

The high degree of curiosity of the caribou is well known to white and native hunters, who can attract the animal within easy killing range by almost any kind of unusual behaviour.

As a result of studies made during 1948, 1949 and 1950, the Canadian Wildlife Service has estimated the barren-ground caribou population in Canada at 670,000.* There has been a great reduction in numbers since 1900, when the population was probably about 1,750,000. Indiscriminate slaughter of caribou by members of early whaling expeditions and the acquisition of modern weapons by the natives of the North have been major causes of rapid reduction of the caribou population. The following quotation† indicates the extent of the slaughter that took place about the turn of the century: "One winter fifteen vessels wintered at Herschel Island and I am reliably informed that these vessels each used from 10,000 pounds to 20,000 pounds of caribou meat an aggregate of over 300,000 pounds in one winter, principally the saddles; at the head of Franklin Bay, in the winter of 1897-98, four ships used of the same kind of meat about 90,000 pounds, and at Cape Bathurst, in 1898-99, one vessel used in the neighbourhood of 40,000 pounds."

Caribou are an important source of fresh, nutritious meat to the native and white populations of the remote areas of the North. Their hides, particularly the softer, finer-furred hides of calves and yearlings, are used as material for making a superior type of Arctic clothing; for this purpose many calves and yearlings are selectively killed during August and September, when the hides are considered to be prime.

It has been estimated that a complete clothing outfit for an Eskimo man (inner and outer parkas, inner and outer trousers, mittens, socks and moccasins) requires about 12 hides. About 25 hides would be required annually to provide satisfactory clothing for a family of two adults and two children. In modern times, however, some of the traditional items of Eskimo clothing have been replaced by imported textile garments—at least in the vicinity of trading posts. Caribou hides are also used for making sleeping robes and other types of covering, and for insulating log houses and tents. Strips of tanned hide serve as cords or ropes. The sinews from along the spine of the caribou are used by the natives for sewing.

With the aid of provincial and territorial game authorities, the Canadian Wildlife Service has, since 1947, carried out extensive studies of all phases of the environment, habits, life cycle, breeding and mortality of the barren-ground caribou. These studies are continuing. They involve aerial surveys and investigations on the ground, as well as the analysis of data supplied by hunters and trappers and obtained from the reports of field officers of the Provincial Governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. From 1932 to 1949, by means of native game returns completed by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police after interviewing the native hunters,

* Banfield, Dr. A. W. F., Canadian Wildlife Service, Department of Resources and Development, *The Barren-Ground Caribou* (Ottawa, 1951).

† Stone, A. J., "Some results of a natural history journey to Northern British Columbia, Alaska, and the Northwest Territories in the interest of the American Museum of Natural History", *Bull. Am. Mus. Nat. Hist.* (1900) 13:31-62.