



# WAPUSK NEWS

*The voice of Wapusk National Park*

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 1, SPRING 08

## CLEANING UP WAPUSK NATIONAL PARK



*Mike Hawkins and Heather Stewart  
Parks Canada Photo: Sheldon Kowalchuk*

“The day was beautiful for this part of the country. There was very little wind, the temperature was near normal and it was a sunny day. It was a great day to be in the park.”

Sheldon Kowalchuk | Patrol Report - February 29, 2008

Management of a national park requires that all users take responsibility for ensuring that these special places stay healthy and pristine for future generations to enjoy, and Wapusk National Park (NP) is no exception. Parks Canada staff, along with partners, contractors and volunteers have been busy tidying up the park.

Before the area became a national park, researchers, local tourism companies and the U.S and Canadian military used the area, leaving their mark on the fragile landscape.

Wapusk is a remote national park so, understandably, much of the residue of modern human activity in the park is related to energy sources such as diesel and gas.

CONTINUED INSIDE

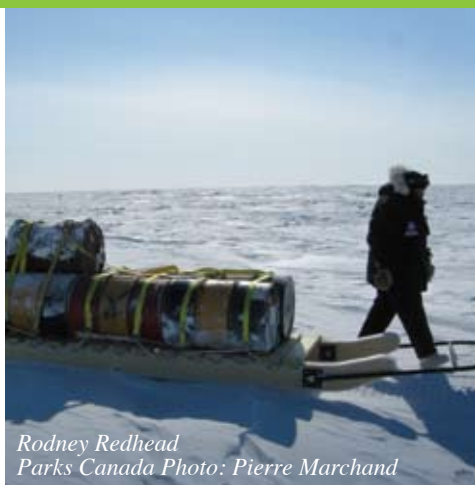
WAPUSK NEWS IS PRODUCED BY PARKS CANADA AND THE WAPUSK MANAGEMENT BOARD



Parks  
Canada

Parcs  
Canada

Canada



Eyesores within Wapusk include; metal waste, scattered barrels, quad tracks, military and tundra vehicle tracks, airstrips and old rockets.

Scarring of the land can take over 100 years to restore to a natural state, so Parks Canada staff are focusing on limiting future impact and removing physical waste, such as empty fuel barrels and other discarded metals.

As we all know, fuel is a very valuable commodity in this northern land but there are approximately 300 unusable fuel barrels that have been left scattered within this new national park. To help mitigate this

problem in the future, designated fuel caches have now been established within Wapusk NP, eliminating the scattering and neglect of barrels.

Over 200 barrels still remain scattered throughout the park. Parks Canada staff hope to eliminate these during the next 3 winters and to limit fuel storage to the 5 designated caches.

Wapusk National Park bears scars that will take hundreds of years to heal – a visible reminder of our impact on the land. Let's remember that we are all keepers of this land and responsible for maintaining its natural beauty and health.

### PICK UP - CLEAN UP

OVER 150 BARRELS HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM THE PARK THIS WINTER.

- January 10th - four park staff members delivered fuel contamination units to a designated fuel cache to prevent any potential contamination at the site. They also removed a total of 15 empty fuel barrels and scrap metal from the Cape Churchill Tower and surrounding area, along with 3 empty barrels from the Nester 1 fuel cache.
- February 24th - park staff, along with Dr. Peter Kershaw (University of Alberta) and 2 field assistants, Stephen Mamet and Carley Basler, entered the park to sample snowpack sites at Owl River and Roberge Lake. Spill kits were also delivered to these sites. The group removed 3 empty barrels from Roberge Lake and 9 empty barrels from Owl River fuel cache.
- February 29th, March 19th and March 28th – park staff removed a total of 28 barrels from the Nester 1 fuel cache.
- April 1st and 2nd – park staff and Murray Gillespie (MB Conservation – retired) inventoried and dug out multiple barrels from Broad River for future removal.
- April 8th – park staff along with Andrew Szklaruk (Department of Natural Resources) removed 9 barrels from the Owl River fuel cache; and Clifford Paddock removed 55 barrels from the Owl and Broad River fuel caches.
- April 12th, 17th, 20th and 22nd – staff removed another 18 barrels from Broad River and Nestor 2.
- April 26th – Clifford Paddock removed another 21 barrels from Owl River fuel cache.

