



# Southern Mountain Caribou

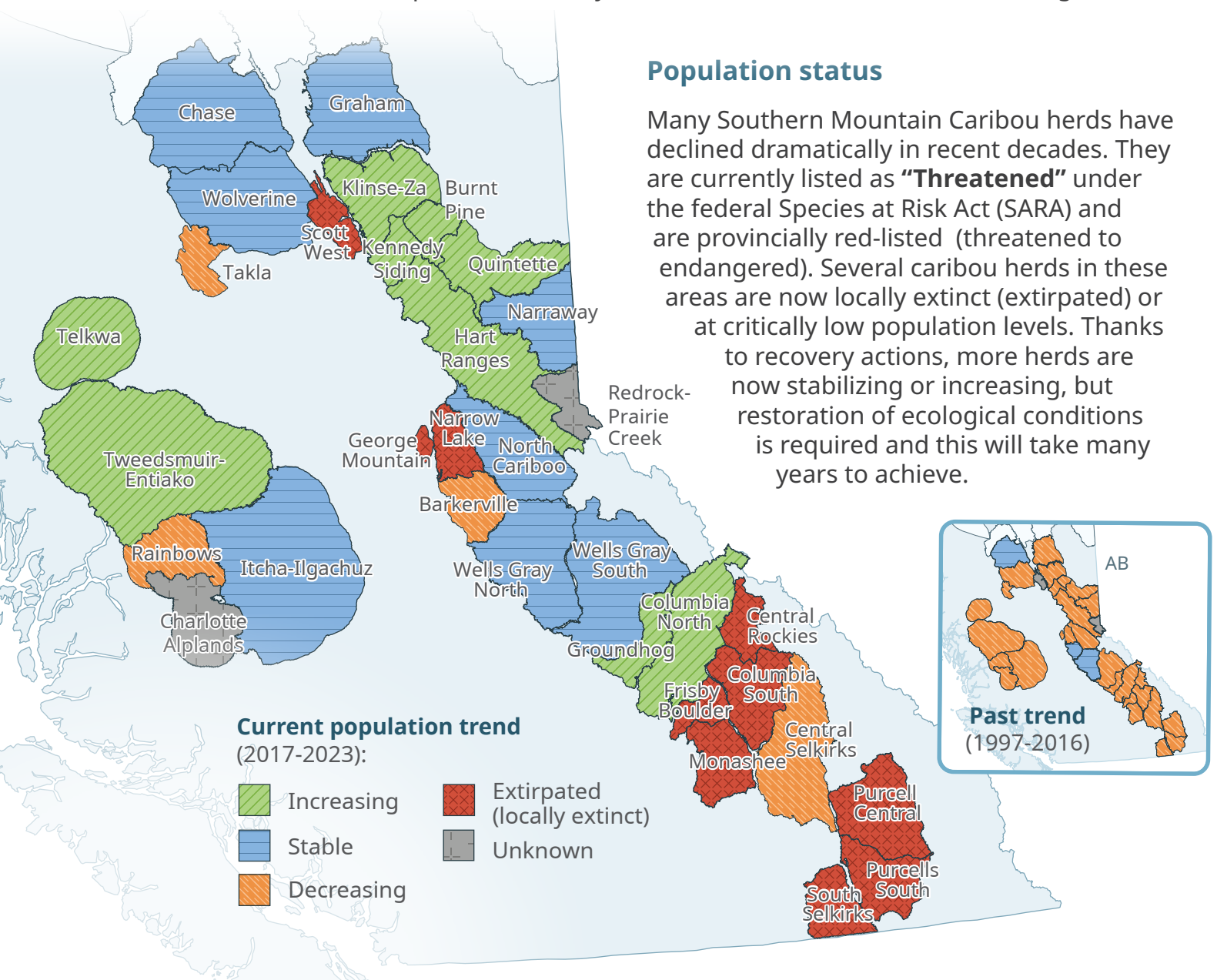
While all caribou in British Columbia are the same species, herds are generally grouped by “ecotype” based on their habitat and behaviours. Thirty-two of the 54 herds located in the province are classified as the Southern Mountain Caribou (SMC) ecotype.

