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SUPERINTENDANTS MONTHLY

REPORT

for

November, 1925.

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UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
MOUNT MCKINLEY NATIONAL PARK

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

MCKINLEY PARK, ALASKA

The Director,
National Park Service,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:

The following is respectfully submitted as my report for the month of November, 1925;

GENERAL STATEMENT

THE MOUNT MCKINLEY NATIONAL PARK was set aside by Act of Congress, February 26th, 1917, (Sec. 5716 R.S. Stat. 938) as a pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people, and placed under the exclusive control of the Secretary of the Interior, who was authorized to make such rules and regulations as he deemed necessary for the care and maintenance of the Park.

By Act of Congress, January 30th, 1922, the Park boundaries were extended eastward to the 149th meridian.

The Park is situated principally in the south-eastern central Alaska. Its dimensions are about one hundred miles north-east and south-west, and an average of twenty six and one-half miles wide north and south, giving it an area of 2,645 square miles, or 1,692,800 acres.

Its altitude is eighteen hundred to twenty thousand three hundred feet, which is the summit of Mount McKinley.

The Park headquarters are now located at Mile 2, on the Park highway, east of McKinley Park Station, on the Alaska Railroad, which is near the entrance to the Park.

DAILY REPORT OF CONDITIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Nov. 1st

Rangers Nyberg and Armstrong in Fairbanks to get the Park dogs from their summer camp.

The road commission automobiles were in bad shape, so they asked me to drive out to Sanctuary River with our truck and bring in their crew from that point. This winds up their work on the park road for this season. I left at noon and returned with the crew at 8 P.M.

Nov. 2nd

Rangers Nyberg and Armstrong in Fairbanks still.

Clerk Mackie and I were in the office all day; then worked on our cabins in the evening also cared for the stock.

Nov. 3rd

Rangers Nyberg and Armstrong still in Fairbanks.

I received advice that the Tanana River is full of running ice and that the dogs cannot be ferried to the mainland from the fish camp. The rangers will have to wait a few days till the river either freezes or the ice stops running.

Mackie and I worked in the office and cared for the stock. We worked on our cabins in the evening.

Nov. 4th

Rangers still in Fairbanks.

Mackie and I were in the office all day and worked on our cabins in the evening also cared for the stock.

Road commission saw two big wolves near the park highway, at about Mile 8; they were probably 200 feet away and never moved while the men passed. One of them was a black one and the other was a gray.

Nov. 5th

Mackie and I were in the office also met train for the dogs.

Recommended Ernest H. Sinclair as temporary ranger for about four months service. Received 4 dogs presented to this park by Mr. William Greene, of Healy Alaska. They are fine dogs and valued at about \$120.00. Though a little smaller than the park dogs, they are lively and good workers.

I made a trip to the railroad, in the evening, to bring them to headquarters.

Nov. 6th

Rangers still in Fairbanks.

Received advices that there was a big ice jam on the Tanana River, below Fairbanks, which flooded the surrounding country; making it impossible to bring the dogs to Fairbanks immediately.

Mackie and I were in the office getting out delayed matter also made a trip to the railroad with the mail. Weather very soft, raining.

Nov. 7th

Ranger Nyberg phoned from Fairbanks reporting that the river is in such a state that he could not get the dogs. Those familiar with the river advised him not to attempt to go down-stream under present conditions. I advised him to go down-stream to the fish camp where the dogs were summered and directed him how to get there; to take ranger Armstrong with him or send him back to headquarters, if possible. We must have the dogs here soon.

Mackie and I were in the office on delayed matters, also cared for the stock and worked on our cabins in the evening.

Nov. 8th

Mackie and I worked on our cabins also I made considerable repairs on the auto truck. The weather very soft - road like a sheet of ice.

Nov. 9th

Mackie and I were in the office on delayed matters. I also hauled freight up from the railroad.

2 prospectors visited us relative to hunting and possible work in the park.

Nov. 10th

Ranger Armstrong returned from Fairbanks. He reports ranger Nyberg left Fairbanks for the fish camp Sunday. He thought it advisable to send Armstrong back to headquarters as there was no telling how long it would take to get the dogs.

