

# Ecological Factors Affecting Northern Caribou in the Omineca Region, British Columbia.



## Caribou Study Update:

### Wolverine, Takla and Chase Caribou Herds “**THREATENED**”

The Southern Mountain Population of Woodland Caribou, which includes our Takla, Wolverine and Chase caribou herds, have been designated by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) as **THREATENED** and are therefore now under the protection of the Species at Risk Act (SARA). A recovery implementation group (RIG) chaired by Scott McNay, has been formed to develop recovery strategies and action plans, mandatory under SARA. Requirements of recovery strategies and action plans include: long-term goals and short-term objectives for caribou recovery, bringing together all that is known of the caribou herds (population #'s, survivorship, critical habitat...), followed by more detailed actions on how to meet these goals and objectives. All information regarding these caribou herds will be valuable in determining which actions to implement as part of the recovery process.

### So, How Many Caribou Are There?

A population census was conducted in January/February, 2004 to determine population sizes and age/gender composition in the Wolverine and Takla herds. We used a weighted, stratified-block, sample strategy in both areas however, all blocks were sampled in the Takla area while a random selection of blocks was taken for sampling in the Wolverine herd area.

We saw a total of 373 caribou during the census (Table 1). The ratio of bulls to cows was 39:100 in the Wolverine and 49:100 in the Takla. The ratio of calves to cows was 44:100 in the Wolverine and 38:100 in the Takla. We estimated the population size for the Wolverine sample area to be 460 caribou. This estimate is comparable to previous estimates of 300 – 500 (Wood 1996), and 550



(Zimmerman et al. 2002), The estimate for the Takla herd was 125. This estimate is also comparable to the previous estimate of 120.

Table 1. Population composition of caribou observed in each study area during the Jan-Feb 2004 census.

Herd Area	Adult Males	Adult Females	Unk Adults	Male Calves	Female Calves	Unk Calves	Total
Takla	32	65	3	2	11	12	125
Wolverine	47	118	31	3	20	29	248
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>373</b>

## Monitoring Continues

Monitoring of collared animals continued throughout the year. A total of 166 animals were located an average of 13 times (Table 2).

Two goat, 5 caribou, 3 moose and 4 wolf mortalities were investigated this year (Table 2). Hunters killed one moose and one wolf in the Chase study area; wolves killed a caribou in the Chase and a moose in the Wolverine area; one goat in the Akie died of natural causes and two animals (1 caribou and 1 wolf) dropped their collars. Cause of death for the remaining mortalities could not be determined.



*This Akie goat was found dead in January, 2004. There were no signs of predation.*

Table 2. Number of telemetry locations acquired ,and mortality investigations completed, for each species in all study areas (number of radio-collars or ear transmitters monitored in brackets) between April 2003 and March 2004.

Study Area	Moose	Wolf	Goat	Caribou	Number of Mortalities
Akie/Ospika	36 (11)	0	379 (23)	59 (16)	1 goat, 2 caribou
Chase	144 (15)	41 (5)	318 (18)	409 (32)	1 moose, 2 wolves, 1 goat, 3 caribou
Scott	0	0	0	99 (4)	0 animals
Wolverine	36 (3)	43 (3)	51 (2)	539 (34)	2 moose, 2 wolves
<b>Total</b>	<b>216 (29)</b>	<b>84 (8)</b>	<b>748 (43)</b>	<b>1106 (86)</b>	<b>14 animals</b>

## Captured!

A total of 41 animals were captured this past year (Table 3), including 3 wolves. Two wolves received Global Positioning System (GPS) collars in order to acquire more locations on those animals each year. These collars are programmed to be remotely triggered to fall off, making additional capturing of the animal unnecessary. All other animals were fitted with VHF radio-collars.

Table 3. Number of animals captured in each study area between February 2003 and March 2004.

Study Area	Wolf	Goat	Caribou	Total
Akie/Ospika	0	14	0	14
Chase	1	16	6	23
Wolverine	2	0	2	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>41</b>

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