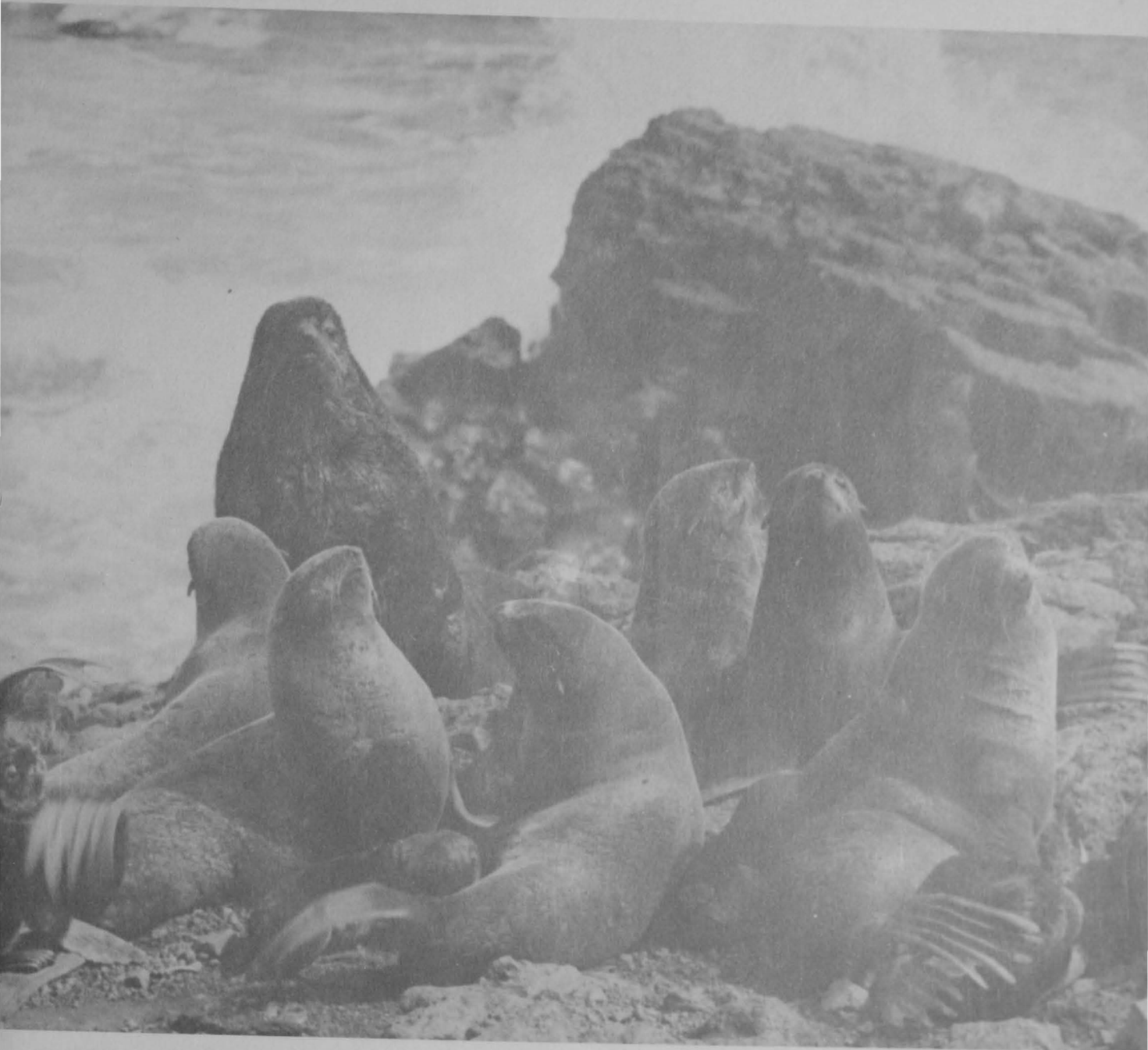


**Fur Seal Industry of the
Pribilof Islands,
1786-1965**



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
BUREAU OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES**

Circular 275

AVERAGE VALUE OF PRIBILOF ISLANDS SEALSKINS, 1957-65

| Year | Dressed, dyed, machined, and finished | | | | Sheared | |
|----------|---------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| | Male | | Female | | Female | |
| | Spring sale | Fall sale | Spring sale | Fall sale | Spring sale | Fall sale |
| | (Average value per skin) | | | | | |
| 1957 . . | \$91.56 | \$68.90 | - | - | - | - |
| 1958 . . | 71.27 | 86.14 | - | - | - | - |
| 1959 . . | 99.75 | 103.23 | - | - | - | - |
| 1960 . . | 101.66 | 104.35 | - | - | - | \$36.05 |
| 1961 . . | 87.94 | 86.69 | - | - | \$11.99 | 41.05 |
| 1962 . . | 106.42 | 107.53 | - | - | 44.33 | 48.40 |
| 1963 . . | 122.52 | <u>1</u> /111.72 | - | (1) | 43.09 | 40.63 |
| 1964 . . | 105.45 | 85.56 | \$71.16 | \$64.34 | 48.82 | 59.65 |
| 1965 . . | 116.36 | <u>2</u> /103.78 | 89.21 | (2) | 47.68 | 60.80 |

1/ A total of 4,668 female skins were sold with the male skins.

2/ A total of 1,870 female skins were sold with the male skins.

Note:--The skins sold were taken several years prior to the date of sale.

Cover A small fur seal harem

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Stewart L. Udall, *Secretary*

David S. Black, *Under Secretary*

Stanley A. Cain, *Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks*

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE, Clarence F. Pautzke, *Commissioner*

