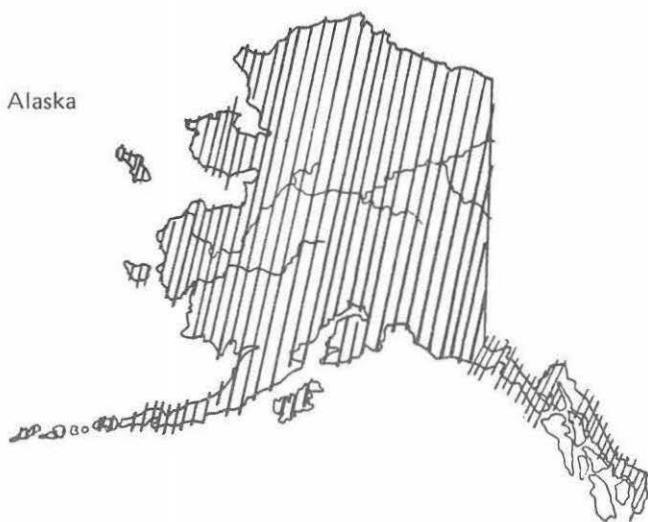
wolf, wolverine, fox, coyote and lynx may be taken although there is often a restricted bag limit. Notice, however, that there is no open hunting season for squirrels and marmots.

A trapping license allows you to shoot any fur animal, except beaver, with a rifled firearm without limit as long as the trapping season is open.



BSFW

Range of the fox in Alaska



TROPHY CARE

There is considerable truth to the old cliché that when the shooting is finished the work begins. Proper trophy and meat care is not easy, but is necessary if one expects good quality results. Probably more meat and trophies are lost through neglect than for any other reason. Care of meat and trophies should not be put off until tomorrow.

Head Mounts

First, don't rush up to the downed animal and slash its throat! The cut may ruin the cape and the blood will stain the hair and be difficult to remove. A chest-shot animal will bleed internally, making throat cutting unnecessary. Many people prefer to remove the head and cape prior to cleaning the animal. This helps keep the cape free of blood and does not seem to impair meat flavor, provided cleaning is not unduly delayed.

The animal should be propped on its stomach and the skin removed as shown in the illustration below (1). Make no cuts on the front of the neck. Leave enough skin for a full shoulder mount by making the cut behind the front shoulder. This allows plenty of hide for the taxidermist to work with.

Caution should be used around the face where short hair makes nicks especially difficult to repair. Be careful when cutting around the eyes. The skin surrounding antlers can be pried away

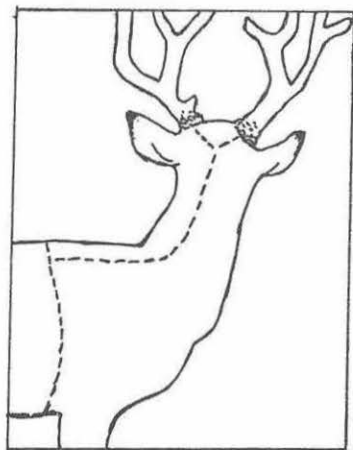
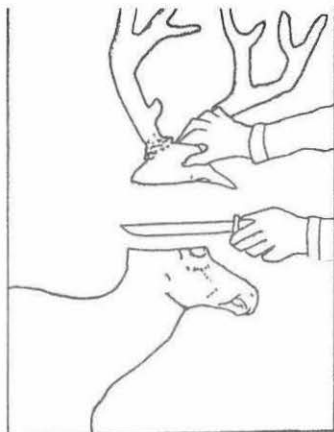


Fig. 1

with a screwdriver, while on horned game the skin is merely cut away next to the horn material. After the cape is removed the horns or antlers are cut away from the skull as illustrated (2).

Fig. 2



Blood should be promptly removed from the cape by washing it in cold water. The cape should then be fleshed by trimming away all fat and meat adhering to the skin. A very sharp knife should be used for this important operation. Failure to flesh the cape will result in the meat and fat rotting, causing the hair to slip.

