

AERIAL SURVEY OF BIG GAME  
RIDING MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

March 1 - 3, 1956



by  
Perret, N. G.  
1956

CANADIAN WILDLIFE SERVICE

1M

CWS

26-56

56-26

Perret, N.G.

Aerial survey of big game Riding Mountain  
National Park March 1-3, 1956. Winnipeg,  
Canadian Wildlife Service, 1956.

3 l.

1. Aerial game surveys-Riding Mountain National  
Park 2. Riding Mountain National Park I. Title

M-7

*Have 3 copies typed and send 2 to Parks*

Aerial Survey of Big Game

Riding Mountain National Park

3

CANADIAN WILDLIFE SERVICE  
WESTERN REGIONAL LIBRARY

March 1-3, 1956. *by Pervet*

An aerial survey of big game in the Riding Mountain National Park was carried out on March 1st and 3rd, 1956. A cessna 170, was chartered from the Maple Leaf Aviation Ltd., Brandon, for the survey.

A heavy fog lay over the land most of the morning on March 1st, however, it cleared by noon and the survey of the park was started. The afternoon was clear and calm with the temperatures around 30°. We were not quite so fortunate on March 2nd, although the fog lifted around Brandon in the early afternoon it remained over the park the entire day. March 3rd dawned bright and clear, we were able to get away to an early start and completed the survey by noon.

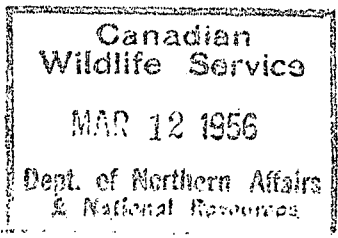
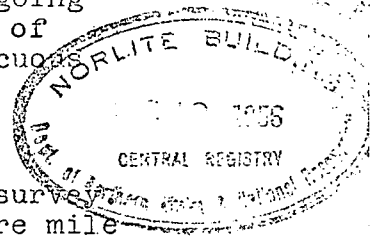
As was the case last year, only one half of the transects were covered. The even numbered transects were flown, and a strip, 1/8 mile wide on each side of the aircraft, was covered. The total area covered by the 16 transects was 71.2 square miles, or 6.2% of the park area.

The snow conditions in the park were ideal for the aerial survey. Tracks and pawed areas were very conspicuous making it easy to spot the animals, even in the heavy timber. Mr. Mitchell, the park superintendent, reported that the snow cover in the park was about three feet. On seeing the snow conditions it was apparent that the 1955 survey was conducted too late in the winter to obtain a good estimate. When we conducted the survey in 1955, the snow was going fast with bare ground showing through in a lot of areas. Tracks and pawed areas were not conspicuous in 1955.

Observations:

ELK: A total of 322 were observed in the survey. This represents a density of 4.52 elk per square mile of the transect area. As the total area of the Park is 1,448 square miles, the elk population index is 5200 animals. This population index represents a 100% increase over the last reliable index which was obtained in 1953.

The heavy snowfall in the Park this winter forced a number of the elk to leave and seek food in the surrounding farmlands. When the situation became serious, the Manitoba Game Branch declared an open season on elk of any age and any sex. The season ran from December 14, 1955 to February 29, 1956. As the season has just closed it is too early for an estimate



of the number of licenses issued or number of elk killed.

Table 1 shows the number of elk observed on the even numbered transects for the six years of the survey. It should be noted that both 1955 and 1956 counts are based on a strip 1/4 mile wide, whereas the counts of the previous years were based on 2/5 mile.

TABLE 1

Transect Number	Lineal Miles	Elk Observed					
		1950	1951	1952	1953	1955	1956
2	9	2	2	1	6	5	2
4	9	37	16	33	11	2	4
6	9	19	7	22	5	3	0
8	9	18	67	5	9	1	9
10	17	42	23	22	9	6	17
12	17	23	28	9	9	15	16
14	19	19	38	49	13	0	11
16	22	26	81	51	28	20	68
18	20	83	36	26	23	4	16
20	19	45	18	24	12	0	20
22	21	8	16	38	15	1	28
24	25	43	33	46	16	0	28
26	23	61	60	29	41	3	37
28	21	16	27	36	9	5	23
30	22.5	31	37	76	2	2	25
32	22.5	-	-	-	3	4	18
Totals	285	473	489	486	208	71	322

Table 11 shows the comparison of elk population estimates for the six years of surveys. The estimates for the years 1950 to 1953 are based on a sample of 224.6 square miles and the years 1955 and 1956 are based on a sample of 71.2 square miles.

TABLE 11

	1950	1951	1952	1953	1955	1956
Elk / Sq.Mile	4.10	4.10	3.97	2.12	1.00	4.52
Estimated Population.	4700	4700	4500	2500	1100	5200

Moose: A total of 56 moose were seen during the flights for an average of 0.79 moose per square mile. On this basis the population index for moose is 900. Although the survey is designed for a population of elk, there is no doubt that the moose population has increased.

Deer: A total of twenty deer were observed during the survey. All but one of these animals were seen along the border on the western end of the park. This would place the population index at 300 deer which is very close to the estimates of 1952.

Coyote: Only one coyote was observed, this was in the vicinity of Vermilion Creek in the north central part of the park.

Wolves: A total of 10 wolves were observed. Two of these were seen in the north central area of the park and 8 were seen in one pack, on the west shore of Whirlpool Lake.



N. G. Ferret,  
Dominion Wildlife Officer.

NGP/VN

CWS  
56-26 Perret, N. G.  
Aerial survey of big  
game Riding Mountain  
National Park. ...

DATE	ISSUED TO
Mar 22 1978	J McCallister
NOV 27 1978	Sorel

CWS  
56-26 Perret, N. G.  
Aerial survey of big  
game Riding Mountain  
National Park. ...

MAY 13 1987

INMAGIC

LIBRARY  
ENVIRONMENT CANADA  
PRAIRIE & NORTHERN REGION  
EDMONTON, ALBERTA, CANADA