



Born in Ketchikan, Ken Pitcher holds a B.S. in biology from Pepperdine College and an M.S. degree from Idaho State University. He joined the department in Anchorage as a game biologist in 1970 and is currently involved in moose and wolf management.

PELT PROGRAM — Game biologist Ken Pitcher logs wolverine pelt during sealing process. Information on date, location and method of take aids biologists in managing wolves, wolverines both as fur bearers and big game species.

photo by Ed Klinkhart

Wolf, wolverine tally

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IN ALASKA, the wolf and wolverine hold the distinction of being classified as both big game animals and fur bearers, with different hunting and trapping seasons and bag limits. This management plan recognizes the growing popularity of these species as valued big game trophies and permits the hunter to take a wolf or wolverine when he is afield for other big game.

At the same time, the Department of Fish and Game also recognizes the value of these animals for both recreational and commercial trapping and provides generous bag limits when and where population levels are high.

This concept, coupled with the controversy surrounding the wolf, requires a comprehensive management program. Accurate tabulation of the harvest is a primary requirement of any management program. After 1968, when the bounty was removed in most areas of the state, harvest information for wolves and wolverine became more difficult to obtain. In 1971, the Board of Fish and Game established a pelt sealing program designed to provide information on the number of animals taken, when and where they were taken, sex composition of the harvest and method of take. This information provides a basis for the department to manipulate seasons, bag limits and method of take to properly utilize the resource while maintain-

ing desired population levels.

Data collected during the first year of the sealing program show a statewide harvest of 1,335 wolves and 548 wolverine. Game management unit 20, a large area surrounding Fairbanks, was the biggest producer of wolves with a harvest of 249. Unit 13 contributed the most wolverine with a take of 75. More wolves and wolverine were taken in March than in any other month.

Trapping accounted for more than 80 per cent of the wolverine take. Just over half of the wolf harvest was taken by trapping and shooting from the ground, with the remainder taken by aerial shooting. However, the percentage of the wolf harvest taken by trappers and ground hunters is certain to increase in the future because of recent federal legislation which prohibits aerial shooting for either recreational or commercial purposes.

No aerial shooting permits which would violate federal law have been issued by the state since March, 1972.

The sealing program alone is not the complete solution to management of these species, but it does provide the Department of Fish and Game with basic information necessary for the development of a sound management program.■

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