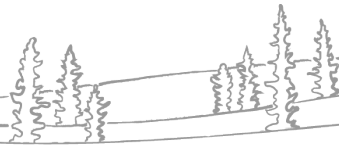




Living with Wildlife and Caribou Predators and Competitors

Predators: rely on caribou for food

Competitors: compete with caribou for the same food and land area



ENR's role in the Public Listening Sessions

The Sahtu Renewable Resources Board (SRRB) has invited the Government of the Northwest Territories' Department of Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) to participate in the public listening sessions addressing the question "What is the most effective way to conserve caribou?" The second public listening session in this series will address the question "What should people's role be in maintaining healthy relations between caribou and other wildlife?"

A key role of ENR in the co-management of wildlife in the Sahtú is to provide information to the SRRB to help inform decision making. It is hoped that the information presented here will be useful to the SRRB as it considers recommendations to conserve caribou in the Sahtú, and to communities as they develop community conservation plans.

Caribou in the Sahtu Region

ENR recognizes that caribou in the Sahtú have interconnected relationships with other animals, plants, people and the land, that have developed over thousands of years. Human activity can affect the natural balance between caribou and other species. Stories, observations and knowledge from Indigenous and community knowledge holders, and scientific information from a variety of sources provide some insight into how caribou interact with other species, including humans, but there is still much to learn.



Actions for Maintaining Healthy Relationships with Caribou and other Species

Three species have important relationships with caribou in the Sahtú - muskoxen, moose and wolves. The Sahtú Todzi Nene Plan (Boreal caribou range plan) is being developed together by ENR and the SRRB to identify the best way to help maintain healthy relationships between moose, wolves and caribou by managing landscape changes in a way that ensures there is always enough undisturbed habitat available to boreal caribou.

There are actions people can take to help maintain healthy ecological relationships between caribou and these other species:

- watch for and report changes;
- harvest at sustainable levels;
- manage amounts of disturbance on the land;
- protect key habitat; and,
- learn and adapt.

Relationships between caribou and moose

Moose are abundant in the Sahtú and the relationship between moose and caribou seems to be healthy and in balance. A review of the traditional and community knowledge literature prepared for this public hearing found that, overall, Sahtú knowledge holders do not appear to have significant concerns about increasing numbers of moose.

Relationships between caribou and muskoxen

Muskoxen appear to be abundant in the Sahtú and numbers are stable. As muskoxen continue to move into more areas, it is possible they will interact with caribou more often. Some people believe they can live together, some believe muskox will push caribou out and yet others believe they will not be found in the same place at the same time. There still more to learn about the relationship between caribou and muskoxen.

Relationships between caribou and wolves

The boreal wolves that live in the forests of the Sahtú prey on moose, boreal and mountain caribou and other species. They can also prey on barren-ground caribou as they pass through the forests during their annual migration. Although, boreal wolves prey mostly on moose, they also prey on boreal caribou when they have the chance. Changes in the numbers of prey species, like moose, can change levels of predation on boreal caribou by wolves. Barren-ground caribou likely provide only a small part of the boreal wolf diet.

Migratory wolves are different. There is a close relationship between migratory wolves and barren-ground caribou. Wolves are the main predator of barren-ground caribou, and barren-ground caribou are the main source of food for migratory wolves. However, there is still more to learn about the impact of wolves on barren-ground caribou herds. When barren-ground caribou are calving, grizzly bears and eagles are also important predators.

