



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

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1957 CALF CROP ON KENAI NATIONAL MOOSE RANGE BEST IN HISTORY

The 1957 calf crop--35 calves to 100 cows--is the best in the history of the Kenai National Moose Range, the Department of the Interior has announced.

The Department also reports that studies by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, United States Fish and Wildlife Service, indicate that the moose herd on Kenai National Moose Range is approximately as large now as at any time in the past; and that in spite of the fact that the tendency of hunters to bag "the big fellows" has relegated the trophy specimens to the hard-to-reach regions, a record or near record set of antlers was taken during the past hunting season.

Late arrival of snow rendered it impossible to make as complete an inventory in 1957 as was made in 1956 but the survey was sufficiently complete to indicate continued healthy trends in population. During the survey 3,155 moose were actually counted. This compares with 3,776 seen in the more complete survey of 1956. But the 1957 count included 616 calves compared with only 518 calves in the previous year's inventory. In 1952 there were 1,163 moose counted, of which 138 were calves.

One result of the hunting pressure is the definite increase in the percentage of young bulls in the herd. In 1953 only 26 percent of the bulls harvested were in the smaller class, that is with an antler spread of 30 inches or less, and more than half of the kill had antlers in the 31 to 50 inch class. But in 1957 nearly half of the bulls killed were in the smaller antler class. Yet in 1957 those who went into the hard-to-reach areas came out with 17 bulls, 14 percent of the kill, with antler spreads of more than 55 inches. Eight of these antlers scored high ratings under the Boone and Crockett system of trophy classification and one of them is being measured to determine whether or not it sets a new record.

The kill on the Kenai National Moose Range in 1957 was 197; the estimated kill on the entire Kenai Peninsula was about 700. Previous kills on the range for 1953, 1954, 1955 and 1956 respectively are 150, 188, 158 and 251.

Kenai National Moose Range was established in 1941. It is 3214 square miles in extent and occupies about half of the Kenai Peninsula.

Information concerning the moose population in the area in the latter part of the past century and the early years of the present one is meager. There are some records; otherwise knowledge of the area is gleaned from talks with "old timers." Before 1880 this area was inhabited by caribou though a few moose were present. Even in 1900 moose meat was one of the minor articles of diet for the natives who were dependent upon other animals for their food. But a series of fires between 1873 and 1900 led to the destruction of the caribou range and a general increase in trees and shrubs important as moose habitat, with the result that moose populations increased between 1900 and 1925. A series of declines occurred after 1925, reaching a climax in the big die-off in 1946. Fires which destroyed a quarter of a million acres of forest land in 1947 again paved the way for moose habitat.

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