

CARMA News Spring 2012

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Happy Spring!

It's almost that time again ... yup, calving season!

CARMA 8 Meeting is ON!

December 4-6, 2012

Thanks to some support from the International Arctic Science Committee (IASC), we are able to commit to holding the next CARMA meeting this late fall.

The theme of the meeting will be "*CHANGING CARIBOU ABUNDANCE - LESSONS LEARNED AND A PATH FORWARD*". In the very near future we will be sending out details of the meeting so mark December 4-6, 2012 on your calendar.

CARMA's Website is on the Move!



Have you noticed nothing has changed on the CARMA website? We are in the process of transferring the site to the CAFF site, a creation of the Arctic Council's Conservation of Arctic Flora

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and Fauna group in Iceland. The process is taking longer than we anticipated and we have been holding back on updating the site until the process is complete - stay tuned!

CARMA at IPY 2012



As a final wrap-up for the International Polar year, a meeting was held in Montreal April 22-27, 2012 - the IPY 2012 *From Knowledge to Action* Conference was attended by over 2500 international scientists, policy makers, academics, students and community leaders highlighting the IPY accomplishments over the last 5 years. Robert White, Gary Kofinas and Don Russell attended on behalf of CARMA and presented a well-received paper titled *Carma-IPY project synthesis: Herd-specific vulnerabilities of migratory tundra Rangifer to global change*.

CARMA at the Arctic Ungulate Conference, August 2011



Every four years primarily caribou, reindeer and musk ox people (researchers, managers, and communities) gather from all the northern countries to exchange the latest ideas and findings on our northern ungulates. This August that meeting was in Yellowknife and CARMA was featured prominently. In fact a quick search of the Program found the word CARMA 66 times! As well as being sprinkled throughout the agenda, CARMA was given a special session where members of the Steering Committee informed the gathering about the recent CARMA accomplishments and possible future. From these presentations five papers will appear in the conference proceedings:

- CircumArctic Rangifer Monitoring and Assessment (CARMA) Network - Origins, Goals, Accomplishments and Future: *by Don Russell and others*
- The CircumArctic Rangifer Monitoring and Assessment network experience: Standardized monitoring of Rangifer health and condition: *by Susan Kutz and others*
- CARMA's climate database: *by Don Russell and others*
- CARMA's tools and approach for collaborative assessment of cumulative effects: *by Anne Gunn and others*
- CARMA's Integrative Modeling: Development and Application of an *Energy/Protein Model*: *by Robert White and others*

CARMA and Nunavut

14th North American Caribou Workshop (NACW)

Feature Person -
Leslie Wakelyn

Feature Herd -
Snaefells Herd

Contact Us

Spread the word about CARMA and your work. Help us increase membership:

Forward this newsletter to at least **TWO** people who aren't members of CARMA ... yet.

Coming Events



14th North American Caribou Workshop (NACW)

Caribou in Managed Landscapes

September 24-28, 2012
Fort St. John, British Columbia, Canada

The theme of this year's conference, *Caribou In Managed Landscapes*, reflects the unique

A number of CARMA collaborators answered a call for proposals by the Nunavut General Monitoring Program to provide monitoring and cumulative effects assessments for a number of key indicators in Nunavut. Caribou, of course was high on the priority list of indicators. The proposal was titled: *CARMA's approach to building capacity for monitoring to describe cumulative effects of climate and development on Nunavut's caribou*. Although, the project was late in starting considerable work was done to pull together the necessary information. For example a 32 year, daily climate record was compiled for each Nunavut caribou herd/group (see map below) and caribou-relevant climate indicators were produced. This climate database will be added to the existing CARA climate database. The project is designed for 3 years if continued funding is received we will be developing a section of the CARMA website where collaborators can track the progress of the project. For any questions about the project contact Don Russell at don.russell@ec.gc.ca



Modern Challenges of Managing Reindeer in Yakutia (Russia)

challenges facing caribou in multi-use landscapes.

For more information visit <http://www.nacw2012.ca/index.php/home>

Status of Snaefellsherd of East Iceland



From: Rán Þórarinsdóttir

Reindeer were introduced to Iceland from Northern Norway in 1771-1787. The population fluctuated considerably in the first 150 years and in 1939 was believed to be only a few hundred individuals. By then the herd was mostly confined to a small area in the highlands north of Vatnajökull glacier. The population gradually increased in size, spending summers close to Vatnajökull glacier and migrating east and north in autumn and descending to lower ground in winter.

