

MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

Quick Facts:

- Woodland caribou are designated as “threatened” and are protected under Ontario’s Endangered Species Act and Canada’s Species at Risk Act.
- Woodland caribou live in conifer-dominated boreal forests across Canada; all caribou in Ontario are considered “woodland caribou.”
- The home range for caribou is typically 200 to 4,000 square kilometres.
- In Ontario, caribou range once extended as far south as Algonquin Provincial Park. Since the late 1800s, half of this range has been eradicated by logging, mining and other industrial activities.
- Caribou are highly sensitive to impacts on their populations. They breed at a later age than do moose or deer, have only one young per year and are very vulnerable to predators.
- Approximately 5,000 caribou are left in Ontario.
- Ontario’s caribou have been declining in population by about 11% annually.

Conservation needs:

- Caribou need large tracts of habitat, up to 10,000 square kilometres (to accommodate fire and other large scale disturbances in the boreal forest).
- Scientists believe that caribou use older, conifer-dominated forests as a way to avoid predators (following disturbances, wolves follow moose and deer into the younger, regenerating forests, where these species find plenty of browse vegetation such as willow, aspen and other shrubs).
- Forests must be managed so that development will not have a significant impact on woodland caribou. Most of the forests where caribou still persist in the southern boreal have reached or have nearly reached the disturbance thresholds as defined by wildlife researchers.