## The Southern Mountain Caribou ecotype

Southern Mountain Caribou in B.C. are among the world’s southernmost caribou populations. This ecotype is further divided into a northern group, central group and southern group. Most of these caribou remain at mid to high elevations year-round, but some herds move seasonally between low-elevation forests and sub-alpine areas. They rely on large undisturbed areas of mountainous terrain with ample lichens, a key food source, both on trees and on the ground.

## Population status

Many Southern Mountain Caribou herds have declined dramatically in recent decades. They are currently listed as **“Threatened”** under the federal Species at Risk Act (SARA) and are provincially red-listed (threatened to endangered). Several caribou herds in these areas are now locally extinct (extirpated) or at critically low population levels. Thanks to recovery actions, more herds are now stabilizing or increasing, but restoration of ecological conditions is required and this will take many years to achieve.



# Caribou population size trends by group

With recovery actions

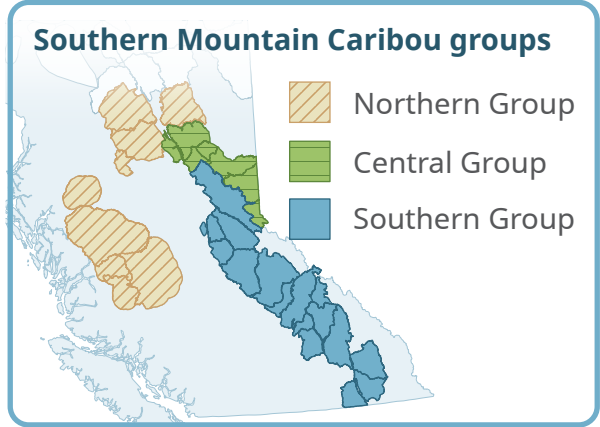
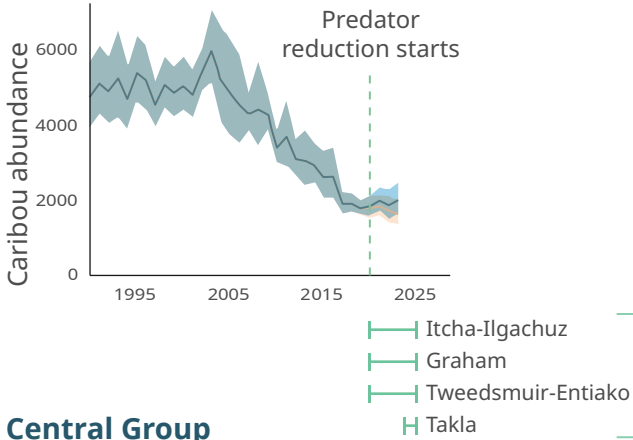
Without recovery actions

