

exposing the white bases of the hairs. Because of this, by late winter or early spring the animals appear greyish-white and are almost invisible against the snow. The hair is shed once a year, in July.

Barren-ground caribou are migratory animals. Their summer range is mainly in the unforested parts of Mackenzie and Keewatin Districts of the Northwest Territories, from the west side of Hudson Bay and Melville Peninsula west to the lower Mackenzie Valley and north to the southern fringe of the islands lying off the Arctic coast. In autumn there is a general migration southward to areas within the tree-line. Some small bands of caribou, however, remain all year on the Arctic tundra.

Caribou migrations occur at three distinct periods of the year—in spring, in mid-summer and in autumn. Studies have revealed that during the spring migration, in April and May, there is a movement of the large herds from the wooded areas, where they have wintered, to the tundra summer range. The mid-summer migration begins in mid-July or early August when there is a general retracing of routes towards the tree-line, followed in September, just before the breeding season, by a swing northward away from the forested areas. After the breeding season ends, usually in October or early November, the autumn migration towards the forested areas begins. If the weather is rigorous, the great columns of caribou generally move swiftly towards their winter ranges but if the weather is moderate the pace slows down.

During these migrations it is usual for caribou to follow well-beaten trails in single file. Sometimes there may be several files parallel to each other; at other times the caribou may bunch together. The parallel trails are usually from one to three feet apart and from six to twelve inches wide. Repeated use over a period of many years has worn these trails to a depth of as much as four inches below the level of the tundra surface. Investigators have reported counting as many as twelve parallel trails on one migration route.

Spring migration routes generally follow waterways, the caribou herds travelling upon the frozen lakes and rivers towards the tundra. During the summer and autumn migrations the animals tend to follow heights of land and to cross the waterways at their narrowest or easiest crossing points.

Calves are usually born in June, during the period known as "spring break-up" Within a few hours they are able to follow their mothers and keep up with the rest of the herd. An adult bull caribou weighs well over 200 pounds and carries an impressive set of antlers; the length of beam of the antlers is often greater than the shoulder height of the animal. An adult cow weighs approximately 150 pounds and has a much smaller antler development. Antlers are shed once a year.

Caribou rely almost entirely on their keen sense of smell to warn them of approaching danger. In comparison with other animals their eyesight is poor, and it is possible to approach within 150 yards of them in open country without being seen. As a rule they are docile and can rarely be goaded into an aggressive act.