

## PROTECTION OF FUR SEALS IN THE NORTH PACIFIC

[See the *Polar Record*, No. 30, July 1945, pp. 264–71. The present supplementary note is based on information released by the U.S. State Department on 6 January 1948.]

The United States and Canadian Governments, by an exchange of Notes dated 26 December 1947, have provided for the continuance of the Provisional Fur Seal Agreement of 1942 between the two countries until a permanent Convention can be arranged for the protection of the fur seal herd of the North Pacific. To such a Convention the United States, Canada, and possibly other interested countries, would be parties.

The original sealing Convention for the protection and preservation of the fur seal herd of the North Pacific Ocean was signed in 1911 by the United States, Great Britain, Japan and Russia. In October 1941 this Convention was abrogated by Japan. During the war the Governments of Canada and the United States felt it advisable that the two countries should continue the protection of the herd. They therefore in 1942 entered into a provisional agreement for the duration of the emergency and 12 months thereafter in order to carry on the fur seal conservation programme during the war.

The conservation programme was designed to rehabilitate the stock of North Pacific fur seals, which had become seriously depleted by the practice of ruthless pelagic sealing in the later decades of the nineteenth and the first of the twentieth centuries. The original Convention was intended to rebuild the herd, primarily by the prohibition of pelagic sealing. In 1912, the first year that the Convention was in force, the size of the Pribilof Islands herd was about 216,000. By sound conservation and management practices the herd has now increased to over 3,600,000, according to the annual census taken in August 1947. The sealing operations in these islands are administered by the Fish and Wildlife Service of the United States Department of the Interior. The herd is estimated to be worth more than \$100,000,000, and the semi-annual auction of fur seal skins in the Autumn of 1947 yielded gross proceeds to the Federal Government of over \$1,470,000.

## A SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY VOYAGE IN RUSSIAN ARCTIC WATERS

[Summarised from a note by A. F. Laktionov in *Izvestiya Vsesoyuznogo Geograficheskogo Obshchestva* (*News of the All-Union Geographical Society*), Tom 77, No. 3, 1945, pp. 160–61.]

Until recently it was thought that the first ship to reach and pass Mys Chelyuskina (Cape Chelyuskin), the most northerly point on the mainland along the Northern Sea Route, was Nordenskiöld's *Vega* in 1878. The first recorded instance of reaching the Cape overland was in 1742, when Semen Chelyuskin, after whom the cape was named, reached it during his travels as a member of the Lena-Yenisey detachment of the Russian Great Northern Expedition. It now appears that a ship, or ships, in all probability rounded the Cape a good deal earlier even than Chelyuskin's visit.