Wolf reduction

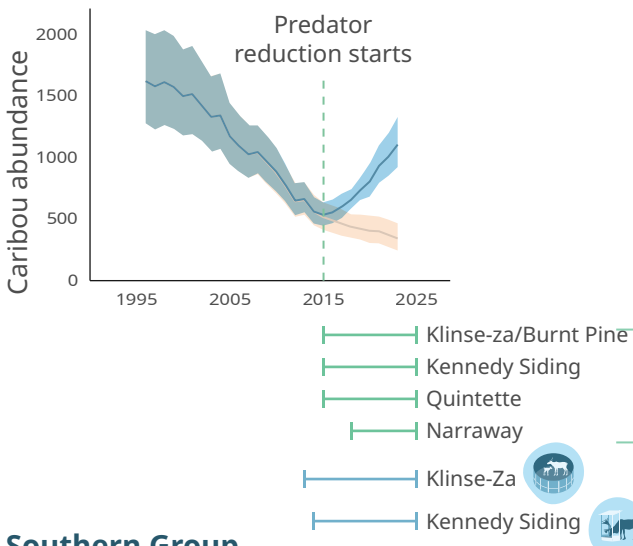
Maternal penning

Supplemental feeding

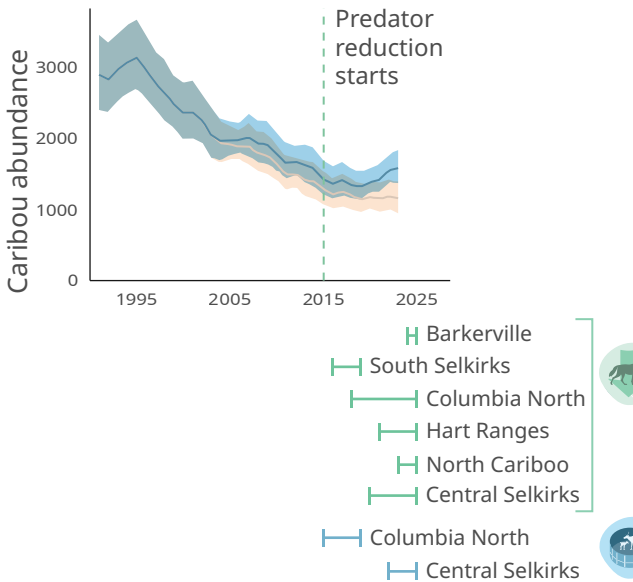
## Northern Group



## Central Group



## Southern Group



## Key threats

Human-caused landscape disturbances have significantly altered Southern Mountain Caribou habitat. Seismic lines, roads, and timber harvesting are common throughout all these ranges. The disturbances have led to significantly increased wolf predation on caribou. Additional stressors include wildfire, damage caused by forest pests, sensory disturbances from recreational vehicles and helicopters, and human settlements.



