Mainland Comox 'Plurals': A Working Paper
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0. Introduction.

In Mainland Comox (hereafter MCMc), a Central Salishan language spoken in the province of British Columbia (Canada), number is not obligatorily marked except in first and second person pronominal elements (subject, object, and possessive affixes and clitics). However, 'plurality' can be explicitly indicated, and there are seven different formations involved in marking it. Although the details of the processes may not be as complicated as in Upper Chehalis (Ts'ulTan Salish) as discussed in Kinkade (1995), MCx plural formations are varied and show some of the characteristics of Salish.

The most productive of all the plural formations is C,VC2 reduplication. There are three affixes which express plurality: -‘Vgf(-), is quite productive, whereas the other two (-‘tan and -‘7om) apply to specifically limited stems. Some roots with a as their (first) vowel have ablaut forms for plurals.

Some roots have suppleted forms to express plurality. Finally, Plurality can also be expressed by an analytical construction using an independent word (qas).

This paper is organized as follows: the remaining part of Introduction gives some characteristics of MCx which will facilitate the understanding of the examples cited in this paper. In Section 1, I will exemplify and discuss the plural forms in the following order: reduplication (1.1), -‘Vgf(-) (1.2), ablaut (1.3), -‘tan (1.4), -‘7om (1.5), suppletion (1.6), and analytical expression (1.7).

MCx predicates usually occur clause initially. Except for reduplicative materials, a root occurs initially in a stem. The two most prevalent shapes of MCx roots are C,VC and C,VC2C, and there are also some C,VC and C,VC2V roots. Longer roots are not synchronally analyzable but may historically be

1 I would like to thank the Sliammon community for allowing me to study their language. I would like to thank especially my language consultants for sharing their knowledge: Mrs. Mary George, Mrs. Elsie Paul, Mr. and Mrs. Dave Dominick. Needless to say, I am responsible for any misinterpretation. My research on Mainland Comox has been generously supported at various times by grants from the Jacobs Research Funds, the Phillips Fund of the American Philosophical Society, and the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science and Culture. International Scientific Research Program (Field Research) (most recently granted to the project Urgent Linguistic Fieldwork of the North Pacific Rim, headed by Oshito Miyanoa, 1995-1996. #07041103). At least two dialects are recognized of Comox: Island Comox (hereafter ICx), (formerly) spoken on Vancouver Island, and Mainland Comox, spoken on the mainland of British Columbia. The latter is spoken by three groups: Sliammon, Klabeo, and Homalo. Further dialectal differences among these groups, if any, have not been recognized. It should be noted that the term 'Mainland Comox' is distalized by the speakers of that dialect. However, since there seems to be no other appropriate cover term for the mainland dialect, I will use this term in this paper. The MCx phonemic inventory includes the following: p, (f), t, (l), (k), (g), q, (r), c, (l), (i), (e), (k), k, j, g, j, j, m, k, (x), (v), x, h, m, n, (l), f, (o), w, (m), (i), (l), y, w, m, (i), (l), (k), r, u, a, o. Static processes may not be as complicated as in Upper Chehalis (Ts'ulTan Salish) as discussed in Kinkade (1995: 361).

As already mentioned above, number is not obligatory (in third persons) and neither is gender. Thus, when the English translation of the examples cited reads 'be / him', it can also be translated as 'she, her, them'.

1. Plural variants.

1.1. Reduplication. C,VC2 reduplication is by far the most productive of all the processes which express plurality. 2 It may be that such a system is used in MCx (since MCx plural formations are varied and show some of the characteristics of Salish and MCx C,VC2 reduplication fits within this context.) Other reduplicative types which form plurals, namely C,VC2V and C,VC2VC, are observed with a limited number of stems. All three types occur with both predicates and lexical arguments. There are other types of reduplication which seem to express plurality, and I will discuss these later in section 1.3.

