

YOU'RE IN
WOODLAND
CARIBOU
COUNTRY



THE SELKIRK MOUNTAINS ARE WOODLAND CARIBOU COUNTRY



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Next time you're in a snowy Selkirk forest, look closely. You may see hoof prints the size of salad plates. These are tracks left by the snowshoe-like feet of woodland caribou in search of their winter staple, lichens that grow high on ancient alpine trees. Or you may stumble across ornate antlers regularly shed by these wild cousins of the domestic reindeer. If you're really lucky, you might catch a glimpse of this rare animal.

Woodland caribou, also known as mountain caribou, once thrived in America's northern forests. Now they're limited to a few isolated areas in the Selkirk Mountains in Idaho and Washington. The increasing impacts of humans on their habitat have made the woodland caribou one of the most critically endangered mammals in the United States. The survival of this vanishing symbol of America's wilderness heritage depends on federal and local commitments to sensible land management and respectful co-existence.

DWINDLING NUMBERS

Thousands of woodland caribou once ranged across Canada and the northern United States from Maine to Washington. After steady population declines, the U.S. government listed the woodland caribou as an endangered species in 1984, making it illegal to kill or harm a caribou or to destroy caribou habitat. Even with these protections, in the last decade caribou numbers have plunged to fewer than 1,700 in 11 herds.

Only one herd remains in the United States along the Canadian border in the Selkirk Mountains of northern Idaho and northeastern Washington. Most of the 30 to 35 members of this herd avoid the heavily trafficked U.S. portion of their range in favor of less impacted mountains in southeastern British Columbia.

Woodland caribou have been pushed toward extinction by poaching, logging and roads, which fragment and damage caribou habitat and bring increasing numbers of predators and motorized vehicles into caribou country. Snowmobiles pose a particular threat given their improved capacity to penetrate remote areas at high speeds. To avoid these machines, caribou—already struggling to survive winter's extreme conditions—must expend precious energy.

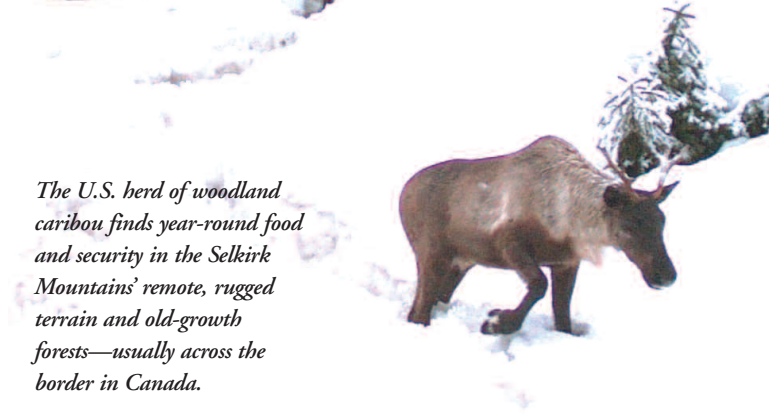


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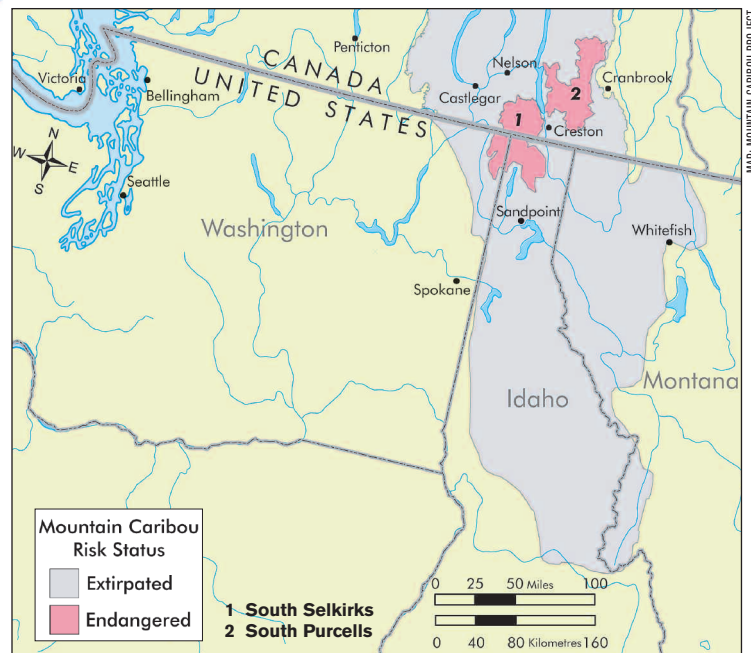
Woodland caribou typically produce a single calf per year, one of the lowest reproductive rates in the entire deer family. Shortly after birth, the calf is on its feet following its mother.



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The U.S. herd of woodland caribou finds year-round food and security in the Selkirk Mountains' remote, rugged terrain and old-growth forests—usually across the border in Canada.



MAP: MOUNTAIN CARIBOU PROJECT

The woodland caribou's range in the western states (light blue) is now limited to key habitat in Washington and Idaho (pink), which the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated a Caribou Recovery Area in 1994.

SAVE OUR CARIBOU

You may never see a woodland caribou—to escape traffic and predators, they typically seek refuge in remote high-altitude areas, often across the border in Canada. But with your help, and the efforts of Defenders of Wildlife and local partners, the magnificent woodland caribou can thrive once again on American soil.

Here's how you can help:

- Snowmobile responsibly. Observe all posted signs, and avoid the Caribou Recovery Area.
- Keep your distance from any caribou you encounter. Move away quietly and slowly to avoid startling and stressing the animal.
- Report harassment or illegal poaching of woodland caribou by calling Idaho's Citizens Against Poaching Hotline at 1-800-632-5999 or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Idaho Law Enforcement Office at 208-378-5333.

- Learn more about woodland caribou at:

www.defenders.org/wildlife/caribou/

www.fs.fed.us/ipnf/eco/projects/caribou/index.html

www.mountaincaribou.org/

www.fws.gov/idaho/Fact/Caribou.html



Watch for U.S. Forest Service signs such as this one. By sticking to the hundreds of snowmobile routes outside the recovery area, you can help save the woodland caribou.



Defenders of Wildlife is a national, nonprofit membership organization dedicated to the protection of all native wild animals and plants in their natural communities.

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