

Bathurst Caribou Survey Completed

YELLOWKNIFE (October 17) - A recent survey of the Bathurst caribou herd's calving grounds shows the size of the herd to be about 186,000 animals.

The aerial survey was done in June 2003 by the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development with financial assistance from the Nunavut Department of Sustainable Development and the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

The results of this latest survey indicate that the Bathurst caribou herd has been declining by about five percent a year for the past decade.

Minister of Resources Wildlife and Economic Development Jim Antoine says it is natural for caribou herds to increase and decrease in size. Elders and biologists have noted changes in the size of the herd in the past however, Mr. Antoine says, the latest survey results raise some concerns about the current status of the herd.

"We will work more closely with our partners and all harvesters to increase monitoring of the herd and to determine what measures may be required to ensure the herd remains healthy and viable," the Minister said.

The Governments of the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Canada along with Aboriginal governments and co-management boards are responsible for the management of the Bathurst caribou and their range. The range of the herd extends from the calving grounds near Bathurst Inlet south toward Great Slave Lake and further southeast toward northern Saskatchewan.

Aboriginal harvesters from the NWT and Nunavut hunt the Bathurst caribou across their seasonal ranges. Resident and non-resident hunters harvest Bathurst caribou under a tag and quota system. Tags for commercial use are also available to Aboriginal harvesters.

Results of the June 2003 Bathurst Caribou Calving Ground Survey will be provided to the Bathurst Caribou Management Planning Committee. This committee was established in 2000 to draft a 10-year Bathurst Caribou Management Plan. It will ensure that the management plan and recommended management actions reflect the results of this survey.

For more information, contact:
Doug Stewart,
Director, Wildlife
Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development
Tel: (867) 920-8064

