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McEwen, E.H.

Barren-ground caribou survey from
Fort McPherson on April 19, 1952.
[n.p., Canadian Wildlife Service] 1952.

3^l. map.

1. Caribou - Aerial surveys 2. Barren-
ground caribou - Aerial surveys I. Title

REPORTBARREN-GROUND CARIBOU SURVEY
FROM FORT McPHERSON ON APRIL 19, 1952.

On April 19th, this survey was made from Fort McPherson in the Aeronco aircraft piloted by M. Zubko, with Warden H. Sprue as recorder. A total of two and a half hours were flown on this survey, during which time approximately 200 to 250 miles were covered.

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A sketch of the route followed has been drawn on the Porcupine River, National Topographic Series. This map does not include the beginning of the route from Fort McPherson to the Rat River, and the return from a point (lat. 67°30' N, long. 136° W) to Fort McPherson. In both of these instances the route followed was direct and can be observed on the Arctic Red River, Nat. Top. Ser.

At 11.15 am we left Fort McPherson and flew towards the Rat River. By 11.45 we had flown out of the Rat River Pass, heading towards Summit Lake, which was reached at 11.55 a.m. In this area, which is indicated on the map, 4000 caribou (approximately) were seen. From here we flew along the Bell River passing over Lapiere House, across the junction of the Bell, Rock, and Eagle rivers, just north of the Observation Monument (lat. 67°34', long. 137°30' W). We returned from here flying in a northeasterly direction across the Eagle, and Rock Rivers to Glacier Lake, and from here to Fort McPherson.

About 6800 caribou were observed on this survey. From the aerial photographs 3910 caribou were counted. The number of caribou counted in small groups from the aircraft was 450. A herd near Glacier Lake was estimated to number between 2000 to 2500 caribou. It was unfortunate that this herd could not be photographed, but the film in the camera had been exposed and had jammed. However, this herd was photographed with a 16mm. movie camera. On examining this film it was found that the caribou were too small and crowded together to count accurately. The estimated number was arrived at by counting a block of the slide (frame) to determine the total number of the herd. The other groups of caribou were seen between the Bell and the Porcupine rivers. From the observations made from the aircraft and examination of the aerial photographs, the caribou were almost entirely cows and yearlings. It appeared that there were few, if any, bulls.

The caribou were travelling in a northeasterly direction, as determined from the tracks along the Bell River from the junction of the Bell, Eagle and Rock rivers. The caribou in the Bell and Porcupine rivers were the stragglers of the main herd which may have past through this area to Summit Lake. On flying further south past the Porcupine River no caribou were found, although if it could have been possible the flight should have continued to Old Crow. On the return flight caribou tracks were seen along the Eagle and Rock rivers heading northward. No tracks were seen from the Rock River to Glacier Lake. The tracks at the lake seemed to indicate that the caribou had moved and were moving towards Summit Lake. There were no tracks north of Summit Lake in the direction of Fish, Sheep and Bear Creeks, which flow into the Rat River.

This herd might be a different one as compared to the one which was surveyed on March 25th, at the Elow River. Although this herd may continue north towards the coast and join the caribou already in that area. It would have been interesting to have resurveyed this herd about two weeks later to observe whether it continued northward. However, this plan could not be carried out as the spring breakup occurred shortly after this survey.

On the completion of this survey some of the inhabitants here were interviewed regarding the caribou. Cst. D. Mead, I.C./ R.C.M. Police, Fort McPherson said that he saw a large herd of caribou, estimated to number between 2000 to 3000 animals, on March 8, 1952 at Shute Creek. This location was about 10 to 15 miles south of the caribou which we saw at Glacier Lake.

Alfred Bunnetplume, age 66, related some of his observation of the caribou in this area. He has noticed in the fall, about November, caribou moving southward along the Fish, Sheep and Bear Creeks towards Summit Lake, and later along the Bell river to Fish Lake (Salmon Cache). The bulls and cows separate about November 15th. Last February, he killed nine bulls at Shute Creek.