A special thanks to the above mentioned partners and to the following Parks Canada staff for their hard work in cleaning up Wapusk; Sheldon Kowalchuk, Mike Hawkins, Kevin Burke, Rodney Redhead, Heather Stewart, David Walker and Pierre Marchand

# WINTER RESEARCH

In the majority of National Parks, monitoring and fieldwork usually stops when the snow starts to fly and the ground freezes, but not in Wapusk National Park. On February 22nd a team headed out for four days to do a snow pack survey with Dr Peter Kershaw and his graduate student, Steve Mamet and Carly Basler from the Churchill Northern Studies Center (CNSC). In addition to setting up snow pack plots and downloading weather data, we planned to do some maintenance chores such as delivering spill kits to fuel cache sites and picking up empty fuel barrels from both Roberge Lake and the Owl River area.

The trip started on a “warm” Friday with temperatures hovering around  $-25^{\circ}\text{C}$  with little wind, despite the fact that we were heading south along the coast. Along the way a Snowy owl was spotted in a tree island near Broad River. As the kilometres sailed by and the sun began to set, it became evident that it was going to be a cold night. As we pulled into the camp after dark, we could see wolf tracks and, the highlight, a wolverine track behind the cabin. Overnight temperatures dropped and in the morning it was a slow start as the snow machines were a bit sluggish. We caught a glimpse of a silver fox who decided to investigate the noise at the cabin.

We loaded two komatiks and headed up river. At first the wind was blustery but in the shelter of the river valley we progressed fairly easily. Along the way we were amazed at the south-facing bank and the mini avalanches visible along the banks. Caribou and wolf tracks were seen along the river, sometimes trying to climb up the snowy banks without success. A Red fox was chasing ptarmigan in the willows along the river but disappeared when he noticed us coming upstream. We had to look for a way up the steep bank ourselves, needing to get the komatiks up onto the plateau. We found a spot at 4pm and returned the next day to get everything up on the plateau and continue the journey. The trip to Roberge Lake was windy and very cold ( $-35^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) and the snow was packed in hard ridges. After a hastily eaten chilly lunch we got to work (nothing like a frozen sandwich to dull the appetite).

*Parks Canada Photo: Desmond Raymond*



Around the weather station we set up two snowpack sites, one in the tree island, and one on the exposed, open thermokarst community. Steve, Carly and I proceeded to take the snow core measurements at 33 snow core sites, in each community. In the open community, this task went relatively quickly but in the deep snow of the tree island it took a long time. After a core is measured for depth, it is pulled up right to the bottom snow “pukak” and it is weighed and then the hardness is assessed using a RAM penetrometer (instrument measuring snow density). While we were doing this, Peter dug a snow pit and assessed the crystal type and depth at each layer. He used thermometers (like oven thermometers) to determine temperature at each layer and assessed the hard pack using another penetrometer.

By 4 o'clock we were ready to head back down to the shelter of the Owl River but not before we unloaded a spill kit and loaded three empty fuel barrels from the lakeshore. As we headed to the cabin we were rewarded with a beautiful sunset providing wonderful photographic opportunities. On the final day we headed up the coast, picking up more empty fuel barrels and leaving another spill kit, arriving back at the CNSC at dusk.

Heather Stewart  
Wapusk NP Ecosystem Scientist





# THE BIRTH OF A NATIONAL PARK

*Parks Canada Photo*

## A UNIQUE HISTORY

It all began with the early Aboriginal inhabitants of this region, traveling the land and leaving traces of their lives behind as reminders of their existence. Their descendents, and the first Europeans, used the area more extensively following the establishment of two major Hudson's Bay Company fur trading posts. The land now known as Wapusk was a travel route and a hunting ground for the people traveling between York Fort and Fort Prince of Wales, now York Factory and Prince of Wales Fort National Historic Sites of Canada.

As the fur trade era came to an end, people migrated away from the land, but the rich history of the people who traversed and hunted the land bordering the western shore of Hudson Bay lived on.

## A UNIQUE LAND

The region between Churchill and York Factory has long been recognized by government agencies and others for its outstanding and unique wildlife and geographic features. This recognition led to a commitment in 1979 to create the Province of Manitoba Cape Churchill Wildlife Management Area (CCWMA).

During this same decade, Parks Canada identified the Hudson-James Bay Lowlands as one of the 39 natural regions representative of Canada's Natural Heritage, thereby meeting the criteria for the establishment of a new national park.

