

Northern Mountain Caribou

While all caribou in British Columbia are the same species, herds are generally grouped by “ecotype” based on their habitat and behaviours. Seventeen of the 54 herds located in the province are classified as the Northern Mountain Caribou (NMC) ecotype.

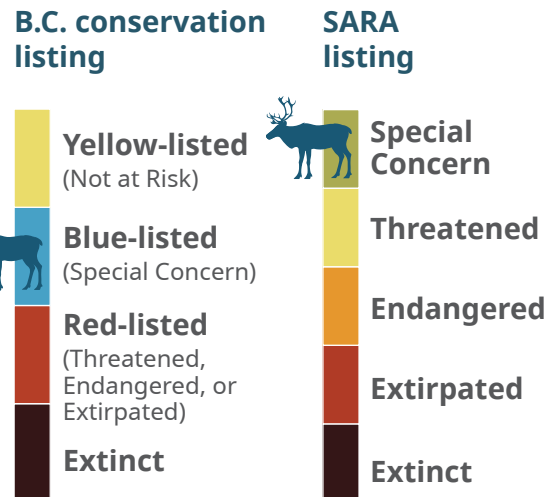
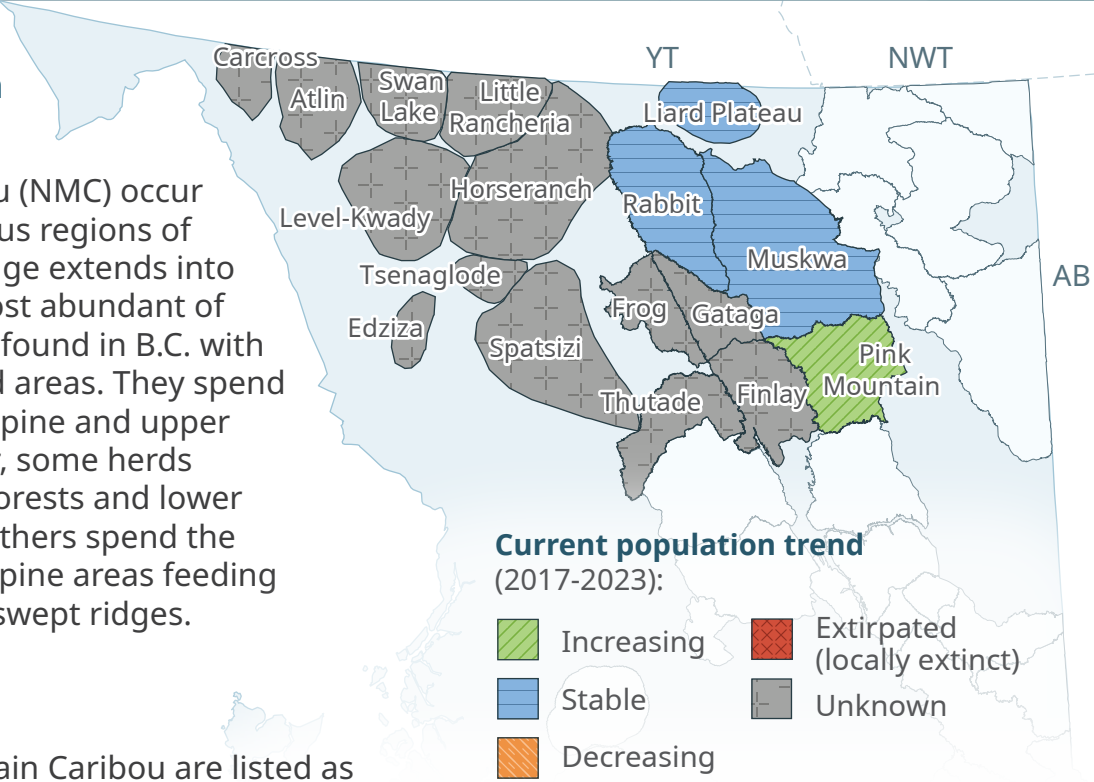
The Northern Mountain Caribou ecotype

Northern Mountain Caribou (NMC) occur throughout the mountainous regions of northern B.C., and their range extends into the Yukon. NMC are the most abundant of the three caribou ecotypes found in B.C. with access to large undisturbed areas. They spend the summer primarily on alpine and upper subalpine ranges. In winter, some herds move down to coniferous forests and lower subalpine areas, whereas others spend the winter staying up high in alpine areas feeding on ground lichens on windswept ridges.