Mackie and I were in the office also I met train with our mail. Considerable time is consumed in sending and receiving the mail as the north and south-bound trains are 2 hours apart. Then one has a $\frac{1}{2}$ hour wait during the sorting. So the return trip from headquarters to the depot and back, takes about 3 hours.

Nov. 11th

Ranger Armstrong getting the dog corral in shape to receive the dogs also put in large ventilator in the barn and also put in a drain in the floor of the barn.

Mackie and I were in the office all day and worked on our cabins in the evening.

Nov. 12th

I am getting worried about Ranger Nyberg and the dogs. Have received no word from him, since the other day.

Mackie and I were in the office all day.

Ranger Armstrong fixed up the small tent beside the barn, putting in a bench, stove, drill-press and also gathered up all the tools and corral equipment and stored them in the small tent. This tent will be used as a work shop and harness room, thereby eliminating the misplacing and possible loss of tools.

Nov. 13th

Ranger Armstrong working on the dog harnesses,

Mackie was in the office all day.

I was in the office part time, then hauled, with the truck, the double ender horse sled, horse bedding from the barn at old H.Q. Also tried to haul the big horse bob sled but the truck could not pull them on the icy hill. First trip across Hines Creek with the truck.

Nov. 14th.

No word from Ranger Nyberg and the dogs.

Mackie and I were in the office all day.

Ranger Armstrong was working on several sets of harness for the new dogs also repaired his own sled (park sled) which I was expecting to have repaired by a local carpenter but have been unable to do so.

Nov. 15th

Ranger cleaning up his quarters.

I took a trip in the auto, to the summit of the divide between Savage and Sanctuary Rivers to look over conditions and to get some equipment stored at Savage cache. The road is in fine shape as far as Savage River but on the hillside from Savage River to Sanctuary River, the divide is drifted

deep with snow in many places. I was able to make the divide but did not attempt to go down into Sanctuary as the drifts were too deep and there was a possibility of not getting back. I saw a large number of caribou in Savage and Jenny Creek valleys also about 70 sheep on the northern range of hills.

Nov. 16th

Ranger Armstrong working on dog harness and put window in harness room and work shop tent. Mackie was in the office all day.

Received word that Ranger Nyberg left Fairbanks this morning with the dogs and that everything was O.K. He will arrive at Healy tonight and come on to McKinley Park Station tomorrow night.

Nov. 17th

Mackie was in the office all day.

Ranger Armstrong working on sled and harness.

I worked in the office part of the morning, then took the sleds and harness for the dogs to the depot; then took the passenger train for Healy to see operator at Healy and to assist Ranger Nyberg with the dogs. We arrived at McKinley Park Station after dark, as the freight train left Healy very late. Nyberg was compelled to build a platform in the car in order to get the dogs in half of it, which was all we were allowed. Armstrong was at the depot to meet us. The dogs were excited and very hard to handle after being cooped up in the freight car, two days. But we landed them at headquarters in good shape and only one dog having a bad cut on his leg.

Ranger Nyberg reported having had a very hard and dangerous time getting the dogs from the fish camp to Fairbanks, a distance of 24 miles, down the Tanana River. He stated the contractor was not at fault as it was impossible to get the dogs to Fairbanks sooner. As it was, the ice was running and the Tanana River was mostly open with rotten rim-ice on the sides. On his trip down he managed to cross the river on a very flimsy ice jam and then work his way down-stream mostly through the willows to the fish camp. On his return he took twelve of the dogs, hooked to a sled, by their chains and was compelled to cut a road through the willows for several miles. Crossing the ice with them, was a dangerous business as he could shove a pole through the ice in most anywhere. The thing is, he arrived safely in Fairbanks with them, after two days as hard a work as he would not care to happen every day. The contractor brought up the remaining dogs the next day. One day later and he is sure he would not have been able to make the trip.

Nov. 18th

Rangers fitting dog collars and repairing sleds.

Mackie and I were in the office adjusting accounts upon which we received notice from the Service.

Nov. 19th

Ranger Nyberg and Armstrong have considerable work ahead of them repairing their sleds and putting new runners under them also fitting dog collars and tow lines. A local carpenter had promised to repair the sleds for us but has been putting it off until we could not wait any longer. So it is up to us to repair them ourselves also Ranger Nyberg will have to get his supplies and equipment together for a three or four months patrol into the Toklat River section of this park.