In 2010-2011 the estimated winter population was 4700



Sakha Republic (Yakutia) is the largest subnational governing body in Russia, and from time immemorial, the habitat of major wild reindeer population.

Here, aboriginals have been traditionally

involved in domestic reindeer herding, which is still one of the key sectors of the economy of the peoples of the North. Millions of hectares of pastures in the tundra and forest-tundra zones that cannot be used by other kinds of domestic animals are productively utilized, thanks to these unique animals.

Up until 1993, Yakutia was one of the major reindeer herding regions in Russia, with the total reindeer numbers approaching 670,000 with 380,000 domestic reindeer (third place after Tchukotka and Yamal) and 280-290,000 wild reindeer (second place after Taymyr).

However, presently the total number of reindeer in the republic is only about 390,000 with 190,000 domestic and 200,000 wild reindeer.

Yakutia is the habitat of three geographical forms of wild reindeer: tundra reindeer of the Lena-Olenyok population, tundra reindeer of the Yana-Indigirka and the Sundrun population as well as the forest form of reindeer. There is also an isolated population on New Siberian Islands.

The Yana-Indigirka population inhabits the interfluvium of the Yana and Indigirka Rivers. The Lena-Olenyok population's habitat is the plateau and plains of North-West Yakutia. And the Sundrun population inhabits the Kolyma Lowlands, in the winter migrating to Alazeya Plateau.

During the transitional period of economic reforms of the 1990s, the size of the Yana-Indigirka population, the biggest in Yakutia, declined dramatically. Presently, it shows unfavourable demographic structure; the numbers continue to drop, and it has practically lost its significance from the commercial harvesting point of view. In 1987-1993 it amounted to 85-130,000 and by 2002 only 34,000 survived. Sundrun (Indigirka-Kolyma) population shows a steady shrinking tendency. In 2002 its size was estimated at about 20,000. The only population that tends to grow is the Lena-Olenyok population of wild reindeer. In 1988 its size amounted to 73,000, in 1994 - 78,000, in 2001 - 90,000, in 2001 - 90,000, and in 2009 - 95,000.

The degradation of the Yana-Indigirka population of wild reindeer has been a source of major concern in recent years. Its size has obviously reached a critically low level and its

individuals divided into eight herds. The biggest herd, consisting of 2200 animals, is the Snæfells herd which uses the highland plateau north of Vatnajökull glacier. This area is divided into two by a glacial river. In Area 1 there were 600 animals in winter 2010-2011 with approximate densities of 0.1 reindeer per km² (total area) and female carcass weights of 42.6 kg (n39, r 32-51 kg). The 1600 animals in Area 2 had a density of 0.5 reindeer per km² (total area) and female carcass weights of 38.0 kg (n145, r 30-46 kg). The difference in carcass weight was statistically significant.

In the years 2009-2011 seven cows of the Snæfells herd were located every 3 hours with GPS radio collars. Preliminary results indicate larger home range than expected with more contact with adjacent herds.

The population size is kept stable with highly managed hunting (20-25% of the population). The ratio in 2010 was 57 cows per 43 males (Skarphéðinn G. Þórisson and Rán Þórarinsdóttir 2011).

Early calf mortality is low (52 calves per 100 cows/yearlings in July) and fertility is high (80-95%). Sources of mortality are primarily anthropogenic, including hunting and road

habitat, particularly in the areas of winter pastures, has shrunk dramatically. The collected data shows the necessity of the development of a complex of measures aimed at revival of the herd, followed by planning the strategy of sustainable use of its resources. Introducing a complete ban on harvesting from this herd is required.

Feature Person - Leslie Wakelyn



Leslie was born in Edmonton, Alberta. She spent her all-important first eight years there, then moved to the rival city of Calgary.

Leslie is disarmingly humble when you speak with her, but is described by colleagues as a wonderful person AND one very smart cookie - with a Bachelor of Science with Honors in Zoology from the University of Alberta (1979), and a

Master of Science in Wildlife Biology from Colorado State University (1984), to prove it.

Now Leslie lives in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories.

