

Office list
5/1/53



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release APRIL 30, 1953

CANADA AND UNITED STATES JOIN FORCES IN CARIBOU SURVEYS

Preliminary results of caribou surveys being conducted jointly this spring by the Canadian Wildlife Service of the Dominion's Department of Resources and Development and the Department of the Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service were announced today by Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay.

Aerial surveys in northeastern Alaska and northwestern Canada in March and April revealed a herd of approximately 20,000 caribou moving towards the Arctic coast along the western slope of the Richardson mountains in northern Yukon. Movements of stragglers and density of old tracks indicated that the herd, when crossing the Porcupine River just below the junction of the Bell River, had wintered in the upper Porcupine Basin in the Yukon and around the headwaters of the Black and Salmon Trout Rivers in Alaska. Areas between the Mackenzie and Yukon Rivers and between the Peel River and the Arctic coast were covered.

During the course of the early surveys, a team composed of wildlife specialists from both sides of the border landed their plane near moving lines of caribou on several occasions and made counts of last year's calves. Movements, numbers, herd compositions, feeding habits, predator relationships and other characteristics of the caribou will be studied throughout the course of the surveys. In late May, a camp will be established in the caribou calving area near the mouth of the Firth River on the Yukon coast. Observations will be continued in both Alaska and Canada until June.

The joint surveys will aid biologists of both countries in determining the overall population, rate of increase, and range of the caribou in the far-flung international area. This information will be used as a basis for future management, regulations, and protection measures to assure the perpetuation of the species.

Because Canada and the United States conducted separate surveys previously, the results have not been entirely satisfactory. As the animals have no regard for international boundaries in migrating this year's surveys are expected to give a complete picture of the international herd throughout the entire range.

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