

# WHAT ARE CARIBOU AND WHERE DO THEY LIVE?

Caribou are hoofed mammals that are larger than deer and smaller than elk. Their colouration can vary slightly but their bodies are usually medium to light brown with shades of gray and white on their rumps and necks.

- ▶ Both males and females grow antlers; the male's antlers are usually larger and fall off earlier in the winter than those of the females.
- ▶ Caribou hooves are similar in size to moose, with a more rounded shape. As a caribou generally weighs only half as much as a moose, it is often able to walk on top of the snowpack.
- ▶ Caribou feed primarily on lichens during the winter months. During the spring and summer they will feed on a variety of plants.



# HOW DOES SNOWMOBILING AFFECT CARIBOU?

Clumps of trees amongst large open areas in the high country of the Interior Wet Belt are ideally suited for Mountain Caribou, as well as for various types of skiing and snowmobiling.

Snowmobiling and skiing may cause caribou to move into less suitable habitat where foraging is not as efficient or where steeper terrain may cause avalanche hazards.

- ▶ Unnecessary movements of caribou may also deplete their energy reserves during critical time periods.
- ▶ Packed trails can provide easier access for predators to move into areas occupied by caribou.
- ▶ Northern Caribou populations are also susceptible to disturbance from recreational activities.

# ARE CARIBOU AT RISK AND WHY?

Certain populations of Woodland Caribou are listed as threatened under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA). Populations of caribou are legally designated under the *British Columbia Forests and Range Practices Act* (FRPA). The Ministry of Environment manages certain herds for recovery.

Mountain Caribou are the most threatened of all caribou in B.C. They no longer live in almost half of their original range and populations have declined.

- ▶ Mountain Caribou's main winter foods are tree lichens, which grow very slowly. Abundant tree lichens are usually found only in old forests.
- ▶ Large tracts of old forests allow Mountain Caribou to disperse to avoid predators.
- ▶ Forest harvesting removes old trees, resulting in a reduced and scattered food supply and a more fragmented landscape.
- ▶ After old forests are cut, young shrubs and trees grow. Moose, deer, and elk move in, attracted by the new growth. Their presence supports more predators and increases the risk that caribou will encounter predators.
- ▶ Road access for forest harvesting, back country lodges, and other development has also increased recreational access and associated disturbances.
- ▶ Threats to Northern Caribou are similar, although the pine forests and associated ground lichens may recover in a shorter time period.
- ▶ The current spread of Mountain Pine Beetle may have significant negative effects on Northern Caribou habitat.
- ▶ Threats to the Boreal Caribou include habitat fragmentation, increased human access and disturbance as a result of industrial activities.



More information and local brochures are available from some local dealers and the following:

## BC SNOWMOBILE FEDERATION OFFICE

Box 400  
Houston, B.C. V0J 1Z0  
1-877-537-8716  
250-845-7705  
<http://www.bcsf.org>  
[office@bcsf.org](mailto:office@bcsf.org)

## ABC SNOWMOBILE CLUBS

Box 234  
Lone Butte, B.C. V0K 1X0  
250-593-4770  
<http://www.abcsnow.ca>  
[info@abcsnow.ca](mailto:info@abcsnow.ca)



## SNOWMOBILE REVELSTOKE SOCIETY

250-837-3325  
<http://www.sledrevelstoke.com>  
[sledrev@telus.net](mailto:sledrev@telus.net)

## VALEMOUNT AND AREA RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (VARDa)

250-566-4817  
<http://www.valemountrecreation.com>

For more information:

## MOUNTAIN CARIBOU RECOVERY PLANNING:

[www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/recoveryplans/rcvry1.htm](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/recoveryplans/rcvry1.htm)

## WILDLIFE GUIDELINES FOR BACKCOUNTRY TOURISM/COMMERCIAL RECREATION:

[www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/twg](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/twg)

## SPECIES AT RISK COORDINATION OFFICE (SARCO):

<http://ilmbwww.gov.bc.ca/sarco/mc>



BRITISH COLUMBIA

The Best Place on Earth



This brochure was produced jointly by the B.C. Ministry of Environment and the BC Snowmobile Federation. Funding was provided by the Government of B.C.

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# SNOWMOBILING AND CARIBOU In British Columbia





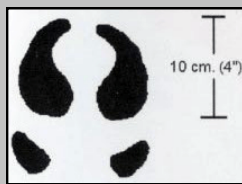
## What can snowmobilers do to reduce disturbance to caribou?

Before you snowmobile in an area, find out if it might be used by caribou. The map shows the general areas where caribou live in B.C.

