

# Caribou Recovery

## What is Caribou Recovery?

Caribou have roamed British Columbia for thousands of years. Over the last 30 years, many caribou herds have become threatened. The main threat is high predation from bears, wolves and cougars that is out of balance from the natural cycle. Factors that contribute to this include natural events such as forest fires, and human activity such as mining, logging and oil and gas activities.

Provincial wildlife managers and biologists have monitored and developed recovery programs for caribou for many years. Despite these efforts, herd numbers continue to dwindle.

The BC Oil and Gas Commission supports a provincial commitment to a new long-term, comprehensive, science-based approach to protect and preserve caribou populations – [the Caribou Recovery Program](#).



## Caribou Facts

- Part of the deer family
- Smaller than moose and elk
- Both males and females grow antlers, which is unique in the deer family
- Males lose their antlers in early winter, females retain theirs until spring when calves are born
- Caribou are medium to light brown with shades of light grey and white on their rumps and necks
- Average lifespan is 4.5 years (maximum 15 years)
- Their main food source is lichens, which grow on bark, branches, leaves, rocks and soils
- The image of the caribou has graced the Canadian quarter since 1937

## How are Caribou Impacts Reduced?

As the Crown corporation responsible for applying British Columbia's laws and regulations related to oil and gas activity, the Commission plays an important role in helping safeguard caribou. The Commission provides oversight at every stage of the oil and gas activity lifecycle.

Commission staff review applications within caribou habitat to ensure they are consistent with government's guidance for proposed activities within those areas. For permits issued within caribou habitat areas, the Commission includes conditions to help reduce impacts to caribou and their habitat, and Commission Compliance & Enforcement staff inspect to verify compliance.

The Commission works to protect caribou habitat using evidence-based practices that support wildlife protection while meeting the province's energy goals.

## Caribou Populations

B.C. is home to 54 herds of caribou. All B.C. caribou are Woodland caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*), and are classified into four designatable units:

- southern mountain
- central mountain
- northern mountain
- boreal

The number of caribou in B.C. has declined from 40,000 in the early 1900s to less than 19,000 today.

Achieving stable boreal caribou populations in B.C. is complex and requires the best available science and the collaboration of governments, agencies, industry, First Nations and land owners.



## For Further Information

Email [ogc.communications@bcogc.ca](mailto:ogc.communications@bcogc.ca) or call 250-794-5200

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## Caribou Recovery Partnership Agreement

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The B.C. government has partnered with the Saulneau and West Moberly First Nations and the federal government to achieve a historic agreement that strives to protect southern mountain caribou in the northeastern part of their range while considering the social and economic well-being of communities and stakeholders in the region. The [partnership agreement](#), signed Feb. 21, 2020, reflects a collaborative approach to caribou conservation, which:

- Complements the leadership role that the Saulneau First Nation and West Moberly First Nations have already taken on caribou recovery efforts in the Peace region.
- Includes a commitment to protect over 700,000 hectares of important caribou habitat in northeastern B.C.
- Builds on the work the parties have already undertaken in habitat restoration, maternal penning projects and predator management. Through these efforts, the decline of the central group has been reversed. The population is now growing at an average rate of 15 per cent per year.

The Agreement contemplates the establishment of new management zones within the Moberly, Burnt Pine, Quintette, Kennedy Siding and Narraway Ranges to meet the Shared Recovery Objectives for the Central Group of Southern Mountain Caribou. The overall area is divided in zones that will be subject to new management designations and directions. These zones are divided into proposed sustainable resource management areas, interim moratorium areas, and a potential Indigenous Nations woodland license.



A minimum of 728 boreal caribou occupy five herd range areas in northeast B.C.

## What Should Industry Know?

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There are rules oil and gas operators must follow in identified boreal caribou habitat in British Columbia. Mitigation guidance specific to reducing impacts on caribou populations and their habitat is developed by the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy.

Interim Operating Practices are transmitted to the Commission by the ministry as operational policy that must be followed by all oil and gas operators within identified boreal caribou habitat.

The management intent of these practices is to limit activities that:

- Significantly reduce terrestrial and arboreal lichen forage.
- Enhance predator mobility (primarily wolves).
- Increase caribou visibility to predators (primarily wolves).
- Enhance forage for other ungulate (prey) species.
- Cause significant fragmentation of large tracts of annual range where caribou can exist at low densities as an anti-predator strategy and avoid linear corridors.