Mackie and I were in the office all day; also I assisted the

rangers in getting ready for their trip, as it will pay to get everything in shape so as not to interfere with future patrol.

Nov. 20th

Rangers working on their sleds and harness also putting new runners on sleds. They had to bend them and bore the wooden runners and also countersink the holes in the steel runners.

Mackie and I were in the office all day; I also assisted the rangers in their work, part time.

Nov. 21st

Both rangers working on their sleds and harness.

2 new Norse-style light runabout dog-sleds received today. These are necessary - one for replacement and one for extra dog team. These sleds will be used on short fast runs as they are much lighter than the old sleds which are becoming worn out and are liable to become useless at any time.

Mackie and I were in the office all day.

Nov. 22nd.

Ranger Nyberg working on his sled.

Ranger Armstrong cleaning up their quarters.

Mackie and I worked around our cabins.

Nov. 23rd

Ranger Nyberg completed repairing his sled. I went over with him, the supplies he should take with him and also instructions relative to his duties while stationed in Toklat River section of the park. He also packed his personal belongings and stored them in the storehouse tent.

Ranger Armstrong working on his sled as I wish him to get ready as soon as possible and assist Ranger Nyberg freight his supplies and equipment as far as Toklat River.

Mackie and I were in the office all day; I also assisted the rangers as far as possible.

Nov. 24th

Ranger Nyberg on trail to Savage River with dogteam, hauling out part of his supplies which he will need on the Toklat patrol. The weight of his outfit including dog-feed and supplies, will be close to 2,000 lbs. To begin with, he can only haul light loads as his dogs are very soft.

Ranger Armstrong working on his sled.

Mackie and I were in the office also I met trains with mail.

As we have no agent at McKinley Park Station, I was compelled to go to the railroad for perishable freight which was dumped off the train, into the snow at 8.30 P.M. in 10-degrees-below-zero-weather. I would not have known they were there if Mr. Morino had not telephoned me that the train was at the depot; of course the perishables were badly nipped by the frost.

Nov. 25th

Ranger Nyberg returned from Savage River. He reports the last 4 miles of road on the Savage end is bare of snow. He also states there is very little snow on that side of the divide. His dogs were very tired going out but returned in better spirits.

Ranger Armstrong working on his sled which was in very bad condition.

Mackie and I were in the office; also I assisted the rangers in order to get them on the trail as soon as possible.

Nov. 26th

As I wish the rangers to make a trip to the northern and south-eastern boundaries before they go to the Toklat River section, I had Ranger Nyberg assist Ranger Armstrong get ready for the trail tomorrow.

Mackie was in the office all day.

I was in the office part time; then in the afternoon, took a trip up First Creek to observe conditions for winter supply of water for H.Q. I broke through the shell ice and severely sprained my instep. Returned to headquarters. Later started to build a temporary shelter of poles and canvas to house the auto truck, as it is almost impossible to start the machine in the open.

Nov. 27th

Ranger Nyberg went on patrol, south, to Windy Creek section and Ranger Armstrong went, west and north, into the park and along the northern boundary.

Mackie was in the office all day.

I hauled coal all the day from the bunker at railroad to headquarters as we were all getting short. In the evening, I worked from 7 P.M. to 11 P.M. on the new sleds, oiled them and put pull-ropes on them.

Mr. Ernest H. Sinclair arrived today. He asked permission to locate in the ranger cabin and get familiar with his duties before entering on duty, Dec. 1st, which permission was granted.

Nov. 28th

Ranger Nyberg returned late this evening. He reported it is impossible to go up Riley Creek with the dogteam. He went up Riley Creek 9 miles, pulling over rocks and gravel. No ice to travel on, in the stream. He walked up Riley 2 miles further and found conditions no better. He had to build 2 bridges to get as far as he did also several ice bridges broke when he was crossing which made it almost impossible to return the same route. So he took over the divide to the railroad - found much exposed ground along the track also the Nenana River was not frozen over and was open for many miles, so he decided to return to headquarters. His dogs were very tired from the trip.

Mackie and I were in the office all day. I also took Sinclair around headquarters and explained to him, the rangers' duties while at this camp.

