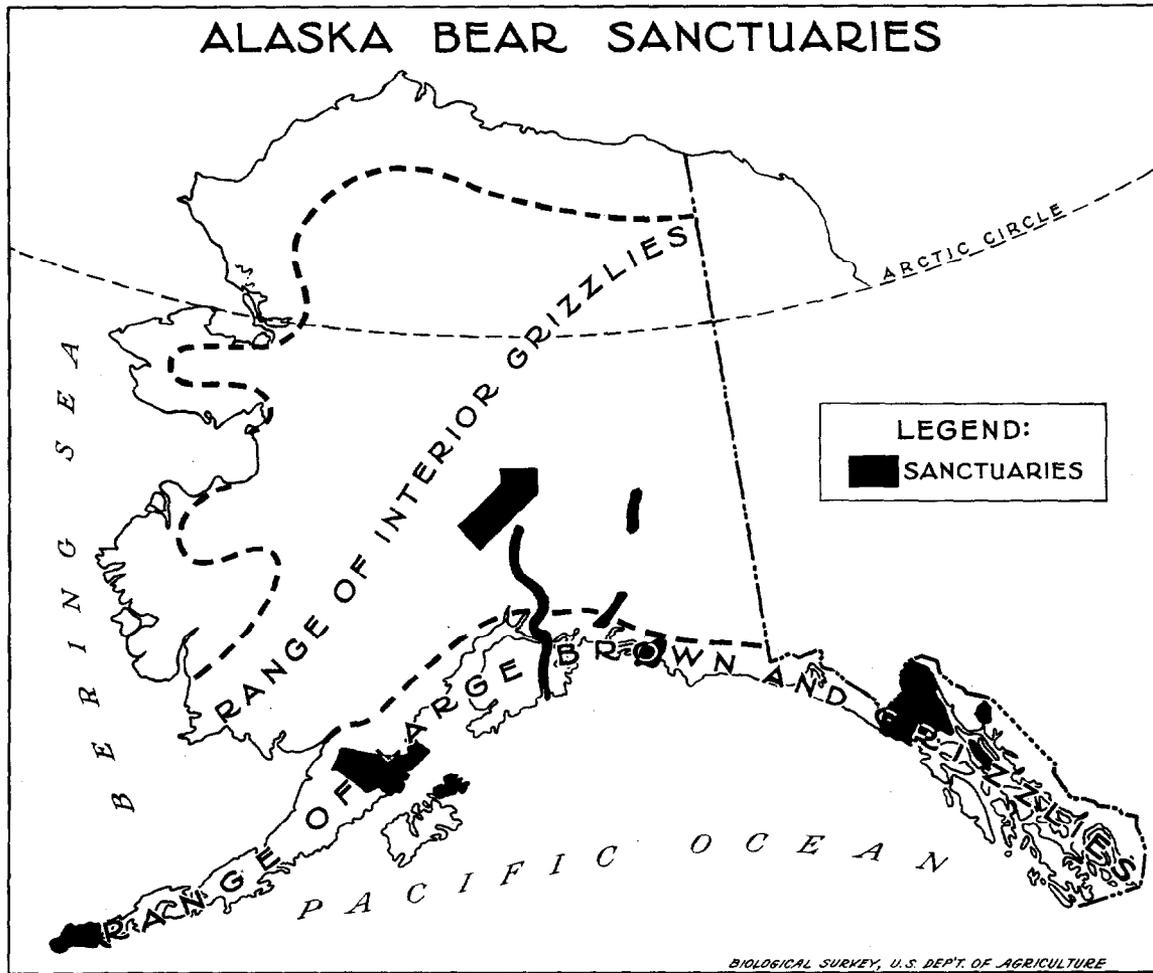


INFORMATION FOR THE PRESS

United States Department of Agriculture



For December 18 papers.

BIG ALASKAN BEARS HOLDING THEIR OWN

Report Credits Favorable Public
Opinion, Sanctuaries, and
Hunting Regulations

The large brown and grizzly bears in Alaska are holding their own as an outstanding wildlife resource of the Territory, says Frank Dufresne, executive officer of the Alaska Game Commission, in a report to the U. S. Biological Survey.

Information from Kodiak Island and the Alaska Peninsula, says Dufresne, leaves no question as to the plenitude of the huge brown bears, while in other parts of the Territory both the brown and grizzly bears appear to be as plentiful or more plentiful than for many years.