BUREAU OF COMMERCIAL FISHERIES, H. E. Crowther, *Director*

Fur Seal Industry of the Pribilof Islands,

1786-1965

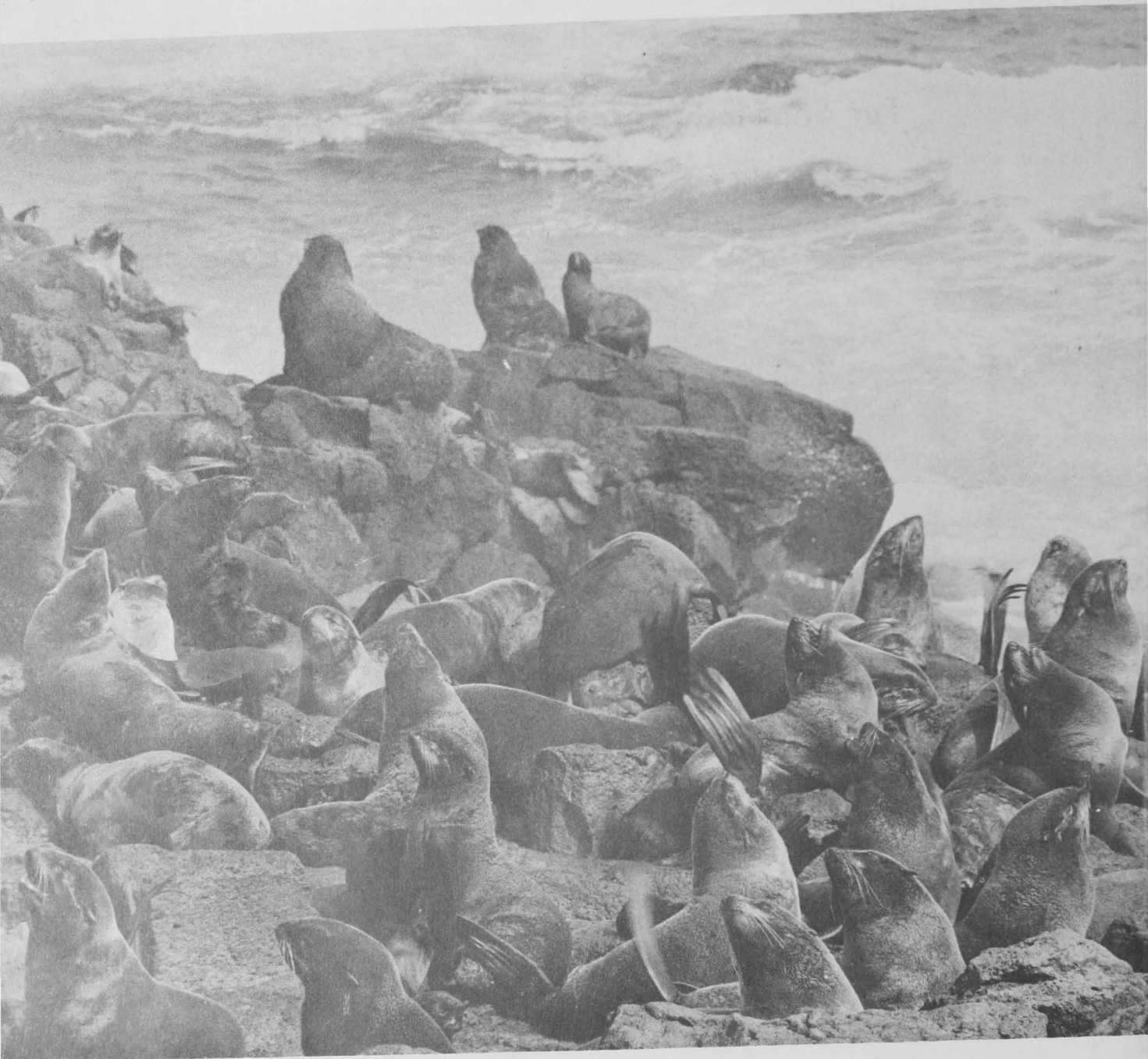
By

FRANCIS RILEY

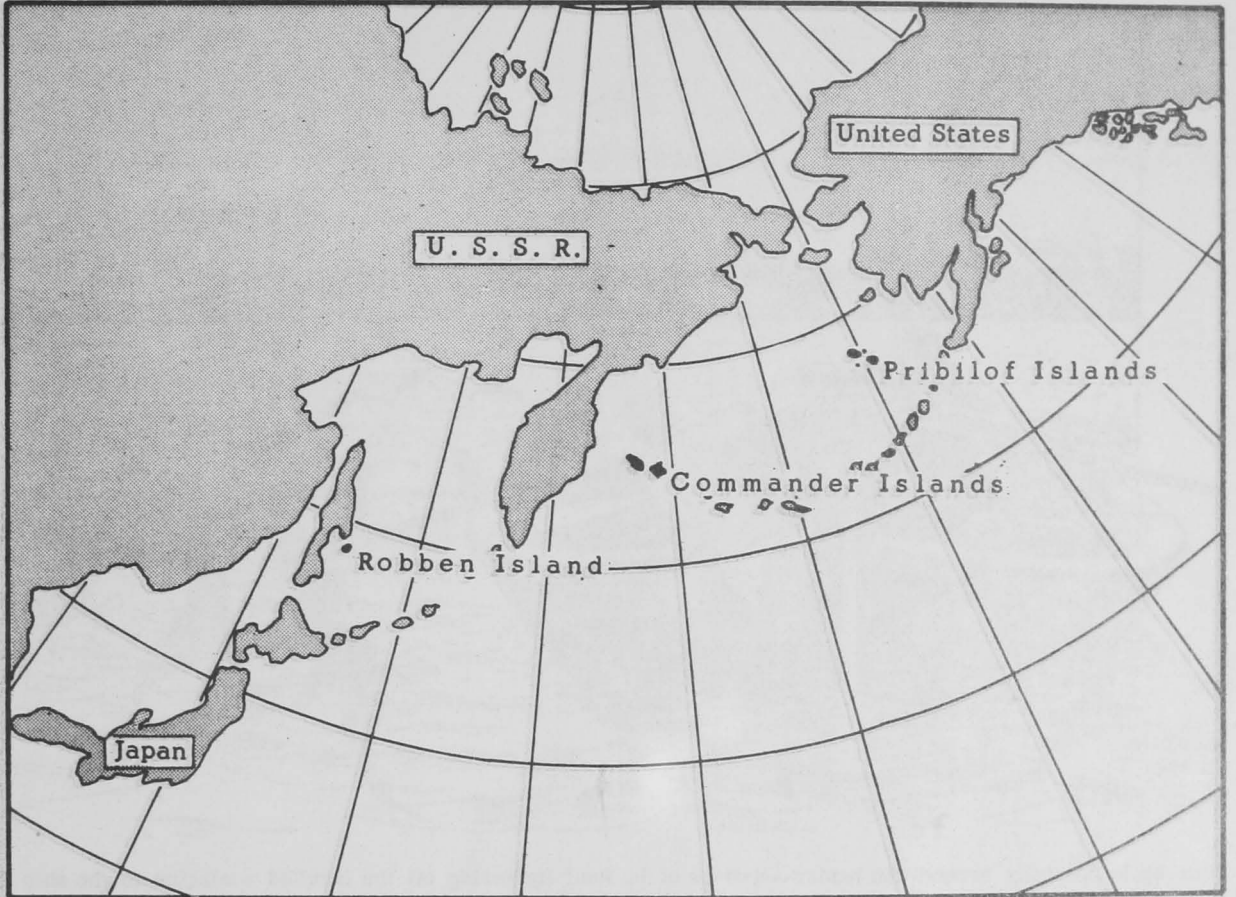
Circular 275

Washington, D.C.

