Wildlife on the Grand Island Game Preserve of the Cleveland-Cliffs Iron (CCI) Company

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Project: Creation of a lesson plan utilizing materials digitized from the CCI collection at the Central Upper Michigan and Northern Michigan University Archives as part of a NHPRC Grant.

Grade Level: Fourth

Time Estimated: 50 minutes

Overview

In this lesson, students will learn about CCI keeping Grand Island as a game preserve and activities concerned with the island's wildlife. They will gain this knowledge through an introductory background discussion and group work at three different stations. Understanding will be achieved through written responses and classroom discussion.

Historical Background

CCI bought half of Grand Island in 1900 from the Munising Company and later purchased the remainder from the island's private owners. William Mather, the president of CCI, wanted to harvest the island's abundant timber at first. The prospect of turning the island into a game preserve appealed to him though. White-tailed deer and partridges were the prevalent native species. CCI introduced several new animals to the island: elk, caribou, moose, pheasants, grouses and small game mammals. Different breeds of trout and salmon stocked the streams also. Native vegetation failed to support the new species, so CCI imported new food sources for the wildlife to flourish.[1]

However, that aspiration proved failing within a few years. Constant watch tried keeping predators off Grand Island when Lake Superior froze. Coyotes and wolves killed off some animals and the regional winter killed off those animals unused to the cold. Elk proved accommodating to the conditions, migrating eventually to the mainland during the winter by the 1940s. Native partridges outlasted the introduced birds: many whom flew to the mainland and soon perished. Thanks to the controlled environment, the native white-tail population grew to 3,000 and strained the food supply.[2]

CCI tried addressing this overpopulation at first through hunting. White-tails proved too numerous though, so the company began selling and shipping deer. Most sales went to outside state parks and game preserves, notably in Pennsylvania and Missouri. Mather encouraged Grand Island to grow as a resort. The company, however, lost profit continually in activities concerning the island. Following Mather's death in 1951, CCI evaluated their position on Grand Island and shifted their focus toward lumbering the trees untouched for decades.[3]

[1] Rakestraw, Lawrence, Fred Stormer and Christopher R. Eder. "A Second Yellowstone: William G. Mather and the Grand Island Game Preserve," *Journal of Forest History* 21 (1977): 158-160.

[2] Rakestraw, Stormer and Eder, "A Second Yellowstone," 161.

[3] Ibid, 161-163.

Objectives

1. Understand activities and the reasoning concerning Grand Island wildlife
2. Evaluate human effect on the wildlife of Grand Island
3. Examine information presented on charts and graphs

Standards of Learning

4 – H3.0.8 Describe past and current threats to Michigan's natural resources; describe how Michigan worked in the past and continues to work today to protect its natural resources.

4 – G5.0.1 Assess the positive and negative effects of human activities on the physical environment of the United States.

Strategies

1. Introduction about CCI, Grand Island and the island's wildlife. (10 – 15 minutes)

Explain the historical background in an engaging matter. Talk about the different wildlife the kids may have seen. Are there common animals in the area? Any unusual animals? Did they enjoy seeing the wildlife? Have any heard of or even visited Grand Island? Does anyone know about Grand Island's wildlife? Is it surprising that the island was a game preserve for fifty years?

Talk about CCI and Grand Island. Explain why natural conversation appealed during the turn of the twentieth century. Theodore Roosevelt's initiatives can be seen on the local and regional level here. Businessmen were interested in sustaining their lands for company interest but also personal recreation. Mather and close friends often vacationed to Grand Island in the summer.