Dufresne attributes the abundance of bears to the favorable attitude of Territorial residents, protective regulations under the Alaska Game Law, and sanctuary areas that total more than eight and a half million acres.

Three Kinds of Bear Sanctuaries

Alaskan bears have the benefit of protection on three types of sanctuaries - refuges established by Executive Orders, closed areas under game law regulations, and national parks and monuments.

Mount McKinley National Park and Katmai and Glacier Bay National Monuments, where all wildlife is protected, provide the bears with more than 5,800,000 acres of safe range - 1,939,493 acres on Mt. McKinley, 2,697,590 on Katmai, and 1,164,800 on Glacier Bay.

The Aleutian Islands Bird Refuge includes the 998,000-acre Unimak Island where bears occur and share the protection given all wildlife. Through an Executive Order, bears share with elk the protection afforded by the 448,000 acres of Afognak Island.

Regulations under the Alaska Game Law prevent bear hunting on eight additional areas, totalling more than 1,340,000 acres. An area of over 1,222,000 acres contiguous to Glacier Bay National Monument and two areas on Admiralty with a combined acreage of nearly 52,000 acres have been closed to bear hunting. The Admiralty Island areas, Thayer Mountain and Pack Creek, include 38,400 and 13,440 acres, respectively. Five other areas, with an aggregate acreage of 66,560, have been closed to all hunting. The commonly used names for these areas and their

acreage are as follows: Eyak Lake, 21,760; Mendenhall Lake, 5,120; Alaska Railroad, 24,960; Keystone Canyon, 4,480; and Big Delta, 10,240.

Special Rules for Bear Hunters

Regulations under the Alaska Game Law protect the bears in other parts of the Territory where hunting is of any consequence. No hunting is permitted anywhere throughout the summer season, June 20 to September 1, and during about five months of the open hunting season the bears are hibernating. The bag limit for large brown and grizzly bears is two a year, except on Admiralty Island where a limit of one has been made to induce nonresident hunters to visit other areas. Sale of bear hides is prohibited, a regulation that Dufresne considers as "perhaps the one outstanding factor which has permitted an increase in the large brown and grizzly bears!"

"Since this restriction was placed in effect, when the original Alaska Game Law was passed in 1925," says Dufresne, "there has been a perceptible change for the better in the brown and grizzly bear population."

Bears Valued by Alaskans

Back of all this success in bear conservation Dufresne sees a favorable public opinion in Alaska. "At no time in the history of the Territory," he says, "has there been better feeling by the residents toward these animals than at the present time. This is particularly true along the coastal area and other game fields where nonresident photographers and hunters regularly spend large sums of money for guides, packers, and transportation. The people of Alaska thoroughly appreciate this source of income and have no desire to jeopardize it by killing off this attraction at no profit to themselves."

Dufresne points out that prospectors, miners, and trappers in certain remote parts and some reindeer herders along the Arctic and Bering sea coast do

regard the bears as a nuisance, but he sees no apparent effect of their attitude on even the local supply of bears.

Note to Editors: Detailed reports from certain areas follow.

In his report to the Biological Survey, Mr. Dufresne included quotations from annual reports of six wildlife agents in Alaska for the year ended June 30, 1938.

Wildlife Agent H. Douglas Gray, of Juneau, said of the large brown bear: "This game animal retains its position as the greatest attraction to the trophy hunter that this district offers. . . . Their numbers seem to be as plentiful as ever, notably on the Baranof-Chichagof-Admiralty Island group."

From Petersburg, Wildlife Agent Hosca Sarber reported: "These animals are holding their own nicely. . . . Favorable public sentiment relative to the protection and management given these animals by the Alaska Game Commission has steadily improved during recent years."

Wildlife Agent Clarence J. Rhode at Cordova wrote: "The brown bears along the coast and in Hinchinbrook and Montague Islands appear to remain fairly constant in numbers. . . . The grizzlies of the interior seemed to be on the increase during the last year."

From Anchorage Wildlife Agent Jack O'Connor reported: "No change over reports of last year; about holding their own."

Wildlife Agent Jack Benson at McGrath said: "Many signs of grizzly bear were noted along the Alaska Range. They are also reported from the Central Range, between the Kuskokwim and Yukon Rivers."

From Nome Wildlife Agent Grenold Collins reported: "The Alaska grizzly is fairly numerous all through my district, and no increase or decrease is definitely known. Very few animals are killed and these by natives working with reindeer herds. Bears are reported by all reindeer men as destructive to deer, but I believe that the extent of damage is not important."