

Biologist recommends Caribou closed season

By Michael Bloomfield
Regional Wildlife Biologist

As Edson regional wildlife biologist I am responsible for wildlife management in an area of approximately 20,000 square miles.

Amongst my duties are collection and interpretation of information on wildlife populations and habitat, review of numerous land development of sport-hunting and commercial

trapping seasons. In addition, I am provincial coordinator for caribou management.

Since my arrival we have thoroughly reviewed the existing data on caribou

distributions and the advantages and benefits of continued hunting in the face of rapidly increasing industrial development.

As a result the Fish and Wildlife Division considers provincial caribou populations to be threatened and has identified caribou management as a high priority. Furthermore, a total closure on caribou hunting was recommended

throughout the province until the necessary research and inventories, have been completed, an adequate management plan has been designed and sufficient improvement has occurred to justify reopening the season.

However, there appears to be a need to publicly express our concern and share our reasoning with others concerned about the continued survival of caribou in the

region and province. Bob Tanghe's recent column provides me the opportunity.

Caribou are a species highly sensitive to industrial activity and hunting because of their traditional habits, curiosity, herding behaviour, low reproduction and dependence on mature forests. This has been documented throughout Canada and in Europe.

In recent years the size, distribution and quality of caribou populations in Alberta have decreased considerably. The decline is largely due to the combined effect of logging, oil and gas activity and recreation. More specifically critical areas were destroyed, traditional movements and habits were disrupted and increased access led to harassment from all terrain vehicles and excessive harvests of bands in accessible areas.

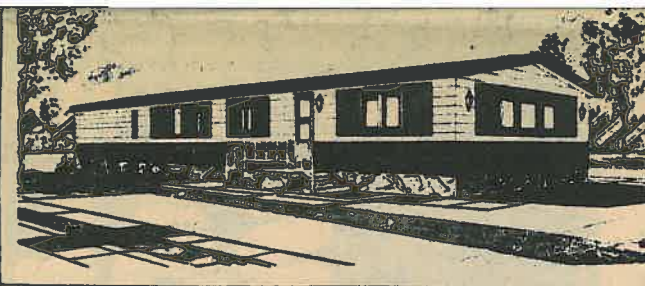
The overall result has been a decline in calf production and survival, loss of local traditions, reductions in the quality of prime bulls and a general population decline. Furthermore, because caribou frequently travel in groups and traditionally use certain areas they are quite vulnerable to hunting pressure as areas are developed.

Additionally, because both sexes have antlers many hunters are unable to distinguish between cows and bulls. Therefore, even relatively small harvests can cause serious problems and even eliminate local bands if hunting pressure is concentrated in only a few areas. This in fact has occurred in our area. As a result, continued seasons are not recommended at this time



A TYPICAL HERD OF CARIBOU race across in front of a wildlife enthusiast's camera.

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Mainstream Canada

Promoting the Games

By W. Roger Worth

Canada recorded its first known lottery-related fatality recently when 32-year-old Newfoundlanders Gerald Roberts, an alcoholic, died after apparently consuming too much booze.

Roberts, who left a wife and three boys, became a millionaire little more than a year ago when his numbers came up in the Loto Canada draw.

*Roger Worth is Director,
Public Affairs,
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Independent Business.*

While Robert's sad demise is perhaps unimportant in the overall scheme of things, it raises questions about the methods Canada's bureaucrats turned hucksters are using to flog their lottery wares across the nation.

Here's Bonanza veteran Lorne Greene, for example, front and centre on the national television network, cajoling Canadians to buy the \$10 tickets that have created more millionaires than the Klondike Gold Rush.

The provinces and regions of the country, following Ottawa's lead, are spending millions of dollars on high-priced, high-powered advertising to

win business away from their federal counterparts.

The argument is not whether Canada should have lotteries, or who should control them. Lotteries and games of chance have become a way of life, particularly since Ottawa set up Loto Canada to help finance the debt left from Montreal's Olympic debacle.

In addition, the financial support for amateur sports and community projects provided by the proceeds of provincial and federal sweepstakes has been helpful.

Still, the system seems to have gone berserk. Advertising budgets for virtually all of the lotteries have rocketed as the market peaked.

Now, federal government promoters are attempting to squeeze the small businesses who made the schemes so successful. Supermarkets are allowed to sell Loto Canada tickets, pulling business away from the corner store.

The basic question, though, is why Canadians are besieged with material promoting the instant millionaire. In their claims, few of the advertisements mention the fact that only one buyer in every 625,000 (the best odds) is a winner.

Gerald Roberts was a winner. You can bet Loto Canada will not be using his name in upcoming promotions.

We urgently need to conduct basic inventories and applied research and develop a thorough management plan before we should consider any further harvests. Resident-only seasons are not the answer because resident hunters now kill the overwhelming majority of caribou each year.

In conclusion it should be clear that my recommendations are not an indictment of hunters but reflect a concern for the continued survival of caribou in the region and province. We have no other choice. Continued hunting and unrestricted development in caribou range could result in disappearance of our resident populations.

My proposal reflects the cautious approach we now should take with caribou and support from local residents and sportsmen will not only ensure the survival of caribou in the area but demonstrate that hunters also are able to make sacrifices for the greater good.

Good Try!

After trying everything else, the creditor sent a letter with a picture of his little daughter enclosed. The caption read, "The reason I need the money."

The next week a photo of a beautiful girl in a bathing suit appeared on the man's desk, also with a caption: "The reason I can't pay!"

Stubbornness does have one advantage: you always know what you are going to be thinking tomorrow.