

1M

CWS-25-53


53-25

McEwen, E.H.

Caribou survey from Fort Mcpherson on
March 3, 1953. [n.p., Canadian Wildlife
Service] 1953.

2 l.

1. Caribou - Aerial surveys - Fort
Mcpherson I. Title



CANADIAN WILDLIFE SERVICE
WESTERN REGIONAL LIBRARY CARIBOU SURVEY FROM FORT McPHERSON ON MARCH 3, 1953

By McEwen E.H.

The plans for this survey had been made last November to locate the caribou herds in the district. It was not possible to conduct this survey until this month because of poor flying weather and the Aklavik Flying Service aircraft was unavailable most of this time.

This survey, three hours, or approximately 350 miles in length, was flown in conditions of unlimited visibility. It began from Fort McPherson at 1200 hours, where Warden Spreu, joined Acting Warden Rees and myself. A map, (Porcupine River, Nat. Top. Ser.) showing the course flown has been enclosed. Briefly the area traversed is as follows: from Fort McPherson along the Rat River through McDougall Pass to Summit Lake (1200 to 1227 hours) southwest to Sinclair Rock (1240 hours), southwest to the Porcupine River at Observation Monument (67° 3'N, 137° 30'W - 1245 hours), southwesterly east of the Porcupine River to a point (66° 20'N, 138° 40'W). Here at 1330 hours we returned flying northeast along the northern branch of the East Porcupine to the Eagle River, northerly between the Eagle and the Rock Rivers, crossing the Rock River at a point, (67° 10'N, 136° 53'W), northeasterly through McDougall Pass to Fort McPherson (1500 hours).

Only 52 caribou in three groups, 24, 25, and 3 were seen. From the number of tracks and trails observed a large number of caribou had been in the area. The caribou had been widely distributed over a large area. This type of distribution was noted on the barren-ground caribou survey with Mr. J.P Kelsall.

The course flown was essentially the same as the one flown last year. In comparing the observations of both surveys, the distribution of the caribou was vastly different. On the survey conducted on April 19, 1952, a herd of about 4000 caribou were scattered along the ridges and peaks in the Summit Lake Area. This year a few tracks were seen. A large number of caribou, last year, were seen in the Porcupine Flats area, which is bordered by the Bell River on the north, the Porcupine on the west and the Eagle on the east. In this flat, muskeg area a few old scattered tracks were seen. Large numbers of caribou had been in the area from the Observation Monument (67° 3'N, 137° 30'W) on the Porcupine River, south beyond the East Porcupine River. The general direction of the trails were in a southwesterly and westerly direction. Trails were still observed up to the time we turned back. The caribou must have travelled in a southwest direction because if they had travelled in the opposite direction we should have observed them. The trails and tracks had been made fairly recently. Had the survey been conducted two weeks earlier, we might have contacted the caribou. It appeared that the caribou had travelled through the valley between two ridges on the Porcupine River (66° 32'N, 138° 25'W and 66° 27'N, 138° 37'W).

Numerous trails were noted between the East Porcupine and Eagle Rivers. These trails were older than those nearer the Porcupine River, and were of a northeast-southwest direction. It would seem that the caribou in this area had moved southwest towards the Porcupine River. About 24 miles northeast of the Rock River fresh caribou trails in a northeasterly direction were noted on a steep slope up to 5000 feet in altitude.

From other reports which have been received only small, scattered herds of caribou have been seen by hunters in this area. The natives from Fort McPherson have killed relatively few caribou. According to Warden Spreu, 41 caribou were reported to have been killed, but there are other hunters who have not returned

to the settlement. In December, small, scattered herds of caribou were reported 15-20 miles southeast of Sinclair Rock, about 25 miles northwest of this point, and in the Bell River area. A group of natives, who travelled from Old Crow to Fort McPherson in late December, failed to contact any caribou along the trail. Some families from Old Crow, residing on the Porcupine River saw large numbers of caribou crossing the Porcupine River near the Driftwood River and Salmon Cache (67° 27'N, 137° 50'W, (Porcupine Sheet, Nat. Top. Ser.) just prior to freeze-up. These animals were reported to be travelling southwest in the direction of the Porcupine Flats. On a flight to Dawson from Aklavik on February 22 and 24, Mr. M. Zubko reported that he observed no caribou, or trails. This flight, flown on February 22 to 24, south of our survey, was made from Fort McPherson along the Peel, Hart and Blackstone Rivers. These observations would seem to indicate that the caribou had not travelled that far south.

This survey confirmed the reports that there are few caribou in the area within a hunting distance from Aklavik or Fort McPherson. The noticeable change of distribution of caribou this year may be partly explained by a greater depth of snow in the area east of the Bell River to the mountains and in the Porcupine Flats. The depth of snow, where the abundance of caribou trails, on the upper Porcupine River, appeared to be less than in the above mentioned areas. *A were seen*

Respectfully submitted,

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

CWS 3.00

000000

53-25 McEwen, E. H.

Caribou survey, in Fort

McPherson on March 3,

1953.

DATE

ISSUED TO

Date Due

CT 53-25
CWS
McEwen, E. H.
Caribou survey in Fort
McPherson on March 3,
1953.

..1

MAY 23 1997

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

INMAGIC