

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
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ANNUAL REPORT OF SURVEY-INVENTORY ACTIVITIES
PART II - CARIBOU, BROWN - GRIZZLY BEAR, SHEEP
FURBEARERS, MARINE MAMMALS, BISON,
GOAT, WOLF, WOLVERINE AND BLACK BEAR

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(Printed October 1971)

CARIBOU

SURVEY-INVENTORY PROGRESS REPORT - 1970

Game Management Unit 9 - Alaska Peninsula (Alaska Peninsula Herd)

Seasons and Bag Limits

Aug. 10 - March 31

Three caribou

Harvest and Hunting Pressure

Harvest ticket returns indicate that 309 caribou were taken in Unit 9 during the 1969-70 hunting season. Eighty-five percent of these animals were males, 11 percent were females, and 4 percent were of unknown sex.

Composition and Productivity

A composition survey on the Alaska Peninsula herd in the vicinity of Becharof Lake was made during 1970 (Appendix I). Counts were made on the ground with the aid of a 20x spotting scope. Animals were separated into sex and age categories on the basis of genital characteristics or by body form and antler development at 50-100 yards. Counts made in this manner are more accurate than those previously made from aircraft since more time can be given to observing each animal, insuring that it is correctly placed in the proper category. A sample size of 3,116 caribou gave a ratio of 48.3 bulls per 100 cows and 46.1 calves per 100 cows.

these villagers and other Peninsula residents to obtain meat whenever animals are present. Because of the logistical expense of traveling to and within Unit 9, the season extension would offer only limited advantages to other Alaskan residents outside of this unit.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the caribou season in Unit 9 be changed to read:

Resident	July 1 - June 30	Three caribou
Nonresident	Sept. 15 - Oct. 31	Three caribou

Appendix I. Summary Alaska Peninsula Caribou Composition Counts.

Year	Type of Count	MM per 100 FF	Yrlg. per 100 FF	Calf per 100 FF	Total Animals in Sample
1968	Aircraft	47	-	50	4,183
1970	Ground	58.7	8.2	48.3	1,283*
		41.7	6.3	44.7	1,833**
		48.3	7.0	46.1	3,116***

CARIBOU

SURVEY-INVENTORY PROGRESS REPORT - 1970

Game Management Unit 10 - Aleutian Islands (Adak Herd)

Seasons and Bag Limits

Unit 10, Unimak Island only	Aug. 10 - Mar. 31	Four caribou
Unit 10, Adak Island only	Aug. 10 - Mar. 31*	One caribou
* Season will be closed by field announcement upon the taking of 50 caribou.		
Unit 10, except Unimak and Adak Islands	No closed season	No limit

Harvest and Hunting Pressure

Fifty-three caribou were harvested on Adak Island in 1970 (Appendix I). The harvest was almost evenly split between sexes with 26 males and 27 females taken. One tagged animal, a 12 year-old female that was part of the original group of calves transplanted to the Island in 1958, was killed this year. No harvest data are available for other areas in the Unit, primarily because no harvest reports are required for Game Management Unit 10.

Composition and Productivity

No data are available.

Appendix I. Adak Caribou Herd, Population and Mortality 1958 - 1970.

Year	Winter Population	Natural Mortality*	Hunting Mortality
1958	10	1	0
1959	23	1	0
1960	-	0	0
1961	-	1	0
1962	36	0	0
1963	43	0	0
1964**	65	1	4
1965**	87	8	2
1966**	106	3	18
1967**	126	1	24
1968**	163	3	55
1969**	167	0	51
1970**	-	0	53

* Essentially, all natural mortality is due to entanglement in wire.

** Allowable harvest: 1964 - 10; 1965 -

CARIBOU

SURVEY-INVENTORY PROGRESS REPORT - 1970

Game Management Unit 11 - Wrangell Mountains-Chitina River (Mentasta Herd)

Seasons and Bag Limits

Aug. 10 - Sept. 30

Three Caribou

Nov. 1 - March 31

Harvest and Hunting Pressure

Harvest data for 1970-71 are not available since the season is still in progress. The Mentasta herd, which resides part of the year in Unit 11, is normally available to most hunters (excluding guided hunts) only when animals migrate across the Slana-Tok Highway or when they are along the Nabesna Road. Both hunting pressure and kill are thusly variable. In September 1970, an estimated 5,000 animals migrated north into Unit 13, from the Wrangell Mountains. An estimated 500 animals were taken by hunters. The actual 1969-70 harvest report returns (without extrapolation included) indicate 203 males, 81 females and 4 unknown sex caribou were harvested.

Composition and Productivity

Little is known of the status of this

Recommendations

Caribou hunting is receiving increasing criticism for a variety of reasons, especially in those areas where caribou can be hunted by snow-machine. The Mentasta herd is not normally available to snowmachine hunting, and thus because of its inaccessibility is not subjected to the long hunting season. There is no logical reason for the season to be closed during October, however a closer look at the long season should be considered.

