

CF4

P.M. 107/2

Prime Minister's Office.

(Fisheries)

No. P.M. 107/2 |

Previous
Correspondence.

SUBJECT.

Conservation of
Fur Seal and Sea Otter Resources

Subsequent
Correspondence.

No.

|

|

been issued since 1914.

Falkland Islands Breeding Season 1924-1925.

The counts of pups made on one of the Government seal reserves in the course of the breeding season 1924-1925 showed that there were 2,250 pups in all. As compared with the breeding season 1922-1923 this figure represents an increase in the fur seal population of 1,800 which may be attributed in part to the removal of sea lions from the rookeries. A Government Patrol Boat is employed in protecting the breeding herds and the Governor has reported that although the number of seals suitable for killing is increasing more rapidly than was expected, a further period of complete rest would be beneficial to the herds and that it is not proposed that any fur seals should be taken during the breeding season of 1925-1926.

(with enclosures) regarding the conservation of fur seal and sea lion reserves.

W. J. G. ...
SECRETARY TO THE PRIME MINISTER

MEMORANDUM.

The Sea-otter is not known ever to have existed in Antarctic or sub-antarctic regions. The following note relates exclusively to the Southern fur-seal (*Otaria australis* or *Arctocephalus australis*) which is found in and around the Falkland Islands, but not (so far as is known) in South Georgia or the South Shetlands, although it existed in both these Dependencies up to about a century ago.

Leases and Licences.

On the 11th September 1872 a special lease of certain Islands was granted for the term of seven, fourteen or twenty one years. The lease included the right to kill in the course of any one year a number of penguins not greater than will yield 16,000 gallons of oil. No mention was made of the words "seal or sealing", the principal industry in that locality in those days being the boiling down of penguins for their oil. In 1894 the lease was renewed for a period of 21 years from the 11th September 1893. The new lease gave the additional right to kill, or permit to be killed, on the Islands or within three miles of them, not more than 500 fur seals or 500 hair seals annually. In 1908, in connection with the application for the exclusive right of fur sealing upon and about all rookeries around the Falkland Islands, the Governor proposed that if the monopoly were granted, the number to be killed in the first year should not exceed 900 in all.

Preservation: Local measures.

Stringent measures have been taken within the last few years against raiders and a copy of the Seal Fishery (Consolidation) Ordinance, 1921, is annexed. The capture of female seals and their young is prohibited in the Falkland Islands and their Dependencies. No cases of poaching have occurred since 1908 and no additional Sealing licence has been

140/140/45.

Foreign Office, S.W.1.

27th January, 1927.

Sir, The following notes have been received from the Ambassador of the United States of America on the 26th January 1927.

1. With reference to the note which the Ambassador of the United States was good enough to address to me under date of December 31st, 1925, I have the honour to transmit to you in herewith information regarding the conservation of fur seal and sea otter resources in the Falkland Islands and their dependencies, which include South Georgia and the South Shetland Islands.

2. You will observe that an Interdepartmental Committee was appointed, and in 1926 drew up a report, on research and development in the dependencies of the Falkland Islands. The scientific expedition in preparation for which the report was drawn up has already set out, and its objects include those referred to in paragraph 99 of the report.

3. After giving careful consideration to the suggestion contained in your note that there should be some form of international agreement and action in this matter, His Majesty's Government in Great Britain have reached the conclusion that such measures would not serve any useful purpose in the areas mentioned in this note, as the conservation of the fur seal and sea otter is, in their opinion, already effectively provided for by His Majesty's Government in respect of the Falkland Islands area.

I have etc..

(Sgd) R.L. Craigie.

Stringent measures have been taken within the last few years against raiders and a copy of the Seal Fishery (Consolidation) Ordinance, 1921, is annexed. The capture of female seals and their young is prohibited in the Falkland Islands and their dependencies. No cases of poaching have occurred since 1908 and no additional Sealing Licences has

Ray Atherton, Esq.,

etc.. etc.. etc..

Foreign Office, S.W.1.

13th January, 1927.

Sir:-

With reference to the note which Mr. Houghton was good enough to address to me on December 31st 1925, requesting to be furnished with data concerning the conservation of fur seal and sea otter resources in certain territories of the British Empire, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the information received on this subject from His Majesty's Governments in the Commonwealth of Australia, New Zealand and the Union of South Africa.

