

2022 Pre-capture Survey Report,

Central Selkirk Caribou

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Introduction

The Arrow Lake Caribou Society completed construction of a maternity pen in the Central Selkirks in fall 2021. Capture was planned for March 24th, 2022. To direct capture efforts a pre-capture survey was completed targeting collared caribou within the herd (n=7). On March 5, 2022 the survey was completed and the following report details the survey observations.

Methods

An attempt was made to survey within a few days of a new snowfall so that recent tracks were visible but older tracks were covered.

The helicopter was a 206B Jet Ranger owned by High Terrain Helicopters and piloted by Roman Sookorukoff. Observers were Erin McLeod, Cory Legebokow and Aaron Reid.

The helicopter was flown directly to GPS coordinates taken from the latest collar locations. When caribou tracks were observed they were followed until the animals were observed. High resolution (3000 X 2008 pixel) photos of the groups of caribou were taken with a Nikon D50 digital SLR camera with a Nikon 70 – 300 mm zoom telephoto vibration reduction lens. Photos were later analyzed on a computer monitor to verify classification. Caribou locations were recorded as Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM) coordinates using North American Datum 1983 (NAD83).

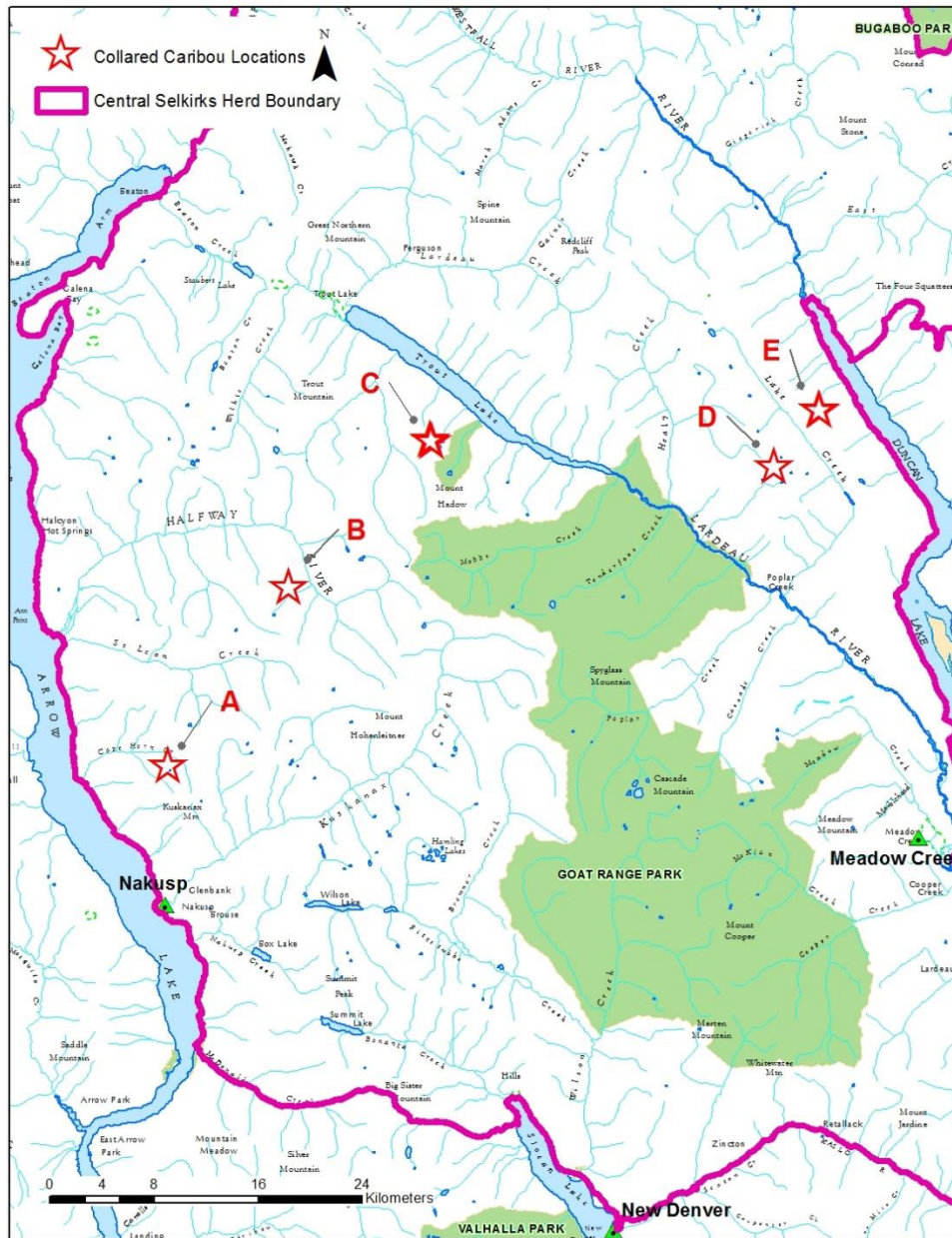


Figure 1. Collar locations visited during the March 5 pre-capture survey. Letters correspond to groups discussed in Table 1.

Results

The total survey time was 1.4 hours and we visited 5 locations based on the previous days telemetry locations. A total of 24 caribou were observed which included 11 cows, 9 bulls and 4 calves. All 7 active collars were accounted for across 5 groups (Table 1).

Table 1. March 5, 2022 Central Selkirk caribou pre-capture survey. Only collared groups were targeted during the survey. Composition based on photo classification. Map label found in Figure 1.

Drainage	Map Label	Total Count	Cow	Bull	Calf	No. Collars	Easting	Northing
Cape Horn	A	4	1	2	1	1	443596	5577494
Halfway	B	2	1	1	0	1	454815	5589559
Lew	C	9	5	3	1	2	467303	5599296
Hope	D	3	1	2	0	1	492915	5594216
Lake	E	6	3	1	2	2	496513	5598238

Discussion

The purpose of this survey was to provide composition of collared groups to inform the maternity pen capture process. Due to budget constraints a census was not flown in 2022. Limited information can be reported due to the methods of only flying to collared caribou during the flight. However, despite not surveying the entire population the number of calves observed is worth noting. Four calves were observed across the 5 groups visited. Four calves have not been observed during a population survey since 2018. Unfortunately, we are not able to measure recruitment as the entire population nor a representative sample of the population was not surveyed.