

BACKGROUND

Caribou and Captive Breeding: Conserving a Species at Risk

As a world leader in conservation, Parks Canada is working with other organizations to protect and recover Species at Risk like the threatened Southern Mountain population of woodland caribou.

To maintain a healthy population of Southern Mountain woodland caribou on the landscape in Canada, Parks Canada, the Government of British Columbia, and the Calgary Zoo have agreed in principle to work collaboratively on a caribou captive breeding program as part of the *Conservation Strategy for Southern Mountain Caribou in Canada's National Parks*.

What is captive breeding?

In a captive breeding program, a limited number of source animals are taken from large, wild populations and bred in captivity. Offspring are strategically released into wild areas where they will have the greatest conservation value and the optimum chances for survival.

The goal of the program is to build a source population that could be used to supplement several small herds in Jasper National Park, British Columbia and potentially Mount Revelstoke and Glacier national parks. Animals from this program could also be reintroduced into Banff National Park, where the remaining resident herd was completely destroyed by an avalanche in 2009.

How will the program work?

Captive breeding is a long-term project with a goal of supplying caribou for approximately four to six sub-populations over a 10-20 year period.

Year 1: Potentially 20 caribou, likely from suitable wild herds in British Columbia, will be moved to the Calgary Zoo's ranch facility south of Calgary.

Year 2: The conservation herd would be augmented by an additional 20 wild caribou.

Year 3: The first yearlings could be translocated from the conservation herd to the wild.

Parks Canada is committed to keeping stakeholders and other conservation organizations informed as to the progress of the caribou captive rearing program. The success of conserving and protecting this iconic species at risk depends on cooperation and collaboration from many partners, including other governments, the private sector, the research and scientific community, outdoor recreationists, and the public who join us in treasuring and protecting Canada's national parks.