

GAME HARVEST REPORT
AND
SUMMARY OF QUESTIONNAIRE
ANALYSIS
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INTRODUCTION

1973 was the first year in which the Game Branch attempted a comprehensive inquiry into the status of big game populations, harvest estimates, the determination of hunting pressure and hunter success rates.

Methods of accurately estimating the non-resident big game harvest have been in use for several years. The biggest unknown in harvest statistics has been the resident hunter kill. To gain as much knowledge as possible of the resident harvest, a questionnaire was designed and mailed to all resident hunters in late November of last year. Notices, including a sample questionnaire, were posted in the local newspapers a week ahead of the mailing date. A further notice appeared in the papers one week before the return cut-off date of February 1, 1974.

The questionnaire were made as simply as possible to avoid confusion. In fact, the samples which appeared in the papers were an example of how to complete the form. Special attention was given to the ease of handling and least expense to the hunter. Questionnaires were prepared and addressed by the Game Branch.

A sample of the questionnaire is attached to this report.

PROCEDURE

Standard methods of gathering information were employed. Aerial surveys conducted on a local basis were used in determining the status of goat and sheep populations west of Whitehorse. The results of this work will appear in a separate report.

This report analyzes a programme directed toward the hunter through the use of a questionnaire. Both of these methods are used successfully on an annual basis in most provinces and states in North America.

Each of the 3568 licenced resident hunters was mailed a questionnaire. By February 1, 1974, 1195 or 33.5% had been returned to the Game Branch.

448 non-resident hunters were each provided with a questionnaire. Accurate kill statistics, however, are provided by the respective outfitters.

Kill statistics from the 477 General Licence holders are gleaned from the affidavits which are part of each licence.

Of the 3568 resident hunters, 714 or 20% did not hunt big game. The remaining 2854 hunted big game.

These kill statistics do not include animals taken by Indians for meat purposes, poaching or crippling losses. At the present, we have no way of estimating these quantities.

SUMMARY OF BIG GAME HARVEST 1973

	MOOSE	CARIBOU	GOAT	SHEEP	GRIZZLY	BLACK BEAR
3568 RESIDENT HUNTERS	976	352	33	75	24	57
448 NON-RESIDENT HUNTERS	193	176	27	228	95	26
477 GENERAL LICENCE HOLDERS (TRAPPERS)	438	1246 (including approx. 700 from Old Crow.)	-	12	31	108
FT. McPHERSON PEOPLE HUNTING IN PEEL RIVER PRESERVE	a known 15	?	-	-	?	?
TOTAL KILLS	1632	1774	60	315	150	191

RESULTS

Resident Hunter Success Rates

Of the 2854 resident tag holders that hunted:

33.6% killed a moose. This figure compares very favorably with the B.C. success rate of 10-15% over the last six years. It takes 8.34 days for the average Yukon hunter to find and kill a moose.

19.7% shot a caribou. This figure is an all Yukon average. Success on the Dempster runs 46%. 4172 days are required by the average Yukoner to find and kill a caribou.

9.4% of goat tag holders were successful, as were 7.5% of sheep tag holders. As each of these species are usually hunted to the exclusion of others, it takes only 5 days to find and kill a goat or sheep.

3.0% of grizzly tag holders were successful.

8.7% of black bear tag holders were successful. Most black bear are probably taken incidental to the hunting of other species.

Of all the hunters that tried this year: 60% killed no animals; 33% killed one animal, usually a moose; 5% killed two animals, usually a moose and a caribou; 1% killed three animals; and less than 1% killed four species of big game.

RESULTS, cont'd.

Hunting Pressure

Hunting pressure was determined as to location by plotting the known kills on a map, and by computing the number of days hunted in each of the three months of open season.

The kill distribution tends to be localized near population centres and concentrated along roads and navigable rivers. This distribution greatly aids us in determining "hot spots" which are a consideration in structuring management zones.

Hunting pressure is fairly evenly distributed between August and September, 15 days and 15 days respectively, with the most hunters afield with the highest percentage of success in the latter month. In October, hunting effort falls off to 9 days per hunter.