Community consultations are always an important starting point in proposing a new national park. In October, 1989, the Province of Manitoba and Parks Canada began a thorough community consultation



process to hear the views of the Churchill region community about the creation of a national park in the area, with the understanding that community approval was key to moving the process forward.

A Working Group Committee (Chair, Lorraine Brandson), comprised of Provincial, Federal, and Churchill representatives, was formed. Nine subcommittees were tasked with the job of studying the current use of the land and identifying issues and concerns. The report of this group, *Assessing the Feasibility of Establishing a National Park in the Churchill / York Factory Area*, proposed 5 potential park areas.

Open houses and community consultations were held in Bird, York Landing, Shamattawa, Tadoule Lake, Churchill, Gillam, Thompson and Winnipeg throughout the summer and fall of 1990 resulting in the selection of a final boundary for the park. The selected land mass formed the 7th largest national park in Canada and consisted of areas with low and medium human use including key landforms, vegetation, and wildlife characteristic of this natural region. It also included a significant part of the Polar bear denning habitat.

### **TOWARDS A NATIONAL PARK**

On January 7, 1993, negotiation on a formal Agreement to establish a national park started. The Agreement outlined the conditions under which the Province of Manitoba would transfer the land to the Federal Government, while stating the goals and commitments of Parks Canada.

This Agreement represented the effort to maintain the health and natural balance of the ecology of the park (ecological integrity) – key to the Parks Canada mandate; respect Aboriginal rights; and accommodate the concerns of the people of Churchill. The establishment of a Park Management Board including representatives from these three groups was a priority item negotiated in the document.

### **WAPUSK NATIONAL PARK ESTABLISHMENT AGREEMENT**

The Agreement to establish Wapusk National Park was signed by the Province of Manitoba and the Government of Canada on April 24, 1996 at a ceremony held in the Churchill Town Centre Complex. This Federal-Provincial Memorandum of Agreement



*Parks Canada Photo*

for Wapusk National Park was witnessed by His Royal Highness Prince Charles; the Mayor of Churchill, His Worship Michael Spence; Eric Saunders, Chief of York Factory First Nation; and Norman Kirkness, Chief of Fox Lake Cree Nation.

### **WAPUSK MANAGEMENT BOARD**

With this important step in establishing Wapusk National Park, the first Management Board representing the five constituencies (Canada, Manitoba, Town of Churchill, Fox Lake Cree Nation and York Factory First Nation) was appointed by the Minister responsible for Parks Canada.

The next task was to develop the Wapusk National Park Management Plan, the guiding document for the governance of the park. After much work and consultation with many groups and individuals, this document came to fruition with the approval of the Plan by Parliament on October 19, 2007. For the Wapusk Management Board, the approval of this plan represents a great accomplishment.

**THANK YOU TO LORRAINE BRANDSON FOR THE INFORMATION  
PROVIDED FOR THIS ARTICLE**

# THE WAPUSK NATIONAL PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN HAS BEEN APPROVED. WHAT WILL THIS MEAN?

The Wapusk National Park Management Plan was approved and tabled in Parliament by the Minister of the Environment on October 19, 2007. As a result, the park now has guidelines to follow and implement for visitor activities and future management.

Some changes, such as entry fees and business licensing, will be introduced over time. Certain activities will continue as they have since the signing of the Park Establishment Agreement on April 24, 1996 but the approval of the management plan allows for more visitor activities.

The Wapusk Management Board and Parks Canada are currently taking steps towards the implementation of management goals and visitor activities as they are presented in the management plan. Changes affecting people or businesses will be developed with stakeholders and decisions will be communicated well in advance of implementation.

Below are some questions and answers relating to decisions that will affect future management of the park.

## **Q. Why is the approval of the Wapusk National Park Management Plan important?**

A. A management plan is an outline of a park or site's long-term strategies, actions and direction. It is developed in consultation with partners and stakeholders. The approval and tabling in Parliament of the Wapusk NP Management Plan represents the Minister's communication to Canadians of the strategies, actions and directions for managing the park.

## **Q. Will people have to pay to go into the park?**

A. The Parks Canada national fees and revenue policy will be implemented. There will be an entry fee for non-beneficiaries of the Park Establishment Agreement. The Park Establishment Agreement specifies there will be no entry fee for traditional local users or Aboriginal persons exercising their treaty rights.