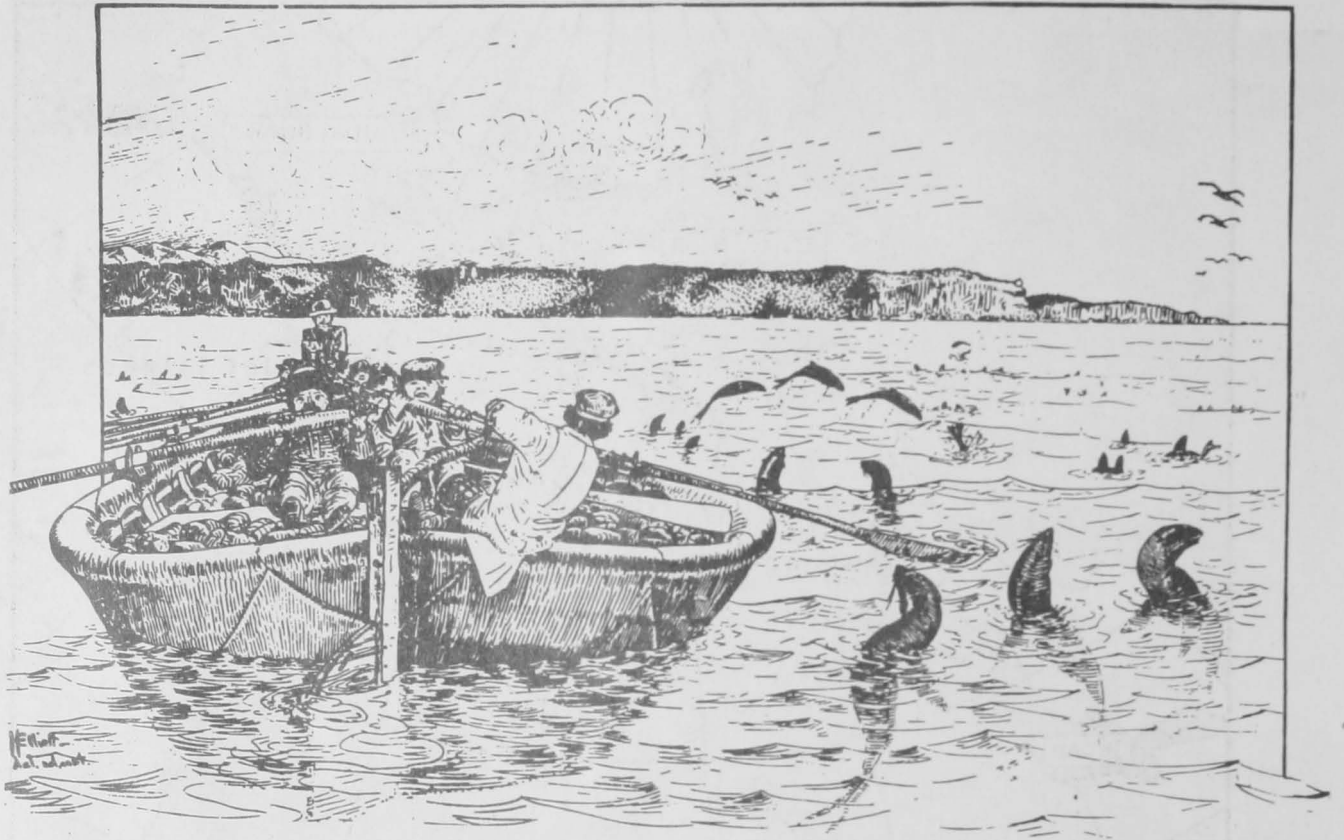
October 1967



Harems on the Pribilof Islands



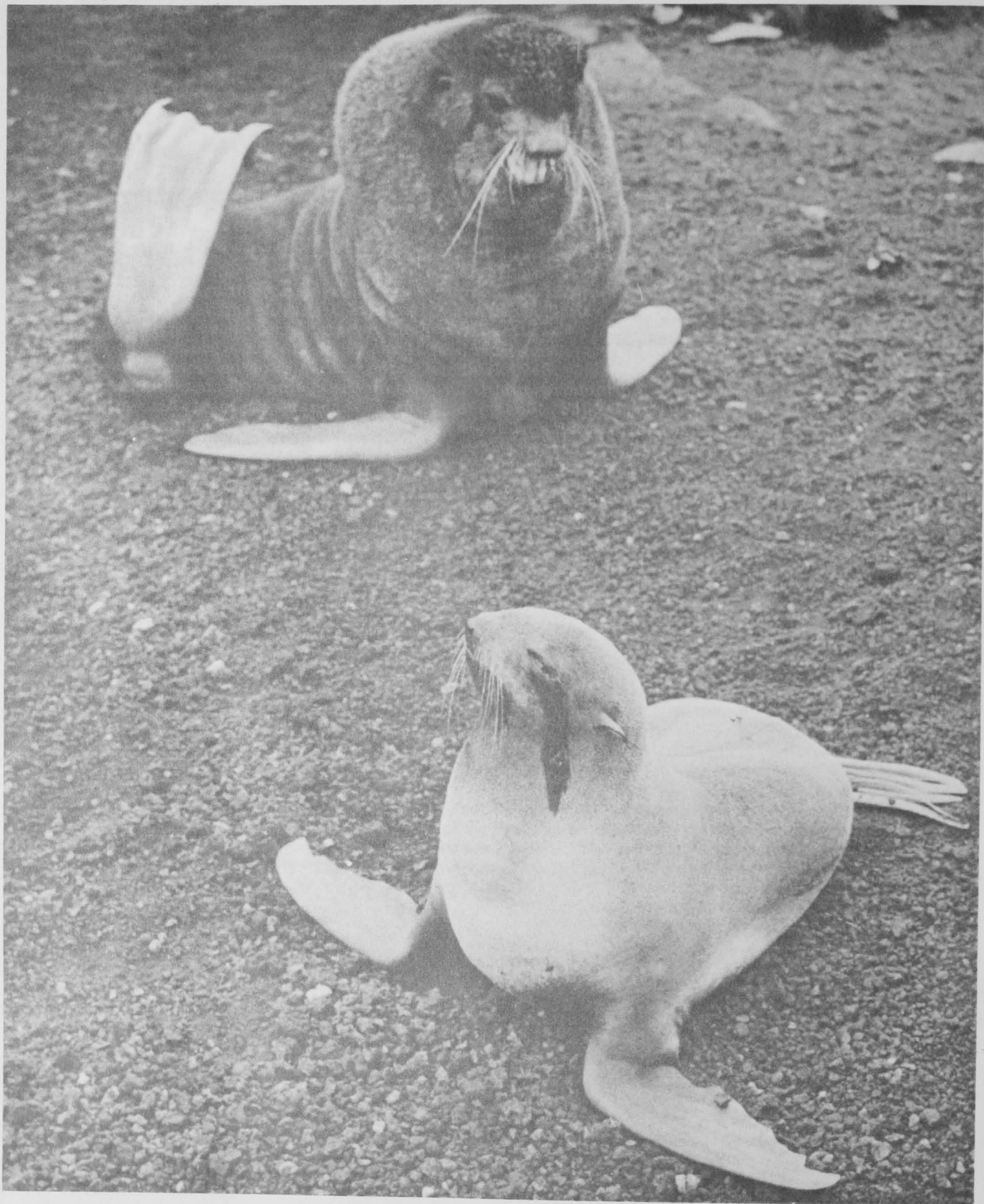
Breeding grounds of the northern fur seals: Robben Island (Kaihyōtō or Tyuleniy Island) off Sakhalin; the Commander Islands (Bering Island and Medny or Copper Island) at the Soviet end of the Aleutian chain; and the Pribilof Islands--St. Paul Island, St. George Island, Otter Island, Walrus Island, and Sea Lion Rock.



"Fur seals sporting around the baidar--Natives of St. Paul lightering off the bundled sealskins to the ship from the Village Cove." A sketch by Henry W. Elliott, who visited the Pribilofs for the Treasury Department and the Smithsonian Institution in 1872, shortly after purchase of the Islands from Russia. The baidar, or bidarra, was made of sea lion skins; canvas-covered bidarrahs are still used in ship-to-shore ferrying.