"My mother was mystified as to how I ended up with the interests I did - being a city kid from a totally urbanized southern Canadian family (non-hunting, non-hiking, non-camping) with no particular interest in animals except for domestic cats. She was particularly puzzled as to how a girl who was always cold and who had a propensity for sore and blistered feet ended up working in the field of wildlife management, especially in the days when I hiked through the high country of Colorado mapping bighorn sheep habitat or tromped through Alberta bogs doing moose browse surveys. And then I moved to the North, which totally baffled her. I moved to Yellowknife in the depths of winter for a 1-year term position with the territorial government - that was 25 years ago. I didn't tell her many details about my work hanging off cliffs during surveys of peregrine falcons in the Mackenzie Valley or gyrfalcons in Nunavut, or trudging along the tundra for many miles in rubber boots looking for ptarmigan eggs or waterfowl nests. She probably wouldn't have wanted to hear much about me helping with the Beverly caribou calving ground survey a few years ago, which required many hours each day in a small plane searching for elusive caribou on the vast tundra - but I finally got to see the calving ground, which was fantastic, even though

accidents.

References

Helgi Valtýsson 1045. Á hreindýraslóðum. Norðri. 228 pp.

Skarphéðinn G. Þórisson og Rán Þórarinsdóttir 2011. Tillaga um veiðikvóta og ágangssvæði 2011 og vöktun Náttúrustofu Austurlands 2010. NA-110109. 41 pp.



Contact Us

Do you have news or events CARMA members should know about? Do you have feedback to make this newsletter better?

Do you want to be a:

- Feature Person
- Feature Project
- Feature Herd, or
- From the mind of - ?

Contact us at askcarma@gmail.com.

More Pictures of Leslie

Photo with article: Looking for birds and walking dogs (our huskies Skye and Lochie) near our cabin

there were sadly very few caribou there."

She's worked for the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq Caribou Management Board (BQCMB) for 15 years, working from her home office with cats and dogs for company.

The journey to her current place in life and the BQCMB's "virtual" office began with a biology job for Syncrude on tar sands near Ft. McMurray.

"It was my first and only job with industry, as a summer student," she said, "helping with water quality monitoring and waterfowl surveys and retrieving dead ducks and shorebirds from tailings pond - yes, Viringia, it has happened before!"

This was followed by moose browse surveys and work on pipeline route selection around Alberta with small consulting firms, a stint with the Alberta Fish and Wildlife Division, and her Master's research on bighorn sheep habitat and vegetation succession - "roaming around the Colorado country alone, looking at grasslands and shrubs, hoping to see sheep, and sleeping in my faithful Toyota Corolla."

She spent 10 years with the NWT Wildlife Division and another five years with the Canadian Wildlife Service, both in Yellowknife. Work with CWS coincided with part-time work for BQCMB.

"I worked on the GNWT raptor and habitat programs where I spent endless hours in helicopters whizzing alongside cliffs and climbing down into cliff nests occasionally to band falcon chicks; did remote sensing analysis to map wetlands with occasional trips to look at the real thing from the air; and did land use permit reviews of the impacts of human land use on wildlife habitat."

In 1991-92 Leslie was in Ecuador on a cross-cultural volunteer exchange program, on leave from GNWT.

"This is where I learned to talk in Spanish about wildlife management and forestry but not about much else, and where my appreciation for clean water and untrammelled wilderness grew substantially."

During a 1996 GNWT re-organization raptor and waterfowl programs were cut and Leslie found herself out of work. But not for long. In September she started a six-month contract with BQCMB to map important habitats for Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou, hired by then-BQCMB Secretary-Treasurer Gunther Abrahamson. Fifteen years later, she's still working for the BQCMB, although on a tenuous basis and from a home office, subject to funding availability and requests for assistance by the Board.

outside Yellowknife, Jun/10



Doing what I do at BQCMB meetings - in this case, presenting info on active mineral tenures on Beverly and Qamanirjuaq calving grounds (a big issue for the board that we've been tracking for many years, as mineral exploration has been increasing in the region) at Nov/07 board meeting. Photo by Marion Soubliere.



Doing what I love best when not stuck at the computer working - paddling around numerous lakes (which are in abundance and easily accessible) around Yellowknife, Aug/06



Leslie (in purple jacket) with fellow surveyors from GNWT-ENR and Baker Lake NU in

From 2000-2005 Leslie was hired by EC's ecological monitoring and assessment network (EMAN) where she worked with Joan Eamer to jointly coordinate EMAN-North; and among other things, helped establish and coordinate Plantwatch North network and produce the EMAN-North northern water quality monitoring manual.

In 2001 she was asked by the BQCMB to obtain funding and establish a community-based monitoring program for the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou ranges based on the Arctic Borderlands Co-op model; coordinated a pilot project in Baker Lake and Arviat, NU with assistance from Gary Kofinas and Joan Eamer from 2001-2004, hiring local people to interview hunters about changes they observed with caribou and on the land; later continued with post-doc research by Anne Kendrick.

