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Caribou stock no. 2, aerial survey,
August 6 and 7, 1953. [n.p., Canadian
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2l.

1. Caribou - Aerial surveys

I. Title

2c.

An aerial survey was conducted on August 6 and 7, using the local Aklavik Flying Service aircraft, Cessna 195. The observers were A. Pilon and myself. The purpose of this survey was to obtain information on the distribution of the caribou on their summer range and obtain calf counts. On August 2, a report was received that a large herd, numbering about 30,000 had been seen in the Firth river area, near Joe Creek, during mid-July. Later, a copy of a letter from R.F. Scott to D.A. Munro was received containing a fuller account of the observations which were made by L. Sumner. It was hoped on this survey to locate the reported group of caribou, but unfortunately this was not the case. However, it was possible on August 6, to land on a lake about 12 miles southeast of our cache on the Firth River, pack the valuable items of equipment to the aircraft and make a permanent, well-marked cache of the remainder of the equipment. The details of this phase of the work has^{ed} been separately written in a letter, dated September 16, 1953.

A total of 490 miles, approximately, were flown on August 6 and 7. The flight lines flown on this survey are recorded on a map (Appendix a). At 1107 hours, we departed from Aklavik crossing the east branch of the Blow River about 20 miles from the forks and the west branch about 10 miles, continuing northwest towards the coast. About six miles opposite Shingle Point we flew west and southwest to the headwaters of the Babbage River, thence across to the Firth River at Joe Creek and down the Firth River. A landing was made at 1330 hours. Only one caribou was seen on this flight. A large number of deep trails, made fairly recently by caribou, were seen in a valley from the headwaters of the Babbage towards Joe Creek. The direction of movement of the caribou could not be determined from these trails. No caribou were seen in the Firth River area, but heavily utilized trails were seen along the banks of the river.

On August 7, we took-off at 0950 hours, flying along the foothills crossing the creek east of the Firth River at $69^{\circ}14'$ N and $138^{\circ}52'$ W, and continuing towards King Point. Then, we flew southeastward towards the Barn Mountains ($68^{\circ}40'$ N, $138^{\circ}33'$ W) crossing the west branch of the Blow River and following along this branch towards the forks. After crossing the east branch

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about eight miles from the forks, we returned to Aklavik along the foothills, landing at 1132 hours.

No caribou were observed until about 16 miles west of the west branch of the Blow River. (68°37' N, 138°10'). From this point small groups of caribou were found between the branches of the Blow to the east branch. The small groups were circled to determine the number of calves. The calves were larger and darker in colour than those seen in June. Still, it was difficult to pick out the calves because they tended to run closely packed with the adults. They could easily be distinguished from the other animals in the group, but our counts may not have included all the calves in the group. Of the 37 caribou classified 22 were calves and 65 adults.

<u>Adult</u>	<u>fawn</u>	<u>Total</u>
18	4	22
3	2	5
11	1	12
4	1	5
1	1	2
2	1	3
2	1	3
4	2	6
<u>20</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>29</u>
<u>35</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>87</u>

The total number of caribou seen on this survey was 92. Four grizzly bears and one wolf were seen. Three of the bears were seen on August 7 in a relatively small area, near the Blow River, in the same area where small groups of caribou were observed.

It is of interest to know that on September 20, M. Zubko flew to Herschel Island following the foothills and coast as far as Kay Point before crossing to Herschel. On the return trip he flew further inland crossing the forks of the Babbage and Blow Rivers and continuing to Canoe Lake and Aklavik. No caribou were seen on this flight although special attention was paid to observe caribou.

On September 8, Cst. Canon, Herschel Island Detachment, disclosed that from interviews he had with employees at the Malcolm River American Army Base, a large number of caribou remained in the area, about 25 miles from the mouth of the Malcolm River, from the last part of May until mid-June. The caribou moved westward from this area. When the opportunity arises I shall endeavour to procure a fuller account of the caribou in that area from the persons who were working there.

Respectfully submitted.

E.H. McEwen
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