I have etc..
(Sgd) Robert Vennittart.

After giving careful consideration to the suggestion contained in your note that there should be some form of international agreement and action in this matter, His Majesty's Government in Great Britain have reached the conclusion that such measures would not serve any useful purpose in the areas mentioned in this note, as the conservation of the fur seal and sea otter in their respective territories is already effectively provided for by His Majesty's Government in respect of the Falkland Islands etc.

I have etc..
(Sgd) R.L. Craigie.

Ray Atherton, Esq..
etc.. etc.. etc..
etc.. etc.. etc..

Falkland Islands (Cmd 657) copies of which were enclosed
in the late Viscount Milner's despatch No.185 of the
28th April,1920.

4. Copies of the enclosures to this despatch are
being sent also to the Governors General of Canada,
the Commonwealth of Australia and New Zealand.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient,
humble Servant,

(Sgd.) L. S. AMERY.

DUPLICATE

Falkland Islands (and other) Dependencies of His Majesty the King
UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA. Viceast Wilmar's

DOWNING STREET,

Confidential.

14 February, 1927.

1. Copies of the memoranda to this despatch are being sent also to the Governor General of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia and New Zealand.
My Lord,

With reference to Your Excellency's despatch No.403 of the 21st June, I have the honour to transmit to you, to be laid before your Ministers, a copy of a note to the United States Embassy transmitting the information received from His Majesty's Governments in the Commonwealth of Australia, New Zealand and the Union of South Africa on the subject of the conservation of fur seal and sea otter resources.

13th Jan. 27.

2. I enclose also a copy of a note to the United States Embassy conveying similar information in respect of the Falkland Islands and their Dependencies, and setting out the views of His Majesty's Government in Great Britain regarding the suggestion that there should be some form of international agreement and action in the matter.

27th Jan. 27.

3. A copy of the memorandum of information in respect of the Falkland Islands is enclosed, information regarding the Dependencies of the Falkland Islands is contained in the report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Research and Development in the Dependencies of the

Falkland

GOVERNOR GENERAL,

HIS EXCELLENCY,

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE,

THE MARL OF ATHLONE, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., D.S.O.,

etc.,

etc.,

etc.,



Am 15/16.

CONFIDENTIAL

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S OFFICE,

No. 5/155

CAPE TOWN,

10 March, 1927.

Encl-

MINUTE.

The GOVERNOR-GENERAL transmits herewith for the information of MINISTERS, with reference to their Minute Lord Buxton's Minute No. 62/1562 of the 25th May, 1920, No. 542 of 18th June, 1926, and / a copy of the undermentioned document, regarding the conservation of fur seal and sea otter resources

From Dept of Marine.

Athlone.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

7914-12/10/26-1,000.

DATE.	DESCRIPTION OF DOCUMENT.
14th February, 1927.	Despatch Confidential from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs (with enclosures).

*Mr van Zeyl
pl speak
B*

destruction of superfluous males during the breeding season is the most economical way of taking a toll of the seal herds. Further study might show that this procedure should be generally adopted for the southern fur seals also. There is perhaps not sufficient correlation between the protective measures of the several southern sealing areas

5. In South Georgia the principle of killing superfluous males during the breeding season seems to be working successfully. The policy there adopted of preventing the destruction of all female seals and of the young of both sexes is probably sound.

6. The material obtained at South Georgia, where the production of oil is the only important object, is not at present used to the best advantage. Seals are killed in months when they are in poor condition, and full use is not made of the carcasses. New regulations are probably required to reduce waste.

7. The director recommends that such parts of this report as are suitable be sent to the Foreign Office and the Colonial Office. He requests that he may be allowed to keep a copy of the report for his own use.

