



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release to FM's, MARCH 27, 1958

BUMPER ELDERBERRY CROP HELPS TAKE HUNTING PRESSURE OFF KODIAK BROWN BEAR

Elderberries, elk, snowshoe rabbits and the Sitka black-tailed deer cooperated in 1957 to ease the hunting pressure on the big brown bear for which Kodiak Island is famous, reports from the Department of the Interior indicate.

The elderberries--a record-breaking crop of them--lured the bears into remote corners where many of them remained during the hunting season; and the elk, deer and snowshoe rabbits were handy in sufficient numbers to become of primary interest to many of the hunters who operated on the theory that venison in the hand was worth more than a bear in the brush.

The bear kill on Kodiak was 157 in 1957, according to the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, United States Fish and Wildlife Service. This compares with 201 in 1956, 193 in 1955, 212 in 1954 and 225 in 1953. Conversely there were 197 Sitka blacktails killed in 1957 compared with 60 in 1956 and 26 in 1954. The elk harvest for 1957 totaled 70 against 40 in 1956 and none in 1954. The take of the varying hare (snowshoe rabbit) was down a bit but the average kill was 18 per hunter, or an average of more than two rabbits a day for an average of seven and a half days of hunting.

The average size of the Kodiak bear seems to be holding steady, but there has been a downward trend in the number of trophy specimens taken. This trend was halted in 1957. Bear hides are classified by what is called the "squared size". Under this system a hide is measured from the tip of the nose to the tip of the tail, and from the tip of one fore leg across the back to the tip of the other fore leg. These two figures are added together and the total is divided by two.

The average size for the 1957 bear hide was eight feet nine inches, which is a little above the five-year average but below the sizes of 10 years ago. In 1950, 39 percent of the hides measured 10 feet or more, squared size. This percentage declined until 1956 when only 15 percent were in that class. In 1957 nearly 21 percent of the take was in the 10-foot or larger group.

The trend in female kill has been generally upward. In 1949 only 25 percent of the harvest were female but in 1957 the figure had jumped to 41 percent.

x x x