Submitted by: Loyal Johnson, Game Biologist III

CARIBOU

SURVEY-INVENTORY PROGRESS REPORT - 1970

Game Management Unit 12 - Upper Tanana and White River (Chisana Herd)

Seasons and Bag Limits

August 10 - March 31

3 Caribou

Harvest and Hunting Pressure

Harvest ticket data disclosed that in 1969 hunters took 13 bull caribou from the Chisana Herd. In 1968, 39 animals were reported taken. Data on the 1970 kill are not yet available.

Hunting pressure on this small herd, located in the Wrangell Mountains, is primarily for trophies, although a few are probably taken for camp meat. No significant changes in the harvest are expected to occur in the near future.

Composition and Productivity

No data. A reconnaissance flight was made over the Chisana-White River area on June 22. Cows with newborn calves were sighted on the benchland areas between Chisana and Beaver Creek. No other observations were made in 1970.

Management Summary and Recommendations

CARIBOU

SURVEY-INVENTORY PROGRESS REPORT - 1970

Game Management Unit 12 and 20C (Alaska Range Herd)

Seasons and Bag Limits

August 10 - March 31

3 Caribou

Harvest and Hunting Pressure

Because of the method in which harvest statistics are compiled, no harvest information is presently available on this herd. Hunting pressure is known to be very light and sporadic. Most animals are taken incidentally during August and September by moose and sheep hunters.

Composition and Productivity

No data. A reconnaissance flight on June 20 disclosed that most animals had moved into the Alaska Range, primarily up the Johnson River. Calving is believed to have occurred on Macomb Plateau.

Animals began moving out of the mountains during late September and on October 4 about 500 animals, believed to be nearly the entire herd, were moving west between the Robertson and Johnson Rivers. No other observations were made during 1970.

Management Summary and Recommendations

CARIBOU

SURVEY-INVENTORY PROGRESS REPORT - 1970

Game Management Unit 13 - Nelchina Basin (Nelchina Herd)

Seasons and Bag Limits

August 10 - September 30
November 1 - March 31

3 Caribou

Harvest and Hunting Pressure

Harvest data for 1970-71 are not available since the season is still in progress. However, the Nelchina herd was available to road based hunting only for a very short time. This was in early November along the Lake Louise Road, when an estimated 300 to 500 animals were taken.

The final reported harvest for the 1969-70 season is available. Actual IBM harvest returns without extrapolation indicate 5,422 caribou (2,627 males, 2,705 females and 90 sex unknown) were harvested.

This year the general inaccessibility of the Nelchina herd to the road systems resulted in the lowest reported number of caribou being checked out through the Denali Check Station. Between August 10 and October 2, 1970, only 509 animals were reported taken. Age analysis of these car

Recommendations

No changes in seasons or bag limits are recommended at this time.

Submitted by: Loyal Johnson, Game Biologist III

CARIBOU

SURVEY-INVENTORY PROGRESS REPORT - 1970

Game Management Units 16, 19, and 20C - (Farewell - Rainy Pass - Tonzona River Herd)

Seasons and Bag Limits

Units 16 & 20C	August 10 - March 31	3 Caribou
Unit 19	August 10 - March 31	5 Caribou

Harvest and Hunting Pressure

These comments apply to Unit 19.

The harvest of these caribou is variable and generally light. Guided hunters may take 30 to 40 animals a year in this area. Hunting at Telida, Nikolai and Farewell is sporadic and the take may range from zero to 30 animals, depending on the movements of the animals. In 1970-71 two were taken at Farewell and two at Telida.

Composition and Production

No data have been gathered. The caribou in this area are listed as "herd" to indicate a group that seems to use this area fairly consistently. In 1970-71 about 200 caribou wintered northeast of Farewell, or at least spent a substantial part of the winter there

CARIBOU

SURVEY-INVENTORY PROGRESS REPORT - 1970

Game Management Unit 17 - Bristol Bay (Mulchatna Herd)

Season and Bag Limit

August 10 - March 31

Three caribou

Harvest and Hunting Pressure

That portion of the Mulchatna caribou herd in Unit 17 received only light harvest by subsistence, recreational and trophy hunters. The crude estimated harvest is less than 100 animals. Harvest information will continue to be estimated only, because no harvest reports are required for this Unit.

Composition and Productivity

No data are available.

Management Summary and Conclusions

In view of the light utilization of the Mulchatna herd, liberalization of the season and bag limit might appear to be in order. However, because the hunting pressure upon this herd is so light, such liberalizations would probably not noticeably increase the harvest. Until better management data are available, no regulation changes appear necessary.

CARIBOU

SURVEY-INVENTORY PROGRESS REPORT - 1970

Game Management Units 17 and 19 (Mulchatna Herd)

Seasons and Bag Limits

August 10 - March 31

5 Caribou

Harvest and Hunting Pressure

These comments apply to Unit 19.

Hunting pressure is generally light. Some hunters from Sleetmute and Aniak hunt in the Holitna - Stony River area by airplane. The known kill in this area was 11 caribou in 1970-71, but the actual kill may have reached 20. Three of these were taken by a beaver trapper. In 1969-70 the people of Lime Village on Stony River took about 40 caribou. Their harvest for 1970-71 is not known yet.

