

UNIVERSITY FOCUS  
TOPIC: PEAT IN THE FOOD CHAIN  
GUEST: DR. DON SHELL *Schell*

TO AIR 27 JAN 84

FOSSIL FUEL ISN'T JUST FOR HUMANS, ANY MORE. IT'S FOR DUCKS AND FISH TOO.

I'M STEPHEN LAY, UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA-FAIRBANKS PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER, WITH THIS WEEK'S EDITION OF UNIVERSITY FOCUS.

PEAT, WHICH HAS WARMED IRISH HOMES FOR CENTURIES, IS FUELING SOME OF ALASKA'S DUCKS AND FISH. BASICALLY THE PEAT FALLS INTO STREAMS AND RIVERS. ONCE THERE IT ENTERS THE FOOD CHAIN.

DOCTOR DONALD SHELL OF THE UNIVERSITY'S INSTITUTE OF WATER RESOURCES HAS INVESTIGATED THESE FOSSIL FUELED ANIMALS.

CUT: incue: "Once the peat..." 34  
outcue: "rearing of their young." 58

IT IS A CRUCIAL FOOD SOURCE. ONE OLDSQUAW DUCK WAS SO DEPENDENT ON THIS FOOD CHAIN, THAT SIXTY FOUR PERCENT OF IT'S BODY CARBON CAME FROM PEAT. CERTAIN FISH SPECIES ARE ALSO VERY DEPENDENT ON THE FOOD. DURING THE WINTER, WHEN THERE ARE NO INSECTS, THE FISH SUBSIST ON THE SMALLER AQUATIC ANIMALS.

CUT: incue: "These fish..." 246  
outcue: "year to year." 255

THE PEAT IS THE ACCUMULATION OF MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED CENTURIES OF VEGETATION ON THE TUNDRA. FLOODS AND RIVER UNDERCUTTING OF BANKS CAUSES CHUNKS OF PEAT TO FALL INTO THE WATER.

CUT: incue: "All peat is..." 166  
outcue: "type of structure." 184

THE DUCKS AND FISH CAN NOT DIRECTLY EAT THE PEAT. BEFORE THEY CAN UTILIZE THE FOOD VALUE OF THIS TEN THOUSAND YEAR OLD SALAD OTHER ORGANISMS MUST FIRST CONVERT THE PEAT INTO A USEABLE FORM.

CUT: incue: "It turns out..." 68  
outcue: "in the ponds." 80

FOSSIL FUELED FISH AND BIRDS ARE NOT AN EXCLUSIVE ALASKAN TRAIT, SHELL BELIEVES.

CUT: incue: "I suspect." 260  
outcue: "North of England." 272

DR. DON SHELL IS WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA-FAIRBANKS INSTITUTE OF WATER RESOURCES,

FOR THE UAF PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE, I'M STEPHEN LAY.

H-85-94 ?  
dk

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