## **Q. How will this affect current operations in the park?**

A. Up to this point in time commercial operators have been issued letters of authorization allowing them to conduct commercial activities in the park. There will be a transition period to bring these operations into the Parks Canada licensing process as outlined in the various regulations under the Canada National Parks Act.

## **Q. How will the approval of the management plan affect:**

### **Local people**

A. No change. Access and activities in the park will continue as they have in the past. Authorization will continue through activity related permits.

### **Traditional local users**

A. No change. Access and activities in the park will continue as outlined in the Park Establishment Agreement and authorized by Local User Permit.

### **Those exercising treaty rights**

A. No change.

### **Existing operators in the park**

A. No immediate change. A phase-in period will be required that is sensitive to the business cycle and notification period of 18 months.

### **New commercial operator opportunities**

A. No immediate change. The Wapusk Management Board will coordinate a call for proposals for new visitor activities. This will be subject to the completion of at least one environmental assessment for visitor activities.

**Q. Will all of the National Parks Act and Regulations apply?**

A. Yes, the Canada National Parks Act and Regulations will apply; however, a special set of regulations (Wapusk National Park of Canada Use Regulations) are under development to allow certain activities outlined in the Park Establishment Agreement (e.g. Traditional Local Users hunting caribou in the park).

**Q. What is the difference between commercial activity and local use?**

A. A commercial activity is any trade, industry, employment, occupation, activity or special event carried on in a park for profit, gain, fundraising or commercial promotion, and includes an undertaking carried on in a part by a charitable organization, or by an organization or individual on a non-profit basis. Local use is an activity defined in the Park Establishment Agreement section "Traditional Local Uses on the Park Land".

**Q. What will a permit cost?**

A. The fees for some permits (e.g. film and photography) are set nationally and are published in the Canada Gazette. Other fees need to be developed for Wapusk and will reflect fees in similar northern national parks (eg. entry and backcountry use). Some permits (eg. Traditional Local Use Permit) are free of charge. For information on specific permit fees contact the Parks Canada office in Churchill.

**Q. I already use the park to snowmobile. What will change for me?**

A. There will be no change in the requirement to obtain a permit for the activity. In the future, there may be a fee for the permit.

**Q. What opportunities will be available in the park and when?**

A. The opportunities are based on appropriate activities listed in the Management Plan. The appropriate activities include the existing commercial operations, hiking, camping, canoeing, and winter tours by over-snow vehicle or dog sled.

**Q. Where can I get a copy of the Wapusk Management Plan?**

A. Contact the Parks Canada office in Churchill at (204) 675-8863. e-mail: wapusk.np@pc.gc.ca

**Q. Who do I contact for information?**

A. Contact the following staff at the Parks Canada office in Churchill at (204) 675-8863 or by e-mail: wapusk.np@pc.gc.ca

**COMMERCIAL LICENSING, INCLUDING:**

- Business licensing
- Licence of occupation
- Guide permit
- Landing permit
- Film and photography permit

Contact: Mike Iwanowsky, Manager, Finance and Administration

**New Activities and Regulations in Wapusk National Park**

Contact: Cam Elliott, Wapusk NP Superintendent

**Existing Activities Regulations & Permits**

Contact: Sheldon Kowalchuk, Wapusk NP Resource Conservation Manager



*Photo: Thorsten Milse*



## KEEPERS OF THE LAND

Wapusk National Park is managed by a 10-member board made up of representatives of Canada, Manitoba, the Town of Churchill, York Factory First Nation, and Fox Lake Cree Nation.

The Wapusk Management Board makes recommendations to the Minister responsible for Parks Canada on the planning, management and operation of the park. The Board makes its decisions by consensus.

People are the keepers of the land, invested with the responsibility to respect and to care for the land – for all time. The Wapusk Management Board makes all of its decisions with this guiding principle in mind, a principle rooted in Aboriginal culture.

## WAPUSK NATIONAL PARK HOSTS RESEARCH AND MONITORING FORUM



*Parks Canada Photo:  
Nancy Spence*

On February 8th and 9th 2008, approximately 60 people gathered in Winnipeg to attend the inaugural Wapusk National Park Research and Monitoring Forum. The goal of the meeting was to bring together individuals with a common interest in WNP. Anticipated outcomes of the forum included a raised awareness about Parks Canada's management and research goals for WNP; an opportunity for various researchers to give presentations about their research and monitoring activities in the park; and to provide a venue for developing partnerships for future research and monitoring initiatives.

