Basic Detail Report

Decoy

Date

1700-1900

Medium

Wood, claws, sinew

Description

Three seal claws bound into the wide end of a long tapering, pine wood handle with fine plaited hide or sinew cord. The shape is slightly convex. There is a large hole through the centre of the wide end. Decoys were common tools for hunting and came in many animal forms. One of the largest sources of food for Arctic peoples was the seal, whose capture became increasingly difficult with the ice increase in winter. Seals would claw holes in the ice in order to breathe and reuse those holes throughout the entire winter. Inuit and Eskimo hunters would wait by the holes with harpoons for unsuspecting animals. This decoy would have been used to lure seals to the surface of breathing holes in the ice. The hunter would use the decoy to scratch on the surface, imitating the sounds of another seal moving on the ice. Bering Strait.

Dimensions

Object/Work: 265 x 35 x 20 mm