All of these are how she got hooked up with CARMA. BQCMB is a CARMA member.

Day-to-day Leslie reviews and inputs on government and non-government plans, processes and strategies; organizes and reports on workshops; assists with communications products including annual reports, workshop reports, newsletters and Powerpoint presentations for community meetings; does environmental assessment for selected projects proposed on key seasonally-important habitats, such as calving and post-calving areas and migration routes; assists with board's administration.

Some of the more major items she's done for the BQCMB since 2005 is: lead development of position paper on protecting important habitats (2004) and 2005-2012 Beverly and Qamanirjuaq management plan; lead BQCMB participation in five environmental assessments on uranium exploration proposals in the upper Thelon region of the NWT, with the first including a presentation to a public hearing; and assisted GNWT-ENR with educational resource "Caribou and People: A Shared Future" by adapting hearing presentation for uranium exploration proposal as a case study

"What I love best", says Leslie, "is working with people who care about wildlife and maintaining environmental quality, and being part of collaborative networks (BQCMB and CARMA, and previously EMAN-North) in which people have a common purpose and principles, and who are passionate about their vision and goals. I love working (for pay or as a volunteer) in collaboration with people with shared interests in conservation from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. I love to help caribou and people who depend on caribou by working to maintain cultures and lifestyles and that include use of caribou. I love working directly with people in northern communities, including BQCMB members."

"I love that my job gives me the opportunity occasionally to get away from the computer and work with people in their own

Jun/09, on survey of traditional Beverly caribou calving ground. Photo courtesy of Leslie.



At the BQCMB meeting held at the CNSC in May 2000. Wow, I still have the same Goretex jacket in good shape, showing it doesn't rain much in YK.



Doing a presentation to BQCMB meeting in Baker Lake in May/01 on community-based monitoring project (modeled after Borderland Co-op program). Photo by Gary Kofinas.

communities, and to actually see caribou! After 13 years of working for the board and promoting protection of calving grounds I was able to assist with a caribou calving ground survey in 2009!

"It's important to me to help make a positive difference in the world, both with the paid and volunteer work I do. As a biologist working for a caribou co-management board, I care about making a difference for conservation of caribou in particular and wildlife in general, and also for people to whom the future of caribou are most crucial (i.e., Aboriginal harvesters)."

Over the years Leslie has enjoyed working, for pay or as a volunteer, with various networks of people, primarily around issues related to ecological monitoring and conservation of northern wildlife, land and water. I find it especially satisfying to work with people who value collaboration, and with people who care deeply about "the land" (which to me includes wildlife and people), and the future of the North and its ecological sustainability.

She helps the BQCMB fulfill its mandate by providing information and recommendations, and keeping track of events and processes that are relevant to the Beverly and Qamanirjuaq caribou herds, habitats and harvesters.

"Board members don't have the time or capacity to monitor and provide input for all developments occurring across the caribou ranges which includes five jurisdictions and about 20 communities, especially those outside their own community or territory/province."

The BQCMB is a key participant in the ongoing review by the Nunavut Impact Review Board of the precedent-setting Kiggavik uranium mine proposal, which is a new level of involvement for the Board in environmental assessment in Nunavut. The Board has recently participated in environmental assessments for 5 proposals for uranium exploration in the NWT. The BQCMB is currently waiting for five relevant governments (NWT, NU, MB, SK, Canada) to sign a new 10-year agreement for renewal of its mandate, and is just beginning discussions concerning a new management plan for the two caribou herds.

Leslie has been married (16 years) to Brad, a communications specialist with, she says, the utmost patience and huge capacity for listening to trials and tribulations about caribou (particularly helpful for someone working alone most of the time). He also plays the highland bagpipes (like Bob White) with the NWT Pipe Band.

Leslie and Brad have two dogs + two cats, all "pound" critters with oodles of, and sometimes too much, character



Leslie in a BQCMB jacket (Nov/09) - originally for use with a case study for GNWT educational CD "Caribou and People: A Shared Future" (Unit 9) based on Jan/07 presentation I made on behalf of BQCMB to impact review board hearing on proposed uranium exploration in upper Thelon region. Photo by Brad Heath.

Her hobbies are volunteering, hiking, paddling (canoe and sea kayak), yoga, birding, travelling, learning about and experiencing other cultures and new places

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