Attendees at the forum included members of the Wapusk Management Board, Parks Canada staff, representatives from various provincial and federal government departments, non-governmental organizations, universities from Canada and the United States, and graduate students. Oral presentations were given on numerous topics, including permafrost, Snow geese, Polar bear foraging, vegetation communities, Arctic foxes and the International Polar Year. Other projects were presented through poster displays.

The Wapusk National Park Research and Monitoring Forum was identified as a priority initiative when the Ecological Integrity Statement for WNP was finalized. Given the success of the event in February, a similar event is scheduled for 2009.







## NAMES, NAMES, NAMES!

Many sites in Wapusk are known by their traditional names – Cree names used by the people of the region long before the park was established. Although we do not know much about other cultural names in the area, the Cree names have survived the test of time.

Cree is an Algonquin language spoken by more than 50,000 people across Canada. Many Cree dialects exist, such as Plains Cree, Woods/Rocky Cree, Swampy Cree, Moose Cree, James Bay Cree, Atikamew, Western Montagnais, Eastern Montagnais and Naskapi.

The Swampy Cree dialect is the most common to this region and is still used today to share information about regions in the park.

Cree name	English name
Mântewisîpîy	Churchill River
Kîhcikamîy	Hudson Bay
Namekosîpîsis	Salmon Creek
Anaskosîpîy	Broad River
Oho Sîpiy	Owl River
Wâskahikanîsîpîsis	Duck Creek
Nochewan Sîpîsis	Noochewaywan Creek
Kîhciwaskahikan	York Factory



## POLAR BEAR NAME GAME

In how many languages can YOU say polar bear?  
Match the name with the language.

<b>Wapusk</b>	<b>Dene</b>
<b>Ours blanc</b>	<b>Latin</b>
<b>Polar bear</b>	<b>German</b>
<b>Ursus marîtimus</b>	<b>French</b>
<b>Nanuq</b>	<b>English</b>
<b>Sas delgegi</b>	<b>Cree</b>
<b>Eis bären</b>	<b>Inuktitut</b>

# GETTING TO KNOW THE WAPUSK MANAGEMENT BOARD

## Fox Lake Cree Nation



**Name:** Raymond Anderson  
**Address:** Gillam, Manitoba  
**Represents:** Fox Lake Cree Nation

Mr. Raymond Anderson has been employed by Manitoba Hydro for 7.5 years and currently works as a Utility Worker. He is a member of the Fox Lake Cree Nation.

Mr. Anderson is an enthusiast of outdoor recreational activities such as trapping, hunting, and boating.



**Name:** Wesley Adam Neepin  
**Address:** Gillam, Manitoba  
**Represents:** Fox Lake Cree Nation

Mr. Wesley Neepin was born and raised in Gillam, Manitoba. He is a member of the Fox Lake Cree Nation and is employed as a Utility Worker for Manitoba Hydro at the Kettle Generating Station.

Mr. Neepin enjoys playing sports and is an active land user who has great respect for the land.

## York Factory First Nation



**Name:** Flora S.N. Beardy  
**Address:** York Landing, MB  
**Represents:** York Factory First Nation

Mrs. Beardy is currently one of the translators for York Factory First Nation Future Development Program. She has served on the Wapusk Management Board since December 1996 representing York Factory First Nation. Flora's extensive knowledge of the traditional and cultural background of the York Factory First Nation is an asset to her membership on the Management Board.

Flora is a "people person" who enjoys working with the public.



**Name:** Donald Saunders  
**Address:** Thompson, MB  
**Represents:** York Factory First Nation

Mr. Donald Saunders is a member of York Factory First Nation and is currently assisting the Band with translation for an oral history project.

His other interests include environmental issues and the Resource Management areas of York Factory. Mr. Saunders participated as a York Factory First Nation representative in the Working Group that negotiated the Agreement to establish Wapusk National Park.



**Name:** Darcy Wastesicoot  
**Address:** York Landing, MB  
**Represents:** York Factory First Nation

Mr. Wastesicoot will be replacing Donald Saunders on the Wapusk Management Board in the near future. Currently Darcy works as Community Liaison for York Factory First Nation Future Development Program. He feels confident that his knowledge and experience in the environmental field will be an asset on the Wapusk Board.