Next, the cartilage should be removed from the nose, the lips split to allow salt to penetrate between the inside of the lips and the skin. The ears should be turned inside out.

Rub plenty of salt into the hide (table salt is fine), being careful to get it into all folds, creases and along the edge of the hide. About three pounds of salt are required for a sheep cape, and it is better to use too much rather than not enough. After salting fold the cape, keeping flesh side against flesh and hair against hair, and place it in a cool, shaded place. In a day or two the hide can be drained and the salting process repeated.

Rug Mounts

Roll the animal on its back and make a slit down the center of the belly from the anus to six inches short of the lower lip. The legs should be slit from the center of the pad along the back of the leg to the cut along the belly as illustrated (3). The feet should be skinned to the last toe joint and the toenail left in place. The pads are not saved for rug mounts, but should be kept if a life-size mount is desired.

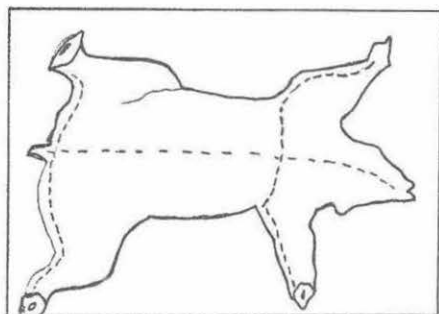
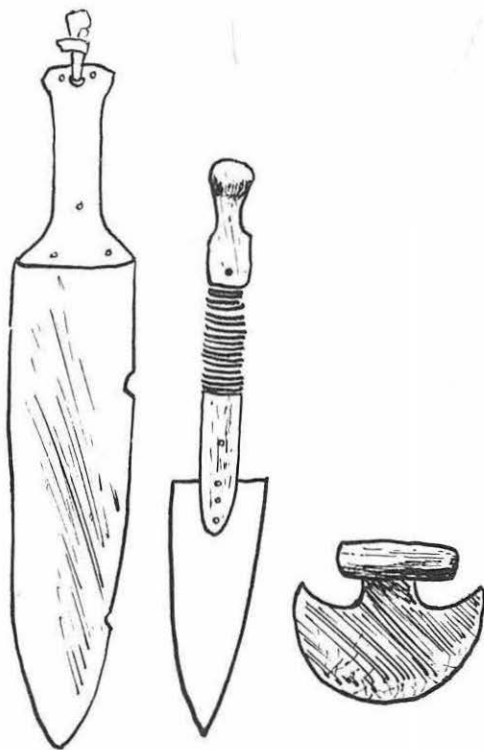


Fig. 3

The skin is now fleshed and salted as described for head mounts, the main difference being that more salt is required for rug mounts because of the larger hide size. Remember, prompt attention to trophies is necessary to insure good quality.



MEAT CARE

Proper care of meat begins with shot placement. A neck or chest shot is preferred since little edible meat is destroyed and the paunch contents will not contaminate any meat. If an animal is downed promptly without giving it an opportunity to run and become overheated, chances of having choice table meat are greatly increased.

Cutting the throat on chest-shot big game is unnecessary since sufficient internal bleeding will occur in the chest cavity. The entrails should be removed, with caution exercised to prevent puncturing the intestine, paunch or bladder and contaminating meat with their contents. The lungs and windpipe should be removed also. To insure good quality meat, the animal should be rapidly cooled to hanging temperature (about 35°F is preferred, but not always possible). This can only be done if the hide is removed since hair is an excellent insulator and will prevent meat from cooling properly, possibly causing it to sour.

Special care should be taken when skinning game to prevent hair from coming in contact with meat. Off-flavored meat can often be traced to improper care during the skinning process. Many animals, particularly during the rut, take on a strong odor. This odor is largely confined to skin and hair, but can be transmitted to meat when the hunter contaminates his hands by handling the hide, then touches

the meat before washing his hands. Any meat thus tainted can acquire a strong and gamey flavor which is objectionable to most persons.