S. F. HARMER.

protection afforded to them in recent years has led to a further increase, which seems to be still going on. The following statistics are given of the total catch for each of the years 1913 to 1925 :—

96 (1)

Table III.—*Fur Seals, South Africa.*

Year.	Number of Skins Secured.				Total.
	Colonial Coast Seals taken by—		South-West African Coast Seals taken for Account.		
	Union Government.	Private Sealers.	Union Government.	Protectorate Administration.	
1913	2,626	1,352	3,784	..	7,762
1914 .. ..	..	..	4,174	..	4,174
1915 .. ..	..	421	..	..	421
1916	878	375	..	..	1,253
1917	1,904	566	5,111	..	7,581
1918	902	1,205	6,241	..	8,348
1919	1,690	2,174	6,476	..	10,340
1920	3,405	1,639	7,479	..	12,523
1921	828	1,192	9,343	..	11,363
1922	3,336	833	8,234	931	13,334
1923	3,126	807	8,152	2,473	14,558
1924	3,303	918	7,197	5,938	17,356
1925	3,169	1,264	8,681	5,097	18,211

The close season extends from the 22nd November to the 15th February, and Government protection is given. The size to which the seal herds should be allowed to grow may have to be considered in relation to the interests of the fishing industry.

SECTION IV.—*Concluding Observations.*

The papers under consideration point to certain definite conclusions :—

1. There are welcome signs of recovery in the numbers of the southern fur seals, which had been almost exterminated by reckless destruction in all the localities which they were known to frequent. From the fact that seals bring forth their young on land they are specially exposed to danger, and it is possible for a single poaching expedition to undo in one season all the good which has resulted from years of careful protection. Should the herds recover to such an extent as to make illicit hunting an attractive venture, the greatest care will have to be taken to guard the breeding colonies adequately on the rookeries.

2. The increase of the herds of fur seals will be likely to lead to destruction by pelagic sealing, the evils of which were at one time so serious in the North Pacific as to require an international agreement. The possibility that this danger will occur in southern waters ought to be foreseen, and suitable measures should be taken in good time. It is to be hoped that the detailed information which has already been given to the United States Chargé d'Affaires will not be used in such a way as to facilitate illicit operations by American vessels or to pelagic sealing expeditions which might be organised before there were any means of preventing them.

3. It appears from some of the reports included in the Foreign Office despatch of the 19th February, 1927, that the skins of southern fur seals are less valuable than those of the Pribilof Islands fur seal; but, on the other hand, the large trade in southern sealskins which existed up to 1826 implies that the industry made considerable profits in those days, and that it might be profitable once more even if the skins are not of the first quality.

4. The reports from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa indicate that further study is required in order to ascertain what is the best policy to adopt for the regulation of the fur seal industry. In South Africa, for instance, the close season extends from the 22nd November to the 15th February, and part of this presumably falls within the breeding season. The investigations which have been made in the Pribilof Islands indicate that, in the case of the northern species at least, the

industries due to a want of understanding of essential biological data and a true recognition of the fact that the foundation of commerce is science."

Mr. Lord's own investigations indicate that the fur seals are probably more numerous than is generally supposed. During his recent visit to Tasmania in connection with the reorganisation of the Institute of Science and Industry, Sir Frank Heath offered to have the value of Australian fur-seal skins enquired into in England. The belief that fur seals destroy an immense number of edible fish has repeatedly been exposed as a fallacy; and some of the best fishing grounds of the world are in the vicinity of seal rookeries. Suggestions are made as to the management of the industry if it should be re-established. These include the making of a census, the branding of pups and the killing of surplus adolescent males.

South Australia.

- 96 (i) There are large numbers of hair seals on all the small islands and rocks between the eastern end of Kangaroo Island and the western border of the State. The only known herd of fur seals is on Casuarina Island. The seals are protected and no hunting is taking place.

Western Australia.

- 96 (h) Fur seals occur on most of the islands off the south coast, particularly on those of the Recherche Archipelago, where 494 were killed in 1920. No other expedition has visited the islands, and seals of all species are protected.

New Zealand.

- 96 (k) There are two small rookeries on the west coast of the South Island, two or three on the Snares, and several on the Auckland, Campbell, Bounty and Antipodes Islands. The numbers of the seals have not been ascertained.

It is stated that in 1814/15 the Antipodes and other islands in the south produced 400,000 skins.

Close seasons have been in force since 1894, but licences have been issued from 1913 to 1916 and in 1923 and 1924 in certain localities; 278 seals were taken in 1923 and 67 in 1924. The killing of females and of all young specimens under twelve months of age was prohibited in these licences. No patrol of the sealing areas can be carried out.

South Africa.