1.1.1. C,VC2 reduplication is formed by reduplicating the stem initial C,VC and placing it before the stem, with the modification of the V to w when the vowel is one of the full vowels (i, u, or o). 4 For example,

(1) t’‘am·1ima! [t’‘am·’ima! ] (t’‘am·’ima! )
(2) k’as·w’nasin [k’as·w’nasin ] (k’as·w’nasin )
(3) ma9ma9a1 [m(9ma9a1) ] (m(9ma9a1) )
(4) ma9ma9as [m(9ma9as ) ] (m(9ma9as ) )
(5) ?oma·tima8 [ ?oma·tima8 ] ( tima8 ·’ima8 )

C,VC2 reduplication can express distribution (plurality) over space or time. Thus,

2 Feminine gender can be indicated in lexical arguments by the use of the determiner f, however, its function may not be restricted to marking gender. Much needs to be worked out on MCx determiners.

2 A limited number of stems form their plurals by C,VC2 reduplication, rather than by C,VC2 reduplication.

E.g., k’as·w’nasin 'stars' (k’as·w’nasin )

1 I give only a limited number of examples for sections 1.1 and 1.2 in the present work. For more examples, see Watanabe (1994a, b, c). The symbols and abbreviations used in this paper are: = lexical suffix, + reduplication, [...] in phonemic representation indicates infixes. A.Intr active-intransitive, CTr control transitive, Det determiner, Fut future, Imp imperative, Impf imperfective, Md mid, NTr noncontrol transitive, Obi oblique, Pl plural, Psv possessive, ptc particle, Qn question marker, s.o. someone, s.t. something, Stv stative. + (plus sign) is used in the gloss when two forms are fused into one morpheme and thus synchronically unsegmentable. For the sake of record, I include the phonetic transcriptions (between [...] ) of each example cited. The corresponding non-plural simplex forms are given in parenthesis following the plural forms.

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comprised of more than two morphemes. Root compounding is not a productive process. Aside from the numerous reduplications, the language is mainly suffixing in its morphology, with only a few infixes and different types of ablaut. It may be noteworthy that plural expressions involve all of these four morphological processes (i.e., reduplications, suffixes, an infix, and an ablaut).

The referent of third persons can be explicitly expressed by lexical arguments, which can be of two types: direct lexical arguments express subject of intransitive predicates and subject and object of transitive predicates (i.e., all core arguments); oblique lexical arguments express all others. The latter is marked by the preceding particle 2a, whereas the former is not. Both types of lexical arguments are usually preceded by a determiner. My use of the term 'lexical argument' and 'predicate' is essentially that of Kinkade (1995: 361).

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(4) ma9ma9as [m(9ma9as ) ] (m(9ma9as ) )
(5) ?oma·tima8 [ ?oma·tima8 ] ( tima8 ·’ima8 )

C,VC2 reduplication can express distribution (plurality) over space or time. Thus,
This affix is found primarily with predicates, and I have recorded only a few lexical arguments with it. In contrast with the C\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{a}C\textsubscript{r} reduplication discussed above, when -Vg(-) occurs with predicates, it can refer to the plurality of an intransitive subject and of both a transitive subject and object. It seems that the referent of this affix, whether to the subject or to the object, is ambiguous out of context. It does not appear to denote plurality in a temporal or spatial sense but only the plurality of the persons involved.

Examples (15) to (18) show this affix occurring after the first syllable of the stem. When this affix occurs in this position, the vowel of the affix is a copy of the vowel of the syllable.\textsuperscript{16}

### Intransitive subject

(15) H\textsubscript{1}\textsubscript{2}\textsubscript{w}wu\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{m}\textsubscript{e}\textsubscript{man}\textsubscript{11} \textsubscript{e}\textsubscript{t}\textsubscript{o}\textsubscript{m} \textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{t}\textsubscript{P}\textsubscript{f} \textsubscript{P}\textsubscript{l}\textsubscript{Sb}\textsubscript{j} 1\textsubscript{p}\textsubscript{l}\textsubscript{.Sb}j+\textsubscript{Fut} 'We will eat (together).'