The harvest from the caribou wintering around the Big River - Katlitna River area was about 20 animals, all taken by McGrath hunters using airplanes.

In 1969-70, hunters from Nikolai took 14 caribou at the end of the season. These may have been from the Big River group, or one of the small bands which wintered near Farewell

CARIBOU

SURVEY-INVENTORY PROGRESS REPORT - 1970

Game Management Unit 18 and western part of GMU 19 (Western Kuskokwim Mts.-
Kilback Mts. Herd)

Seasons and Bag Limits

August 10 - March 31

5 Caribou

Harvest and Hunting Pressure

Hunting pressure is light and sporadic. Except for occasional air-borne hunters, contact with caribou is limited to occasional hunting trips from various villages or contact incidental to other activities.

The actual harvest is unknown but appears to be negligible.

Composition and Production

No data have been gathered in this area.

Management Summary and Conclusions

The raising of the bag limit from three to five has not materially affected the harvest this year. No change is recommended.

CARIBOU

SURVEY-INVENTORY PROGRESS REPORT 0 1970

Game Management Units 19 and 21 - (Beaver Mountains Herd)

Seasons and Bag Limits

August 10 - March 31

5 Caribou

Harvest and Hunting Pressure

Hunting pressure is negligible. Two caribou were known to have been taken in 1970-71. None are known to have been taken on their wintering area west and north of the Beaver Mountains.

Composition and Production

No composition data were gathered. On April 10, 1970 a reconnaissance of the Beaver Mountains area was made. Approximately 1,100 caribou were found on the northwest slopes of the Beavers. On May 15, 1970 the same area was examined. About 700 caribou were seen, of which 150, or about 27 percent, were calves.

Caribou move into this area as early as the first week in March, and many remain in the general area all summer and fall. Most of these caribou apparently winter on the Dishna -

CARIBOU

SURVEY-INVENTORY PROGRESS REPORT - 1970

Game Management Units 19, 20C, and 21 - (Central and Eastern Kuskokwim Mts. Herd)

Seasons and Bag Limits

Units 19 & 21	August 10 - March 31	5 Caribou
Unit 20C	August 10 - March 31	3 Caribou

Harvest and Hunting Pressure

The extent to which caribou inhabit the Kuskokwim Mountains from the Innoko River east is mostly unknown. Harvest is mainly by hunters from McGrath who take caribou wintering on the Nixon Fork flats. Approximately 30 caribou were taken by McGrath hunters in 1970-71. About 15 caribou were taken by Nikolai hunters early in the winter for the first time in many years.

Composition and Production

No data on composition or productivity have been gathered. On 11 April 1970, about 700 caribou were found on the north side of the Sunshine Mountains.

Scattered caribou have been found in the Cloud

No changes in season or bag limits are recommended. Because of the caribou's erratic and unpredictable movements and the fact that a harvest can occur only when the animals are accessible near the Steese or Taylor Highways, it is impossible to forecast future harvests. Should an over-harvest appear to be occurring the situation could be controlled by an emergency field announcement curtailing the season and/or lessening the bag limit.

Submitted by: Larry Jennings, Game Biologist III

has been suggested earlier. Evaluation of all calf crops (14% of the herd in 1969) and spring yearlings (13% of the herd) indicates an annual increment exceeding the harvest for the 1969-70 season. This may be the case in the 1970-71 season if survival counts in spring 1971 show an increment paralleling a 15% calf crop last fall. Productivity and survival appear to exceed hunting harvest and natural mortality. It is recommended that seasons and bag limits remain unchanged.

Submitted by: Mel Buchholtz, Game Biologist II

Management Summary and Recommendations

Harvest this year appears to be about normal for the Arctic caribou herd. With a population of 242,000 animals, it appears that the current harvest is only minimally affecting the population. It is recommended that the liberal season and bag limits remain unchanged.

Submitted by: Robert E. Pegau, Game Biologist II

CARIBOU

SURVEY-INVENTORY PROGRESS REPORT - 1970

Game Management Units 24, 25, and 26 - (Porcupine Herd)

Seasons and Bag Limits

No closed season

No Limit

Harvest and Hunting Pressure

These animals are accessible only to a limited number of villages.

Composition and Productivity

Very little information was obtained last year. Currently the Bureau of Land Management is planning an aerial census of the Porcupine Herd during the post calving concentrations to obtain an estimate of the number of animals in this herd.

Management Summary and Recommendations

There is very little information available about this herd. There is increased activity from oil development in the area utilized by this herd. A census is being planned for this coming year. It is recommended that the liberal bag limit and season remain unchanged.

Management Summary and Conclusions

The Unit 1 brown bear harvest is small. Determination of whether even this is too many bears to allow a trophy population to be maintained (which seems doubtful) will have to await the accumulation of additional data, particularly age data.

Recommendations

No regulatory changes can be recommended on the basis of information currently available.

Submitted by: Alan Courtright, Game Biologist III

