

# Boreal Caribou in the NWT



## Boreal caribou are one of five different types of caribou in the Northwest Territories (NWT).

They are different in both biology and behaviour from barren-ground caribou. Boreal caribou are larger in body size, with thicker and broader antlers, and live year-round in the forest east of the Mackenzie Mountains.

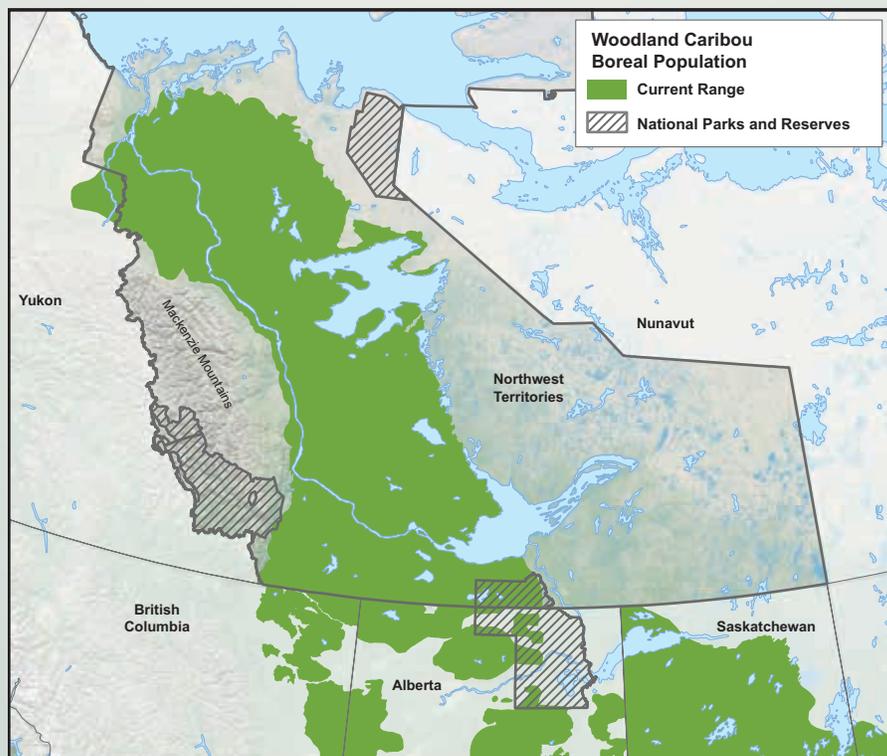
Boreal caribou are very unique in their seasonal movements. In the spring, they spread out and calve individually to reduce their risk of predation. In the winter, they may gather in small groups of typically no more than six caribou.

Boreal caribou hold important cultural and spiritual significance for Indigenous people in the NWT who harvest them. Resident hunters may also harvest boreal caribou, but are limited to one caribou per year.

## Species at Risk

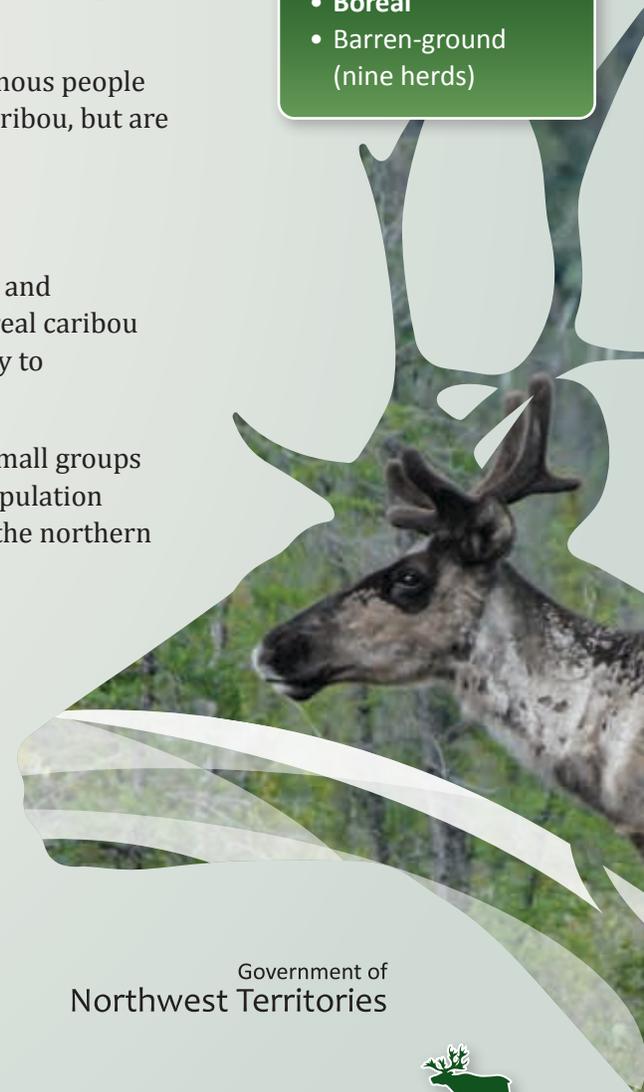
Boreal caribou are listed as a threatened species under both federal (2003) and territorial (2014) species at risk legislation. Across Canada, numbers of boreal caribou have declined by more than 30 per cent over the last 20 years, due primarily to fragmentation and loss of boreal forest habitat.

