

SK2 Central - Caribou population monitoring

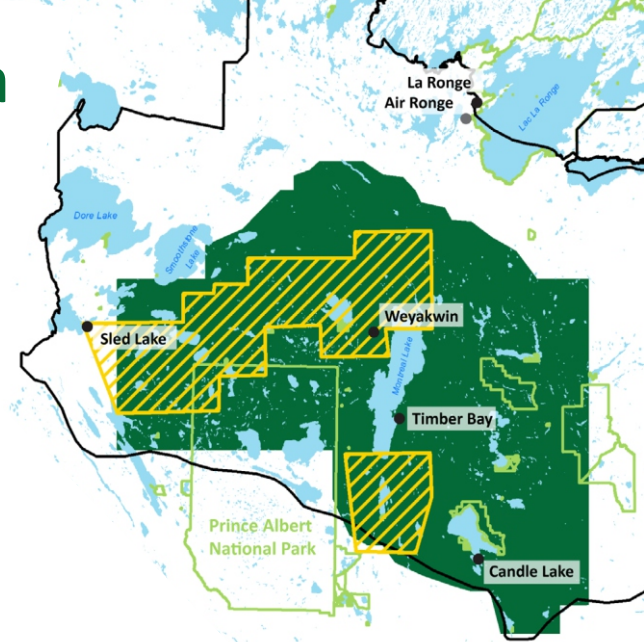
Woodland caribou are integral to northern Saskatchewan's boreal forest and are a culturally significant species to Indigenous peoples. Caribou are impacted by landscape disturbances that alter older conifer forests and peatlands including industrial activity, roads, forest harvest and wildfire. Limited population data for caribou makes it harder to build conservation plans or track success. To address this information gap, **the province established a population monitoring program from 2017–2019 within SK2 Central.**

What we did:

1. Located caribou winter foraging areas using helicopters.



2. Collected fecal pellets for DNA samples to identify individual caribou.



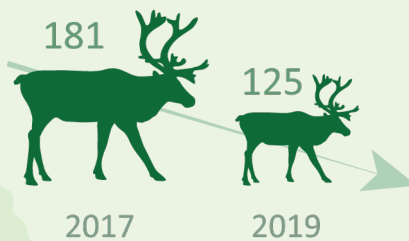
SK2 Central Boundary
Parks
Waterbodies
Caribou Pellet Collection
PAGE 2007 Survey Area
SK2 Central 2017-2019 Study Area

To estimate longer term trends, 2017-19 population sizes were estimated for a portion of SK2 Central that was previously surveyed in 2007 within the Prince Albert Greater Ecosystem (PAGE) study area.

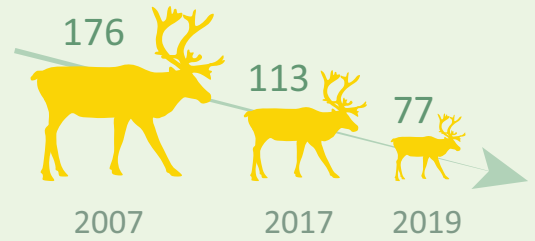
What we found:

We observed a **significant decline in both female and male caribou numbers** in the SK2 Central and PAGE study areas.

SK2 Central study area:



PAGE study area:



These declines suggest that **current habitat conditions within SK2 Central are not sufficient to maintain a self-sustaining caribou population** and that additional efforts are to reduce human-caused disturbance.



These results are critical to Saskatchewan's conservation efforts and the implementation of the *Range Plan for Woodland Caribou in Saskatchewan – SK2 Central (SK2 Central Range Plan)*.