Nov. 29th

Ranger Nyberg on trip to Savage River taking some of his supplies out. Sinclair asked permission to go with Nyberg, using the extra team, so that he can become used to them, which was granted.

Ranger Armstrong returned from Savage River patrol. He tried to get through Savage Canyon to the north boundary but was unable to as the stream was open and very little rim ice. He very nearly lost his outfit in a deep hole so turned back as he did not wish to endanger himself, dogs or equipment. He will try again tomorrow, leaving the dogs at upper Savage cabin and walk through

in this way, he can cover most of the vital points, be taking a day longer.

Mackie and I were in the office all day. I also repaired an old Yukon sled which we use for hauling material, etc., around headquarters.

Nov. 30th.

Ranger Armstrong went on patrol to Savage, taking a load of Rangers Nyberg's supplies, with him. He will walk through the canyon and cover as much ground as possible of the northern boundary between Savage River and Healy.

Ranger Nyberg and Sinclair returned from Savage River. Their dogs were very tired, as they had to pull over considerable bare ground.

Mackie and I were in the office all day.

ADMINISTRATION

There was no change in the personnel, during the past month, which consisted of a superintendent, clerk and 2 rangers, the third ranger Mrs. F. L. Karstens, receives \$1.00 per month to give her legal status to assist the superintendent in his work.

Though the office work is still somewhat behind, it is gradually being brought up to date. The superintendent's and clerk's cabins are in a fairly comfortable condition, now allowing practically full time in the office except on routine work around headquarters, and the care of stock when the rangers are on patrol. Also the inability to get a carpenter to repair the dog sleds, which were in very bad condition and needed repairs. This work was done by the superintendent and rangers. Also to relieve the rangers for patrol, the superintendent hauled all the coal and freight and met trains with the mail.

The posting and receiving of mail matter twice a week, is quite a problem as the north and south bound trains are 2 hours apart. It is necessary to post matter at least $\frac{1}{2}$ hour before the train time and another $\frac{1}{2}$ hour is lost waiting for the mail, to be sorted. Then the 4-mile round trip from headquarters to the railroad, consumes additional time, making a loss of practically 2 half days during each week.

The receiving of freight, especially perishable goods, is a matter of considerable time lost and expense to the personnel, as we have no railroad agent at McKinley Park Station. Freight is dumped off in the snow or put in the cold depot where it has every opportunity to freeze, or if it is left out in the snow, stray dogs have the chance to spoil it. We have no way of knowing when our freight is shipped and many times have gone those 2 miles to the railroad and waited several hours in the cold and when the freight-train arrives, find our freight has not been shipped. The freight-trains are irregular and arrive here anytime in the afternoon or well into the night or early morning. These conditions have used up more of our time, than one would realize. The matter has been taken up with the Railroad requesting their assistance if possible, suggesting that the agents north and south of us, inform us when there is freight for us on any of their trains. This, the Railroad informed me, they would do by notifying the agents and freight conductors but would not guarantee it would follow out.

Such conditions as this and many other routine jobs interfere greatly with straight time in the office by the superintendent and clerk. Also much time has been spent by the superintendent and clerk delving into decisions and proper procedure in the office and administration matters, as it is our aim to be commended, rather than censured, by the Service.

ROAD WORK

No work was done on the park road this month; all the crews having been laid off by the Alaska Road Commission except three mechanics who are working on the repairing of the tractors and cars, in preparation for next season's work.

VISITORS

There were no visitors to the park during the month.

TRANSPORTATION

No traffic over the park road, except the road commission and park cars.

The road between headquarters and railroad is being kept open for the auto truck, as it is much cheaper and quicker to haul coal, freight, etc., with the truck than horses. Horses and sleds were resorted to after a deep snow but for a quarters of a mile around the railroad depot, the snow was all blown off the road, making it impossible to haul loads on sleds over this stretch. After much preparation, the auto truck was put into service again. We are also constructing a temporary pole-and-canvas garage to house the truck as it is almost impossible to start the engine, when it is allowed to remain in the open.

