



Woodland Caribou
Conservation
Mountain National Parks



March 2016

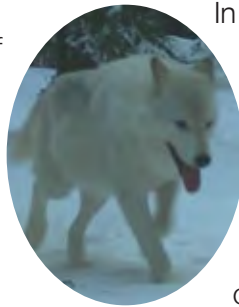
MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARKS CARIBOU CONSERVATION PROGRAM

Woodland caribou inhabit incredible landscapes in Canada's mountain national parks. From remote, rugged mountain passes and old-growth forests to some of the parks' most accessible alpine meadows, their range is truly awe-inspiring. We invite you to visit your parks, explore these spectacular areas, learn more about caribou, and maybe even catch a glimpse of one of these intriguing animals.

Read on for an update on Parks Canada's Southern Mountain caribou conservation actions.

BANFF NATIONAL PARK

CARIBOU REQUIRE HABITAT WITH FEW PREDATORS. Wolf numbers and their use of caribou range can strongly impact caribou's ability to survive. In Banff National Park, wolf distribution and abundance is being tracked using a combination of radio collars, remote cameras, snow tracking and public observations.



In winter 2015, Parks Canada radio-collared six wolves in Banff National Park. Currently there are five wolves each in the Bow Valley and Panther/Cascade packs and seven in the Fairholme pack. Remote camera images of the Red Deer pack have confirmed eight individuals that roam throughout the Red Deer, Clearwater and Pipestone valleys, which include caribou range.



Calf in maternity pen
Photo: RCRW

MOUNT REVELSTOKE AND GLACIER NATIONAL PARKS

PARKS CANADA WORKS CLOSELY WITH PARTNERS AND

STAKEHOLDERS. Since the mid-1990s, Mount Revelstoke and Glacier national parks have collaborated with the British Columbia Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations on studies of caribou in the Revelstoke area. Based on these studies, there is an ongoing winter closure of the Mt. Klotz area of Mount Revelstoke National Park to protect important winter habitat of the Columbia South herd. More recently, Parks Canada is proud to support

the Revelstoke Caribou Rearing in the Wild (RCRW) Society's maternity penning project. The goal of the RCRW program is to increase the survival of caribou calves in the Columbia Mountains.

In July 2015, the RCRW's maternity penning project released 11 new calves, 17 female caribou and one yearling back into the wild. During an RCRW monitoring flight on February 2, 2016, eight of the 11 calves were spotted and confirmed to have survived—this is at least double wild calf survival rates.

In preparation for a third season, the RCRW, partners and volunteers expanded the size of the maternity pen by three hectares (about 50 percent larger). Be sure to check out the RCRW website for updates at www.rcrw.ca.



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JASPER NATIONAL PARK

MINIMUM CARIBOU COUNTS ARE CONDUCTED ANNUALLY USING AERIAL SURVEYS. The number observed in each range is the minimum count—it does not account for caribou not seen. In fall 2015, a minimum of 25 caribou were seen in the Tonquin: 12 males, 10 females and three calves; 12 in the Brazeau: four males, five females and three calves; while three animals were seen in the Maligne herd.

In Jasper National Park, to account for animals not seen and get a population estimate, caribou scat is collected. The scat, when kept frozen, carries the animal's DNA and allows us to identify individual caribou. Scat DNA results from 2014 suggest a decline in the Tonquin herd, from an estimated 46 in 2013 to an estimated 34 in 2014. The small size of the Maligne and Brazeau herds does not allow for a population estimate to be calculated. Over time, DNA analysis gives a picture of the relationships within and between the herds. For example, the last 10 years have shown very limited movement of individuals between the three herds (only four cross-range movements of males and no female movement). Results from the 2015 scat analysis are expected in late 2016.

Compared to caribou populations elsewhere, Jasper continues to have relatively high calf survival (37 percent of females had calves). Given these numbers, calf mortality is not considered to be a driving factor in Jasper's caribou population declines.



Tonquin caribou, Nov. 2015



SLOW DOWN FOR CARIBOU! Sightings of caribou have been recorded almost every year since 1955 on a stretch of the Icefields Parkway (Highway 93N) that runs through the Brazeau herd range. To help protect these caribou, a seasonal reduced speed zone has been in place since 2005. This year, the action is being revised following a review. To improve the winter driving experience, raise awareness and encourage greater compliance, the speed zone has been slightly shortened and shifted to the north and is in effect for a shorter season annually. These changes take into account where and when the area has been used by the Brazeau caribou herd over the last decade, road conditions (primarily sightlines), and feedback from the public.



