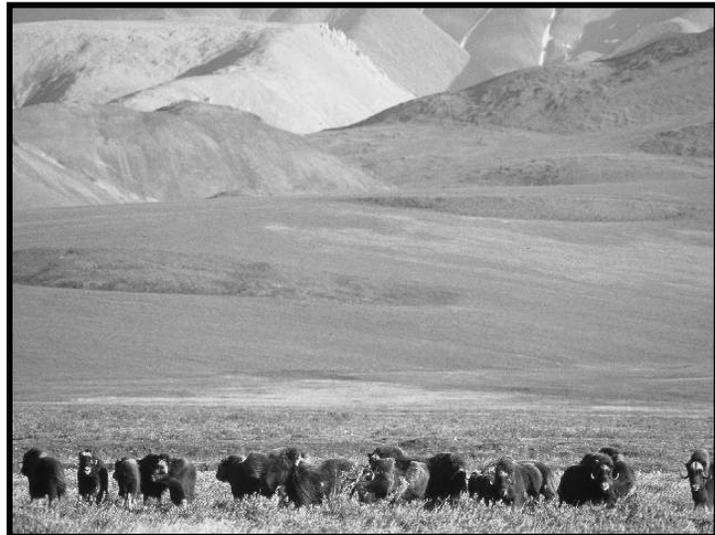




Muskox as a Resource

Muskox Meat

Muskox are an important source of meat for many Arctic communities where they are harvested as a subsistence food source. Muskox meat is nutritious and is highly valued by those who consume it. Currently muskox are harvested in Alaska, Northwest Territories and Nunavut, in most places under quota. In the Yukon, steps are being taken that will allow muskox to be harvested under quota once the quotas are recommended and adopted by the Yukon Government.



Commercial Harvesting

Some muskox are harvested for commercial purposes such as the sale of meat to stores and restaurants. In the Western Arctic, large scale commercial harvests have taken place for a number of years near Sachs Harbor and Holman. Meat, hides, wool and horns from these communities are exported to markets in southern Canada. These harvests have been organized by the Hunters and Trappers Committees (HTC) and the communities. The Inuvialuit Regional Corporation helps find the markets.

Guided Sport Hunting

Guided sport hunting for muskox provides a source of income for some Northern communities. Outfitted sport hunts are offered by the communities of Holman, Sachs Harbor, Paulatuk and Tuktoyaktuk. Sport hunting is administered by the HTCs or sport hunting outfitters in the communities. Muskox are considered a unique and valuable trophy. Sport hunters pay as much as \$5000 to hunt muskox.

Qiviut

The soft brownish underhair of the muskox is called qiviut. The qiviut of the muskox is perhaps the finest wool in the world. It is stronger than sheep's wool and eight times warmer. It is finer and softer than cashmere. Qiviut is spun into wool and used to make warm woolen clothing, hats, scarves and mitts. It is very valuable. Commercially spun qiviut currently sells for about \$200 per 100 grams, and a qiviut scarf can sell for over \$300.

Qiviut can be collected on the range of muskox during the spring and summer, when the muskox shed their coats. The wool becomes attached to bushes as the muskox walk by. Inuit on Nunivak Island, in Alaska, collect the naturally shed wool clinging to bushes and tundra plants, and spin it by hand.



Using large captive herds for qiviut production is under study. Muskox domestication projects have been tried in several places. A domestic muskox herd at Palmer, Alaska is kept exclusively for the production of qiviut and has resulted in a community-based industry that manufactures clothing and other woolen items.

Tourism

Viewing of muskox is an important attraction to tourists, photographers, researchers, and students of wildlife. In the Yukon and Alaska, muskox sightings are enjoyed by Firth River rafting parties and visitors to Ivavik National Park, Herschel Island Territorial Park and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Muskox are valued as unique wildlife species with an ancient history and an important place in the Arctic ecosystem.

Photos by Ken Madsen

For more information, visit the Wildlife Management Advisory Council (North Slope) web site on muskox of the Yukon and Alaska North Slope at www.taiga.net/wmac/species/muskox.