This information, considered with before and after aerial surveys, gives us the continuing annual status of a heavily harvested population. Through the use of these techniques, seasons, bags and kill composition become more realistically based on the reproductive and survival potential of the population.

DISCUSSION, cont'd.

Unless we can get a much higher degree of hunter cooperation this year in the recovery of moose reproductive data - cow moose season will be discontinued. An objective assessment of the cow moose season is only possible with a high recovery rate of the right plumbing.

We would like to encourage a higher questionnaire return this year. Perhaps a draw from returned questionnaires for a good quality rifle or a similar device to encourage a higher level of hunter cooperation could be implemented. The participation of the hunter in the future is critical to the establishment of good management practices in the Yukon.

CONCLUSION

While Yukon hunters currently enjoy huntable populations of all big game species, the need for flexible and enforceable game laws, and zoning to facilitate a biological basis for species management will become apparent in the near future. Our increasing population and an intensifying of alternative uses of wildlife habitat suggest these endeavours are necessary and appropriate. This report represents a first step in addressing these problems.

DISCUSSION

A 33.5% return of a hunter questionnaire on the first attempt is encouraging and adequate, but a higher percentage return is desirable. Apparently not all hunters received a questionnaire last year. This problem will be solved in 1974 by issuing, with the licence, the questionnaire complete with the new management zone map.

The cow moose season last year did not turn out satisfactorily. Only 20% of those hunters taking cow moose bothered to return their questionnaire - and worse, only 10% brought in the reproductive tract. The details of locating and collecting the ovaries and uterus were provided to cow moose hunters.

Of the present levels of harvest, restricted cow moose seasons are not thought to be detrimental except perhaps for "hot spots". One of the best indicators of the status of a big game population, is the information gathered from an examination of female reproductive organs. The object of last year's experimental cow season was to get preliminary data on various moose populations by these examinations. Out of an estimated 100 hunters taking cow moose, only 10 collected the reproductive organs. We didn't learn very much from this experiment.

EXPENSES INCURRED BY THE AVERAGE YUKON HUNTER

3568 resident hunters were licenced in 1973. Of these, 2854 actively hunted game birds and big game in the Yukon. Of the 1195 questionnaires returned, 820 were useful for purposes of computing the expenses incurred in the following categories:

- (1) Aircraft: 7.1% or 202 hunters used aircraft at an average expenditure of \$111.37 each - contributing \$22,497.00 to locally based air charter companies.
- (2) Boats: 35.7% or 1019 hunters used boats at an average cost to each of them of \$38.33. Most of the \$39,058.00 was spent on gas & oil.
- (3) Vehicles: 87.4% of the resident hunters used vehicles at an average expense to each of \$66.55. Again, gas and oil comprised the bulk of a \$165,975.00 expenditure.
- (4) Horses: Only 2.4% or 68 residents used horses last year. Hay burners cost each of them an average of \$31.85 for a bill of \$2,166.00. Feed and transportation were the prominent items here.
- (5) Food: 69.4% costed food at an average expense to each of \$43.57. Last year's grub cost \$86,312.00.

EXPENSES, cont'd.

- (6) Lodging: 154 or 5.14% of resident hunters bought lodging costing them \$31.42 each. Their bill was \$4,839.00.
- (7) Clothes: \$18,487.00 was invested in clothes by resident hunters.
- (8) Firearms: 479 or 16.8% invested in firearms last year. Each person spent an average of \$159.33 each for a total of \$76,319.00. New weapons purchased account for most of this, but repairs and accessories are included.
- (9) Ammunition: 62.2% invested in ammunition at an average cost of \$11.71 each for a total of \$20,785.00. This includes the minor expenses of handloaders.
- (10) Optics: 10.7% or 305 residents invested in binoculars or scopes at \$74.70 each for a bill of \$22,784.00.
- (11) Miscellaneous: 21.3% of last year's sportsmen spent an average of \$39.00 each on purchases related to hunting. Their investment cost \$23,870.00.

An estimated total of \$483,092.00 was spent by 2854 hunters for an average cost to each of approximately \$170.00.