After the skin is removed the animal should be quartered by first removing both front shoulders. A piece of plastic is handy to lay the pieces of meat on to keep them free of dirt, sticks and leaves. Then the animal can be sawed in two by cutting the backbone between the first and second ribs. Splitting down the center of the pelvis separates the hind quarters. The ribs can be removed from the front half by sawing them off to within about 10 inches of the spine. The remaining neck and back portion can be left intact or cut in two, depending on how heavy the animal is and how far it is necessary to pack it. All bloodshot meat should be trimmed away.

Meat should be kept dry. Avoid thoroughly wetting it, especially in weather where it cannot immediately dry and glaze. If wetting is unavoidable, blot the meat dry as soon as possible. Paunch contents in contact with the meat should be wiped away with a damp cloth.

The chunks of meat should be placed in cheesecloth bags and hung in a cool, shady spot until the meat cools and glazes over; then it can be transported to the final destination. If cooling prior to transporting is not possible, care should be taken to insure that the meat is free to "breathe" and continue cooling while being transported. Meat should never be placed in plastic or other airtight bags during the cooling and aging process.

Sourdoughs claim that a moose isn't fit to eat unless it has been hung for at least 10 days prior to butchering. Hanging tenderizes the meat due to the enzymatic action which occurs naturally in flesh. Meat need not be hung as long in warm weather since the enzymatic or aging action is accelerated at higher temperatures. In general, moose require more aging than other Alaska big game animals, due in part to their much greater size.

The crust which forms on exposed meat during aging should be removed prior to cooking since this may impart an objectionable flavor to the meat. Flies can be discouraged by sprinkling black pepper on meat. Lacking black pepper, a small smudge fire built under the hanging meat will keep insects away.

Minimum field butchering equipment for large animals includes a knife with a blade at least four inches long, a small saw, meat bags or cheese cloth, rope, a packboard and a sheet of plastic. Use a whetstone or steel for putting the edge back on a knife. A partner is very handy when butchering large animals such as moose.

HOW TO BUTCHER THAT MOOSE

Courtesy of 10th & M Lockers and Cold Storage, Anchorage, Alaska

Reprinted from *Alaska Sportsman*



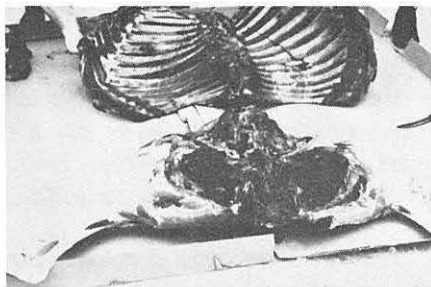
1. First, cut off neck at shoulder for roast, stew or burger.



3. Sit up on ribs, then saw down middle of back bone.



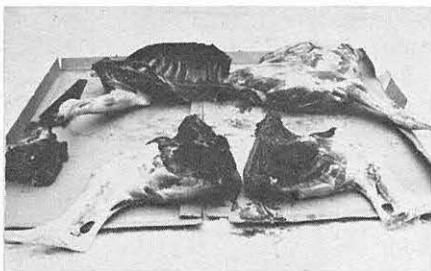
5. Cut hind half down middle of backbone to quarter.



2. Cut carcass in half at first rib.



4. Front half now in two front quarters.



6. Carcass now divided into five pieces.



7. If needed, break front quarter between sixth rib.



8. Finish cut with the saw at the backbone.



9. Cut off front leg at brisket-burger or boil meat.



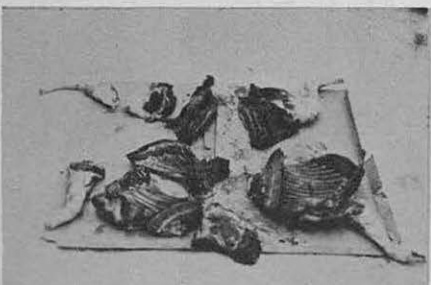
10. Saw will be needed to finish cut.



11. Cut loin off hind quarter at aitch bone (pelvic).



12. Cut off lower leg at knee. Burger or boil meat.



13. Place meat in shroud cloth to keep clean & flies off.