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Fur seals (cow and bull)

Fur Seal Industry of the Pribilof Islands, 1786-1965

By

FRANCIS RILEY, Supervisory Fishery Reporting Specialist

Bureau of Commercial Fisheries
Washington, D.C.

HISTORY

(The Islands and the Seals)

The Pribilof Islands lie about three hundred miles off the mainland of Alaska in the heart of the Bering Sea. Surrounded in the summer almost constantly by dense fog and drizzling mists, they are the most insignificant landmarks known to that body of water. The Islands are the natural retreat and only breeding ground of the Alaska fur seal herd. There, on the rocky beaches, the young are born each summer. In the fall, after the breeding season is over, the seals leave the Islands and return to the sea.

Other fur seals, also belonging to the genus *Callorhinus*, are found on a few islands off Russia and Japan. To a limited extent the fur seals belonging to the genus *Arctocephalus* are found in cold areas of the Southern Hemisphere. It is generally believed that the Alaska fur seal herd comprises over 80 percent of all existing fur seals in the world today.

The nature and pattern of the fur seals' habits are such that a program of wise utilization can be readily devised and practiced. The Alaska fur seals come ashore only on the Pribilof Islands in late May and early June before the snow has melted. They are highly polygamous animals--the sexes are born in equal numbers--and it is possible to take the surplus males for their skins without reducing the growth of the herd. The story of the Pribilof Islands fur seal herd is one of adventure and international diplomacy. It is a heartening account of cooperation among nations and an outstanding example of wildlife conservation.

The Alaska fur seal was not valued highly by Russian fur gatherers as they prospected for and exploited the sea-otter herds in the Aleutian Archipelago. The seal herd had been noticed as it went north in the spring and returned south in the fall through the passes and channels of the Aleutian chain. As the sea otter reached a point of extermination, however, the fur seal became the source of much speculation as to its breeding habits and where

it spent its time on land. In 1786, after more than 18 years of search by hardy Russian navigators, the land home of the fur seal was found with the discovery of the island of Saint George (Pribilof group) by Gehrman Pribylov. He took possession of the land in the name of Russia and endowed it with the name of his sloop, the Saint George. It was estimated that the seal herd (at the time of the Russian discovery) contained at least 2 1/2 million animals. Almost immediately the teeming rookeries of the Pribilofs began to yield sealskins to the fur markets of the world.

A few years before Pribylov's discovery, adventurous mariners from New England and Europe, in their search for oils to replace the rapidly declining supply of whale oil, had investigated the commercial possibilities of the great herds of fur seals inhabiting the southern seas. In the 50 years that followed, fur seal rookeries on countless islands were destroyed as fast as they were discovered. Every seal that could be obtained was killed. Literally millions of pelts were delivered into the China trade. The sealing business was profitable, but the period of prosperity did not last. The huge populations of fur seals south of the Equator were rapidly annihilated with the exception of only a few small herds that still exist in the Southern Hemisphere.

The early exploration of the Alaska fur seal herd followed the same destructive course as that in the southern seas. Russian sealing operations were wasteful and largely unrecorded. There were no restrictions on the number of seals killed; no attempts made to protect females. Operations were conducted in this manner until 1799. In that year the seal Islands passed into the control of the Russian-American Company, which remained in charge until Russia sold Alaska to the United States.

The records of the Russian-American Company's early operations are imperfect, but it is known that overseers recognized the dangers of overexploitation. At various times they placed temporary bans on killings. These were, however, inadequate, and by 1834 the herd had dwindled to the lowest point under Russian jurisdiction. As a result, Russia

applied a stringent ban on killing in 1835. After a rest of 7 years, when fewer than 10,000 skins were taken annually, the kill was gradually increased under controlled conditions. Only males were taken--the killing of females was forbidden.

After the initial period of unrestricted killing, the take of seals by the Russians appears to have been conservative. Although complete data are not available, scientists have estimated that more than 2 1/2 million pelts were taken between the time the Islands were discovered and 1868--the year in which Alaska was annexed to the United States.

During the first year (1868) of American occupation, various independent parties took 140,000 seals. In the following year, before the Islands were set aside by the U.S. Government as a special reservation for the protection of the animals, 86,000 seals were killed. A year later the U.S. Treasury Department was authorized to lease exclusive rights to take seals on the Islands, with stipulations that no females were to be killed.

During the next 40 years of U.S. ownership, the sealing privilege on the Pribilofs was leased to private companies (The Alaska Commercial Company and the North American Commercial Company). More than 2 million fur seal skins were taken. From 1870 to 1889, the Alaska Commercial Company had little difficulty in getting its annual quota of 100,000 skins. Sealing on the Islands was carefully regulated; however, pelagic sealing (the killing of seals at sea) was not regulated. By 1889 pelagic sealing was taking a heavy and damaging toll which threatened to exterminate the Alaska fur seal herd.

Fur seals are vulnerable to capture at sea as well as on land. The Indians of the northwest coast of America from time immemorial followed the custom of spearing fur seals from their canoes as they passed along the shore. The catch, however, was small and had little effect on the fur seal herd. The animals were taken primarily for food and clothing. Between 1871 and 1878, this fishery was expanded. By 1879, schooners averaging 70 tons and fitted out to transport hunters and canoes to the sealing grounds, engaged in the fur seal harvest.

Sealing on land was controlled, but at sea all animals became targets. The result was the loss of many injured animals, and others that had been killed outright sank and were never retrieved. More important was that a high percentage of the take was females whose death resulted in the loss of their unborn pups or starvation of new-born pups left on land. Pelagic sealing greatly disturbed the pattern of production to which the conservation of the herd had been tailored; the slaughter was to end only when the herd had been reduced to such a low point that pelagic sealing as well as land killing was unprofitable. Pelagic seal-

ing on a commercial scale reached its peak in 1894 when nearly 62,000 skins were taken. Between 1868 and 1909 almost a million skins were taken on the high seas.

Pelagic sealing was an extremely wasteful method of taking seals. For many years there was no way to prevent these operations--they were carried on in waters beyond the control of the countries possessing the rookeries. The United States recognized that the wasteful killing at sea was greatly against the interests of the herd and sought to establish jurisdiction over pelagic sealing in the Bering Sea. The United States seized and confiscated a number of sealing vessels that operated in those waters. The action resulted in a controversy with Great Britain, for the pelagic fleet was largely of Canadian registry. In 1892 the entire matter was remanded to a tribunal of arbitration. This body, which met in Paris in 1893, denied the United States authority to exercise jurisdiction over the Pribilof Islands' fur seals when such animals were more than 3 miles from shore. Although other regulations were formulated to protect the animals, they later proved to be inadequate and the Pribilof herd continued to decline.

In 1897 Congress enacted a law forbidding American citizens to engage in pelagic sealing at any time or place. In 1910, the U.S. Government assumed full charge of sealing operations on the Pribilof Islands following expiration of the leasing program. By then, the once great herd had been reduced to less than 150,000 animals.