2. Break students into groups and rotate through the three stations. (20 – 30 minutes, 7 – 10 each)

Station 1 – Annual deer sales by CCI

Materials

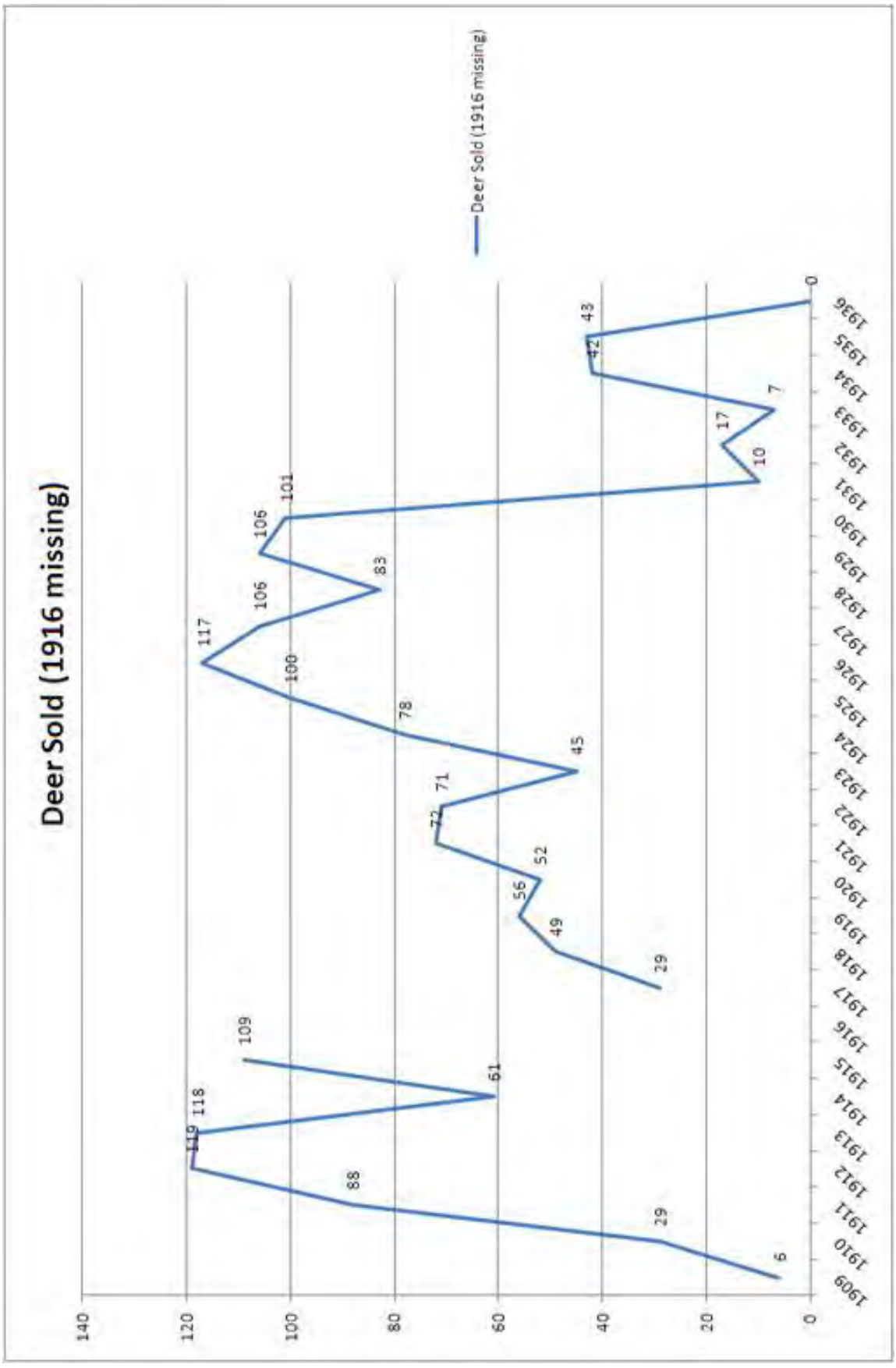
Graph, compiled from CCI Land Reports, showing annual deer sales

Activity

Groups will look at the graph showing the number of deer CCI sold. They will see the inconsistency of the operation and question why the activity ceased. Sales were affected on a national level, so students may relate how the Great Depression affected the sales of the 1930s.

Questions

1. Material Analysis
   - When were the most deer sold? The least?
   - Where was the greatest difference between two years? The least difference?
2. Material Interpretation
   - How many deer do you think were sold in 1916? Why?
   - Did it make sense to stop selling deer after 1935? Why or why not?


Deer Sold (1916 missing)
Deer Sold (1916 missing)
140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
1909
1910
1911
1912
1913
1914
1915
1916
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1936
6
29
88
119
118
109
61
117
106
100
106
83
78
101
45
71
72
52
56
49
29
43
42
7
17
10
0

Station 2 – Wildlife purchased for Grand Island

Materials

Chart, compiled from CCI Land Reports, showing game purchased between 1902 and 1913

Activity

Groups will look at a chart showing the early game purchases of the CCI for Grand Island. The information presented shows the wildlife CCI bought for establishing a game preserve. Most of the animals died off by the 1920s, leaving only the native white-tail and birds along with the elk.

Questions

1. Material Analysis
   - What animal did CCI buy the most of? The least of?
   - Do you recognize any animals here? If so, where have you seen them before?
2. Material Interpretation
   - If you don't know some animals, then what might they have looked like?
   - Was introducing this many animals wise for the environment? Positives? Negatives?

