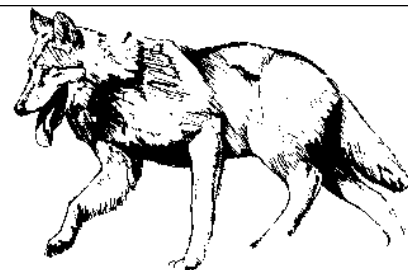


# WOLF NOTES



No. 2

Editors: Dean Cluff and Lyle Walton

Spring/Summer 1998

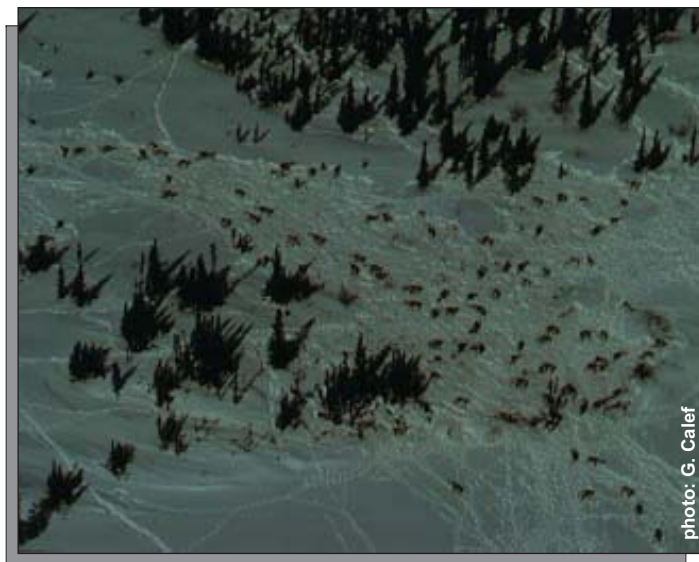
*A Newsletter on Wolf Studies in the Central Arctic, NWT, Canada*

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## EXTENSIVE WINTER MOVEMENTS BY TUNDRA WOLVES

Most central arctic wolves in the Northwest Territories are migratory and follow the caribou migration from summer to winter ranges. Wolves from the Bathurst caribou range normally winter with the caribou north of Great Slave Lake.

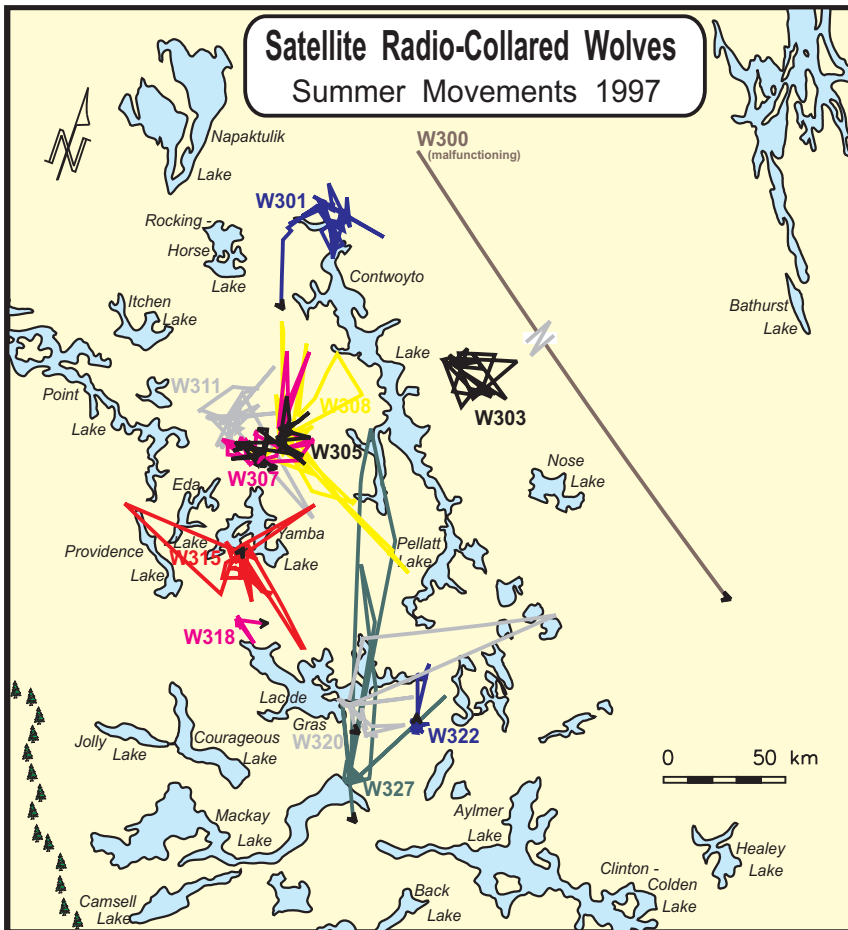
However, this year the Bathurst herd ventured further southeast into the traditional winter range of the Beverly caribou herd. This movement by the Bathurst caribou was not previously documented except possibly in oral history. Wolves that followed these caribou traveled 450 to 600 km from their natal den site.



