

Jasper National Park Caribou: Statement by Recreational Users and Conservationists

February 16, 2021



Jasper caribou. Photo © John E. Marriott, wildernessprints.com

The Alpine Club of Canada (ACC), Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA), Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) Northern Alberta Chapter, and David Suzuki Foundation are issuing the following statement:

We are very concerned that today, February 16, Parks Canada is lifting its winter-time backcountry access restrictions in Jasper National Park's Tonquin caribou range.

There are so few caribou left in the herds in Jasper, that every single individual counts. The precautionary principle is required in this situation.

The groups ask Parks Canada to be guided by best available evidence and:

- close Tonquin backcountry to human access all snow season, instead of opening it mid-February for recreation and lodging operations;
- re-assess and reduce impacts to caribou of Tonquin summer-fall backcountry access.

In the 1960s, southern Jasper National Park had hundreds of caribou. Today there are fewer than 60 animals left. One herd is gone, two more are at such low numbers that they might not last much longer. The Tonquin herd is the largest herd left; it only has 45 caribou, including 10 or less breeding females. Evidence from Jasper's recently-extirpated Maligne herd, as well as other available [scientific research](#), indicates more should be done to limit Tonquin access.

Backcountry ski and snowmobile supply routes into Jasper's Tonquin Valley bring noise, packed trails and people into high quality caribou habitat (Figure 1). This activity can harm caribou in three ways: stressing the caribou, displacing them from the best habitat, and making it easier for wolves to gain access and hunt them.

The Alpine Club of Canada has voluntarily suspended bookings at its Tonquin backcountry Wates-Gibson hut for the entire winter. [The groups are asking](#) all backcountry winter recreationists to lead by example and to ask their peers to stay out of the Tonquin backcountry all snow season to support caribou survival.

The groups' January 28, 2021 [statement](#) is attached for reference.

If you can, please write Parks Canada's CEO Ron Hallman (ron.hallman@canada.ca) stating your concern with today's decision to re-open winter backcountry access into Tonquin caribou range, and request that Parks Canada:

- close Tonquin backcountry to human access all snow season, instead of opening it mid-February for recreation and lodging operations; and
- re-assess and reduce impacts to caribou of Tonquin summer-fall backcountry access.

And please copy Jasper National Park (pc.jasperinfo.pc@canada.ca) and AWA's ccampbell@abwild.ca

Thank you for taking action for Jasper caribou!

- Carolyn

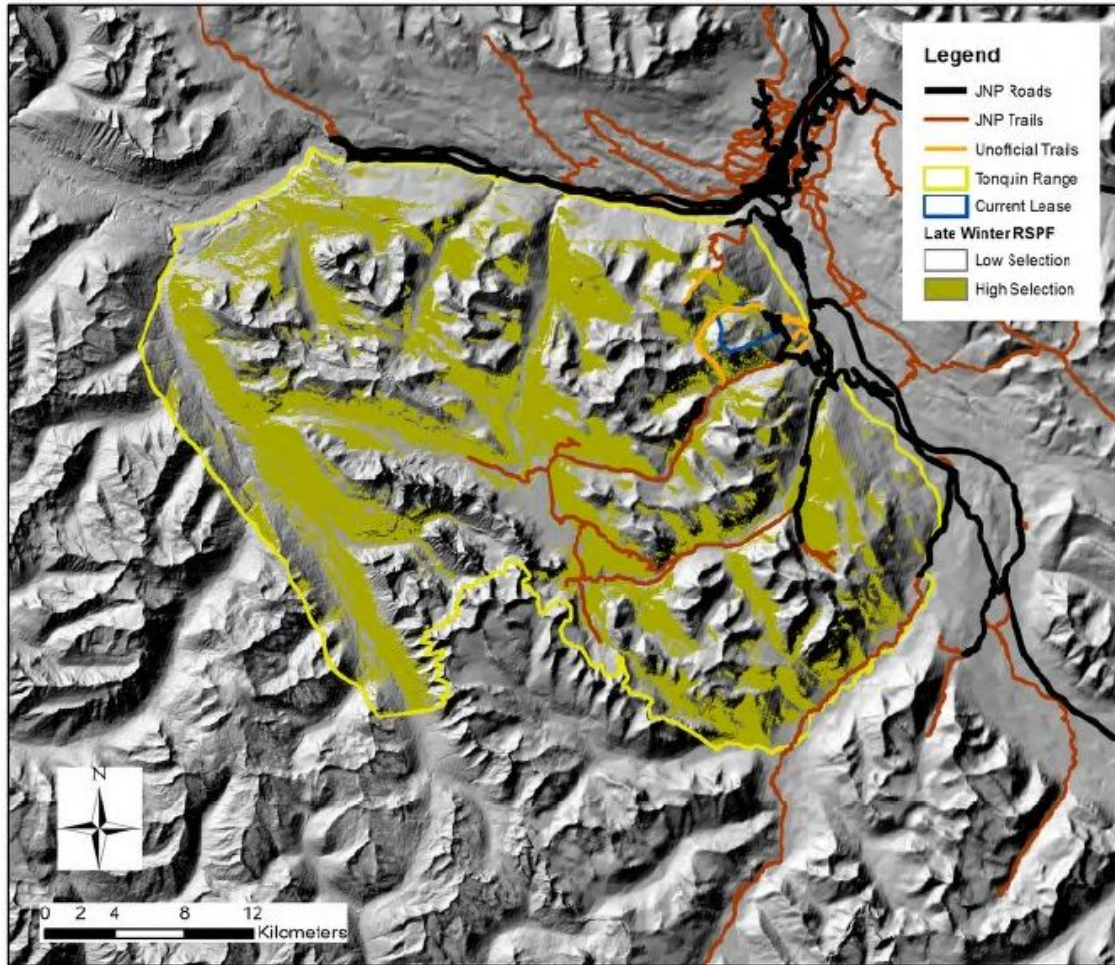


Figure 1. Spatial representation of access and habitat classes 3, 4 and 5 during the late winter (January 22nd to May 22nd) season 2002-2009. Tonquin Valley ski and snowmobile supply routes (in red) make paths far into high quality 'late winter' caribou habitat (shaded yellow/green areas). (Source: [Czetwertynski and Schmiegelow, Tonquin Caribou Risk Assessment Final Report, 2014](#))



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