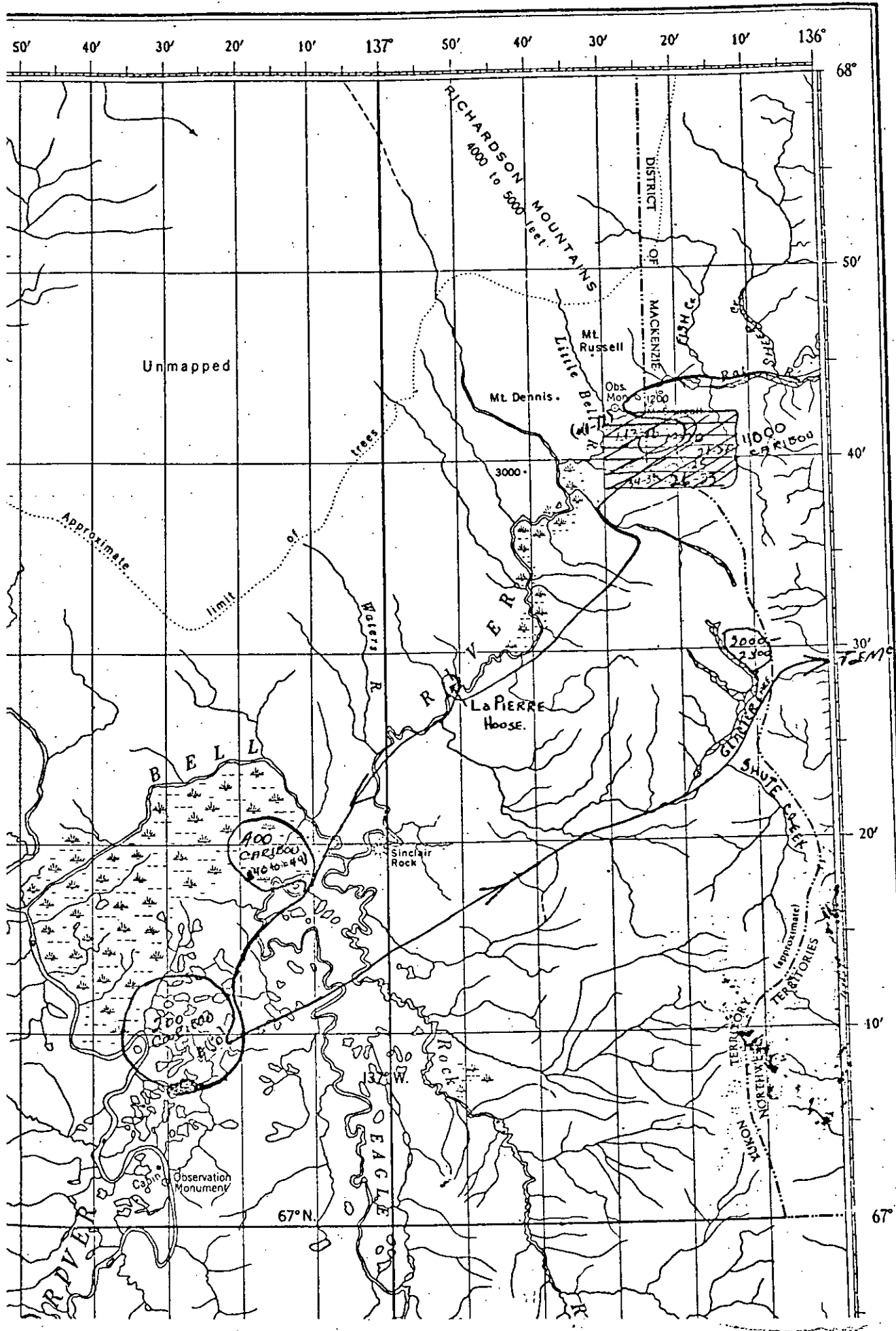
The caribou remain in the muskeg area between the Bell and Porcupine Rivers during the winter. In the spring, about March or April the caribou begin moving northward towards Summit Lake. He does not know whether these animals travel to the coast, but he knows that the caribou do not have their fawns in the Summit Lake area.

Last spring, March 1951, south of Lapierre House he observed the caribou mainly cows passing northward. These caribou were passing through the area for five days.

He believes that there is a separate herd of caribou which range between the Ogilvie and Blackstone Rivers, about 100 miles northeast of Dawson. As far as he knows this herd and the one at Summit Lake do not contact each other. He remarked that the caribou of the 'Dawson herd' are larger than the ones in the Summit Lake Area.

Respectfully submitted,

E. H. McEwen
E. H. McEwen,
Mammalogist.



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