

2012 Chisana caribou rut count summary

Survey dates: October 15-2012

Survey time: 6.6 hrs including mob demob from HJ

Pilot: Aaron Toombs, Heli Dynamics

Aircraft: Bell L3 Long Ranger

Weather: sct cloud with most higher mountains in cloud become o/c with lowering ceiling and snow later in day, -5, winds lght and variable.

Range conditions: snow about 20 cms, ponds and small lakes just starting to freeze. Bright with good sightability in earlier day becoming grey in late aft.

Results: This annual comp count was planned to be done in conjunction with Alaska Deptmt of Fish and Game from Tok. Low ceilings and cloud delayed the count from the original survey date of Oct 10'th to the 15'th of October when we finally had favourable weather conditions. By this time the ADFG crew no longer had a helicopter on contract to count the Alaskan side of the range. A telemetry plane contracted by Wrangell St Elias Ntl Park was in place to assist the Yukon and Alaskan count was off doing other work by Oct 15'th so we had no telemetry support for this count. We found and counted 14 groups of caribou with a total of 215 caribou. We searched known rutting range between Wolverine Plateau and Kletsan Creek in the Yukon half of this herds rutting range. We tried twice to check the Koidern Mtn area for caribou but were turned back by low cloud each time.

Composition of Chisana caribou counted Oct-2012				
COWS	CALVES	IMMATURE BULLS	MATURE BULLS	TOTAL
117	23	40	35	215

We found: 20 calves/100 cows
64 bulls/100 cows

INCIDENTAL OBSERVATIONS:

Moose: We saw and recorded 12 moose observations totaling 80 moose. Nine of these were calves. We saw two bull moose on the south side of Big Boundary. We first saw a large amount of blood in the snow and thought that we were at a killsite. We checked and could not find a kill and only saw moose trax in the area. One of the bulls appeared to be standing weakly with back legs partly splayed. Our assumption is that they had been fighting and one was badly gored as a result. In our attempt to check for caribou on Koidern Mtn and the mountain to the northeast we recorded a large number of moose. In a single pass along this mountain face we recorded eight groups totaling 57 moose. Of these 10 were calves.

Goats: We saw two goats (WKA) on the west side of a mountain to the west of Kluane River.