

Introduction to the Mountain Caribou in Managed Forests Program

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The following group of papers focusses on the woodland caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*) of southeastern and east-central British Columbia. These animals, often known as "mountain caribou", inhabit mountainous terrain in which the winter snowpack is commonly 2 or 3 meters deep. Terrestrial forage lichens are absent from most habitat types. Shrubs are used by caribou in early winter, but are usually buried under the snowpack by midwinter. During most of the winter, mountain caribou feed on arboreal lichens. Arboreal forage lichens are abundant only in late-successional stands. Thus, the problems of integrating caribou habitat management and forest harvesting differ from those in the boreal forest, where good terrestrial forage production often occurs earlier in forest succession. In the range of mountain caribou, as in other areas, forestry activities also have the potential to increase disturbance and human-induced mortality, and to alter predator-prey relationships.

The Mountain Caribou in Managed Forests (MCMF) program was begun in 1988 by the Ministry of Environment in Prince George to address the question: *Can forest stands be managed, through silvicultural systems and habitat enhancement techniques, to sustain both timber harvest and mountain caribou habitat over the long term?* An interagency Technical Working Group, based in Prince George, oversaw caribou studies (described by Terry *et al.*, this issue.) and habitat management trials (described by Armleder & Stevenson, this issue.) aimed at developing stand-level strategies that

would be applicable throughout the range of mountain caribou. That work has resulted in preliminary recommendations (Stevenson *et al.*, 1994).

By 1990, the need to address issues of landscape-level habitat management for caribou at a provincial level had become apparent. A provincial MCMF Committee was formed to develop consistent habitat management strategies for caribou. That group, described below by McKinnon, oversaw the work reported by Simpson *et al.*

The MCMF program has been supported by many funders and participants. Major participants that have provided continuity throughout the program are B.C. Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, B.C. Ministry of Forests, and Wildlife Habitat Canada. As well, specific subprojects have been funded by the B.C. Habitat Conservation Fund, Canada-B.C. Forest Resources Development Agreement, Canada-B.C. Partnership Agreement on Forest Resource Development, Mica Wildlife Compensation Program, Revelstoke Reservoir Compensation Program, and several forest companies.

References

- Stevenson, S.K., H.M. Armleder, M.J. Jull, D.G. King, E.L. Terry, G.S. Watts, B.N. McLellan & K.N. Child. 1994. *Mountain Caribou in Managed Forests: preliminary recommendations for managers*. B.C. Min. Forests and B.C. Min. Environ., Lands and Parks. Victoria, B.C. 33 p.