In the NWT, there are an estimated 6,000 to 7,000 boreal caribou living in small groups across a large, continuous range of mostly intact boreal forest. The NWT population is considered self-sustaining with numbers that are stable or increasing in the northern part of the range and decreasing slightly in the southern part.



### Caribou in the NWT:

- Peary
- Dolphin and Union
- Northern Mountain
- **Boreal**
- Barren-ground (nine herds)



Government of Northwest Territories



### Did you know?

Boreal caribou and northern mountain caribou are both types of woodland caribou. They are similar in size and physical characteristics, but have different habitat and behaviour.

## What is boreal caribou critical habitat?

Critical habitat is the habitat necessary for the survival and recovery of boreal caribou. Federal legislation requires at least 65% “undisturbed habitat” for each boreal caribou range across Canada. Currently, 69% of NWT habitat is considered undisturbed (2017).

## Indigenous names for boreal caribou:

- Sakaw atihk
- Mbedzih
- etthen
- Ṯodzi
- Medzih
- Vadzaih
- Tuttut
- Tuktut
- Ṯadzié

August  
2019

**Framework for  
Boreal Caribou  
Range Planning released**

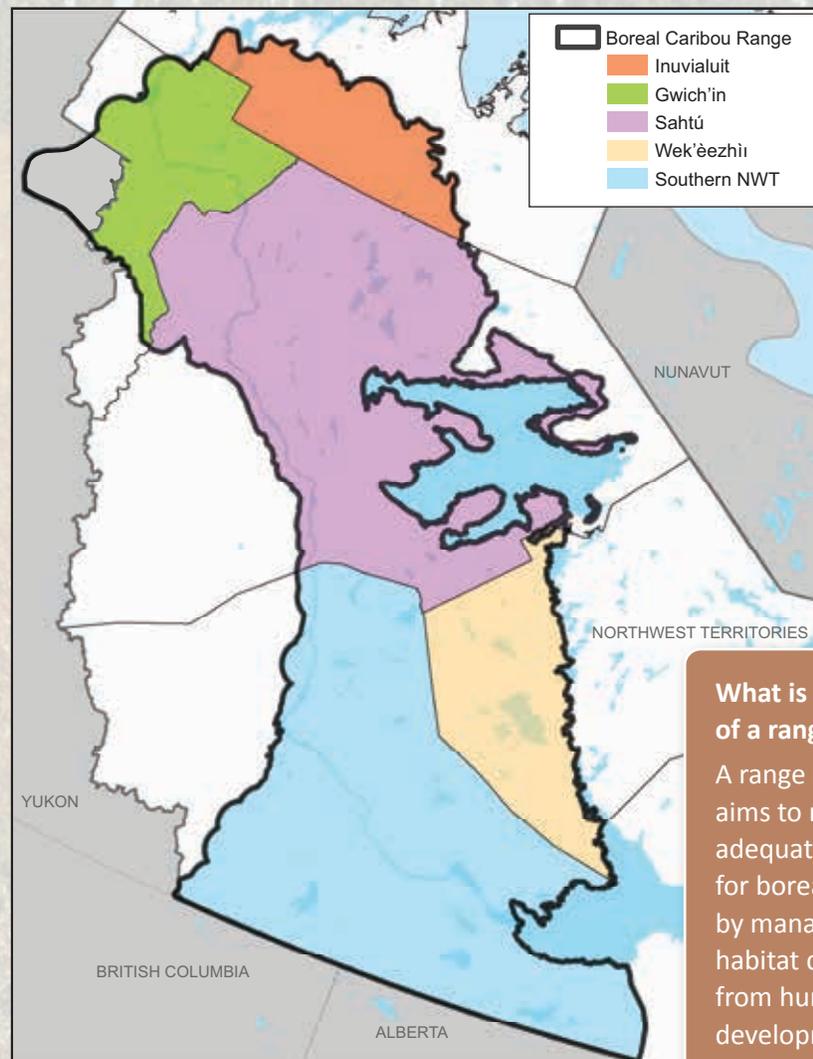
## A Threatened Species

Boreal caribou need large areas of intact forest to provide food and shelter, and to help them avoid predators. In the NWT, most habitat disturbance is caused by wildfires; human-caused disturbance is relatively low. Cleared areas such as roads or seismic lines increase access to the forest, which can leave boreal caribou more vulnerable to predation and harvest. Changes to the landscape (from fire or development) can also provide vegetation for bears, deer and moose, which can lead to increased predator populations.

## Protection and Recovery

A recovery strategy for boreal caribou in the NWT has been developed by the GNWT and its co-management partners. Our strategy, together with the national recovery strategy, aims to ensure a healthy and sustainable boreal caribou population across their NWT range that offers harvesting opportunities for present and future generations.

Both recovery strategies call for range plans to manage landscape disturbance and protect critical habitat. *A Framework for Boreal Caribou Range Planning*, released in August 2019, provides a roadmap for developing five regional plans in the NWT. The GNWT is currently working with its co-management partners across the NWT to develop range plans that reflect the best available scientific, local and traditional knowledge.



### What is the goal of a range plan?

A range plan aims to maintain adequate habitat for boreal caribou by managing habitat disturbance from human development activity and wildfires.

November  
2019

**Range planning begins**

2019  
through  
2022

**Range plans  
developed for  
Wek'èezhìi and  
Southern NWT regions**

2020  
through  
2023

**Range plans  
developed for Sahtú,  
Gwich'in and Inuvialuit regions**