Find out if there are snowmobile closures in the area where you intend to snowmobile. The contacts listed in this brochure can provide local information. Many closures are regulated under the *Wildlife Act*; details and maps for these closures are in the Hunting and Trapping Synopsis, which can be obtained free at many sporting goods stores and on the web at:

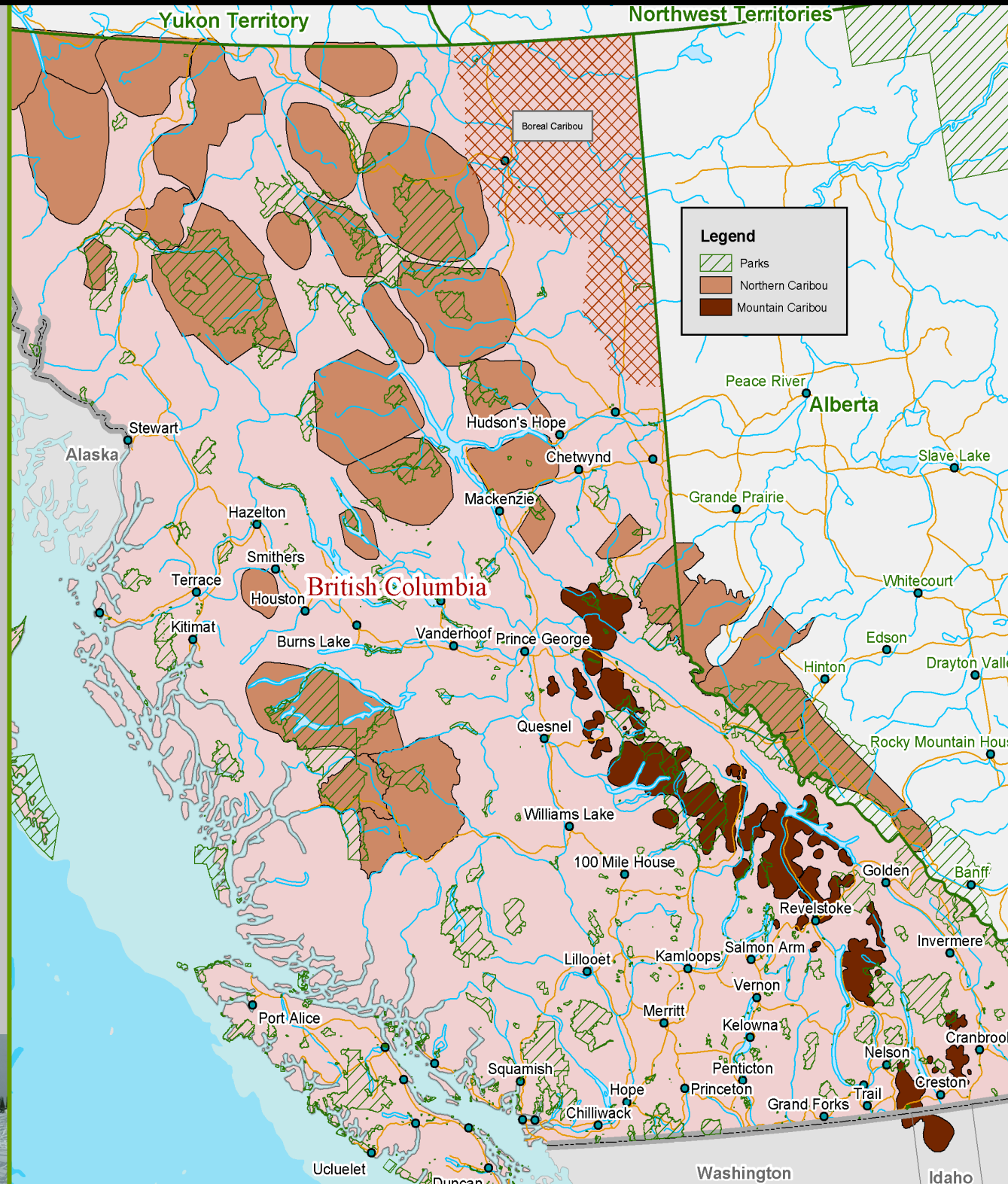
<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/fw/wild/synopsis.htm>

- ▶ Ride in areas designated for snowmobiling; do not ride in closed areas. Many closures are marked, so please obey all posted signs.
- ▶ If caribou are encountered on a road or designated trail, turn off the engine and wait until the caribou have moved off the road or trail before continuing, making every effort to stay as far away from the caribou as safely possible.
- ▶ If caribou are encountered in a play area, do not approach them and shut down your machines to give animals a chance to move away. Then, leave the area and refrain from riding within sight of the caribou.
- ▶ Taking photographs is okay if from a distance.
- ▶ If caribou tracks are observed, do not follow the tracks.



Caribou Track

## Regional Distribution of Caribou in B.C.



## What can snowmobilers do so they don't harm other animals and plants?

The potential for harming other wildlife and plants can be reduced by the following:

- ▶ Do not approach, follow, or harm any wildlife.
- ▶ To avoid damaging vegetation, ride only where the snow is greater than 30 cm deep.
- ▶ Bring out everything that you bring in.

All caribou in British Columbia are Woodland Caribou; they are further divided into three *ecotypes* depending on feeding and movement behaviour:

**MOUNTAIN CARIBOU** live in the Interior Wet Belt that stretches from northern Idaho and Washington to an area north of Prince George. They are different from other caribou because in winter they survive by eating lichens that grow on trees. This trait allows them to live in this deep snow zone as they do not have to dig through snow for ground lichens as do other caribou.



**NORTHERN CARIBOU** live in the west central and northern parts of B.C. and in parts of Alberta. During the winter they feed on lichens that grow on the ground, digging through the snow when necessary. They usually choose low elevation pine forests or wind-swept ridges where the snow is less deep.

**BOREAL CARIBOU** live in the low elevation flatter areas of muskeg and open forests in northeastern B.C., north of Ft. St. John. Their range also extends across the northern boreal forests of much of Canada. Ground lichens are their main winter food.