After extended diplomatic negotiations, timely and concerted action by conservationists of four countries (United States, Great Britain, Japan, and Russia) finally succeeded in getting their countries to accept the terms of the North Pacific Fur Seal Convention of 1911. Pelagic sealing was prohibited except by aborigines using primitive weapons. Each country owning fur seal rookeries agrees to share 30 percent of the annual take of sealskins--Canada and Japan each to receive 15 percent of the seal-skins from the Pribilof Islands and 15 percent of those from the Commander Islands, and Canada, Russia, and the United States each to receive 10 percent of the pelts from Robben Island. The Convention remained in force for 30 years until terminated by Japan in 1941. From 1942 to 1957 the Pribilof herd was protected by a provisional agreement between Canada and the United States, and in 1957 a new North Pacific Fur Seal Convention, similar in basic provisions to the 1911 Convention, was concluded by Canada, Japan, The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the United States.

The Convention of 1911 provided, for the first time, a sound basis for the management of the North Pacific fur seals. Since 1911 the Alaska fur seal herd has steadily increased from less than 150,000 seals to its present level of

TAKE OF PRIBILOF ISLANDS FUR SEALS, 1786-1965

| Year | From Pribilof Islands | From pelagic and other sources | Total |
|-------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| | <u>Number</u> | <u>Number</u> | <u>Number</u> |
| 1786 - 1796 | <u>1/ 2/</u> 417,758 | (3) | 417,758 |
| 1797 - 1816 | <u>4/</u> 844,890 | (3) | 844,890 |
| 1817 | <u>4/ 5/</u> 60,188 | (3) | 60,188 |
| 1818 | <u>4/ 5/</u> 59,856 | (3) | 59,856 |
| 1819 | <u>4/ 5/</u> 52,224 | (3) | 52,224 |
| 1820 | <u>4/ 5/</u> 50,220 | (3) | 50,220 |
| 1821 | <u>4/ 5/</u> 44,995 | (3) | 44,995 |
| 1822 | <u>5/</u> 36,469 | (3) | 36,469 |
| 1823 | <u>5/</u> 29,873 | (3) | 29,873 |
| 1824 | <u>5/</u> 25,400 | (3) | 25,400 |
| 1825 | <u>5/</u> 30,100 | (3) | 30,100 |
| 1826 | <u>5/</u> 23,250 | (3) | 23,250 |
| 1827 | <u>5/</u> 19,700 | (3) | 19,700 |
| 1828 | <u>5/</u> 23,228 | (3) | 23,228 |
| 1829 | <u>5/</u> 20,811 | (3) | 20,811 |
| 1830 | <u>5/</u> 18,034 | (3) | 18,034 |
| 1831 | <u>5/</u> 16,034 | (3) | 16,034 |
| 1832 | <u>5/</u> 16,446 | (3) | 16,446 |
| 1833 | <u>5/</u> 16,412 | (3) | 16,412 |
| 1834 | <u>5/</u> 15,751 | (3) | 15,751 |
| 1835 | <u>5/</u> 6,580 | (3) | 6,580 |
| 1836 | <u>5/</u> 6,590 | (3) | 6,590 |
| 1837 | <u>5/</u> 6,802 | (3) | 6,802 |
| 1838 | <u>6/</u> 6,000 | (3) | 6,000 |
| 1839 | <u>6/</u> 6,000 | (3) | 6,000 |
| 1840 | <u>6/</u> 8,000 | (3) | 8,000 |
| 1841 | <u>6/</u> 8,000 | (3) | 8,000 |
| 1842 | <u>6/</u> 10,370 | (3) | 10,370 |
| 1843 | <u>6/</u> 11,240 | (3) | 11,240 |
| 1844 | <u>6/</u> 11,924 | (3) | 11,924 |
| 1845 | <u>6/</u> 13,637 | (3) | 13,637 |
| 1846 | <u>6/</u> 15,070 | (3) | 15,070 |
| 1847 | <u>6/</u> 17,703 | (3) | 17,703 |
| 1848 | <u>6/</u> 14,650 | (3) | 14,650 |
| 1849 | <u>6/</u> 21,450 | (3) | 21,450 |
| 1850 | <u>6/</u> 6,770 | (3) | 6,770 |
| 1851 | <u>6/</u> 6,564 | (3) | 6,564 |
| 1852 | <u>6/</u> 6,725 | (3) | 6,725 |
| 1853 | <u>6/</u> 18,035 | (3) | 18,035 |
| 1854 | <u>6/</u> 26,146 | (3) | 26,146 |
| 1855 | <u>6/</u> 8,585 | (3) | 8,585 |

See footnotes at end of table.

(Continued on next page)

TAKE OF PRIBILOF ISLANDS FUR SEALS, 1786-1965 - Continued

| Year | From Pribilof Islands | From pelagic and other sources | Total |
|------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| | <u>Number</u> | <u>Number</u> | <u>Number</u> |
| 1856 | 6/ 23,550 | (3) | 23,550 |
| 1857 | 6/ 21,082 | (3) | 21,082 |
| 1858 | 6/ 31,810 | (3) | 31,810 |
| 1859 | 6/ 22,000 | (3) | 22,000 |
| 1860 | 6/ 21,590 | (3) | 21,590 |
| 1861 | 7/ 29,699 | (3) | 29,699 |
| 1862 | 8/ 20,000 | (3) | 20,000 |
| 1863 | 8/ 25,000 | (3) | 25,000 |
| 1864 | 8/ 26,000 | (3) | 26,000 |
| 1865 | 8/ 40,000 | (3) | 40,000 |
| 1866 | 8/ 42,000 | (3) | 42,000 |
| 1867 | 8/ 48,000 | (3) | 48,000 |
| 1868 | 9/ 140,000 | 4,367 | 144,367 |
| 1869 | 9/ 85,901 | 4,430 | 90,331 |
| 1870 | 9/ 23,773 | 8,686 | 32,459 |
| 1871 | 9/ 102,960 | 16,911 | 119,871 |
| 1872 | 9/ 108,819 | 5,336 | 114,155 |
| 1873 | 9/ 109,117 | 5,229 | 114,346 |
| 1874 | 9/ 110,585 | 5,825 | 116,410 |
| 1875 | 9/ 106,460 | 5,033 | 111,493 |
| 1876 | 9/ 94,657 | 5,515 | 100,172 |
| 1877 | 9/ 84,310 | 5,210 | 89,520 |
| 1878 | 9/ 109,323 | 5,540 | 114,863 |
| 1879 | 9/ 110,511 | 8,557 | 119,068 |
| 1880 | 9/ 105,718 | 8,418 | 114,136 |
| 1881 | 9/ 105,063 | 10,382 | 115,445 |
| 1882 | 9/ 99,812 | 15,581 | 115,393 |
| 1883 | 9/ 79,509 | 16,587 | 96,096 |
| 1884 | 9/ 105,434 | 16,971 | 122,405 |
| 1885 | 9/ 105,024 | 23,040 | 128,064 |
| 1886 | 9/ 104,521 | 28,494 | 133,015 |
| 1887 | 9/ 105,760 | 30,628 | 136,388 |
| 1888 | 9/ 103,304 | 36,389 | 139,693 |
| 1889 | 9/ 102,617 | 29,858 | 132,475 |
| 1890 | 9/ 28,859 | 40,814 | 69,673 |
| 1891 | 9/ 14,406 | 59,568 | 73,974 |
| 1892 | 9/ 7,509 | 46,642 | 54,151 |
| 1893 | 9/ 7,390 | 30,812 | 38,202 |
| 1894 | 9/ 15,033 | 61,838 | 76,871 |
| 1895 | 9/ 14,846 | 56,291 | 71,137 |
| 1896 | 9/ 30,654 | 43,917 | 74,571 |
| 1897 | 9/ 19,200 | 24,332 | 43,532 |

See footnotes at end of table.