Predation



Forest harvesting



Sensory disturbance



Climate change



Roads



Forest pests



Mining



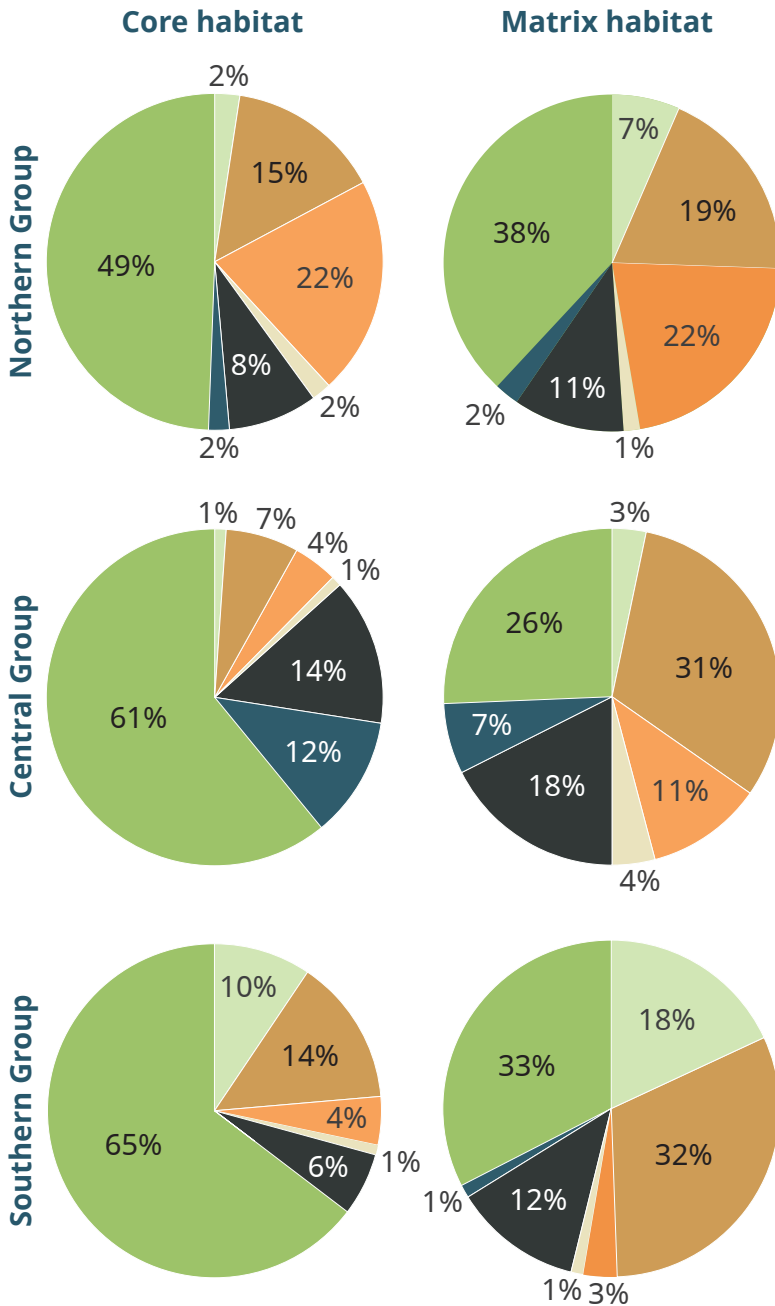
Wildfire



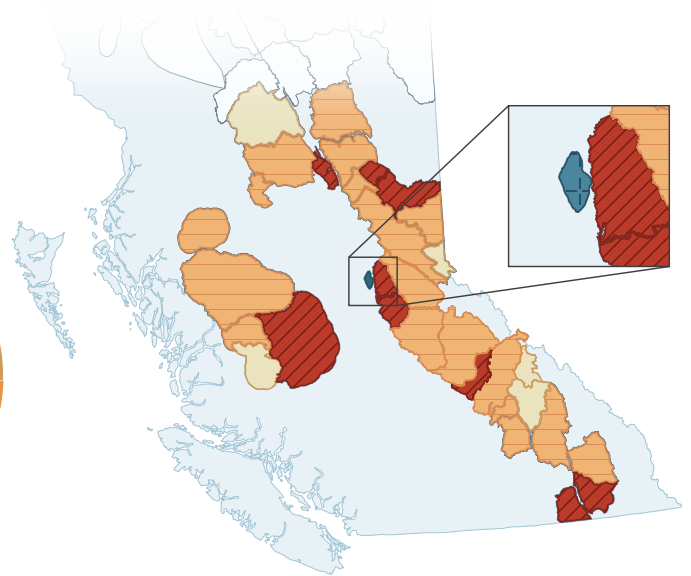
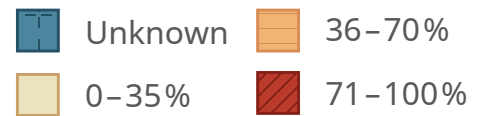
Human settlements

## Habitat condition

Key strategies to help caribou recover include minimizing disturbances in core habitat used by caribou and limiting disturbance to 35% in the surrounding matrix habitat where predator-prey dynamics influence caribou survival<sup>1</sup>.



## Percent of area disturbed



## 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<sup>1</sup>)
- Fire** (within the last 40 years)
- Pests** (forest pest outbreaks with greater than 50% canopy loss)
- Roads** (includes 500-metre buffer<sup>1</sup>)
- Static disturbances** (features with "permanent" footprints like mines and urban areas including 500-metre buffered area<sup>1</sup>)
- Undisturbed**

1. Disturbance limits and buffers to account for avoidance by and influence on caribou are in accordance with the federal Recovery Strategy:

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](http://canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/species-risk-public-registry/recovery-strategies/woodland-caribou-southern-mountain-2014-final.html)

## Current and proposed recovery actions



**Habitat protections** are present in most herd ranges, but are incomplete and may not apply to all human activities.



**Habitat restoration** is occurring in collaboration with many partners, including First Nations, other levels of government, non-governmental organizations and industry.



**Maternal penning** is occurring in the Central Selkirks and Klinse-Za.



**Supplemental feeding** trials are occurring in Kennedy Siding and Wells Gray South ranges. A one-year, high-elevation feeding pilot project occurred in the Groundhog range.



**Predator reduction** is occurring in 13 ranges as of 2025. Additional **prey stabilization** has occurred in Columbia North and parts of the Hart Ranges.



**Tourism and recreation management** is implemented via legal and voluntary snowmobile closures and through wildlife guidelines for commercial adventure tourism and backcountry recreation users.

## Looking ahead

Continued monitoring and learning are essential parts of our work. We take an adaptive management approach, where we continually assess the effectiveness of our actions and adjust our approaches as needed to achieve our recovery objectives. We continue to work with partners to improve our understanding of caribou habitat and expand habitat protections and restoration. Through several engagement processes, incremental habitat-related measures are being explored as options to support long-term recovery of Southern Mountain Caribou.

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

[gov.bc.ca/caribou-recovery](http://gov.bc.ca/caribou-recovery)



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