80-04 PT. 2

Olaus Murie talks at a meeting of the Tanana Valley Sportsmen's Association on August 14, 1955 in Fairbanks, Alaska.

Fairbanks, Alaska

Tape begins with a slide show in progress. An unidentified man talked about whitefish and catching them. He talked about pike fish. It is not considered a game fish in Alaska, but he considers it a valuable fish in Interior Alaska. It is found in just about every watershed in the Interior. They are slow growing and spawn in the early spring. The young hatch out in a matter of days and eat insects and small crustaceans. As soon as they are two or two and a half inches long they start eating forage fish. They eat other pike. They grow about four and a half inches in the first season. A five or six years old fish may be seventeen to twenty inches long. You have to get at least a five inch pike to get much meat. There is a ling or burbot that isn't utilized throughout Alaska. He believes it will be in the sports fishery in the future. The sheefish is also a sport fish in Alaska. It is fished in the Arctic and up the Yukon up to Eagle. It is caught locally in the Tanana.

He drew a diagram of the ranges of the fish in Alaska. The southeastern Alaska, the panhandle and through the Prince William Sound area is characterized by heavy rainfall, a moderate climate, streams that fluctuate in flow, and is fairly warm. There are all five species of salmon in this region, rainbow, cut throat trout, Dolly Varden, and eastern brooks. There are whitefish in the lakes and streams. There a very few pike and no sheefish.

In the Bristol Bay and the Alaska Peninsula region there are all five species of salmon and rainbow trout. He talked about the range of the cut throat trout. There are dolly vardens and lakes trout. Grayling are found in the Copper River drainage around the Chitina area. White fish is found throughout the area. There are a few pike and no sheefish.

He talked about the different races of Dolly Varden. Some of them are anadromous.

There was a question about grayling and the age that they spawn. The unidentified speaker said they are about five or six years old when they spawn and they are about twelve inches long.

There was a question about steelhead.

From Bristol Bay to Kotzebue Sound there are five species of salmon, rainbow, some steelhead, Dolly Varden, lake trout, grayling, whitefish, a few pike. Sheefish are common. They are anadromous.

In the Arctic there is little data about fish species. Pink and dog salmon are found in the Arctic. There are no cut throat or rainbow trout. Dolly Varden and lake trout are found there. Grayling are found in the Arctic along with whitefish. There has been talk of commercializing the whitefish fishery.

He asked the audience if they have any questions.

There was a question about the Interior. The unidentified person said the Interior has the drainage of the Tanana and Yukon Rivers. The salmon species are the king, silver and dog salmon primarily. There are no rainbows or cut throat trout. There are a few lake trout. Dolly Varden are rare in the Interior. Grayling are found extensively in the Interior area. Whitefish are found. Pike dominates the fresh water fish in the Interior. There are fresh water cod and sheefish.

The unidentified speaker said fish are cold blooded and the body temperature is dependent on the water in which it lives. He said the temperature of the water in Alaska varies to a wide degree. Fish have an optimum temperature in which they grow. When the water is cold they do not grow to any appreciable extent. They grow rapidly in the summer months. In the summer the lakes are stratified with the cold water below and the warm water above. It may be 65 degrees at the surface and 40 degrees at the bottom. The water is oxygenated at the top layer but not at the bottom of the lake. As the cold weather comes on the top layer cools down and is much heavier. This cold water that is saturated with oxygen sinks down and displaces the water at the bottom of the lake and shoves it upward. This continues for two or three weeks until it freezes over. At this time the lake water is 39 degrees and saturated with oxygen. There is an ice layer on top and prevents oxygenation of the water. It is sealed in. The fish in that lake have a slowed metabolic rate. There is enough oxygen sustained in the water to allow the fish to overwinter. Taping quits.

31:54 Olaus Murie talked about leaving the camp in better condition than when they found it. That is a part of wilderness travel. In California pack outfits must take their cans out. They have buried cans in the past. They try to work towards quality of personal individual experience. He thinks that that is the thing that is needed in our country. He wishes that people could have the kind of summer he had on the Sheenjek.