(Continued on next page)

TAKE OF PRIBILOF ISLANDS FUR SEALS, 1786-1965 - Continued

| Year | From Pribilof Islands | From pelagic and other sources | Total |
|----------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| | <u>Number</u> | <u>Number</u> | <u>Number</u> |
| 1898 | 9/ 18,047 | 28,552 | 46,599 |
| 1899 | 9/ 16,812 | 34,168 | 50,980 |
| 1900 | 10/ 22,470 | 35,191 | 57,661 |
| 1901 | 10/ 22,672 | 24,050 | 46,722 |
| 1902 | 10/ 22,386 | 22,812 | 45,198 |
| 1903 | 10/ 19,292 | 27,000 | 46,292 |
| 1904 | 10/ 13,128 | 29,006 | 42,134 |
| 1905 | 10/ 14,368 | 25,320 | 39,688 |
| 1906 | 10/ 14,476 | 21,236 | 35,712 |
| 1907 | 10/ 14,964 | 16,036 | 31,000 |
| 1908 | 10/ 14,996 | 18,151 | 33,147 |
| 1909 | 14,368 | 14,139 | 28,507 |
| 1910 | 13,586 | 12,111 | 25,697 |
| 11/ 1911 | 12,006 | 12,671 | 24,677 |
| 1912 | 3,764 | 12/ 205 | 3,969 |
| 13/ 1913 | 2,406 | 495 | 2,901 |
| 1914 | 2,735 | 366 | 3,101 |
| 1915 | 3,947 | 439 | 4,386 |
| 1916 | 6,468 | 629 | 7,097 |
| 1917 | 8,170 | 737 | 8,907 |
| 1918 | 34,890 | 483 | 35,373 |
| 1919 | 27,821 | 626 | 28,447 |
| 1920 | 26,648 | 2,343 | 28,991 |
| 1921 | 23,681 | 3,115 | 26,796 |
| 1922 | 31,156 | 2,563 | 33,719 |
| 1923 | 15,920 | 5,818 | 21,738 |
| 1924 | 17,219 | 3,285 | 20,504 |
| 1925 | 19,860 | 6,509 | 26,369 |
| 1926 | 22,131 | 3,899 | 26,030 |
| 1927 | 24,942 | 2,301 | 27,243 |
| 1928 | 31,099 | 3,902 | 35,001 |
| 1929 | 40,068 | 4,969 | 45,037 |
| 1930 | 42,500 | 3,984 | 46,484 |
| 1931 | 49,524 | 1,649 | 51,173 |
| 1932 | 49,336 | 1,938 | 51,274 |
| 1933 | 54,550 | 2,076 | 56,626 |
| 1934 | 53,468 | 290 | 53,758 |
| 1935 | 57,296 | 980 | 58,276 |
| 1936 | 52,446 | 1,927 | 54,373 |
| 1937 | 55,180 | 2,832 | 58,012 |
| 1938 | 58,364 | 1,551 | 59,915 |
| 1939 | 60,473 | 637 | 61,110 |

See footnotes at end of table.

(Continued on next page)

TAKE OF PRIBILOF ISLANDS FUR SEALS, 1786-1965 - Continued

| Year | From Pribilof Islands | From pelagic and other sources | Total |
|------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| | <u>Number</u> | <u>Number</u> | <u>Number</u> |
| 1940 | 65,263 | <u>14/</u> 65 | 65,328 |
| 1941 | 95,013 | 21 | 95,034 |
| 1942 | <u>15/</u> 150 | - | 150 |
| 1943 | <u>16/</u> 117,184 | - | 117,184 |
| 1944 | 47,652 | 91 | 47,743 |
| 1945 | 76,964 | 39 | 77,003 |
| 1946 | 64,523 | 417 | 64,940 |
| 1947 | 61,447 | 186 | 61,633 |
| 1948 | 70,142 | 244 | 70,386 |
| 1949 | 70,990 | 90 | 71,080 |
| 1950 | 60,204 | 333 | 60,537 |
| 1951 | 50,771 | 735 | 51,506 |
| 1952 | 63,922 | 28 | 63,950 |
| 1953 | 66,669 | 54 | 66,723 |
| 1954 | 63,882 | - | 63,882 |
| 1955 | 65,453 | - | 65,453 |
| 1956 | 122,826 | - | 122,826 |
| 1957 | 93,618 | - | 93,618 |
| 1958 | 78,919 | - | 78,919 |
| 1959 | 57,810 | - | 57,810 |
| 1960 | 40,616 | - | 40,616 |
| 1961 | 95,974 | - | 95,974 |
| 1962 | 77,915 | - | 77,915 |
| 1963 | 85,254 | - | 85,254 |
| 1964 | 64,206 | - | 64,206 |
| 1965 | 51,020 | - | 51,020 |

1/ Berg's Chronological history, 1820, cited in Fur-Seal Arbitration, Case of the United States, Proc. Trib. Arbitration, Paris, 1895, 1:125. 2/ Attempts to obtain authentic records on the number of fur seals slain upon the Pribilof Islands before 1868 were partially successful. Counts of shipments of skins to be exported to China or Russia were made by the Russian Company when the skins were shipped to Sitka. Beyond this, there were only a few records on the number of animals consumed in Alaska, lost through wastefulness and crude methods of curing skins, or destroyed in warehouses. This confuses a correct determination as to the sum totals and the result probably represents not more than one-half of the seals killed during these years. 3/ Fur seals taken from areas other than the Pribilof Islands are included with those taken on the Islands. 4/ Elliott's Monograph, reprint Seal and salmon fisheries, part 3, p. 115, gives the number of seals killed from 1797 to 1821 as 1,112,373, after deducting 5,000 skins annually for skins shipped from the Commander Islands. The number 844,890 is obtained by deducting from the above number the seals stated by Vemaminof to have been killed during 1817-21. 5/ Vemaminof's Notes on islands of Unalaska District, part 2, table 6, cited in Fur-Seal Arbitration, Case of the United States, Proc. Trib. Arbitration, Paris, 1895, 1:126. 6/ Report of H. H. McIntyre, 1869 (House Ex. Doc. 36, 41st Congr., 2d Sess.). 7/ Report of British Commissioners, Fur-Seal Arbitration, Proc. Trib. Arbitration, Paris, 1895, 6:109. 8/ The fishery industries of the United States, 1880, by G. Brown Goode (Henry W. Elliott), sect. 5, History and methods, 2:361-362. 9/ The commercial fisheries of Alaska in 1905. [U.S.] Bur. Fish., Doc. 603:32. 10/ The fur-seal fisheries of Alaska in 1909 by Walter I. Lembkey, [U.S.] Bur. Fish. Doc. 735. 11/ Convention for the Protection and Preservation