- 96 (l) There are about sixteen to eighteen herds, which may at certain seasons individually consist of a few hundreds or even thousands of animals. The sealing grounds are divided into two groups:—

1. The Northern or Ichaboe group on the south-west coast between 24° 28' S. and 27° 41' S., lying within territorial waters. The islands, the names of which are mentioned, are worked partly for the Union Government and partly for the Administration of the South-West African Protectorate.

2. The Colonial group, all in the territorial waters of the west and south coasts and all within the jurisdiction of the Union Government. Three of the islands which are mentioned by name are worked for the Government, and the rest are thrown open for public enterprise under licence, and only from the 16th February to the 21st November.

So much destruction had taken place, particularly on the then German South-West African Coast, that at the outbreak of war in 1914 the industry had been entirely ruined. The seals increased during 1915 and 1916, and the

Australia.

- 96 (f) This is a valuable report on the fur seal resources of Australia, prepared by Dr. Charles Anderson, Director of the Australian Museum, Sydney. The commonest species is *Arctocephalus doriferus* Wood Jones, of which there are several herds, mostly of small size, extending from New South Wales to the islands of the Bass Straits, the south-west coast of Victoria and the Recherche Archipelago in South-Western Australia. Mr. Le Souef's estimates ("Australian Zoologist," IV, No. 2, 1925, pp. 112-116) of the numbers of fur seals in various localities are quoted in detail. The New Zealand fur seal, *A. forsteri*, is sometimes found in Australian waters.
- 96 (f) It may be observed that the discrimination of species of fur seals is a difficult matter, and that authorities have been by no means in agreement with regard to the number of species which ought to be recognised. The report gives information with regard to the history of sealing in Australia. The industry was established at a very early date, and seal products and whale oil were the first exports sent from New South Wales. The seals were not actually captured on this part of the coast in any number, the cargoes being brought to Port Jackson from New Zealand and Bass Straits. In 1798 a single vessel returned with 9,000 sealskins from Tasmania. A number of American vessels joined in the trade in 1797. In 1804 the "Union" obtained 12,000-14,000 sealskins at Kangaroo Island, South Australia.
- 96 (f) By 1810 the industry appears to have reached its maximum, and 45,000 skins were brought into port in one week in that year. The week's imports into Sydney had a value in London of £102,500. Some of the seals were no doubt hair seals. In 1809 two vessels brought to Sydney cargoes of 12,000-14,000 sealskins each from New Zealand.
- In 1815 there was a great falling off. "The apparently inexhaustible supplies on Macquarie Island and the islands of Bass Strait were by this time seriously depleted. Three or four years previously 100,000 were procured in the season on Macquarie Island, but in 1815 the numbers had dwindled to 5,000 or 6,000 owing to indiscriminate slaughter."
- The year 1826 "witnessed the collapse of the industry, and by 1830 the great seal trade was at an end. There is no doubt that indiscriminate killing, the females as well as the young being slaughtered, was largely responsible."
- No serious amount of sealing has been done recently, and the herds seem to be recovering to some extent.
- Seals are now totally protected in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania, and partially protected in South and Western Australia. In Western Australia there is an open season from the 1st April to the 31st October. There is no systematic policing of the sealing grounds, and no special measures are taken to develop the herds.

Victoria.

- 96 (g) There are about fourteen colonies of seals in and around Bass Straits between Victoria and Tasmania, the precise localities being indicated. Lady Julia Percy Island appears to have about 3,000 seals and the Seal Rocks about 4,000. No hunting is permitted. The Seal Rocks are fully occupied during the breeding season—November and December. The Chief Inspector of Fisheries and Game adds that he doubts whether any industry of value could be established, as the skins, although belonging to fur seals, are of poor quality and do not fetch high prices.

Tasmania.

- 96 (j) The only persons who capture seals are half-caste residents on the islands in the straits, and the animals are not otherwise molested. A summary of a paper by Mr. Charles Lord, Director of the Tasmanian Museum, is appended. Mr. Lord states that the fur seals are of great economic value, but that their control requires the utmost care, and that research is necessary. "The past history of fisheries throughout the world was strewn with wreckage of

NORTH AMERICA.

[April 2, 1927.]

CONFIDENTIAL.

SECTION 1.

[A 1975/140/45]

No. 1.

British Museum to Foreign Office.—(Received April 2.)