Population status

Currently, Northern Mountain Caribou are listed as a **“Special Concern”** under the federal Species at Risk Act (SARA) and are provincially **blue-listed** (at risk, but not extirpated, endangered, or threatened). The population status of many NMC herds is unknown, and information on their distribution (to identify where range boundaries should be located) is limited. The B.C. government is monitoring and conducting research on these herds in collaboration with universities, First Nation governments, and the Yukon government to improve our understanding of Northern Mountain Caribou populations.

We do know that these herds are generally more stable and have higher population sizes than Southern or Boreal herds. Because of this, hunting of these caribou is still biologically sustainable, but only in specific Wildlife Management Units under applicable regulations.



Key threats

Human-caused habitat alterations in Northern Mountain Caribou ranges are primarily from mining and exploration, seismic lines, roads and timber harvest. While these disturbance levels are lower than for other ecotypes due to the remoteness of these herds, in some areas it has led to significant increases in wolf predation on caribou. Additional stressors include wildfires, sensory disturbances from recreational vehicles and helicopters, and human settlements.



Predation



Forest harvesting



Sensory disturbance



Climate change



Roads



Mining



Wildfire



Human settlements

Habitat condition

Key strategies for maintaining or recovering caribou include limiting disturbance in core habitat used by caribou and the surrounding matrix habitat where predator-prey dynamics influence caribou survival.

Habitat disturbance type

(clockwise from top right)

Old disturbances (includes cutblocks, damage from forest pests, and fire damage older than 40 years)

Cutblocks (includes 500-metre buffer)

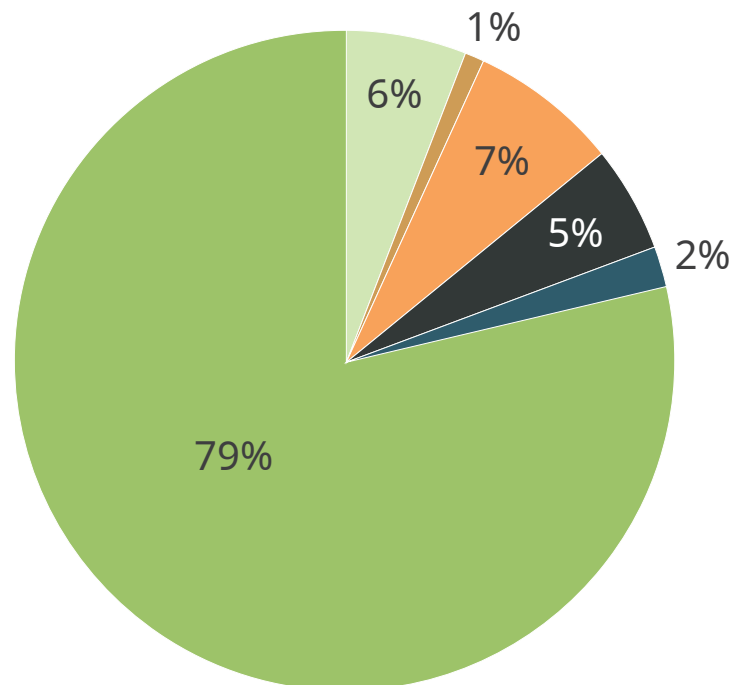
Fire (within the last 40 years)

Roads (includes 500-metre buffer)

Static disturbances (features with "permanent" footprints like mines and urban areas including 500-metre buffered area)

Undisturbed

Disturbances are "buffered" according to guidance from the Federal Recovery Strategy to account for avoidance by caribou¹.



1. Recovery Strategy for the Woodland Caribou, Southern Mountain population (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*) in Canada. 2014. [canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/species-risk-public-registry/recovery-strategies/woodland-caribou-southern-mountain-2014-final.html](https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/species-risk-public-registry/recovery-strategies/woodland-caribou-southern-mountain-2014-final.html)

Current and proposed management actions



The information necessary to identify range boundaries and core and matrix habitat for NMC is currently lacking, which makes **habitat protection** difficult.



A total of 9,372 kilometres of linear disturbances have been assessed and identified as good candidates for **habitat restoration** in the Pink Mountain range.



Tourism and recreation management in these areas is voluntary and not legally enforced.



Predator reduction has been implemented in the Pink Mountain herd range from 2019 to 2025. The results are consistent annual growth and a near doubling of the herd's size over those years.

Looking ahead

Continued monitoring, learning and adaptive management are essential parts of our work. While significant efforts have been made over many years to improve our understanding of Northern Mountain Caribou herds, their vast and remote ranges make monitoring challenging and contribute to data gaps. Work is underway to secure funding to meet the needs of Northern Mountain Caribou herds, and to establish or strengthen partnerships and collaborations to build capacity for their long-term stewardship.

To learn more about Northern Mountain Caribou recovery in B.C., visit:

gov.bc.ca/caribou-recovery



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