

THE UTILIZATION OF PINGOS BY MINK IN THE YUKON-
KUSKOKWIM DELTA, ALASKA

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During 1960 and 1961 the Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit at the University of Alaska conducted a research program to obtain information concerning the ecology, economics, and management

of mink in the Yukon-Kuskokwim delta. In certain areas of this delta, pingos are of common occurrence and are found in all stages of development. There is a difference in the utilization of these topographic features by mink, depending upon the stage of plant succession present. The classification of pingos by plant types is as follows: (1) grass type, on which Calamagrostis canadensis is the dominant plant; (2) mixed-vegetation type of which Calamagrostis canadensis and Spiraea beauverdiana are the codominant species; (3) tundra type characterized by the presence of mosses (mostly Sphagnum sp. and Polytrichum sp.), lichens (Cladonia sp.), Rubus chamaemorus, Empetrum nigrum, and Ledum palustris decumbens. Active natal dens of mink were found only on pingos of the mixed-vegetation type under the thick stands of Spiraea beauverdiana. Soil under this plant species was comparatively more stable and dryer than that under Calamagrostis canadensis; depth of thaw of the active layer was greater than on the tundra type pingos; and the Spiraea may have afforded some degree of protection from aerial predation.

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