



Woodland Caribou  
Conservation  
Mountain National Parks



# MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARKS CARIBOU CONSERVATION PROGRAM

The Mountain National Parks encompass truly awe-inspiring landscapes including the high mountain habitat of Southern Mountain caribou. We invite you to visit your parks, and through a variety of activities, explore the spectacular areas caribou call home, learn more about caribou and what they need to make a living, and maybe even catch a glimpse of one of these amazing animals.

**PARKS CANADA IS A WORLD LEADER IN CONSERVATION** and is working collaboratively with other organizations to protect and recover Species at Risk like woodland caribou in the national parks. Woodland caribou are an important part of the mountain national parks.

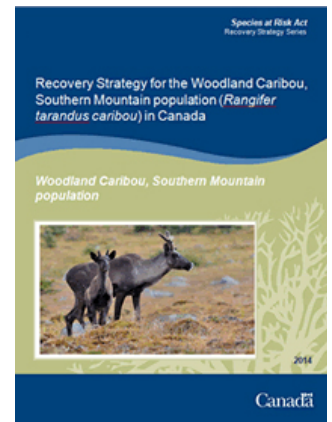
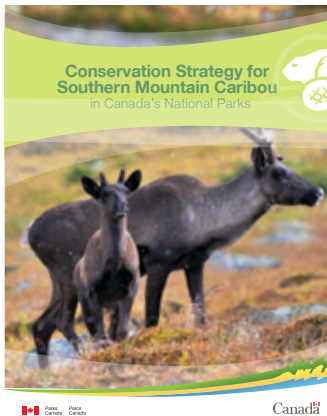
With the release of the *Recovery Strategy for the Woodland Caribou, Southern Mountain population in Canada* in June 2014, Parks Canada has a legal obligation to prevent the destruction of caribou critical habitat. In the mountain national parks, significant critical habitat protection measures are already in place.



Group of caribou from the Tonquin herd  
Photo: M. Bradley

## WHAT ACTIONS ARE BEING TAKEN TO PROTECT CRITICAL HABITAT?

- Monitoring and management activities to reduce predation risk;
- Maintenance and protection of old-growth habitat;
- Consideration of critical habitat protection in fire and vegetation management plans and integrated land-use planning;
- Adjustments to the timing of winter access in areas of caribou habitat; and
- Reduced speed zones and/or caribou crossing signs on roads through critical habitat.



Read on for a firsthand account of the latest research and conservation actions for the Southern Mountain population of woodland caribou in the mountain national parks.



## **BANFF NATIONAL PARK**

### **ON-GOING MONITORING OF WOLVES IN BANFF**

**NATIONAL PARK** is helping to assess any changes in wolf use of caribou habitat over time to inform future caribou reintroduction efforts. Using the highest animal care standards, Parks Canada plans to radio-collar six wolves from the Red Deer, Fairholme and Bow Valley packs. Additional remote cameras have also been placed throughout caribou range to monitor changes in the distribution of both carnivores and their prey (deer, elk, moose, sheep and goats). Twenty-four cameras are currently tracking wildlife movements in this region north of Lake Louise.



Last spring, the Bow Valley and Red Deer wolf packs consisted of eight and 11 wolves respectively.

The Bow Valley pack had at least three pups and we hope to confirm the number of Red Deer pack pups through remote camera data. Continued monitoring of wolves and other wildlife species in caribou range will provide Parks Canada with information required to prioritize where caribou translocations will have the greatest likelihood of success and conservation value.

The wolf monitoring program will also evaluate: wolf responses to the spring, night time travel restriction on the Bow Valley Parkway; factors affecting wildlife use of corridors; and prevalence of summer wolf predation on mountain goats.

## **MOUNT REVELSTOKE AND GLACIER NATIONAL PARKS**

**MOUNT REVELSTOKE AND GLACIER NATIONAL PARKS (MRG)** continue to recover southern mountain caribou in the regional ecosystem through initiatives including the Mount Klotz seasonal closure and the Revelstoke Caribou Rearing in the Wild Society maternity penning project.

### **MOUNT KLOTZ**

Since 2007, Parks Canada has closed the Mount Klotz area in Mount Revelstoke National Park. In place from December 15 to April 15, the closure ensures that caribou from the South Columbia herd have undisturbed winter habitat. According to a 2013 census, this herd has declined to about six animals. As part of Parks Canada's Mountain National Park Caribou Conservation Program, we are taking action to reduce or eliminate threats to Southern Mountain caribou on Parks Canada lands, and regionally in collaboration with partners.

Parks Canada identified five threats as impacting caribou populations in the mountain national parks. These threats are consistent with those described in the Recovery Strategy and it is a priority to reduce or eliminate all of them. One threat is facilitated predator access: the threat of packed winter trails helping predators to access areas of important caribou habitat. In winter, wolves travel more efficiently on packed trails or roads thus increasing their ability to access and hunt in these areas. Work over the past decade has led to the conclusion, supported by science, that managing the timing of backcountry access for winter recreation will reduce the risk of predation on caribou.



## REVELSTOKE CARIBOU REARING IN THE WILD SOCIETY

MRG continues to work with the Revelstoke Caribou Rearing in the Wild Society (RCRW) to increase the survival of caribou calves in the Columbia North herd. Calf survival is critically low for this herd and to address this, the RCRW project pens pregnant females so calves can be born and start their life in a predator free space. This summer, nine calves were successfully raised in a pen with their mothers, and then returned to the wild. While the RCRW reported one calf mortality in November, monitoring suggests that at least six and up to eight of the nine calves are still alive.