\textit{Cf.} H\textsubscript{1}\textsubscript{2}\textsubscript{w}wu\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{m} 'I will eat.' (\textsubscript{e}\textsubscript{t}\textsubscript{o}\textsubscript{m} 1\textsubscript{p}\textsubscript{l}.Sb\textsubscript{j}+\textsubscript{Fut})

Compare also: H\textsubscript{1}\textsubscript{2}\textsubscript{w}wu\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{m} 'always eating' (with C\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{a}C\textsubscript{r} reduplication)

(16) \textit{\textit{é}}\textsubscript{a}h\textsubscript{-}\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{g}\textsubscript{-}\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{m} \textsubscript{p}\textsubscript{r}\textsubscript{y}\textsubscript{t}\textsubscript{Mdl} 'They are praying.'

\textit{Cf.} \textit{\textit{é}}\textsubscript{a}h\textsubscript{-}\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{m} 'He prays.'

### Transitive subject

(17) \textsubscript{a}7\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{q}\textsubscript{-}\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{g}\textsubscript{-}\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{t}-\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{d}\textsubscript{-}\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{f} \textsubscript{t}\textsubscript{\textit{1}}\textsubscript{\textit{a}}\textsubscript{\textit{m}}\textsubscript{\textit{i}}\textsubscript{\textit{t}}\textsubscript{\textit{a}}\textsubscript{\textit{m}} \textsubscript{t}\textsubscript{\textit{B}}\textsubscript{\textit{a}}\textsubscript{m} 'They ran after me.'

\textit{Cf.} \textsubscript{a}7\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{q}\textsubscript{-}\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{t}-\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{d}\textsubscript{-}\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{f} \textsubscript{t}\textsubscript{\textit{1}}\textsubscript{\textit{a}}\textsubscript{\textit{m}}\textsubscript{\textit{i}}\textsubscript{\textit{t}}\textsubscript{\textit{a}}\textsubscript{\textit{m}}\textsubscript{\textit{t}}\textsubscript{\textit{B}}\textsubscript{\textit{a}}\textsubscript{m} 'He ran after me.'

### Transitive object

(18) \textsubscript{a}7\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{q}\textsubscript{-}\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{g}\textsubscript{-}\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{t} \textsubscript{t}\textsubscript{\textit{c}} \textsubscript{\textit{a}}\textsubscript{\textit{g}} \textsubscript{\textit{Sb}}\textsubscript{j} 1\textsubscript{g}.\textsubscript{Sb}j 'I ran after them.'

\textit{Cf.} \textsubscript{a}7\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{q}\textsubscript{-}\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{g}\textsubscript{-}\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{t} \textsubscript{t}\textsubscript{\textit{c}} 'I ran after him.'

In examples (19) to (21), this affix is attached at the end of the stem. In this position, the vowel of the affix is i, regardless of the first vowel of the stem or the nearest vowel in the stem.\textsuperscript{15}

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\textsuperscript{4} E.g., qay\textsubscript{a}w\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{y}\textsubscript{m}\textsubscript{i}x\textsubscript{a}*" Native Indian people' (qay\textsubscript{a}w\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{y}\textsubscript{m}\textsubscript{i}x). See also example (59).

\textsuperscript{15} I have not found any data for which this affix directly follows a stem initial C\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{a}C\textsubscript{r} sequence.

\textsuperscript{16} The stem \textit{7\textsubscript{a}m\textsubscript{e}\textsubscript{man} is intransitive. For the transitive predicate meaning 'to eat t\textsubscript{\textit{t}}, ma\textsubscript{t} is used.'

\textsuperscript{17} The linking vowel of the control transitive marker -\textsubscript{V}t\textsubscript{\textit{I}} follows the following pattern (Kroeber 1989:110): (a) immediately after roots of shape CaC, no link vowel (e.g., example 8); (b) immediately after roots of shape CVC (V\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{e}), link vowel is the same as root vowel (e.g., 23a); (c) immediately after roots of shape CaCC, link vowel is e; (d) after longer forms, especially suffixed ones, no link vowel (e.g., 22 and 24; exception: forms with -VC reduplication or with -Vg(-) take link vowel a [e.g., 17 and 18]). In my previous studies, I segmented the link vowel from the following transitive marker, but I will not do so in the present analysis for the sake of simplicity.

