

## 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.

In 1940 and 1941 a hydrographical expedition discovered evidence of early habitation on the most northerly island of the Ostrova Faddeya and on the shore of the mainland opposite, in Zaliv Simsa. This locality is on the eastern side of Poluoostrov Taymyr, about 75–100 miles south-east of Mys Chelyuskina. The objects found included copper vessels, knives, frying pans, tin plates, silver coins, ear-rings, a flintlock weapon, and crosses of the sort that are hung round the neck. There were also found remains of a boat, sledges and huts, with human skeletons in the latter, and, of particular interest, a compass, a sun watch, and a document appearing to be letters patent. The coins, of which altogether more than 3400 were found, belong to various reigns, from that of Vasili III, who ruled in Moscow from 1505 to 1533, to that of Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich, who ruled from 1613 to 1645. From this, and the evidence provided by other objects, it would seem that this locality was reached by Russians from towns on the White Sea and Barents Sea, such as Mezen, Kholmogora (Hakluyt's Colmogro) and Pustozersk, in the first quarter of the seventeenth century. In fact it is likely that the journey or journeys were made before 1620, since in that year a decree was issued forbidding absolutely all trading by the sea route from the west to the mouth of the Ob'. This decree had the intended effect of stopping the development of shipping routes in the Kara Sea. It seems probable that the expedition was both trading and hunting, and that it suffered shipwreck while on the way to the mouth of the Khatanga. It is surmised, from the range of objects evidently intended for use in trading with natives, that those making the expedition had a very clear idea of the conditions and needs of the Siberian market. It is possible, therefore, that this particular party which was shipwrecked off eastern Taymyr was not the first to make the journey.

#### “ZEMLYA SANNIKOVA”

[Based on *Izvestiya Vsesoyuznogo Geograficheskogo Obshchestva (News of the All-Union Geographical Society)*, Tom 78, No. 3, 1946, pp. 357–58; *Morya sovetskoy arktiki (Seas of the Soviet Arctic)* by V. Yu. Vize, Leningrad, 1936.]

It has recently been announced that Zemlya Sannikova, or Sannikov Land, has been conclusively proved not to exist. A geographical puzzle that had exercised explorers of that part of the Russian Arctic for over 130 years has thus at last been solved.

Between 1805 and 1811 Yakov Sannikov, a trader, travelled extensively over the Ostrova Novosibirskie (New Siberian Islands), a group of islands lying in the Arctic Ocean off the north Siberian coast between the mouths of the Lena and the Indigirka. From the northern coast of Novaya Sibir', the most easterly island of the group, he saw land due north out to sea. This was evidently what is now called Ostrov Bennett, an island reached and named in 1881 by de Long. From the northern tip of Ostrov Faddeyevski, in the centre of the group, he claimed to see land in a northerly direction, about 30 miles away. The absence of any land in this area was proved shortly afterwards by a subsequent expedition. From the northern shore of Ostrov Kotel'ny, at the western