WILD ANIMALS

Considerable sheep and caribou were seen during the month. The sheep are just as plentiful as ever in the eastern portion of the park and seem to be getting more accustomed to the human activities in the park. The great amount of blasting and noise along the park road has not affected them in the least, if anything, they are more tame than ever, for a very large band of sheep ranged most all the summer, close to where the road crews were working.

In many instances the fox are getting very tame and in some cases almost friendly.

The great run of caribou, from the western portion of the park, has not developed this Fall, though Mr. Wm. N. Beach's party reported having passed the herd west of Teklanika River which numbered possibly 50,000 animals. Only about 6,000 were observed in the Savage River basin also this estimate about checks with the number seen in the Windy Creek section, south-east of the park.

It is evident that, the greater part of the herd turned back west, after reaching Teklanika River basin. This diverting of the big run from the east of the park, is due, I believe to the fine weather this Fall, and the late arrival of snow also the small amount of snow in the hills, comparing with previous years. During the month, there have been enough sheep and caribou, in the eastern portion of the park, to satisfy any lover of wild animal life.

For the first time since protection was established in the park, wolves are beginning to show up in numbers. Several were seen in the park and

are very bold also a number of them were seen south-east of headquarters and along the northern boundary. If they are found to be increasing too fast, means will be found to get rid of some of them.

PATROL

By reason of the soft weather this Fall and the small amount of snow, travelling with dog-teams is exceedingly difficult; also the lack of sufficient ranger cabins, along the boundaries, makes it almost impossible for patrol. The iron runners on the sleds will never last the winter, if present conditions continue also the ranger cabins are too far apart to send the rangers out with a pack on their back, especially the south-eastern patrol, where a shelter-cabin should be erected near the headwaters of Riley Creek. The northern boundary is better as to cabins only it is difficult to reach the boundary especially if the weather is mild. There are two ways of reaching the northern boundary from headquarters, other than going over the high range. One way is to go down the railroad track to Healy station and then along the boundary (N) but the wind blows almost continually along this route leaving no snow. The other way is to go into the park over the park road to Savage River and then through Savage Canyon to the north boundary. The difficulty of this route is Savage Canyon, which is about 4 miles long and very narrow. During the freeze-up, the waters in the canyon freeze up on the riffles and back up; freeze a good rim ice, then the water runs off and leaves boil holes in the ice, some open and others with a thin shell-ice over them but in fairly cold weather, the rim ice is safe for travelling, if one knows the ice and is careful. In soft weather, such as we have had this Fall, the rim ice becomes weak and dangerous and one must be well versed in this work to be able to make the journey through.

Next summer, the system of patrol will be changed entirely. We hope to be able to construct a few small inexpensive shed-roof shelter-cabins at necessary points on the boundaries and place the rangers on certain sections of patrol without dogteam or horses as it will be much easier and more efficient for them to walk from shelter to shelter, having one good cabin for their headquarters. The dogteams will be used to supply them and for trips out of headquarters camp. We are hoping that our 1927 appropriation (Fiscal Year 1927) will allow us a few additional rangers so that this plan can be followed out to the best advantage. We are also planning to do away with the expensive keep of horses which are very necessary during the winter at certain times. But it is believed that a much cheaper and more satisfactory method can be arranged by hiring such horses as are necessary, from the Park Transportation Co., during the summer and purchasing a small tractor for heavy hauling in summer and winter and keeping the road open for the auto truck during the winter. This small tractor would work in on road maintenance during the summer months, pulling stumps and hauling logs. To date we have tried to figure out the elimination of keeping horses the year round. Heretofore when we needed horses we needed them very badly and no chance to hire them, especially in winter. The road, auto truck, the possibility of acquiring a small tractor, with hiring horses for patrol when needed during the summer, have changed conditions here to a great extent and I believe under this plan, much more can be accomplished at a considerable less expenditure.

During the end of the month, Ranger Hyberg has been freighting his

supplies into the park, in preparation to locate in the Toklat River section of the park, for the balance of the winter. He will have considerable weight in dog-feed and outfit, amounting to nearly 2,000 pounds. It is thought advisable to have Ranger Armstrong and his dogteam assist him to get his supplies and equipment to Toklat River, as they will have to break trail all the way and the going is very hard.

Respectfully yours,

Henry P. Karstens,
Superintendent.