BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS OF BARREN-GROUND CARIBOU OF THE CENTRAL ARCTIC HERD ADJACENT TO THE TRANS-ALASKA OIL PIPELINE

by
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THE TRANS-ALASKA OIL PIPELINE

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A

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ABSTRACT

Concern over impact of the pipeline and haul road on normal caribou behavioral patterns prompted study of environmental factors affecting herd activity. Seasonal and sexual differences were found in activity budgets and cycles. In winter, the period of the rest and activity cycle is approximately twice that for summer. In summer, the cycle period for cow groups is longer than for bull groups; the winter cycle is not sex dependent. Circadian activity patterns are synchronized with dawn and dusk. Northward spring movements of parturient cows and their avoidance of riparian habitats are attributed to wolf predation pressure. Caribou harassment by parasitic insects results in distinct behavioral and movement responses. Winter snow characteristics are primarily responsible for caribou distribution and movements. Pipeline construction resulted in little apparent disruption of behavioral patterns of bulls; however, its influence was most evident on distribution and activity of cow-calf groups between calving and rut.

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"'Well,' I added, as the duck paddled along slowly, displaying its intricately patterned feathers, 'that's just the way I feel right now, as though the universe were too frighteningly queer to be understood by minds like ours. It's not a popular view. One is supposed to flourish Ockham's razor and reduce hypotheses about a complex world to human proportions. Certainly I try. Mostly I come out feeling that whatever else the universe may be, it's so-called simplicity is a trick, perhaps like that bird out there. I know we have learned a lot, but the scope is too vast for us. Every now and then if we look behind us, everything has changed. It isn't precisely that nature tricks us. We trick ourselves with our own ingenuity. I don't believe in simplicity.'"

- Loren Eiseley, <u>All the Strange Hours</u>