

# Barren-ground Caribou in the NWT Porcupine Herd



The Porcupine caribou herd is one of nine barren-ground caribou herds that spend all or part of their time in the Northwest Territories (NWT).

## Porcupine caribou range

The Porcupine caribou herd range includes the NWT, Yukon and Alaska, with the calving grounds located along the Arctic coast in Alaska and Yukon. Much of the herd's calving and post-calving ranges exist within the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge on the North Slope in Alaska.

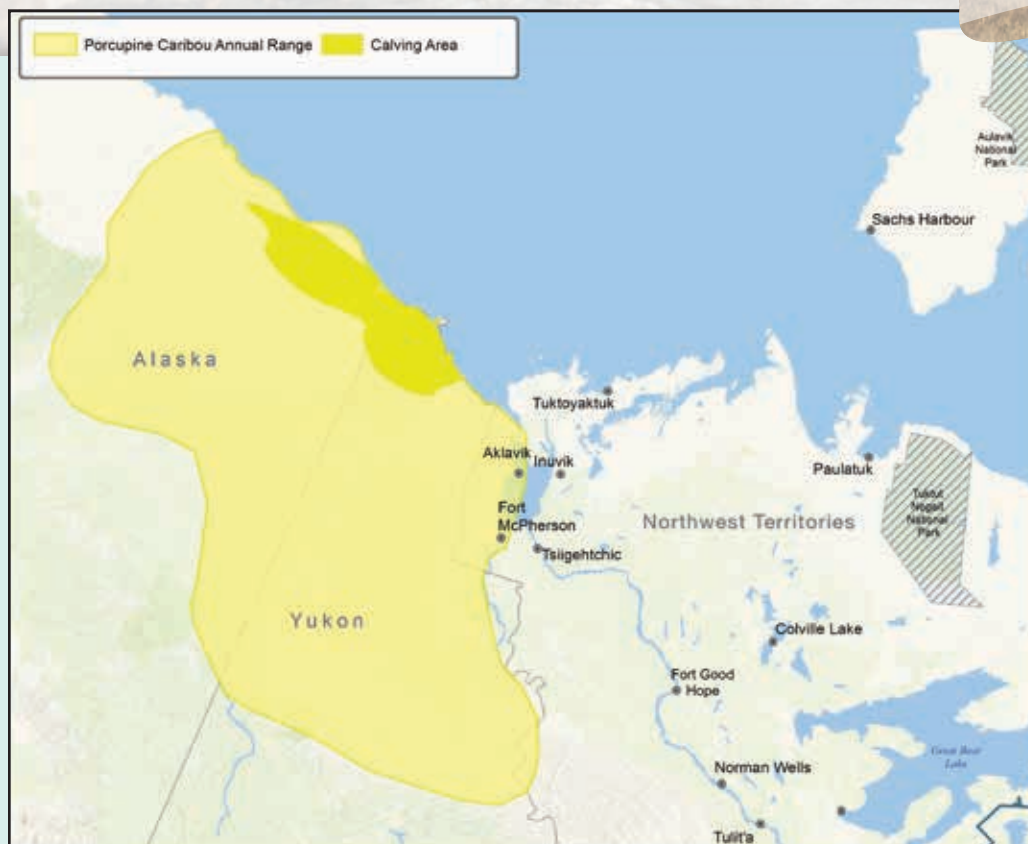
## Population

The latest population estimate of the Porcupine caribou herd is 218,000 (2017), up from 197,000 animals in 2013. It is currently the only herd in North America at its recorded maximum.

However, the relatively low reproductive rate of the herd means it is more vulnerable to the impacts of increased mortality than other herds in northern Canada, and could have a hard time recovering during periods of low numbers.



Photo: Peter Mather



The Porcupine caribou herd is currently one of only three barren-ground herds harvested by NWT residents for which there are currently no Aboriginal harvest restrictions. The majority of Porcupine caribou are harvested by Gwich'in and Inuvialuit harvesters from the NWT communities of Aklavik, Inuvik, Fort McPherson and Tsiigehtchic. The herd is also harvested by hunters in Yukon and Alaska.

## Shared management

Caribou management decisions in the NWT are made collaboratively. The Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) works side by side with Indigenous governments and organizations, renewable resources boards and affected communities. Where caribou herds migrate across territorial borders, we coordinate with neighbouring governments.

The Porcupine herd is managed under two agreements: the International Porcupine Caribou Agreement (IPCA) between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United States, and the Porcupine Caribou Management Agreement (PCMA) in Canada. The IPCA (1987) established the International Porcupine Caribou Board. The PCMA (1985) established the Porcupine Caribou Management Board, which includes representation from the Gwich'in Tribal Council, Inuvialuit Game Council, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, Na-cho Nyäk Dün, GNWT, Government of Canada and Yukon Government.



### A Leader in Co-Management

Established in 1985, the Porcupine Caribou Management Board is one of the oldest caribou management boards in northern Canada, and is a model for shared decision-making. While it does not make laws or regulations, its recommendations carry the weight of the federal, territorial and Indigenous governments represented on the Board.

The parties to the PCMA have taken a number of actions to protect the Porcupine caribou herd and its habitat in Canada. These include:

- Establishment of Ivvavik National Park, under the Inuvialuit Final Agreement, to protect the calving grounds of the herd in Canada
- Land withdrawal of the Yukon North Slope west of the Babbage River, under the Inuvialuit Final Agreement
- Establishment of Vuntut National Park, under the Vuntut Gwitchin Final Agreement in Yukon
- Development of a Harvest Management Plan and Implementation Plan, which coordinate management actions for the herd according to its size and status.
- Continued participation and support for the PCMB
- Areas identified under the Aklavik Community Conservation Plan where no development is allowed, due to extreme cultural and renewable resource significance and sensitivity

## Shared responsibility

We have a shared responsibility to support the Porcupine caribou herd through its entire population cycle, including periods of highs and lows. It is up to all responsible parties to work together to protect this shared resource and ensure we are using the best information – including scientific, traditional and local knowledge – to make good decisions about sustainably managing wildlife, the environment and development.

A 2017 Tax Reform Bill in the United States opened up lands in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) for oil and gas exploration and drilling. The GNWT, along with other Canadian parties, supports the permanent protection of the Porcupine herd and its calving and post-calving ranges within ANWR.