\textsuperscript{18} There is, however, at least one exception in which the vowel is u, qay\textsubscript{a}w\textsubscript{a}\textsubscript{y}\textsubscript{m}\textsubscript{i}x. I treat the glottal stop in this example as an epenthetic consonant which breaks up the VV sequence.
Intransitive subject

(19) \(ci\cdot ci\text{-im-}iw\)
impdance-MdI-PI
'They are dancing.'
Cf. \(ci\cdot ci\text{-im}\) 'He is dancing.'

Transitive subject

(20) fa\(a\text{-at-as-}iw\)
wait-CTr-3Sbj-PI
'They waited for him.'

Transitive object

(21) sap\'-t- iw \(\text{can } s\)am
club-CTr-PI
'I will club them all.'
Cf. sap\'-t \(\text{can } s\)am
'I will club it.'

These examples (15·21) confirm that \(-Vg(-)\) can refer to the plurality of all core arguments. 

1.3. Ablaut

1.3.1. Some roots whose (first) vowel is \(a\), have an ablaut form to express plurality. In such stems, the vowel \(a\) is changed to \(a\). As is shown in the examples below, the ablauted forms denote plurality of the arguments, and also that of temporal and spatial sense. However, there is no example in the corpus in which the ablauted form refers to plural transitive subject. This process has not been found to occur with lexical arguments but only with predicates. The following examples show the ablaut forms in (a) and its corresponding simplex form in (b):

(22a) q\(a\text{-ip}=u\text{-}a\text{-}8\)i
fold-hand-CTr+2sg.0bj
'I will roll up your sleeves.'

(22b) q\(a\text{-ip}=u\text{-}a\text{-}8\)a
fold-hand-CTr+1sg.0bj+Imp
'Roll up my sleeve!'

(23a) \(\text{ba}x\text{-at-as}\)
stab(pl.)-CTr+3Sbj
'He's stabbing it many times.'

(23b) \(\text{ba}x\text{-t-as-}ct\)
stab-CTr+3Sbj-Past
'He stabbed it.'

(24a) sap\'=iq\(a\text{-}8\)e \(\text{to } \text{fanx}\)
club(pl.)-top.of.head-CTr+2sg.Sbj+Det
'Keep on clubbing the fish!'

(24b) sap\'=iq\(a\text{-}8\)e
club-top.of.head-CTr+2sg.Sbj
'Club him on the head!'

(25a) las\(-\theta\)-as
punch(PI)-CTr+1sg.Obj-3Sbj
'He hit me all over the body.'

(25b) las\(-\theta\)-as
punch-CTr+1sg.Obj-3Sbj
'He hit me.'

The meaning of the root sap\'- in (24a) is often translated as 'to spank', as shown in the following example:

(26) sap\'-at \(\text{p}om\text{ to } \text{cuy}\)
club(pl.)-CTr+1sg.Sbj+Det
child
'I will spank the kid.'

Now, observe also the next examples, where this ablauted stem cooccurs with \(-Vg(-).\)

(27) sap\'\(-\text{ag-at-as}\text{ to } \text{cuy}\)
club(PI)-CTr+3Sbj+Det
Plechld
'He is spanking all the kids.'

(28) sap\'-at-as- iw \(\text{to } \text{cuy}\)
club(pl.)-CTr+3Sbj-PI+Det
Plechld
'They are spanking the kids.'

In these two examples, the \(a\) ablaut refers to the plurality of the act of 'clubbing' (= 'spanking'), and the \(-Vg(-)\) affix refers to that of the arguments.

1.3.2. It may be the case that this ablaut vowel \(a\) is the source of the vowels in \(\text{C}_{ia}\) and \(\text{C}_{ia}\text{C}_{i}\) reduplications. 

\[=\text{iq}^\prime\text{'top of head'}\]. \(n\) is generally deleted before \(t\).
In examples (29) and (30), the roots underwent the a ablaut and C₁V₄ imperfective reduplication. The former process (i.e., a ablaut) must have preceded the reduplication, because this reduplication copies the stem-initial CV, and the vowels in the reduplicant in the following examples are a.

