



VERSATILE UMIAK—The Department of Fish and Game is finding that the Eskimo umiak, or skinboat, is a very versatile craft in its study of seals and walrus in the Bering Sea. Manned by Eskimos, the umiak can approach

walrus and seals silently, enabling the scientists to observe the animals at close range. Such a craft in the above photograph is shown with three of its Eskimo crew.

Eskimos and Their Umiaks Vital In Walrus and Seal Research

Many Eskimos along Alaska's Arctic coast are lending a vital element to the Department of Fish and Game's seal and walrus programs: age-old hunting skills and stealthy skin boats.

John Burns, Game Biologist in Nome, has nothing but compliments for the native hunters who have volunteered their labor—even in windy weather at 30 degrees below and lower.

"I've spent a lot of time studying walrus," said Burns, "and these native boats are really the ticket for moving in close to a big tusker."

Built by the Eskimos themselves from the skins of walrus, the boats glide silently

through the frigid sea. But Burns points out that an Eskimo at the helm is as important as the boat.

"Up here it just plain makes sense to have an experienced man as a partner and who could I find with more experience than an Eskimo hunter," Burns continued.

Men from St. Laurence Island, King Island, and other coastal communities prove valuable to game biologists by furnishing information also.

Speaking of one group of

hunters, Burns said, "After finding out about what we are trying to accomplish, and the methods, they went out of their way to supply information and specimen material—refusing remuneration."

With this type of support from local hunters, the State's seal and walrus programs have been given a big boost toward success.