



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL BIOLOGICAL SERVICE

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In reply refer to:

June 21, 1995

MEMO

To: Mentasta Caribou Files
From: Wildlife Research Biologist *Kurt Jenkins*
Subject: Post-calving Aggregation Count of Mentasta Caribou

On 20 June 1995, Bob Tobey (ADF&G), Lindsey Christensen (WRST-Seasonal BioTech), and I completed the post-calving aggregation count of the Mentasta Herd. The count was conducted from 0730 to 1300. Temperatures ranged from approximately 48-60 F at 4000 feet elevation during the survey. Winds were light (0-5 mph) and variable. Skies were generally cloud-free at the start of the survey. Clouds increased above 6200 feet at about 1000 on the west slopes of Mt. Sanford. We searched high elevation sites before clouds developed; thus we searched all available caribou habitat.

The survey area included from the Dadina River north and east to the West Glacier in the upper Copper River. All but two radio-collared caribou were found within this area during a comprehensive radio-tracking flight on 19 June 1995. The two exceptions were two collared cows and calves found at the base of the Copper Glacier in a group of 8 cows and 3 calves. No other caribou were seen in that area during the radio-tracking flight.

The survey area was divided into approximately equal thirds. Lindsey Christensen and Jim Hannah (pilot) searched the area between Dadina River and Sanford River from 4000 feet elevation to rock and ice. I (Kurt Jenkins) and Harley McMahon (pilot) searched from Sanford River to Boulder Creek. Bob Tobey and Lynn Ellis (pilot) searched from Boulder Creek to West Glacier.

We counted a total of 739 caribou, 613 adults and 126 calves. We counted 227 adults (many bulls) and 36 calves between Dadina and Sanford Rivers. We counted 353 adults and 88 calves between Sanford River and Boulder Creek. We counted 33 adults and 2 calves between Boulder Creek and West Glacier. Caribou were suitably aggregated, with 68% of groups on snow patches.

The total count was down 2% from last year's count of 753 Mentasta caribou. However, more calves were counted this year. The total count of adults (i.e., 613) was down approximately 11% from last year (692). Additional analysis of population trends will follow from the results of upcoming composition surveys of the Mentasta herd.

cc: Russell Galipeau, WRST
Bill Route, WRST
Bob Tobey, ADFG