



Maternal Penning to Enhance Survival of Caribou within the Klinse-Za Herd

External: Issued April 23, 2017

This external memo is forwarded to report on events and conditions occurring since the caribou cow capture that took place on March 22 and 23, 2017.



Figure 1. Scenes from inside the 2017 Klinse-Za maternity pen: caribou at one of the feeders (left) and the weight station (right).

Days in pen → 31

Days to release → 90

Summary of significant events since capture

- Although not yet confirmed, evidence would suggest that one of the cows has aborted her pregnancy (sometime prior to April 15th). Stormy conditions (wind and snowfall) made it difficult to track the cow real-time without being too intrusive and since there would be little we could do to avert or direct the situation in any way, we simply monitored as best we could and collected samples when we could.
- There have been no other incidents to report. Cows are feeding well and all seem to be in fair to good condition.



- Snow conditions at the pen are very different this year. Snow depths are sufficient that we feel we need to shovel the perimeter both on the inside (so caribou don't have any chance to jump out) and on the outside (so predators cannot see, or jump into, the pen). The BC Wildfire Service (Mackenzie Base) has offered to provide in-kind support (labor) to the shepherds and a crew has been arranged to shovel snow at the pen this coming week.



Figure 2. Snow at the pen is much deeper than it has been in the previous three years.

Other news

- Our project team met in Vancouver with Environment and Climate Change Canada on April 11th where the team delivered a presentation about the importance of caribou and the maternal pen to West Moberly First Nations and Sauleteu First Nations.
- The film about the Klinse-za caribou that was produced by Isabelle Groc, "Their Land: Last of the Caribou Herd" continues to be displayed at a number of film festivals (e.g., Los Angeles, New York, Denver). The film is in competition for the Audience Awards and Isabelle notes that anyone can vote for this film on-line at (<https://theaudienceawards.com/vote>). You can also view the film there if you have not yet seen it.
- We completed a brochure for the shepherds to handout when they encounter snowmobilers and other recreationists using the road by the pen and the alpine above the pen (see below).



Maternal Penning

Mt. Bickford is the site of a protective maternal pen for caribou. The maternal penning project is an important initiative, now in its 4th year, which is helping the Klinse-Za herd avoid extinction.



Spring is calving time for the caribou. During these months, the pregnant and nursing cows are very attentive and protective of their vulnerable calves. Both cows and calves are easily stressed at this time, so it is crucial that we minimize disturbance and keep their stress low.

Legal Regulations

Please note that under the BC Wildlife Act (1996), there are **no motor vehicles allowed above 1,400 m in this area** (MU 7-31). Snowmobiles weighing > 450 kg are not allowed above 1,400m year-round, while snowmobiles < 450kg are allowed above 1,400 m ONLY from Nov 1–April 30.

Partners & Sponsors

Many thanks to our dedicated partners and generous supporters. Without their contributions the penning project would not have been possible.



Klinse-Za caribou maternal pen



***** Please ***
respect the
calving season**

There are 9 caribou cows with their calves currently living in a maternal pen on Mt Bickford. Please refrain from driving and quadding in the alpine (i.e. above 1,400m) to avoid disturbing the animals during this sensitive time.



Woodland Caribou

Woodland caribou are considered a species of Special Concern in BC and across Canada. In BC, caribou are classified into three ecotypes - Mountain, Northern and Boreal - based primarily on behavior and how they use their habitat.

The Klinse-Za herd is the Northern ecotype because they migrate long distances between seasonal habitats, eat terrestrial lichens, and over-winter at both low- and high-elevations, depending on snow conditions.

Caribou are an iconic northern species. Both male and female caribou have antlers. Caribou used to be abundant in this region, and are culturally important to indigenous communities.

Caribou Food



Klinse-Za Herd

The Klinse-Za herd belongs to the Pine group of caribou, which is composed of 4 herds that inhabit the region between the Peace Arm and the Parsnip Reach of Williston Lake: Klinse-Za, Kennedy Sliding, Scott East, and Burnt Pine.

This herd has been declining since 1997, from ~190, reaching a record low of 16 individuals in 2013. This population crisis brought together concerned First Nations communities (West Moberly and Saulteau) and other partners to implement emergency management measures intended to avoid the extinction of the herd.

The immediate cause of caribou population decline is believed to be excessive predation. As such, a multi-pronged approach that includes maternal penning, local predator control, and habitat restoration has been developed and is being implemented.



The essential purpose of a maternal pen is to protect calves from predators during the vulnerable neonatal (i.e. infant) stage. By keeping the cows and calves in a pen guarded 24/7, from late March to mid-July, we are giving those calves a much better chance of surviving to adulthood and continuing to perpetuate the herd.



While in the pen, the caribou are closely monitored for health and behavior. First Nations Caribou Keepers from West Moberly and Saulteau First Nations guard the pen from predators, feed the caribou (see 'Caribou Food') and work to minimize the disturbance from the surrounding area.

These measures have stopped the previous decline in the population and the herd has grown in size to 61 individuals.

Thank you for respecting the caribou

For more information, please contact Wildlife Informetrics at 250-997-5700 or WILD_INFO@wildlifeinformetrics.com

Figure 3. Klinse-Za caribou maternal pen brochure for handout to recreationists.



Important dates

- April 28th – delivery of final report for the 2016 mat pen results.
- May 10th – Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program tour of the mat pen .

Funding update

We now have ~\$ 540,000 confirmed funds (of the \$550,000 necessary) for the 2017 penning year so far – so pretty much there. Welcome to BC Hydro and BC Wildfire Services as new sponsors and a very genuine thanks to all the supporters of the 2017, and previous years, maternity pens.



The teams:

- Níkanêse Wah tzee Stewardship Society
 - West Moberly First Nations (Chief Roland Willson/Tamara Dokkie)
 - Saulteau First Nations (Estelle Lavis/Naomi Owens)
- Caribou Mat Pen Working Group¹
 - West Moberly First Nations (George Desjarlais/Jason Lee, alt - Jeff Richert)
 - Saulteau First Nations (Naomi Owens/Carmen Marshall)
 - Wildlife Infometrics (Scott McNay/Brian Pate, alt - Line Giguere)
- Mat Pen Technical Advisory Team²
 - Little Smokey penning trial (Kirby Smith)
 - Revelstoke penning trial (Rob Serrouya/Kelsey Furk)
 - UNBC (Kathy Parker)
 - FLNRO (Chris Addison/Chis Ritchie/Helen Schwantje)
 - MOE (Dale Seip)
- Support teams – capture specialists, veterinarian team, shepherds, lichen collectors

¹ The Caribou Mat Pen Working Group is a committee appointed by the Níkanêse Wah tzee Stewardship Society.

² The Mat Pen Technical Advisory Team is an ad hoc committee chosen by the Working Group to obtain technical advice.