

## Manitoba Caribou Facts

**Ecotypes:** Although there is but a single caribou species, *Rangifer tarandus*, many wildlife biologists further classify caribou by "ecotype," according to whether they are migratory or sedentary and what terrain or habitat they occupy.

(1)The **Boreal forest (or woodland) caribou** reside year-round in the Boreal forests of Manitoba. The females calve alone, in secure areas such as islands or wet peatlands, where they may remain with their young for several months. They congregate in small groups during the autumn mating period (rut) and winter. Their total movements are often shorter than 100 km. Hence they are considered sedentary when compared to migratory caribou. Boreal forest caribou are listed as **threatened** both nationally and provincially.

(2)The **migratory tundra caribou** congregate in large groups of 100s or even 1000s in the spring to calve in tundra habitats. They disperse in winter, often into Boreal forests where they may overlap with Boreal forest caribou populations. Their migrations between tundra and winter range are long-distance, up to thousands of km. Several migratory tundra herds reside at least part of the time in Manitoba and share their ranges with Ontario or Nunavut.

**Range and Numbers:** Caribou were once found in all Boreal forest regions of Manitoba but the southern portion of their range has been heavily affected by development.

Census-taking for caribou is difficult. Woodland caribou are by nature shy and reclusive animals. Estimates put caribou numbers in Manitoba at 1800 - 3000 individuals.

Chief development activities which led to habitat loss, and reduced caribou numbers, have been mining, logging, hydro-electric projects, and other human activities. All these involve destruction of Boreal forest and construction of roads, both of which permit other ungulates such as moose and deer to invade traditional caribou habitat. The presence of these species is dangerous to caribou because deer, especially, attract predators such as bears and wolves.

**Concerns:** Experts have observed a delay of about 20 years between changes in the habitat of woodland caribou and population losses of the animals. Biologists and groups such as CPAWS worry that this 20-year gap may lull the provincial government into thinking that it has time to act. But the loss of habitat today will result in population decline in the future. CPAWS and others maintain that Manitoba needs to act fast to conserve critical habitat to save the woodland caribou.

## Status of Caribou in Manitoba

**1992:** Along with 150 other countries, Canada signed the international **Convention on Biological Diversity** at the Rio Earth Summit. The Convention requires a national biodiversity conservation strategy and federal endangered species legislation.

**2000:** Under the **Woodland Caribou Conservation Strategy** Manitoba committed to protect and prohibit development within critical habitat for woodland caribou.

**2004:** The federal **Species At Risk Act (SARA)** came into effect. SARA authorizes the **Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC)** to advise the federal government of conservation concerns for animal species. Under SARA, in Manitoba migratory tundra caribou populations are not considered to be at risk. However woodland caribou populations are recognized as threatened.

**2006:** **Manitoba Endangered Species Act** mandates habitat protection for caribou.

**2007:** **Manitoba Caribou Recovery Strategy**, required under the Species At Risk Act: The goal of the strategy is to help achieve self-sustaining woodland caribou populations. The goal is good, but the objectives of the strategy will not accomplish the goal.

Therefore, CPAWS urges a revision of the Strategy to make the full protection of large habitats for woodland caribou the primary aim. CPAWS supports protection of the most important caribou habitats in Manitoba, highlighting (1) the east side of Lake Winnipeg and the creation of a World Heritage Site, an effort led by First Nations, (2) protection for parts of the Interlake, and (3) protection for the west area of Lake Winnipegosis.

**2007:** **Agreement with Tembec** on a 50-year halt to logging in important habitat on east side of Lake Winnipeg.