



Backgrounder for Owl-Flintstone Lake caribou range in Manitoba

- Reindeer and caribou are the same species, *rangifer tarandus*. (www.IUCNredlist.org/details/29742/0)

Federal Recovery Strategy

- Caribou require large areas comprised of continuous tracts of undisturbed habitat rich in mature to old-growth coniferous forest, lichens, muskegs, peat lands, and upland or hilly areas.
- Boreal caribou are limited in their potential to recover from rapid, severe population declines. Habitat alteration (i.e. habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation) from both anthropogenic and natural sources, and increased predation as a result of habitat alteration have led to local population declines throughout their distribution.
- The federal recovery strategy identifies 65% undisturbed habitat in a range as the disturbance management threshold, which provides a measurable probability (60%) for a local population to be self-sustaining. This threshold is considered a minimum threshold because at 65% undisturbed habitat there remains a significant risk (40%) that local populations will not be self-sustaining.
- The Owl-Flintstone population of woodland caribou is classified by Environment Canada as “As Likely As Not Self-Sustaining”
- Only 61% of the range of the Owl-Flintstone range is undisturbed habitat.

Provincial Strategies

- Woodland caribou are elusive and relatively sedentary animals that are highly symbolic of the northern Canadian wilderness. They are an indicator of ecosystem health and their continued presence on the boreal landscape is a measure of our success in managing human impacts on the boreal landscape.
- On smaller ranges, such as the Owl-Flintstone range, threats tend to be more concentrated and have more immediate impacts to the population. The threats identified for the high-risk ranges are primarily of anthropogenic origins.
- The identified threats include:
 - Habitat loss, alteration, fragmentation through landscape changes resulting from industrial activities;
 - Landscape changes as a result of natural disturbances including wildfire;
 - Landscape changes resulting from existing and development of new linear features;
 - Disturbance by other human activities (e.g. recreational activities)
- Manitoba will:
 - Ensure that decisions made will balance the demand for resource use, boreal forest maintenance and boreal woodland caribou conservation.
 - Protect recovery habitat which will include calving, nursery, winter core areas and other identified important areas of the Owl-Flintstone range inside and outside of Nopiming Provincial Park, within the current established legislative framework to ensure the long-term persistence of the Owl-Flintstone population.
 - Consider expanding and/or establishing new protected areas to secure specific, valuable caribou habitat components while recognizing the dynamics of forest succession.
- Habitat considered critical for the continued viability of a woodland caribou range will be protected by legal designation. No development will occur within these protected areas. Calving areas, travel corridors, wintering areas or other habitat may be considered for protection.



Leading Research

- Primary threats to survival and recovery:
 - Habitat loss and degradation due to industrial development (for example, oil and gas development, logging, and associated roads, seismic and power lines).
 - Habitat disturbance harms boreal caribou not just through direct loss of suitable habitat or by creating zones of avoidance, but also by creating conditions that serve to increase other hooved species like deer and moose, and therefore the level of predation boreal caribou face.
- Clearcuts should be buffered by at least 12 km of intact forest for caribou to have a greater than 50% chance of survival.

Sources:

Environment Canada. 2012. [Recovery Strategy for the Woodland Caribou \(*Rangifer tarandus caribou*\), Boreal population, in Canada.](#)

Manitoba Conservation. 2011. [Action Plans for Boreal Woodland Caribou Ranges in Manitoba.](#)

Ecojustice. 2012. [Failure to Protect: Grading Canada's Speices at Risk Laws.](#)

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Vors, LS, JA Schaefer, BA Pond, AR Rodgers and BR Patterson. 2007. Woodland caribou extirpation and anthropogenic landscape disturbance in Ontario. Journal of Wildlife Management 71, 1249-1256.

(http://www.biology.ualberta.ca/faculty/mark_boyce/vors_caribou/Caribou_Population_Dynamics/Selected_Publications.html)