## NWT Wolf Harvest Attracts Attention

A Toronto Globe and Mail article in late February raised questions and concerns about the harvest of wolves in the Northwest Territories, specifically in the Rennie Lake area, east of Fort Smith and north of Saskatchewan. Over the winter 635 wolves were harvested in the area. The distribution of satellite radio-collared wolves suggests that this harvest included wolves from both the Bathurst and Beverly caribou ranges although not all wolves from the Bathurst caribou range were in the Rennie Lake area. Wolves from the Bathurst caribou range were also harvested by hunters from Lutsel K'e and Fort Reliance as they moved through there with the Bathurst caribou herd.

For more information on the wolf harvest, please visit the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development's website at: <http://www.rwed.gov.nt.ca/>



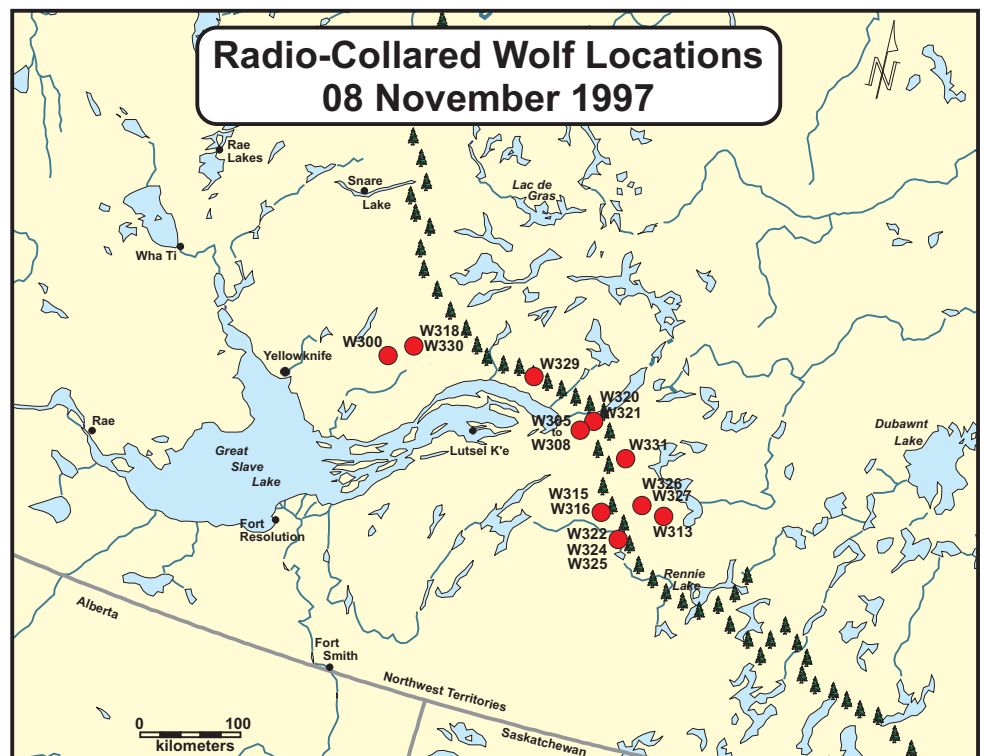
## Summer Movements

Summer movements were based on eight satellite radio-collared wolves from eight different packs. We could not get enough locations from the other collared wolves for this analysis because they were fitted with conventional (VHF) radio-collars and therefore do not transmit to a satellite.