*British Museum (Natural History),
London, April 1, 1927.*

Sir,

I HAVE the honour to inform you that I have submitted to the trustees of the British Museum a Report on Southern Seals and Sealing, prepared by Sir Sidney Harmer, K.B.E., F.R.S., mainly based on information received through the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office.

The trustees approved the report, and instructed me to send a copy of certain sections to the Foreign Office. This copy is enclosed herewith.

I may add that a copy of the whole report has been sent to the Colonial Office.

I have, &c.

C. TATE REGAN, *Director.*

Enclosure in No. 1.

Extracts from the Report on Southern Seals and Sealing.

SECTION III.—*Southern Fur Seals in General.*

Sealing Papers.

96

THESE are *strictly confidential* papers submitted by the Foreign Office, and the correspondence seems to have arisen out of a request for information with regard to the Falkland Islands and their dependencies. It may be observed that the mention of the sea otter in this connection was hardly necessary, as this Northern Pacific animal is not likely to be found in the far South.

Falkland Islands.

96 (b) The Foreign Office has reached the conclusion that international action (which has been suggested) is not required in the Falkland Islands area, since the conservation of the fur seals is already effectively provided for in that region by His Majesty's Government.

96 (c) The statement in this memorandum that fur seals no longer occur in South Georgia and the South Shetlands is not strictly correct. A small herd of fur seals was observed close to shore off South Georgia on the 10th April, 1923 (Report, 17th July, 1924, p. 5); and it has been stated that fifty-one fur seals were killed at the South Shetlands in 1905 (Report, 31st May, 1924, p. 2). With the increase of the herds which is taking place at the Falkland Islands, it is not unreasonable to hope that the fur seal of these parts will spread more widely and will re-establish itself in various parts of the dependencies where it formerly occurred in large numbers (see Appendix XIV of the Interdepartmental Report, here referred to as 96 (d)).

The history of recent sealing operations in the Falkland Islands is narrated, and mention is made of a lease granted in September 1872 and renewed in 1894 for twenty-one years from the 11th September, 1893. A Seal Fishery (Consolidation) Ordinance was issued in 1921, but no additional sealing licence has been granted since 1914. The information given in this paper is mostly contained in other documents previously received at the Museum.

DUPLICATE

UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.

CONFIDENTIAL.

Downing Street,

16 May, 1927.

My Lord,

With reference to my Confidential despatch

of the 14th February, I have the honour to transmit for the information of His Majesty's Government in the

Union of South Africa, a copy of a letter from the British Museum forwarding extracts from a Report on Southern Seals and Sealing, by Sir Sydney Harmer, K.B.E., F.R.S.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most obedient,

humble Servant,

(Signed) L. S. AMERY

Falkland Islands

GOVERNOR GENERAL,

HIS EXCELLENCY,

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE,

THE EARL OF ATHLONE, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O., D.S.O.,

&c., &c., &c.



P.M. 15/16

CONFIDENTIAL

No. 5/156

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S OFFICE,

CAPE TOWN,

7th June 1927

MINUTE.

The GOVERNOR-GENERAL transmits herewith for the information
of MINISTERS, with reference to his Confidential Minute
No. 5/155 of 10th March 1927 a copy of the undermentioned
document. regarding extracts from a Report on Southern Seals and
Sealing by Sir Sydney Harmer, K.B.E., F.R.S.

Althone.

GOVERNOR-GENERAL.

7914—12/10/26—1,000.

DATE.	DESCRIPTION OF DOCUMENT.
16th May 1927	Despatch, Confidential, from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs (with enclosure).
<i>Mr. van Jaarsveld</i>	

P.M.15/16.

GOVERNMENT GENERAL OFFICE,

CAPE TOWN.

CAPE TOWN.

8th June, 1927.

VT/AC.

MINUTE.

CONFIDENTIAL.

of MINUTE No. P.M.15/16

No. 5/106

The Secretary for Mines & Industries,
Cape Town.

document.

Sealing by Sir Sydney

With reference to my Minute No.P.M.15/16 of the 15th March, 1927, I forward herewith for your information a copy of a letter from the Director of the British Museum, dated 1st April, 1927, forwarding extracts from a Report on Southern Seals and Sealing by Sir Sydney Harmer, K.B.E., F.R.S.

His Excellency

SECRETARY TO THE PRIME MINISTER.

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[Handwritten signature]