

NORTHERN NEWS

Notes on the fish of Banks Island

At the end of August, 1851, the crew of the *Investigator* obtained a few "trout" up to a pound in weight from a comparatively small lake near Ballast Beach on the north coast of Banks Island.¹ Apart from this record of over a hundred years ago there appears to be no mention of fish in the rather scanty literature which deals with Banks Island. The casual observations made during the Defence Research Board's 1952 and 1953 expeditions are therefore recorded below. In the first year I was assisted by Mr. Andrew Macpherson, and in the second, by Capt. I. M. Sparrow, R.E. An account of the first expedition is published in the October 1953 number of *Arctic* (Vol. 6, pp. 171-97).

The present Eskimo inhabitants of Banks Island told me that as far as they knew there were no fish² around the coast of the island except in the vicinity of the mouths of the Sachs and De Salis rivers. At the former place, where the Eskimo now congregate in the spring, they catch enough Arctic Char to form a useful supplement to the food of five families between about the beginning and end of July when they usually leave for the mainland, but apparently the fish are not plentiful enough to put up for winter use. In the fall, fish are sometimes caught through the ice of the first lake up the Sachs River, and also at Raddi Lake. I was told that at Raddi Lake Arctic Char, Lake Trout, and whitefish could be obtained.

¹Armstrong, A. 1857. 'A personal narrative of the discovery of the North-West Passage.' p. 413.

²This was their actual expression. It must be interpreted to mean no fish of use to them as food, or not enough fish to make net-setting worth while. It is also possible that they have not tried many places, since at present they seldom go far from Sachs Harbour during the summer. They have never visited the north coast.

In 1952 we set out a 4-inch mesh net a little north of Cape Collinson during the night of July 19-20, and again north of Nelson Head from July 22 to 26, but most of this time the weather was stormy and no fish were caught. Drifting ice or bad weather at our later stops made it impracticable to fish.

In 1953 a net set on July 16 about 12 miles up the Thomsen River produced one Arctic Char the next day. Between July 18 and August 2, while we were at the northeast point of Castel Bay, we set out three 50-foot nets, one with a 2½-inch mesh and two with a 4-inch mesh, whenever drifting ice made it practicable. About 100 Arctic Char of average size, 50 whitefish, and a number of sculpins were caught.

The dried head of one of the whitefish was brought back to Ottawa and has been tentatively identified as *Coregonus sardinella* by Mr. Vladimir Walters, Department of Biology, New York University. Mr. Walters informs me that he has found this species along the arctic coast as far east as Bathurst Inlet, and that a whitefish, not specifically identified, has been taken on King William Island; otherwise the genus has not previously been recorded from the Arctic Archipelago.

Between August 5 and 8, about 8 char were caught in the lagoon at the northwest point of Mercy Bay, but a net set on the opposite side of Mercy Bay in the shallow, muddy water inside the ice barrier at Back Point for a few days about August 15 was unproductive. After that, ice conditions did not permit further fishing.

Amongst the Arctic Char obtained at Castel Bay were two fish considerably larger (a male weighing 15 lbs., and a female weighing 14 lbs.) than the rest. These had yellowish flesh, very different from the red or pink flesh of the others. Their skin also was different, being dark

and mottled. Although their resemblance to Lake Trout occurred to me at the time, I did not then know that that species ever visited salt water (actually it was no more than brackish), and I assumed that these two fish must be merely large, old char, although I had never previously seen such yellow-fleshed, dark-skinned char in salt water. Walters,¹ however, mentions that members of the Canadian Arctic expedition noted Lake Trout in the mouths of some of the large rivers near Coronation Gulf, and that a specimen in the American Museum of Natural History was caught 5 miles off shore in Hudson Bay. In view of this I am now fairly sure that the two fish we caught at Castel Bay must have been Lake Trout. As mentioned above, the Eskimo considered that there were Lake Trout in Raddi Lake, and Walters records that the species was taken on Wollaston Peninsula, Victoria Island, by the Canadian Arctic expedition.

A specimen has also been recorded from Southampton Island, and a fish believed to be a Lake Trout was taken about three miles up the Hantzsch River, west Baffin Island.² T. H. MANNING

Expedition to Ungava, summer 1953

Rumours of the existence of an unusual bear, akin to the Barren Ground Grizzly, are not uncommon from the northern section of Quebec. During the summer of 1953 Mr. Oshin Agathon and Mr. T. Donald Carter, Assistant Curator, Department of Mammals, American Museum of Natural History, investigated these rumours. They also secured a specimen of the Barren Ground Caribou and made collections of small mammals, birds, and freshwater life whenever time permitted. The following account is based on a report written

¹Walters, Vladimir. 1953. "The fishes collected by the Canadian Arctic expedition 1913-18, with additional notes on the ichthyofauna of Western Arctic Canada." *Nat. Mus. Can. Bull.* No. 128 (*Ann. Rep. for Fisc. Yr. 1951-52*) pp. 257-74.