Summer movements were variable, with males showing the greatest distances traveled from den sites. Summer range sizes for three male wolves averaged 1611 km<sup>2</sup> (range = 679 - 3400 km<sup>2</sup>), whereas ranges for five females averaged 619 km<sup>2</sup> (range = 91 - 1368 km<sup>2</sup>). Range sizes were based on the minimum convex polygon method.

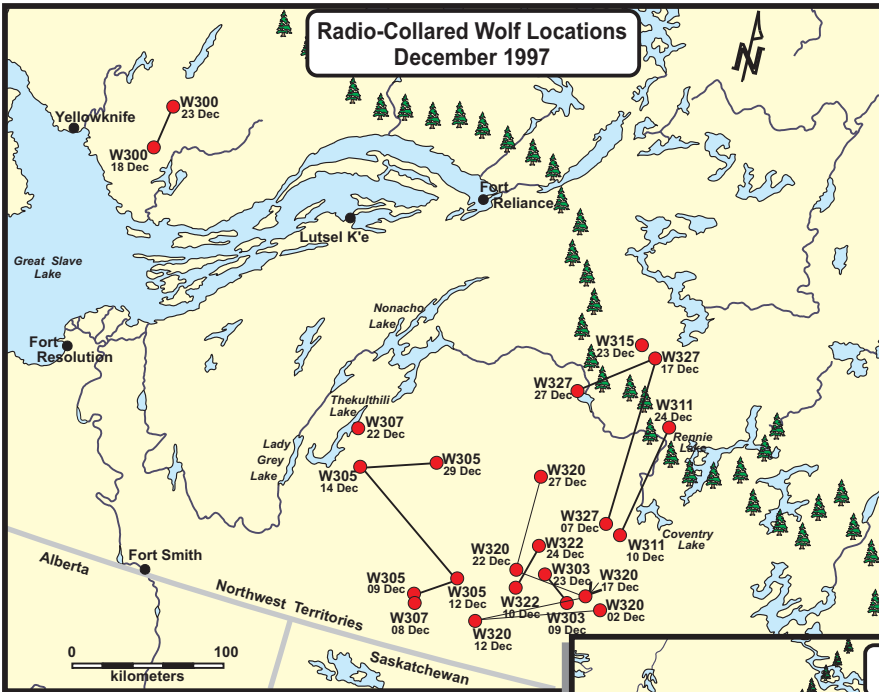
## Fall Locations

As expected, tundra wolves followed the Bathurst caribou herd in early fall as the caribou moved south to their winter ranges. By late fall, these migrations were well underway. Radio-collared wolves located on November 8<sup>th</sup> had already reached the treeline.