Vine Creek Prescribed Fire

PARKS CANADA CONTINUES TO EVALUATE FIRE MANAGEMENT ACTIONS WITH RESPECT TO CARIBOU CRITICAL HABITAT PROTECTION. For example, the 750-hectare Vine Creek prescribed fire was determined to have minimal impact on caribou recovery and in May 2015, it was successfully implemented. In early July, a wildfire started in the Excelsior Creek area of the park and spread south in the Maligne Valley along Medicine Lake. Caribou biologists worked with the Fire Management team during the Excelsior Fire to minimize the potential impacts of fire suppression activities on caribou. For example, to minimize disturbance from helicopters, a no-fly zone was put in place over an area of the Maligne Valley where caribou were known to be.



JASPER NATIONAL PARK (cont.)

WINTER IS A MAGICAL TIME IN JASPER NATIONAL PARK!

Extensive planning has gone into Jasper's winter season with an enhanced offer for the 2015 – 2016 season in conjunction with on-going commitment to caribou recovery in the park. Over the last few years, the park's winter recreational opportunities have been expanded to broaden their appeal to a range of visitors. At the same time, following a public engagement process, protection measures are now in place for the winter ranges of the four Jasper caribou herds.

This year, adjustments were made to the delayed access boundary at Maligne Lake, and the Moose Lake Loop, as well as a section of trail to Trapper Creek, were opened on a trial basis. The intent is to add to the winter experiences at Maligne Lake without impacting the surrounding areas. This will be evaluated on a yearly basis to ensure no impacts to the area's caribou conservation actions. Your cooperation in respecting the delayed access boundaries is essential for these actions to be successful.



Skiing on Maligne Lake

CARIBOU AMBASSADORS TAKE ACTION! In spring 2015, 34 enthusiastic volunteers and staff from several local businesses joined Jasper's Caribou Ambassador Team. First piloted in 2012, Caribou Ambassadors receive in-depth training on caribou biology, ecology and the latest in caribou conservation in the mountain national parks. Volunteers then share their knowledge with park visitors as trailhead hosts, roving trail ambassadors and at community outreach events. Starting last year, this training has also been offered to local businesses giving them the opportunity to be Caribou Ambassadors during their day to day interactions with visitors. In 2014, 20 people took part in Caribou Ambassador training and connected directly with over 3700 visitors in Jasper National Park.



WORKING TOWARDS RECOVERY. Increasing numbers when populations become too small is a challenge, especially for animals that generally produce a single offspring per year. *The Recovery Strategy for Woodland Caribou, Southern Mountain population (Rangifer tarandus caribou) in Canada* identifies several augmentation options to address the threat of small populations. Parks Canada has been investigating caribou breeding as a potential option to increase small herds. This approach has many challenges however, including sustainability, animal health and welfare considerations, obtaining source animals and long-term maintenance requirements. The results of this investigation will inform next steps.



CARIBOU ARE CLOSER THAN YOU THINK! Through the Parks Canada urban outreach teams at Vancouver's Telus World of Science and the Calgary Zoo, innovative programs are raising awareness of caribou and the places they call home.

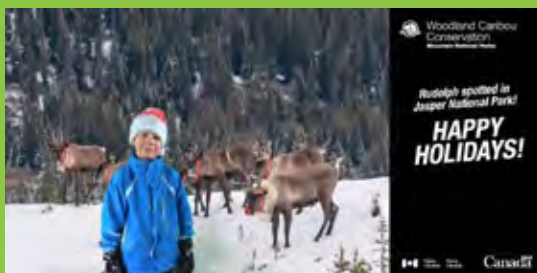
This spring, a team from Mount Revelstoke and Glacier national parks engaged families in Kelowna and Vancouver with a new interactive display on species at risk found in the parks, including caribou. A Caribou Ambassador from Jasper even joined the fun at the Fat Cat Children's Festival in Kelowna.

In early 2016, caribou was the topic of a Canadian Wildlife Federation "Wild Webinar". A member of the Mountain National Park Caribou Conservation team was invited to present to students from across the country. The students did some preliminary research on caribou and then participated in the webinar both learning and sharing their own findings. To view the webinar visit:

<http://livestream.com/accounts/1929428/events/4680724>



In 2016, watch for Parks Canada's new travelling exhibit on woodland caribou, whitebark pine and fire. With inspiring mountain landscapes, hands-on activities and compelling stories, the exhibit is sure to engage both young and old.



In November, a team from Jasper National Park got into the holiday spirit at West Edmonton Mall, inviting shoppers to meet Canada's caribou. Using Greenscreen technology, shoppers created personalized holiday cards with festive Jasper caribou as the background.

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

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