²Manning, T. H. 1942. "Notes on some fish of the Eastern Canadian Arctic." *Can. Field-Nat.* Vol. 56, pp. 128-9.

by Mr. Oshin Agathon to Dr. Harold E. Anthony, Deputy Director, Chairman and Curator, Department of Mammals, American Museum of Natural History, who had originally planned to lead the expedition.

The most hopeful area for the search was considered to be a strip across Ungava, just to the south of the tree-line, bounded on the east coast by Fort Chimo and Leaf Bay and on the west by Great Whale River and Lake Minto. The first two weeks in August were chosen to coincide with the salmon runs and the best flying weather. The party travelled by chartered aircraft, and had hoped to make a number of reconnaissance flights from each settlement, but bad weather and other difficulties curtailed their program.

After stops at Montreal, St. Jovite, and Senneterre the party reached Rupert House, where they started their investigations. The general pattern was to question the Hudson's Bay Company's Post Manager and as many of the natives and other inhabitants as possible. A few Black Bear had been killed at Rupert House, but while there were vague reports of a brownish coloured bear, none of these could be substantiated. At Great Whale River the Indians had just killed two Polar Bear, which they had not seen for several years, and reported that they rarely took Black Bear on their trips inland, but had never seen a brown-coloured bear. At Lower Seal Lake, Fort Chimo, Indian House Lake, and Knob Lake much the same story was heard. Again, there were vague rumours of a brownish bear and Black Bear were generally very scarce. On their way back to New York a female Black Bear with two cubs was spotted from the air between Lake Nichicun and Roberval.

Mr. Agathon and Mr. Carter concluded that it was most unlikely Grizzly Bear existed in the region, though this could not be proved from one short trip; nor could they find any evidence of a light-coloured phase of Black Bear similar to the Glacier Bear of Alaska.

Mr. Agathon spent any spare time observing life in small ponds and marshy lakes. Two female toads found near

Lake Nichicun were brought back alive. Mr. Carter obtained about sixty specimens of small mammals. The caribou specimen, a fine male in late velvet, was secured by Mr. Agathon near Indian House Lake on August 12.

A great many old caribou trails were

seen on the flights from Rupert House to Fort Chimo, but there were very few recent signs though caribou lichen was plentiful. From Fort Chimo south to Indian House Lake, and beyond Lake Nichicun, caribou trails appeared much fresher.

OBITUARY

W. L. G. Joerg (1885-1952)

On 7 January 1952 one of America's leading geographers, W. L. G. Joerg, Chief Archivist of the Cartographic Records Branch of the National Archives in Washington, D.C., died suddenly of cerebral hemorrhage at the age of sixty-six.

Wolfgang Louis Gottfried Joerg was born in Brooklyn, New York, on 6 February 1885. His father, a German-born physician, and his mother, born in Geneva, Switzerland, recognized the aptitude of their son, and gave him every encouragement. After graduating from Brooklyn Polytechnic Preparatory School at fourteen he searched in vain among American institutions for well-rounded courses in geography. His remarkable fluency in European languages and the classics, made possible his successful studies at Thomas Gymnasium and the University of Leipzig in Germany from 1901-4. Following a year at Columbia University, New York City, completing courses in geography and surveying, he spent five profitable, happy years at the University of Göttingen in Germany.

Fired with enthusiasm about the new science, geography, he joined the American Geographical Society in 1911, as an assistant to Cyrus C. Adams, Editor of the *Bulletin*. This association with the American Geographical Society was to last for twenty-six years, through March of 1937. His precise scholarship and editorial ability early were recognized, first as Assistant Editor of the *Bulletin*, then as Associate Editor of *The Geographical Review*, 1916-20, editor of the Society's Research Series, 1920-6, and finally as Research Editor of the Society, 1926-37. In April 1937 Mr. Joerg was appointed Chief of the newly created Division of Maps and Charts of the National Archives in Washington, D.C., a responsibility for which he was unusually well qualified.

The geography, cartography, and exploration of the polar regions had fascinated him, Mr. Joerg once mentioned, at a very early age. It was, he said "a sign of the times." His interest was spurred by the expeditions of Peary and others, and matured during his studies at Göttingen under Professor Ludwig Mecking. Although Mr. Joerg had never seen the arctic and antarctic regions, he became so well versed in the literature and in the knowledge of their geography that very many explorers and scientists working in these regions sought his advice.

Perhaps Mr. Joerg's first publication on the Arctic was his "brief statement as to the origin and scope of the Map of the Arctic Regions. . ." which appeared in the *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* (Vol. 45 (1913) p. 610), and he was responsible for the "final version, exclusive of the soundings." In the late 1920's, when the American Geographical Society embarked on its program of polar research and publication Mr. Joerg, as Research Editor in charge, was responsible for publishing the 'Problems of polar research' and its companion volume 'The geography of the polar regions'. The editorial perfection which he achieved in preparing these and other contributions by polar experts went far towards establishing his reputation in that field. From the date of these volumes