Wildlife Purchased for Grand Island Game Preserve

LARGE MAMMALS	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913
Antelope		4		2								
Black Tail Deer		3		5	2							
Caribou			5	4		6						
Elk	11	8								3		1
Moose	8		1									
Mule Deer		4	2	4								
White Tail Deer			14	1	3							

SMALL MAMMALS	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913
Badger					1							
Belgian Hare		11	16									
English Rabbit		12										
Jack Rabbit	40											
Raccoon		2					1					
Red Squirrel	36											

BIRDS	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909	1910	1911	1912	1913
Black Game			39	53								
Caperoailzie			104	58								
Chicken		97			61	10			103			51
Dal-Rypa				4	31							
Hazel Grouse				3	28							
Mallard Duck		4										
Pearl Guinea					6							
Pekin Duck					14							
Pheasant	8	140										
Pigeon			10									
Quail						24						
Sharp Tail Grouse			72									
Squaw Duck											2	
Wild Turkey		2	3	2								

Station 3 – Foxes

Materials

Word document containing excerpts from Annual Land Reports regarding the Grand Island fox population from 1912-1922 (excluding 1916).

Activity

Students will read and analyze information regarding the fox population on Grand Island from 1912-1922. Information includes both the decimation and propagation of foxes by Cleveland-Cliffs.

Questions

1. Material Analysis
   - What year did CCI begin the fox farm? End it?
   - What year had the largest known population of foxes?
2. Material Interpretation
   - Why would CCI choose to begin the fox farm after decimating the initial population?
   - What were the motivating factors for ending the fox farm?

Fox Propagation on Grand Island

1912

good-sized broods of young. The persistent effort made last winter in getting rid of the foxes was successful, with the result that during the present winter there has been very few tracks seen on the island, and the work of exterminating them has been carried on throughout the winter. Rabbits have very largely increased, which indicates that the foxes have been largely exterminated. Caper-

1913

Northeast Camp. The rabbits and red squirrels have very largely increased, which indicates that the foxes have been exterminated to a great extent.

Fox Propagation

During the early spring, in hunting and destroying foxes, the gamekeepers found two dens containing six small foxes each together with the mothers. The foxes were taken alive and a corral has been built and the foxes put into it for the purpose of propagating them. We have had several calls for live foxes from hunting clubs, and as foxes are easy to raise and require very little care the experiment, on a small scale, will be interesting and should be profitable. The fox farm now contains 25 foxes.

1914

FOX FARM

This enterprise is still in the experimental stage. The stock now consists of 13 adults - 6 males and 7 females. This year's young are 3 males and 3 females, making in all 19 individuals. They all seem to be in good condition, but so far only the red variety has been produced, except perhaps a slight tendency to cross fox, but the black or gray have not yet appeared.

1915

FOX FARM

Another enclosure for foxes was built in the old orchard this season, and two pairs of foxes placed in it. The dimensions of the outside fences are about 80 ft. square, surrounding two pens of 20 x 20 ft. each. In all, there are in the farm, nine male and thirteen female foxes, but all of the ordinary red color. However, at present prices of the fur market, there should be good profit in even these common ones.

1917

At the Fox Farm there were no additions this year, and no natural increase due to breeding. It is supposed that the mating period, on account of the backward season, occurred later than usual, and that the usual practice of separating the sexes after this period was done too soon. The present stock consists of 15 animals, all of the common red variety, but even these are of considerable value now on account of the great advance in the prices of all furs.

1918

Fox Propagation

The increase has been very slight; but four cubs were born in the pens. The number will be reduced and a fresh start made with new blood if they can be obtained at reasonable prices from the trappers about the country.

1919

Fox Propagation

This work has been disappointing and owing to the high price of furs we decided to kill all except two of the best females. A new male has been purchased and we hope that better results may be obtained.

1920

Fox Propagation

This work has been unsatisfactory. Due to the high prices paid for skins all but two of the foxes were killed and their skins sold.

1921

Fox Propagation:

No results have been obtained in the attempt to propagate the red fox. This experiment has been abandoned.

1922

Fox Propagation

This work has been unsatisfactory. Due to the high prices paid for skins all but two of the foxes were killed and their skins sold.

3. Come together for discussion at end of class (10 – 15 minutes)

Was CCI's goal worthwhile? Was it successful? Why or why not? What could have they done differently? How would their methods work today? Overall, was the company's effect on Grand Island beneficial or not? Why or why not?

If the class had a game preserve (or a zoo), what animals would everyone like to see? Why? Where would the animals come from? How would they be taken care of? How difficult do the students think it would be?

References

Cleveland-Cliffs Iron Company, Annual Reports of the Land Department 1912-1955, Central Upper Peninsula and Northern Michigan University Archives, Northern Michigan University, MS 86-100.

Rakestraw, Lawrence, Fred Stormer, and Christopher R. Eder. "A Second Yellowstone: William G. Mather and the Grand Island Game Preserve." *Journal of Forest History* 21, no. 3 (1977): 156-163. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3983289.

Additional References

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