(29) λa-λap[ilxW-at
Impf-break(pl)-(Stv)-CTr
breaking lots of them (e.g., sticks)
[C₄ap[ilxW-at λap[ilxW-at to break (s.t. in two)]
Cf. λap[ilxW-at λap[ilxW-at 'to break (s.t. in two)'

(30) k'ap'at-7om
Impf-cut(pl)-7om
'cutting one's fingernails'

(31) ~a.~aA-aw
C₄, break(pl)-Pl
'Lots of string-like object [ropes] are breaking up.'
Cf. ~aA-aw ~aA-aw '(it is) breaking up'

(32) pa-pax-aw
C₄, tear(pl)-Pl
'(e.g. clothes, bag is) tearing apart (into pieces)'

Examples (33) and (34) below have C₄a as their reduplicant, however, unlike the examples above, the roots have lost their vowels. In contrast with the examples above, they do not seem to indicate the imperfective aspect, and the reduplication involved here does not appear to be C₁V₄ imperfective reduplication. Thus, we cannot be certain as to the source of the vowel a (or the C₄a as a whole), however, plurality is clearly expressed.

(33) ē'a-ē'px ta 7om
C₄,dirty Det 1sg.Psv clothes
'My clothes are all dirty.'
Cf. ē'apx '(it is) dirty'

(34) xax-λ-it to x"il'om
C₄, break-Stv Det rope
'The rope is broken/severed in multiple points.'
Cf. xax-λ-it x"il'om 'The rope is broken/severed.'
Compare also with example (31).

The second type of reduplication which perhaps involves the a ablaut is C₄C₂ reduplication. Its meaning is not entirely clear, however, most of the examples with this reduplication express plurality of some kind. For example,

(35) naš-naš-am
C₄C₄, swim-Mdl
'swimming back and forth'
Cf. naš-am 'to swim'

(36) gaq'w=gaq'w=Ian-am
C₄C₄, drag-foot-Mdl
'(to be) dragging one's both feet'
Cf. gaq'w=gaq'w=Ian-am 'The rope is broken/severed.'

(37) q"am=q"am=qin-'lam
C₄C₄, put.in.mouth-Mdl
'always kissing'
Cf. q"am=qin-'lam 'to kiss'

(38) k"an-k"an-7om č
C₄C₄, see-Mdl
'I'm looking around'
Cf. k"an-7om 'to see'

(39) taq'w=taq'w=it
C₄C₄, cough-Stv
'cough and stop, cough and stop'

(40) k"at k"at=it=im
C₄C₄, dump-Mdl
'it is (continuously) hopping/jumping continuously'

For some stems which undergo C₄C₄ reduplication (the a forms below), forms with C₁aC₂ reduplication (discussed in 1.1) were also recorded (the b forms). The difference in the meaning of the two reduplication types is difficult to discern precisely, however, example (41) shows that they may express different kinds of plurality.

(41a) saš-saš-am
C₄C₄, itch-Mdl
'itchy all over'

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17 If the (first) vowel of the root is a, the root loses that vowel when it undergoes C₁V₄ imperfective reduplication.
In the next two pairs of examples, the semantic contribution of the reduplication is not entirely clear, however, they are clearly recorded more examples of this suffix in ICx. This suffix in ICx (transcribed by Harris as -tan). I have not been able to elicit any other examples with this suffix in MCx, however, Harris (1977:95-6)

are:

1.4. **-tan**. This suffix attaches to a limited number of stems to form plurals.19

(44) qi￥-tan 'younger siblings (brothers / sisters)' [qi￥'tan] (qi￥18 'younger sibling' [qi￥])

(45) ʔima￥-tan 'grandchildren (ʔima￥'grandchild')

(46) (gax-met) hajuf￥-tan 'barbecued seals' [gaxmet hajuf￥'tan] (hajuf￥'hajuf￥q￥')

I have not been able to elicit any other examples with this suffix in MCx, however, Harris (1977:95-6) recorded more examples of this suffix in ICx. This suffix in ICx (transcribed by Harris as -tan or -tan) attaches to many, but not all, kinship terms, and to a limited number of non-kin terms. Examples given by Harris (1977: 95-96) are18:

1.5. **-tom**. This suffix likewise occurs with a limited number of stems. Note that in the first two examples below ('dogs' and 'trees'), the stems are modified from their simplex forms. The third example ('owls') has both the -P(-) plural affix and -tom.