If maternity penning is able to increase the size of the Columbia North herd, the larger herd may populate adjacent lands including the range of the Columbia South herd that uses habitat in Mount Revelstoke National Park. The project is also providing valuable information that will contribute to caribou conservation efforts across Canada.

Parks Canada is supporting the RCRW initiative with funding, staff time and equipment. Parks Canada provided \$19,000 in funding for year-one (2013) and an additional \$40,000 for year-two (2014) to assist with start-up costs, as well as contributing staff support and equipment. Parks Canada Agency is committed to on-going support and collaboration on this important initiative. The RCRW recently received additional funding through Environment Canada towards improving mountain caribou calf survival through maternity penning in the Columbia Mountains, British Columbia. This funding guarantees continuation of the project through 2015.



Caribou mom and calf in RCRW maternity pen.  
Photo: RCRW, Terry Anderson

## GETTING SOCIAL ON CARIBOU CONSERVATION

Through the RCRW and its partners, including Parks Canada, the maternity penning project has contributed to raising awareness and support for caribou conservation among Canadians. Project updates, photos of caribou and highlights of the work being done by staff and volunteers have been featured on social media including the RCRW and Mount Revelstoke and Glacier facebook pages, and Parks Canada's facebook page and Twitter feed. The project has also had extensive coverage in both regional and national media.

Updates on the project can be found at [www.rcrw.ca](http://www.rcrw.ca), and through the Revelstoke Caribou Rearing in the Wild or Mount Revelstoke and Glacier national parks Facebook pages.



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## CARIBOU COUNTS AND MAPPING

A full census of the Columbia North, Columbia South, and Duncan herds will be done by the Province of British Columbia and Parks Canada in late winter 2015.

Parks Canada has also completed ecosystem mapping of important caribou habitat in MRG. Ecosystem maps identify areas that caribou need for spring and summer feeding, calving and winter survival. This mapping information along with caribou radio collar data was used to inform the description of critical habitat used in the *Recovery Strategy for the Woodland Caribou, Southern Mountain population (Rangifer tarandus caribou) in Canada*. By understanding the habitat and food that caribou need, we can better plan for their protection.

## JASPER NATIONAL PARK

There are four caribou herds found in Jasper National Park. The A La Peche herd in the north is estimated at around 90 animals, and is monitored largely by the Province of Alberta with Parks Canada participation. The other three herds, Tonquin, Maligne and Brazeau, in the southern part of Jasper, are actively monitored by Parks Canada.

### COUNTING CARIBOU

Late snowfall in the alpine this fall delayed Jasper's annual caribou survey until after the rut was over. This makes counting caribou more difficult as they tend to disperse and are often found in the trees at this time. This year, the number of caribou seen was 29 in the Tonquin, nine in the Brazeau and two in the Maligne. It is likely that,

due to the timing, some caribou were missed in the visual survey and more accurate population estimates are expected later in 2015 when we get the results from the scat DNA analysis.



Photo: M. Bradley

## CARIBOU IN THE CITY

This year, Parks Canada's Mountain National Park Caribou Conservation Program once again took its stories on the road. In 2014, we connected with audiences in Edmonton, Calgary and Vancouver. In Edmonton, the caribou conservation team were at Telus World of Science during their Wildlife Rescue exhibit and at the Royal Alberta Museum for Culture Days. Hands-on props and activities engaged young and old alike in caribou discussions. Throughout the summer, Parks Canada's urban outreach programs introduced Canadians to caribou through hands-on activities and interactive programs at Vancouver's Telus World of Science and the Calgary Zoo.

Our goal is for all Canadians to know caribou as more than just a picture on the quarter. We hope you see an iconic animal worth protecting, and are inspired to visit national parks where make their home.





### DELAYED ACCESS

Delayed winter access into areas of important caribou habitat was first implemented in the range of the Tonquin herd in 2009. Following extensive public engagement, new delayed access initiatives were implemented for the ranges of the Brazeau and A La Peche caribou herds in 2013. This year, to further enhance protection of caribou winter habitat, delayed access was implemented in the range of the Maligne herd; the winter ranges of all four caribou herds are now protected. During the delayed access period, winter recreational enthusiasts are invited to explore other areas of the park not needed by caribou. Once the delay is over, all areas can be enjoyed at a time when days are longer and temperatures generally warmer. Over the last few years, we have also expanded the park's winter recreational opportunities to appeal to a broad range of visitors and ensure they can continue to enjoy quality winter activities even as we implement recovery actions for this species at risk.



### CARIBOU: CEREMONY AND AMBASSADORS

On August 14th, a small ceremony in the Bald Hills region of the Maligne Valley in Jasper National Park brought together peoples from the Bighorn Chiniki Stoney Nation reserve near Nordegg, Alberta and the Parks Canada caribou conservation team from Jasper and Banff national parks. The purpose was to appeal to the spirit of the caribou through a traditional ceremony with the shared intention of returning caribou to the landscape.



While the ceremony was taking place in the high country, on the trail, visitors to the Bald Hills were met by Jasper's dedicated Caribou Ambassadors. Now in its third year, through this program, volunteers receive hands-on training and behind-the-scenes updates on caribou conservation in the mountain parks. Throughout the summer, the ambassadors share this knowledge with visitors at trailheads and on the trails in areas of caribou habitat including Cavell Meadows and Maligne Lake.

For more information on caribou conservation in the mountain national parks:

Visit [www.parkscanada.gc.ca/caribou](http://www.parkscanada.gc.ca/caribou)

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