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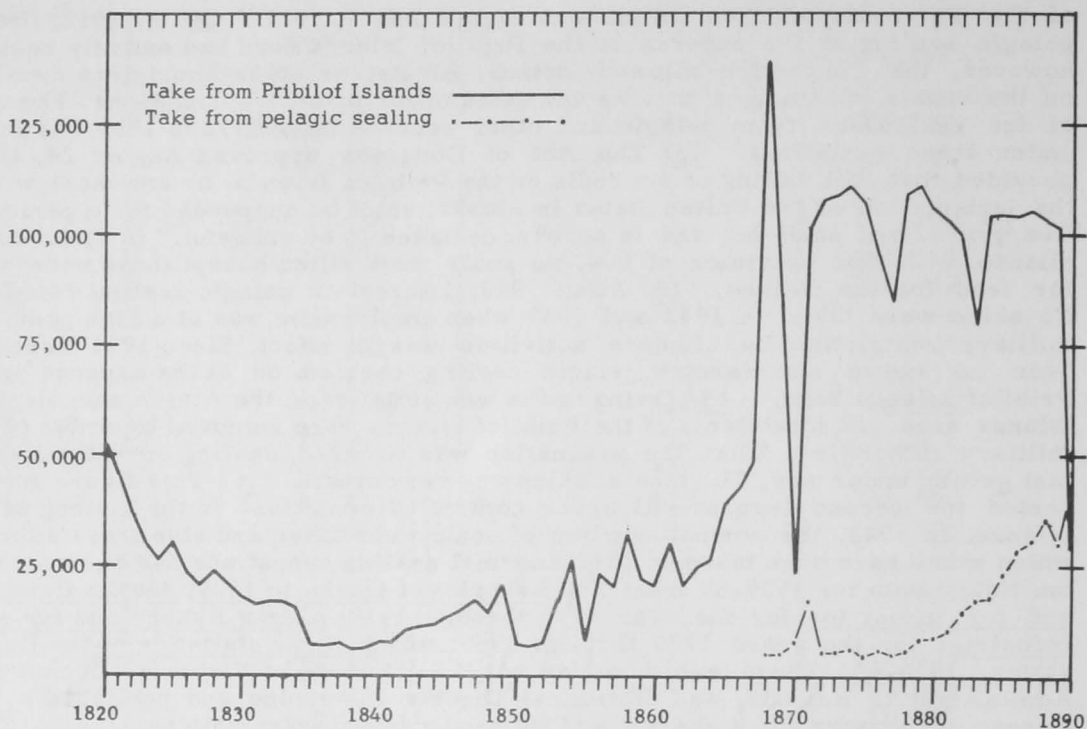
TAKE OF PRIBILOF ISLANDS FUR SEALS, 1786-1965 - Continued

of the Fur Seals and Sea Otters was signed July 7, 1911. ^{12/} By 1912, illegal pelagic sealing at the expense of the Pribilof Islands herd had entirely ceased; however, the Convention allowed Indians, Aleuts, or other aborigines dwelling on the coasts of America to take fur seals under primitive conditions. The take of fur seal skins from pelagic and other sources from 1912 to 1953 was made under these conditions. ^{13/} The Act of Congress approved August 24, 1912, provided that "all killing of fur seals on the Pribilof Islands, or anywhere within the jurisdiction of the United States in Alaska, shall be suspended for a period of five years, and shall be, and is hereby, declared to be unlawful." In strict compliance with that provision of law, no seals were killed except those necessary for food for the natives. ^{14/} After 1940, interest in pelagic sealing dwindled. No skins were taken in 1942 and 1943 when employment was at a high point and military restriction on offshore activities was in effect. Since 1954 there has been no known commercial pelagic sealing carried on at the expense of the Pribilof Islands herd. ^{15/} Owing to the war situation in the Alaska and Aleutian Islands area, all inhabitants of the Pribilof Islands were removed by order of the military authorities. When the evacuation was ordered, sealing operations were just getting under way. The take of skins was very small. ^{16/} This figure represented the second largest kill under controlled conditions in the history of the Islands. In 1943, the normal number of seals were taken and also those animals which would have been taken in 1942 if normal sealing operations had been carried on. Note: Data for 1909-59 from The fisheries of Alaska in 1909; Alaska fisheries and fur industries for the year 1910 through 1919; Alaska fishery and fur-seal industries for the years 1920 through 1955; and Fishery statistics of the United States, 1956-65. These are a series of [U.S.] Bureau of Fisheries Documents, Administrative Reports, and Statistical Digests assembled and published by the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries and its predecessor organizations.



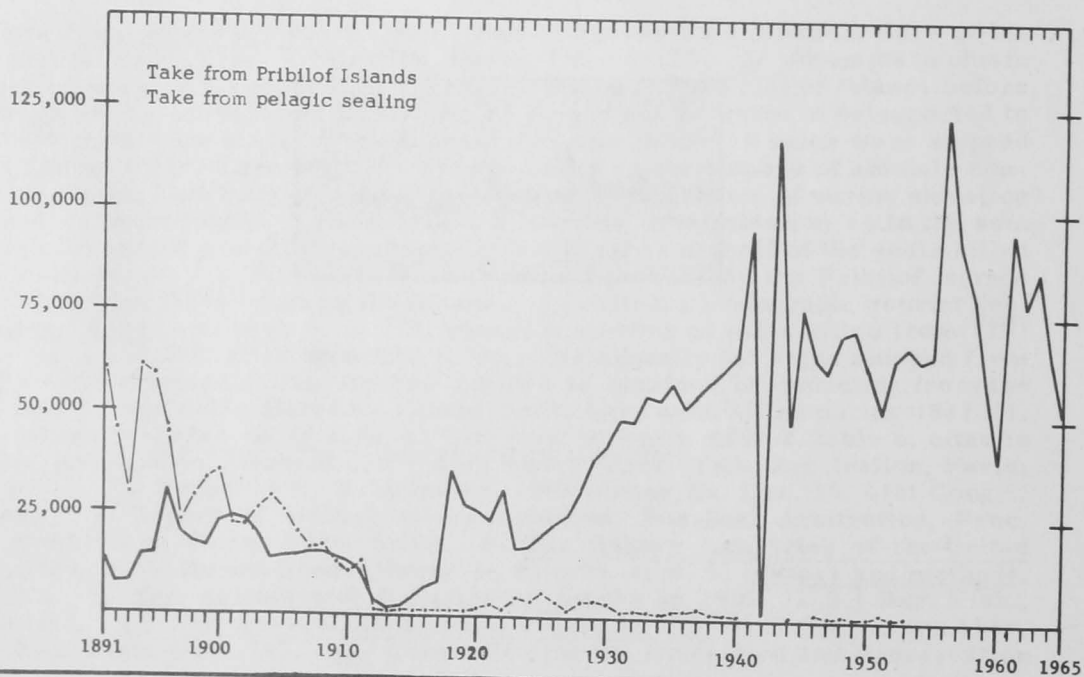
TAKE OF PRIBILOF ISLANDS FUR SEALS, 1820-90

Number of skins



TAKE OF PRIBILOF ISLANDS FUR SEALS, 1891-1965

Number of skins



about 1 1/2 million animals--an outstanding accomplishment in the conservation of wildlife. Since 1939 the herd has sustained an average annual take of about 69,000 sealskins. The future of the Alaska fur seal herd seems assured as long as the countries of the world continue to work together in the solution of problems peculiar to such migratory wildlife populations.

INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTS FROM THE SEALS

After the U.S. Government assumed full charge of sealing operations in 1910, efforts were made to utilize waste products of the industry. For the most part, fur seal carcasses had been abandoned to the elements. Natives on the Islands used some seal meat as food and other parts of the carcasses in the making of clothing. The abandoned carcasses were also a source of food for the blue fox populations on the Islands. World War I stimulated efforts to use waste products. Seal meat was preserved in salt for experimental use by the Department of Agriculture, the gullets or throats of the animals were used experimentally for fine leather, oil and gelatine were extracted from carcasses, tests were made of the suitability of intestines for sausage casing, and bone deposits were collected for chemical analysis. Little was actually achieved, although 472,000 pounds of fur seal bones were sold to fertilizer manufacturers.

In 1918, the Government built a small reduction plant for producing oil from which glycerine, an essential material for munitions, could be prepared. The plant operated on a limited basis from 1919 through 1924, and for a short period in 1928. Operations were restricted by a shortage of coal for fuel. The plant produced about 82,000 pounds of meal and 34,000 gallons of oil. Although there were some sales, over half of the meal was used as fox food on the Islands and over two-thirds of the oil was used in the tanning of sealskins

and in the preparation of fox food. About 1920, the price of meal and oil declined to the point where operation of the plant was not economical.

In 1930, the plant was modernized and enlarged. The new installation was completed in 1931 but, owing to low oil and meal prices, did not operate until 1935. The plant was then used each season until 1962, except in 1942 when the Pribilof Islands were evacuated for military reasons.

During World War II, the demand for meal and oil increased; however, the plant was too small to utilize all of the available waste products from the increased harvest of sealskins. Plans were made to double the capacity of the plant, but owing to wartime conditions, expansion was not completed until 1948.

Plant production yielded an annual average of about 636,000 pounds of seal meal and 46,000 gallons of oil between 1948-61. During 1935-39, most of the meal was used as fish food in hatcheries operated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. After 1939, the product was sold as a protein ingredient in poultry feed. Small quantities were also fed experimentally to fur-bearing animals or sold to State fish hatcheries. Fur seal oil had been sold since 1935 for use in leather tanning. The reduction plant was abandoned in 1962 because of poor markets for fur seal meal and oil.

In 1962 and 1963, a private firm experimented with using fur seal carcasses as mink feed and an initial shipment of 150 tons of frozen meat found a ready market in 1963. In 1964, a 5-year contract to utilize stripped fur seal carcasses was awarded to Pacific Fur Foods, Inc. A 500-ton capacity sharp-freezer and cold storage unit was installed on St. Paul Island, and the firm processed 1,636,000 pounds of seal carcasses, mostly into frozen ground meat suitable for mink food. The cold storage plant and processing procedures were improved in 1965, and about 1,736,000 pounds of frozen ground seal meat were produced.

PRODUCTION AND SALES OF FUR SEAL MEAL AND OIL, 1919-65

| Year | Quantity produced | | Quantity sold | |
|---------|-------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| | Meal | Oil | Meal | Oil |
| | <u>Pounds</u> | <u>Gallons</u> | <u>Pounds</u> | <u>Gallons</u> |
| 1919 | 20,568 | 3,000 | 20,568 | 3,000 |
| 1920 | 19,000 | 1,853 | 15,393 | - |
| 1921 | 8,759 | 5,271 | - | - |
| 1922 | 1,935 | 8,546 | - | - |
| 1923 | 8,703 | 5,925 | - | - |
| 1924 | 19,014 | 6,870 | - | - |
| 1925 | (1) | (1) | 1,019 | - |
| 1926 | (1) | (1) | 3,518 | - |
| 1927 | (1) | (1) | - | - |
| 1928 | 4,215 | 2,479 | - | - |
| 1929-34 | (1) | (1) | - | - |
| 1935 | 155,254 | 18,994 | - | 18,238 |
| 1936 | 276,040 | 25,252 | - | 23,669 |
| 1937 | 330,265 | 29,830 | - | 29,341 |
| 1938 | 357,222 | 30,587 | - | 29,865 |
| 1939 | 502,914 | 32,809 | 338,421 | 27,966 |
| 1940 | 618,762 | 30,605 | 569,536 | 24,405 |
| 1941 | 747,546 | 54,610 | 746,457 | 39,610 |
| 1942 | (1) | (1) | - | - |
| 1943 | 782,000 | 75,259 | 244,679 | 94,482 |
| 1944 | 484,776 | 32,976 | 835,470 | 32,976 |
| 1945 | 547,969 | 41,189 | 547,969 | 41,189 |
| 1946 | 528,040 | 33,912 | 528,040 | 33,912 |
| 1947 | 606,514 | 39,746 | 606,514 | 39,746 |
| 1948 | 686,089 | 48,592 | 684,089 | 48,592 |
| 1949 | 694,350 | 49,253 | 693,350 | 49,253 |
| 1950 | 673,558 | 42,013 | 672,000 | 41,689 |
| 1951 | 702,616 | 39,867 | 702,000 | 39,867 |
| 1952 | 729,806 | 35,029 | 729,806 | 35,029 |
| 1953 | 705,935 | 46,800 | 705,935 | 46,800 |
| 1954 | 661,131 | 40,220 | 661,131 | 40,220 |
| 1955 | 642,876 | 40,509 | 642,876 | 40,509 |
| 1956 | 1,252,169 | 88,270 | 1,252,169 | 88,270 |
| 1957 | 748,277 | 53,291 | 748,277 | 53,291 |
| 1958 | 636,000 | 52,908 | 636,000 | 52,908 |
| 1959 | 659,167 | 39,307 | 659,167 | 39,307 |
| 1960 | 332,000 | 22,300 | 332,000 | 22,300 |
| 1961 | 624,000 | 52,458 | 624,000 | 52,458 |
| 1961-65 | (1) | (1) | (1) | (1) |

1/ Plant not operated. Source:--Data for 1919-34 from Alaska fisheries and fur industries and Alaska fishery and fur-seal industries. These are a series of [U.S.] Bureau of Fisheries Documents and Administrative Reports. Data for 1935-49 from Fishery Leaflet 380 by Ralph C. Baker. Data for 1950-65 from Alaska fishery and fur-seal industries and Fishery statistics of the United States. These are a series of Statistical Digests assembled and published by the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries and its predecessor organizations.

SHIPMENT AND SALE OF FUR SEAL BONES, 1917-19

| Year of shipment | Net weight | Receipts less expense of sale |
|------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| | <u>Pounds</u> | <u>Value</u> |
| 1917 | 32,170 | \$ 322 |
| 1918 | 338,900 | 4,532 |
| 1919 | 101,084 | 1,447 |
| Total | 472,154 | 6,301 |

Note: Includes old sea lion bones.

Source: Alaska fisheries and fur industries. [U.S.] Bur. Fish., Docs. 847, 872, and 891.



Small harem: bull, cows, and pups

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