

Winter Wildlife Count – January 12, 2008

A Public Stewardship Project in the Peace Region

This newsletter provides a short overview summary of results from our first wildlife count conducted by volunteers in the Peace Region. This project not only provides useful information for the management of our wildlife resources, it also provides the public a great opportunity to contribute to wildlife inventory and management activities in the Peace Region.

This project has three main objective:

1. Monitor population distributions (presence/absence)
2. Monitor trends in abundance and composition of populations over long-term
3. Increase public involvement in wildlife management

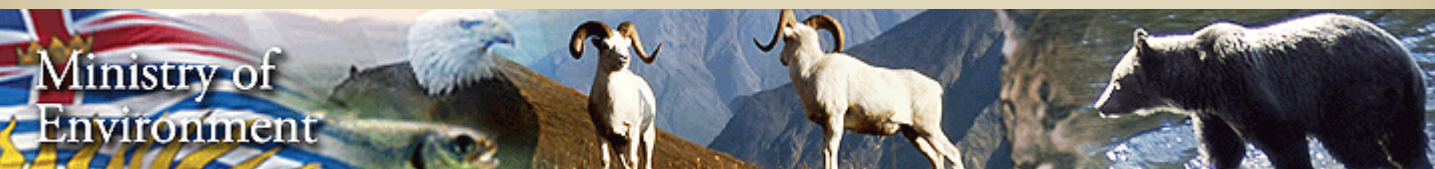
The Peace Region has an abundant and diverse wildlife population, spread out over a large land mass. This creates a very challenging situation for Ministry biologists to inventory animals in a cost-efficient and scientifically accurate fashion. Accurate inventories for most species are typically very costly both in time and money. This project is one way of providing information that can complement the more rigorous game inventories biologists carry out.

Information from these types of public stewardship projects become more valuable each additional year they are done. There are numerous variables that can affect the counts in any one year, weather, observers, natural mortalities etc.; therefore long-term data collection becomes very valuable in reducing the effects of any one of these variables.

The project started out as a Christmas Deer Count, modelled after the popular Christmas Bird Counts held throughout N. America. Because of the interest and opportunity to observe other species of wildlife, the count was expanded to include a number of other species common in the agricultural zone.

An overview of the methods and results is provided on the next page. We hope to continue this program and based on the interest we've seen, we think it will grow.

If you would like to participate in the next ungulate count, please call the Ministry of Environment office at 250-787-3411 and leave your contact information. We will let you know when there will be an organizational meeting next winter. We hope to do this year's count a little earlier, sometime before Christmas.



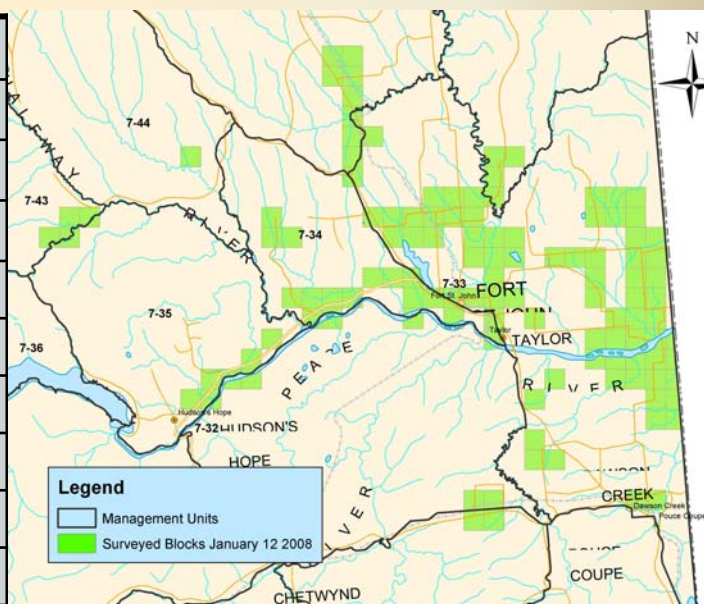
METHODS:

Posters advertising the project were distributed, and two meetings were held, one at the South Peace and the other at the North Peace Rod and Gun Club buildings. At the meeting, a presentation outlined the objectives and methodology and maps were available for people to choose their preferred area of interest to conduct the count. The areas of interest are within Management Units 7-20, 7-21, 7-32, 7-33, 7-34, 7-35, 7-36, 7-45 and 7-46, which are primarily agricultural zones.

A grid of squares 5 by 5 km. in size were overlaid on these MU's and people chose as many of these grids as they wanted to do. The count was all done on January 12, 2008, and it needs to be done in one day to avoid double-counting. The count has to be done from 12:01 am to 11:59 pm, and it can be done driving roads, snowmobiling, on foot or any other means of transportation.

People were asked to record the time spent observing (not getting to and from the area) to the nearest 10 minutes. This is very important for standardization of data and to calculate indices of abundance. Because of the range of experience and skill level of the observers, we only requested people record species and sex of animals. Because males of some species may have already lost their antlers, it can make sex differentiation difficult. At the meetings, field guides of the common species were provided. Because of the ongoing program to monitor the potential occurrence of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), observers were also educated on looking for signs of sick animals, particularly deer and elk. Other species besides ungulates were also recorded, particularly sharp tailed grouse, which are currently the focus of a research project by MOE.

DESCRIPTION	TOTALS
Number of participants	72
Number of groups of participants	40
Number of blocks surveyed	127
Number of observation hours	124
Mule deer	1188
Elk	407
White tailed deer	278
Moose	159
Coyote	61
Sharp tailed grouse	61
Wolf	4
Fox	2



Map showing location of blocks surveyed on January 12, 2008

note: not all data was available at the time of this newsletter

Thanks to all participants

