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Part 2. }

BUREAU OF FISHERIES

REPORTS

OF

AGENTS, OFFICERS, AND PERSONS, ACTING UNDER THE AUTHORITY
OF THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,

IN RELATION TO THE

CONDITION OF SEAL LIFE ON THE ROOKERIES OF THE PRIBILOF ISLANDS,

AND TO

PELAGIC SEALING IN BERING SEA AND THE
NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN,

IN

THE YEARS 1893-1895.

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IN TWO PARTS.

PART II.

[With maps and illustrations. Results of investigations under the direction
of the U. S. Commissioner of Fish and Fisheries.]

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OPENING OF PART OF BERING SEA TO PELAGIC SEALING.

By the provisions of the recent treaty of arbitration, pelagic sealing will hereafter be permitted in Bering Sea after August 1 of each year outside of a radius of 60 miles from the Pribilof Islands. Notwithstanding that the use of firearms will be prohibited, the opportunity afforded by this privilege is likely to produce a very serious effect upon the seal herd belonging to the several rookeries whenever the vessels find continuous good weather. Seals, when in the water, can readily be killed by means of spears, and they are regularly taken in this manner by most of the Indian seal hunters of the Northwest Coast. Many sailing vessels have been accustomed to carry Indian spear hunters with their canoes in preference to the white hunters, who use guns and boats, and we may expect to see full advantage taken of the former method in the free waters of Bering Sea. The open season for seals coming, as it does, at the close of the sea-otter season, will also make available the entire force of Alaskan spear-throwing hunters, who will be the more eager to take advantage of the new privilege, in view of the recent restrictions placed upon otter hunting and the present scarcity of otters. The apparatus employed in the latter fishery is likewise largely adapted to the pursuit of seals. After the month of August, however, the weather soon becomes unsettled and stormy, thus somewhat limiting the period when pelagic sealing can safely be carried on.

Observations made upon the distribution of seals in Bering Sea between July 28 and August 13, 1892, by the steamer *Corwin*, showed conclusively that the nursing seals travel distances of at least 200 miles from the Pribilof Islands in search of food, and consequently that the closed area about those islands, having a radius of only 60 miles, affords them only a very partial protection. The effect of killing large numbers of these females, which must certainly take place, means also the destruction of their pups on shore through starvation and the more rapid thinning out of the herds upon the rookeries than has hitherto occurred. The complete protection of the fur seal in Bering Sea, together with such restrictions upon its killing in the North Pacific Ocean as have been provided by the treaty of arbitration, would no doubt permit a steady increase upon the rookeries where it breeds, but its pursuit in any manner within part of the area it occupies as a feeding ground during the breeding season may be expected to have a disastrous effect upon the breeding rookeries of the Pribilof Islands.

List of the maps showing the outlines of the rookeries on the Pribilof Islands, 1893.¹

ST. PAUL ISLAND.

Northeast Point rookery	Chart A
Polavina rookery	Chart B
Ketavie and Lukannon rookeries	Chart C
Reef and Garbotch rookeries	Chart D
Tolstoi and Lagoon rookeries	Chart E
Zapadnie and English Bay rookeries	Charts F and G

ST. GEORGE ISLAND.

Starry Arteel rookery	Chart H
North rookery	Chart I
East and Little East rookeries	Chart J
Zapadnie rookery	Chart K

¹ This set of maps not transmitted for publication, the accompanying set for 1895, showing more reduced area of rookeries, being deemed sufficient.