



Nahanni
(Nahʔa
Dehé)
Mountain
Woodland

caribou
medzih

WHAT ARE WE STUDYING?

The study started in 2008, and looks at two mountain caribou herds in the Greater Nahanni Ecosystem (Nahʔa Dehé): the South Nahanni (SN) and Coal River (CR) herds. It is planned to continue over the next five years.

What do we want to know?

- **recruitment** and **sex ratios**
- population estimates
- habitats used
- health of the captured caribou
- harvest rates
- more **baseline** information

What did we find in 2008?

During the survey, we saw 245 South Nahanni caribou and 341 Coal River caribou. Caribou management guidelines suggest a healthy herd should have at least 26 calves and 30 bulls for every 100 cows. In 2008, our study showed low **recruitment** for both herds.

SN recruitment: 10 calves: 100 cows
SN sex ratio: 36 bulls: 100 cows

CR recruitment: 12 calves: 100 cows
CR sex ratio: 34 bulls: 100 cows

How will the results be used?

Caribou need large, intact habitats. Healthy populations usually mean healthy ecosystems. Study results will help us work towards a future with healthy caribou populations and a healthy Nahʔa Dehé. Nahanni National Park Reserve is too small and too narrow to protect wide-ranging populations of mountain caribou, which have large **ranges** and don't recover well from human disturbances. Study results will help us figure out where **critical habitat** is and how to protect it, so that we can help protect Nahanni caribou.

Why Study Nahanni (Nahʔa Dehé) Caribou?

- We don't know enough about how many caribou there are, or if the herd numbers are stable or going down.
- We don't know how many caribou are being harvested – we want to make sure harvest levels are sustainable.
- Increased industrial activity (mostly mining exploration) along the Yukon-NWT border is providing easier access for hunters, and may also be disturbing important caribou habitat.
- More information will help the governments of the Yukon and NWT, Parks Canada, Renewable Resources Boards and others work together to manage Nahanni caribou.



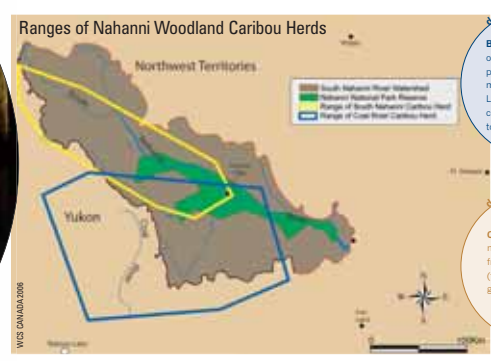
definition
Range: the extent of area on the land (or water) in which an animal, or group, usually occurs during the entire year.

definition
Sex ratio: a comparison of how many males and how many females are in a population. For caribou, this is expressed as the number of males (bulls) for every 100 females (cows).

definition
Recruitment: the number of young that survive to breeding age in a population. For caribou, this is expressed as the number of calves for every 100 cows.



Mountain woodland caribou are one of five types of caribou in the NWT



definition
Baseline: the first set of information collected, preferably before any major changes happen. Later information can be compared to the baseline to look for changes.

definition
Critical habitat: the most important or frequently-used range (for example, calving grounds).

DID YOU KNOW?

- Unlike boreground caribou migrations which cover large areas of land, most mountain caribou migrate shorter distances between high and low elevations. However, Nahanni caribou can migrate over 200km between their winter and summer ranges.
- Caribou are the only large mammal that can survive on a diet of lichens, which make up 60-70% of their diet.
- Woodland caribou reproduce slowly, with one calf born each year. Many calves do not survive their first six weeks.
- In the shadow of the Ragged Range, the spruce forests near Nailicho (Virginia Falls) are partly sheltered from winter snows. Less snow makes it easier to dig down to ground lichens, and there are tree lichens here too, so this area is important mountain caribou habitat.
- Dene peoples in this region have sustainably harvested mountain caribou for thousands of years.

COMMUNITY OBSERVER PROFILE

Darrell Betsaka is from Nahanni Butte, NWT. He participated in the fall 2008 survey as a community observer, helping the survey crew count and identify caribou from the helicopter. Darrell enjoyed the work, especially getting to see a different part of the mountains. He sees the caribou collar work as important to learn more about caribou in Nahʔa Dehé, and has shared his experiences with many interested community members.

TOM JUNO