

SECTION III. FISHERY RESOURCES

Species Descriptions

Fishery resources of Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge are varied and abundant. A list of fish species known to occur on the refuge can be found in Table 2; however, more species may be present since few comprehensive fishery inventories have been completed to date. The following species descriptions and general life history information are taken from previous investigations throughout the interior Yukon drainage as well as specific information within the refuge where available. With the exception of headwaters of the Koyukuk drainage (the route of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline), little fisheries information within the refuge boundary is available.

Table 2. Common, Koyukon Athapaskan, and scientific names of the fish of Kanuti Refuge.

| <u>Common name</u> | <u>Koyukon name^a</u> | <u>Scientific name</u> |
|-----------------------|---|---------------------------------|
| Chinook (king) salmon | ggaal | <i>Oncorhynchus tshawytscha</i> |
| Chum (dog) salmon | noolaagha | <i>Oncorhynchus keta</i> |
| Coho (silver) salmon | saan laagha, noldlaagha | <i>Oncorhynchus kisutch</i> |
| Dolly Varden | gaal yeega', silyee lookk'a | <i>Salvelinus malma</i> |
| Northern pike | k'oolkkoya | <i>Esox lucius</i> |
| Inconnu (sheefish) | nidlaagha | <i>Stenodus leucichthys</i> |
| Arctic grayling | tlaghalbaaya | <i>Thymallus arcticus</i> |
| Burbot (lush) | tl'aghas | <i>Lota lota</i> |
| Round whitefish | hultin' | <i>Prosopium cylindraceum</i> |
| Broad whitefish | taasiza' | <i>Coregonus nasus</i> |
| Humpback whitefish | holagha | <i>Coregonus pidschian</i> |
| Bering cisco | | <i>Coregonus laurettae</i> |
| Least cisco | tsaabaaya | <i>Coregonus sardinella</i> |
| Alaska blackfish | oonyeey, dzonhee, dagheets'eelee, gidzeelbaanh | <i>Dallia pectoralis</i> |
| Longnose sucker | toonts'oda | <i>Catostomus catostomus</i> |
| Slimy sculpin | | <i>Cottus cognatus</i> |

^a Adapted from Nelson 1983.

Chinook (King) Salmon

The Yukon River chinook salmon run is one of the largest natural runs remaining in North America (Healy 1991). Yukon River drainage (U.S. and Canada) combined commercial and subsistence chinook harvests from 1986-1990 averaged 176,000 fish (ADF&G 1992). Yukon chinooks bound for headwater streams in Canada are known to travel more than 2,000 miles in a 60-day period. Adult chinook salmon enter Kanuti Refuge via the Koyukuk River and spawn in many of its tributaries, a distance of about 1,000 miles from the mouth of the Yukon River. The chinook salmon run coincides very closely with the summer chum salmon run. Chinooks arrive at refuge spawning streams in late July to early August. Eggs overwinter in the stream gravel and hatch in early spring. Many refuge streams are important feeding areas and migration routes as juveniles remain in freshwater for up to two years before traveling to the sea. They spend one to five years at sea before returning to their stream of origin to spawn. The relatively