

Summary - Population Trend Analysis for Boreal Caribou

Monitoring

The Woodland Caribou Range Assessment program monitors the status of woodland caribou populations and habitat to provide important information for range plan development and implementation.

SK2 Central Woodland Caribou Population Assessment

Woodland caribou populations were listed as threatened under the *Species at Risk Act* in 2003. In 2012, Environment and Climate Change Canada developed a national recovery strategy. At the time, a population assessment of Saskatchewan's Boreal Plain (SK2) caribou was not available. Boreal Plain caribou generally require a minimum of 65 per cent undisturbed habitat within their range to provide a 60 per cent chance that the population will persist in that area. With only 57 per cent of undisturbed habitat, SK2 was assessed to be "as likely as not" self-sustaining

Saskatchewan committed to monitor provincial woodland caribou populations, and in 2017 the province initiated a three-year program for the SK2 Central caribou administration unit (Figure 1). The province used fecal DNA based capture-recapture methods to estimate population sizes and population rate of change from 2017-2019.

The results from the population analysis show a decline in both female and male caribou numbers in the SK2 Central study area (Figure 1) from 2017-2019 and since 2007 when assessed for the smaller Prince Albert Greater Ecosystem area (Figure 1). The 2019 population size estimate is 125 animals for the study area. The rate of decline for both sexes in recent years (2017-2019) is around 30 per cent per year.

Caribou in the SK2 Central study area are generally found in the remaining large, relatively intact areas with suitable habitat. These remaining habitat areas are largely disconnected and both short and long-term declining population trends indicates that the current habitat is not sufficient to maintain a self-sustaining caribou population. Additional efforts to reduce human-caused disturbance will be required, as identified in the *Range Plan for Woodland Caribou in Saskatchewan, Boreal Plain Ecozone – SK2 Central Caribou Administration Unit*.

For further information or a copy of the full report, please send your request to:
woodlandcaribouproject@gov.sk.ca

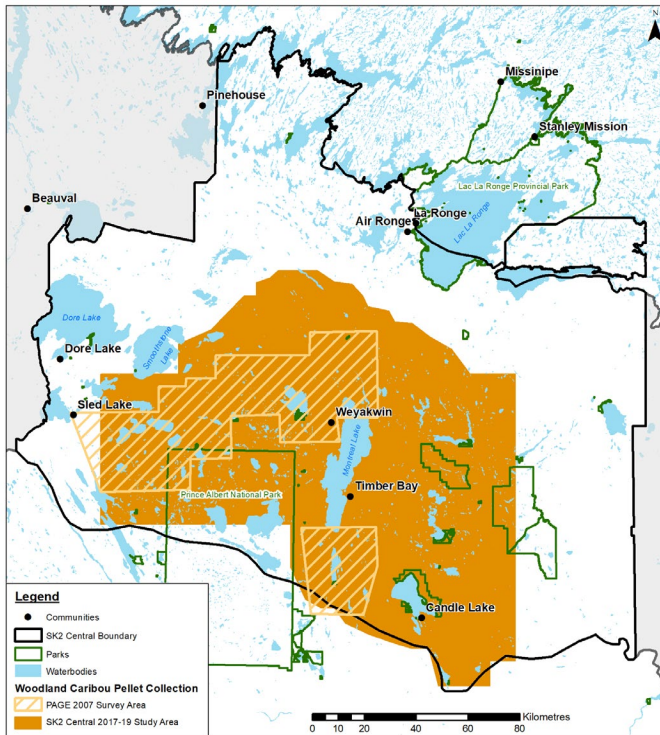


Figure 1: SK2 Central and PAGES study area

Traditional Knowledge

The province's understanding of woodland caribou is limited to the results from relatively recent, short-term studies. There are many aspects to understanding woodland caribou behaviour and biology that would benefit from longer-term knowledge passed down to the present.

Traditional knowledge can be complex and may include:

- knowledge about the environment;
- knowledge about the use and management of the environment; and
- values about the environment, which are typically based on cultural values and beliefs of the knowledge holders.

Such knowledge originated long ago, based on first-hand observation, and is passed on and combined with the experience of succeeding generations. Making use of traditional knowledge will lead to a more complete understanding of woodland caribou and greatly raise confidence in the outcome.

Report a Woodland Caribou Sighting

Woodland caribou are listed as "threatened" under the federal *Species at Risk Act*. Your help is appreciated in [reporting any sightings](#) of woodland caribou or signs of caribou activity.