

Research Project Updates and Proposals, September 20, 2017
Resolute Bay HTA Boardroom 19:00-21:30
Meeting with Iviq Hunters and Trappers Association

In attendance: Philip Manik Sr. (Chair), Joadamee Amagoalik, Paddy Aqiatuk, Simon Idlout, Kantisse Idlout, Delilah Manik (HTA Manager), Tabitha Mullin (GN-CO), and Matt Fredlund (GN-Wildlife Tech).

Half way through the meeting the projector stopped working and the rest of the presentation was done off the laptop screen, hindering the communication and discussion.

Matt was introduced; Matt provided an overview of research results to date and upcoming projects for comment; Philip provided translation throughout the meeting.

Devon Island Survey Results, 2016 – Matt showed a map with transects and the strata to demonstrate how the survey focused search effort in areas of greatest probability of observing caribou and muskoxen (MX). A map with the locations of all caribou and MX as well as tracks was shown to give a representation of the distribution. It was also mentioned that although no caribou were seen on Devon directly across from Grise Fiord (GF), in the final report it is mentioned that the GF HTA has observed tuktu there recently. The search effort in hours flown as well as a minimum count of 14 Peary caribou (not an estimate) was presented. It is believed that, as with the previous survey in 2008, the caribou population persists at very low numbers. To the contrary, a large increase in muskox was observed relative to the previous survey in 2008, with a 2016 population estimate of 1,963 (± 343 SE) muskox (Appendix 1). The recommendations in the report were talked about, although at the time of the presentation the TAH for Muskox had already been increased to 100 as had previously been consulted on with the HTA.

Comments – Simon said that MX stay in one area, and caribou and MX do not like being together. Caribou do not like the smell of MX. He also wanted to know why there are TAH on MX when they just keep caribou away. Joadamee asked about the poop survey. Matt responded that will be discussed later in the presentation. Tabitha brought up that caribou had been seen on the southwest end of Devon Island. Paddy added that MX on Cornwallis Island are doing well. Simon said they want to sell MX to other communities. Matt responded that they have the right to do that if they wish. Joadamee asked since the snow melt was late this year will there be a die off? Matt responded it is possible but was not sure. Simon wants to know if there will be restrictions on hunting of caribou will all hunters of caribou be restricted, such as wolves.

Lougheed Island Survey Results, 2016 - Matt showed a map of the flight lines and locations of all caribou seen on the island (on and off transect). The caribou population was estimated at 140 (\pm SE33) Peary caribou, with no MX or wolves seen during the survey (although wolf tracks had been seen that summer). The caribou population estimate has decreased from 205-672 (95% CI) estimated in 2007 survey (Appendix 1). Management recommendations from the report supported no changes in caribou management, and asked what was thought of including Lougheed into the Bathurst Island Group for future surveys?

Comments – Simon mentioned that when Mike Ferguson was doing surveys up here he did not believe the community when they told him caribou moved between islands, he finally believed it when he saw the tracks for himself.

Prince of Wales, Somerset Survey Results, 2016 – Matt showed a map with transects, MX group locations (on and off transect) as well as the population estimate of 3052 (± 440) Muskoxen, with approximately half on each of Prince of Wales and half on Somerset Islands. No caribou were seen during the survey, however hunters did report seeing caribou during the same time frame. Even with a slightly declining trend in the MX population, implementing a TAH is not required for the continued sustainable use of muskoxen in MX-06, which are generally harvested at low levels. Even without a TAH, harvest reporting would still be important to maintain. Since no caribou were seen, it was recommended that no caribou harvest occur, although hunting is not likely the limiting factor (Appendix 1).

Comments – Simon mentioned that caribou move between Prince of Wales Island in spring and summer and back to Somerset in winter. He also mentioned that he saw barren ground caribou on Prince of Wales Island many years ago and lots of summer tracks in the sand. Joadamee added that he was with Simon at Backbay in 2011 and that caribou can smell the food from far away and move to it. Philip contributed that caribou move from an area to let the plants grow back. Simon has an uncle in Cambridge Bay that says caribou are moving north again. Paddy asked why the locations of where hunters saw the caribou were not presented on the maps. Matt could not answer that question but will bring it up with managers if this is something that should be included in the future.

Genetics Update, 2016 – Matt showed a map of the general genetic division between the various caribou herds, as well as a map that shows the extent of the last glacial maxima. Showed maps with a greater break down between the high arctic islands, and mentioned how the genetic work shows that Peary caribou are from a lineage that is ~96,000-185,000 years old. And they were isolated until ~8,000 years ago (Appendix 1).

Comments – N/A

High Arctic Wolf Update, 2017 – This portion of the presentation was prepared by Morgan Anderson and presented by Matt. Matt mentioned that as of spring 2017 all 4 collars that were on wolves were offline. Due to various reasons, one falling off, one malfunctioning and being removed by the researchers in the summer 2017 as well as two collars were just missing and the wolves were not seen. The movements, kill sites, dens, and two new collars that were deployed were mentioned as well, with plans to deploy more in the following year (Appendix 1).

Comments – N/A

Central Ellesmere Island Survey Update, 2017 – Matt showed maps of transects, flight paths, as well as locations of seen caribou (14), MX (2163), and tracks. The sizes of groups of MX ranged from 1-43. The results are still being worked on and will be sent to the HTA as soon as the report is completed (Appendix 1).

Comments –N/A

Upcoming Surveys – Matt showed a map with Northern Ellesmere Island (NEI) and Axel Heiberg to show where the next surveys may be occurring. NEI will probably happen in March/April 2018, and Axel Heiberg in March/April 2019; however at this time final commitments could not be made. If the NEI survey occurs in 2018 it will be done with Helicopter (83 hrs) and fixed wing (43 hr) surveys. Survey methods and sampling design were discussed, along with the need for 3-5 community members to participate in the survey from Grise Fiord or Resolute Bay. For the Axel Heiberg survey, it would all be completed with helicopter (70hrs) and requiring 1-2 community observers (Appendix 1).

Comments – Simon said that it is not good to chase caribou because their lungs could explode. Matt clarified that the caribou would only be flown over and not chased.

Harvest Reporting – Matt brought up that harvest reporting is important for managers to make informed decisions and the when a TAH is in place it is mandatory; however, if there is not currently a TAH it is still important to have harvest records – both as a great tool in the management of wildlife and also to benefit the determination of Basic Needs Level (BNL) for Grise Fiord under the Nunavut Agreement.

Comments – General consensus is that the HTA is not supportive of providing harvest reports.

Closing of meeting – Matt showed a map showing all the locations of MX and PC from the most recent surveys to get input on any disagreements of changes that may have occurred since the latest survey (Appendix 1). Matt thanked the board for meeting with him and sharing their knowledge and he looks forward to working with them in the years to come.