(52) ʔam￥-tom 'village' (ʔam￥'house')22

(53) janis￥-tan 'gums' (janis￥'tooth')

The prefixed element does not appear in MCx, however this is a historically regular development; Cx lost almost all prefixes to avoid word-initial consonant cluster.

22 ICx ʔ corresponds to MCx θ (see example 45).

23 The plural 'villages' is formed through Cx, Cx, reduplication: ʔam￥'ams￥-tan (Harris ibid.). The word for 'house' in MCx is ʔam￥'ams￥-tan (besides ʔayɑ?', which also means 'house'; ʔam￥'to live'; Cf. Blake [1992:183] ʔam￥'ams￥'house'; Sechelt ʔam￥'ams￥'house' [Beamont 1985:16, 17]). The suffix (-tom) in the ICx form is not the plural suffix but a lexical suffix 'instrument' (and Sechelt ʔman￥'container, enclosure'). Incidentally, the vowel of the suffix, whether θ or a, is difficult to tell; full vowels, especially a, often reduces to θ in unstressed position. I have recorded the form q￥'am￥'tan [q￥'am￥'tan] for 'village' in MCx.

24 Apparently, these prefixes are cognates (Kinkade 1995:351). The Pentlatch material is originally collected by Boas, but is cited here from Kinkade (1995). I have converted the Sechelt orthography used in Beamont (1985) to match the usage in this paper. Upper Chehalis and Cowlitz belong to the Tsimoan branch, and Sechelt and Pentlatch belong to the Central branch.

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18 Emphasis is the speaker, Mrs. Mary George's.
19 There is a lexical suffix of the same phonemic shape, -tan, which indicates 'instrument'. E.g., t￥'ayɑ'?-tan 'shade' (t￥'ayɑ'?-shade'), nɑ￥p￥-us￥-tan 'mask' (nɑ￥p￥-put in', us￥-head/face'). However, it seems difficult to see any semantic connection between this lexical suffix and the plural -tan.
20 The loss of $ in the suffixed form cannot be explained. It is apparently retained in the corresponding ICx form (see example 47).
21 I have normalized the notation in Harris (1977) to match the usage in this paper.

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The plurality of (64) refers to the subject when the predicate is intransitive and to the object when transitive.

As is shown above, for example (61) (but apparently not for 60), there is another plural form derived by C₃C₂ reduplication. According to Beaumont (1985:38) the plural form with xʷ...am is a collective plural, meaning 'a lot of trees' or 'all the trees', whereas the reduplicated form is a normal plural 'trees'. I have not been able to elicit C₃C₂ plural forms (without the suffix -?am) for the three MCx examples above (57, 58, and 59).

### 1.6. Suppletion

A few pairs of stems show number suppletion. There are only three clear examples in my data so far. Note that for (62), there is another plural form derived by C₃C₂ reduplication. However, no difference in their semantics has been observed.

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### 1.7. Analytic expression

Plural reference can be indicated syntactically by juxtaposing qəx 'many' (sometimes in combination with -mut 'very'). For example,

(66)  xələm.ə_kʷ qəx-mut qəyə

want-Qn Det many-very water

'Do you want lots of water?'

Also, qəx can be used as predicates meaning 'there are lots of ...'. For example,

(67)  qəx to ṭəyəuy'

many Det Pchild

'There are lots of kids.'

The next example is a segment from a text (conversation) in which an elderly couple is reminiscing about their fishing trip. The plurality of 'owls' in the first line is only implied, but the English translation provided by the consultant reflects this. In the second line, the plurality is explicitly stressed by the use of qəx.

(68)  qəx to qəx

many Det many-very Det

water

'Kill all the deer!'
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