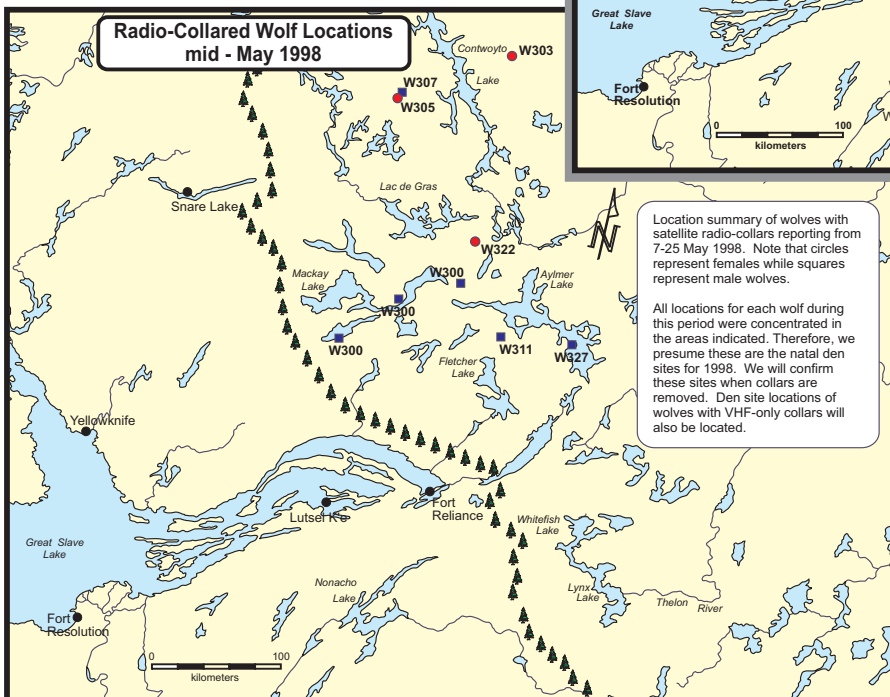
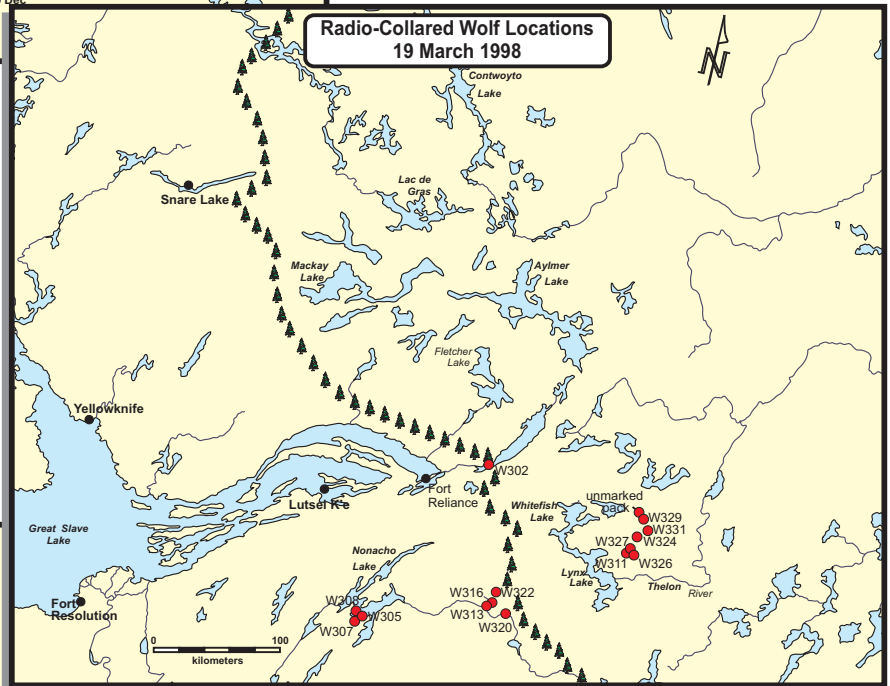


# Winter Movements

To our surprise, collared caribou continued to move southeast of Great Slave Lake with the collared wolves following. Prior to this year, such a southerly shift of the Bathurst caribou winter range had not been formally documented. This year Bathurst caribou wintered with the Beverly caribou herd on the Beverly winter range.



Radio-collared wolves were found in three main locations on March 19<sup>th</sup>. Herds of thousands of caribou were seen where the easternmost wolves were located. Caribou in the western area were more scattered. It was not possible to distinguish Bathurst caribou from Beverly caribou from spacing behavior we observed.



Location summary of wolves with satellite radio-collars reporting from 7-25 May 1998. Note that circles represent females while squares represent male wolves. All locations for each wolf during this period were concentrated in the areas indicated. Therefore, we presume these are the natal den sites for 1998. We will confirm these sites when collars are removed. Den site locations of wolves with VHF-only collars will also be located.

# 1998 Denning

From the location of wolves with satellite radio-collars reporting during May 1998, it appears that many of the breeding pairs are returning to last year's denning area.

# Mortalities

Four collared wolves (3 females, 1 male) have been harvested this winter. One male wolf died from unknown causes this summer and its collar was retrieved and placed on another wolf in September (W331).

In May, we retrieved the collar of a female wolf that died in early April west of the Rennie Lake area. Very little remained of the carcass and we could not determine the cause of death. No other tagged wolves have appeared in the harvest.



*Lyle Walton investigates suspected mortality*

## Acknowledgments

We thank the NWT Grizzly Bear Project and Lance Schmidt (Forest Management) for logistical support. Helicopter Wildlife Management safely and effectively net-gunned wolves for capture and collaring. We are grateful to the following companies, agencies, and individuals represented by the logos below for providing logistical support and assistance throughout the study.



Resources, Wildlife, and  
Economic Development



Penner & Associates Ltd.



John/Paul & Associates

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