## Town of Churchill



**Name:** Gavin Lawrie  
**Address:** Churchill, MB  
**Represents:** Town of Churchill

Mr. Lawrie and his wife are long time Churchill residents. Gavin was one of two Town of Churchill representatives on the Working Group that negotiated the Wapusk National Park Establishment Agreement. Mr. Lawrie was appointed to the Wapusk Management Board on its inception in 1996 and has ably represented the community of Churchill throughout the Board's history.





**Name:** Lorraine Brandson  
**Address:** Churchill, MB  
**Represents:** Town of Churchill

Ms Lorraine Brandson is an employee of the Diocese of Churchill Hudson Bay. She is Director of the Eskimo Museum, and is responsible for the Diocesan magazine and photograph archives.

Ms Brandson has been a resident of Churchill since 1973. From 1989 to 1996 she served as Chair for the Working Group that undertook the feasibility studies and negotiations for the proposed national park at Churchill (Wapusk National Park).



**Name:** John Garson  
**Address:** Split Lake, MB  
**Represents:** Province of Manitoba

Mr. John Garson is a member of the Tataskweyak Cree Nation at Split Lake, Manitoba. Most recently, in addition to serving as a provincial representative on the Wapusk Management Board, Mr. Garson has been involved as a member of the Tataskweyak Cree Nation's team working on its "Overview of Water and Land" process. He is also a member of Manitoba Conservation's Aboriginal Resource Council.



**Name:** Cam Elliott  
**Address:** Churchill, MB  
**Represents:** Parks Canada

Mr. Cam Elliot is Superintendent of Wapusk National Park & Manitoba North National Historic Sites of Canada. He has worked as a public servant for over 25 years with the government of NWT, the Province of Manitoba and with Parks Canada Agency. His career focuses are in wildlife and land management in northern Canada with expertise in moose, caribou, Polar bears and integrated forest-wildlife management.

## Province of Manitoba



**Name:** Steve Kearney  
**Address:** Thompson, MB  
**Represents:** Province of Manitoba

Mr. Steve Kearney is Manitoba Conservation Regional Director for the Northeast Region. He has been employed with the department since 1976, and has spent over 25 years in the Northeast Region. He was a member of the Working Group involved with the development of the Agreement to establish Wapusk National Park.

## Canada



**Name:** David L. Wotton  
**Address:** Winnipeg, MB  
**Represents:** Canada

Mr. David Wotton has over thirty years experience with the Province of Manitoba, beginning as a forest/environment research specialist and retiring in June 2006 as Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM).

Mr. Wotton has served on many national and international committees for both environment and natural resource initiatives as well as on international initiatives in Slovakia and the British Virgin Islands.

# GUESS HOW MANY CARIBOU ARE IN THIS PICTURE



Photo: Ryan Brook

**Enter to win a Wapusk National Park Prize Pack!**  
**Fill out this form and mail it to us at:**

Wapusk Games  
Wapusk National Park of Canada  
P.O. Box 127  
Churchill, MB R0B 0E0

**How many caribou are in the picture?** \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
PO Box/Street address \_\_\_\_\_  
Town: \_\_\_\_\_ Province \_\_\_\_\_  
Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
email: \_\_\_\_\_

**We want to hear from you!** The Wapusk Management Board appreciates any comments or suggestions you have about this issue of the newsletter. \_\_\_\_\_

You may also drop off this form at the Parks Canada office in Churchill, MB or e-mail us the above information at: [wapusk.np@pc.gc.ca](mailto:wapusk.np@pc.gc.ca)

## SUMMER ECOLOGY OF CARIBOU

### THE CAPE CHURCHILL CARIBOU HERD

Every year in spring and summer, hundreds of caribou migrate into the coastal tundra of Wapusk National Park. They use the northeast corner of the park as their calving ground, feeding in sedge meadow fens and traveling along the raised gravel beach ridges.

### SUMMER INSECT HARASSMENT

In this picture on July 21st, 2007, Ryan Brook and other scientists happened to fly by helicopter right over the herd and he took this photo.

**Do you know why the caribou gather in this way?**  
**Stay tuned for an answer in our next issue.**

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to Dr. Ryan Brook, researcher from University of Manitoba, and Mr. Sheldon Kowalchuk, Resource Conservation Manager of Wapusk National Park for providing the pictures and information.

Front page banner photo courtesy of Kevin Burke

Aussi disponible en français