

Bathurst & Bluenose Caribou Survey



Northwest Territories Environment and Natural Resources

JUL 09 2015

DISTRIBUTION LIST

Bathurst and Bluenose-East Caribou Calving Ground Surveys

I would like to provide you with an update on population surveys being conducted this summer for the Bathurst and Bluenose-East barren-ground caribou herds.

In June, Environment and Natural Resources (ENR) successfully completed calving ground photographic surveys for both the Bathurst and Bluenose-East caribou herds. The field survey teams included representatives from ENR, Government of Nunavut, Tłı̄chǎ Government, Wek'èezhìi Renewable Resources Board, Yellowknives Dene First Nation, NWT Métis Nation, and a number of community representatives.

The survey was done at the peak of calving, and good weather and visibility ensured the collection of very good field data and photographs. As a result, we can expect a high level of confidence in the final survey results once they are available. An initial field summary of the calving ground surveys is attached. Please note this information is preliminary and still needs to be confirmed through analysis.

The photographs from both surveys are now being counted, and we will have an estimate of the number of breeding cows on each calving ground by late August or early September. Once we have those numbers, some additional work and analysis is required to produce a total population estimate for each herd. We hope to have new population estimates for the Bathurst herd by late September and the Bluenose-East herd by early November.

While we need to complete this process to determine the final population estimates, the preliminary findings suggest further decreases in both herds compared to the 2012 (Bathurst) and 2013 (Bluenose-East) calving ground photo surveys. This is consistent with other recent sources of information, and highlights the need for us to continue to work together on conservation measures for these herds.

Over the summer, ENR will be engaging with communities, Aboriginal governments and co-management boards while we wait for the final survey results. We are preparing to visit communities in the fall, and prepare for the development and implementation of management actions this coming fall and winter.

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Should you have any questions, or if you want to set up a meeting to discuss the photosurveys please contact your local or regional ENR office.

Sincerely,



Ernie Campbell
Deputy Minister

Attachment

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- Mr. Jeff Walker, Superintendent, Sahtu Region, ENR
- Mr. Stephen Charlie, Superintendent, Inuvik Region, ENR
- Mr. Carl Lafferty, Superintendent, Dehcho Region, ENR
- Mr. Troy Ellsworth, Superintendent, South Slave Region, ENR
- Mr. Gary Bohnet, Principal Secretary, Executive
- Mr. Jack Bird, ADM, Operations
- Ms. Lynda Yonge, Director, Wildlife Division, ENR
- Ms. Jody Pellissey, Executive Director, WRRB
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- Mr. Steve Baryluk, Inuvialuit Game Council
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2015 BATHURST & BLUENOSE-EAST CALVING GROUND PHOTOGRAPHIC SURVEYS:

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

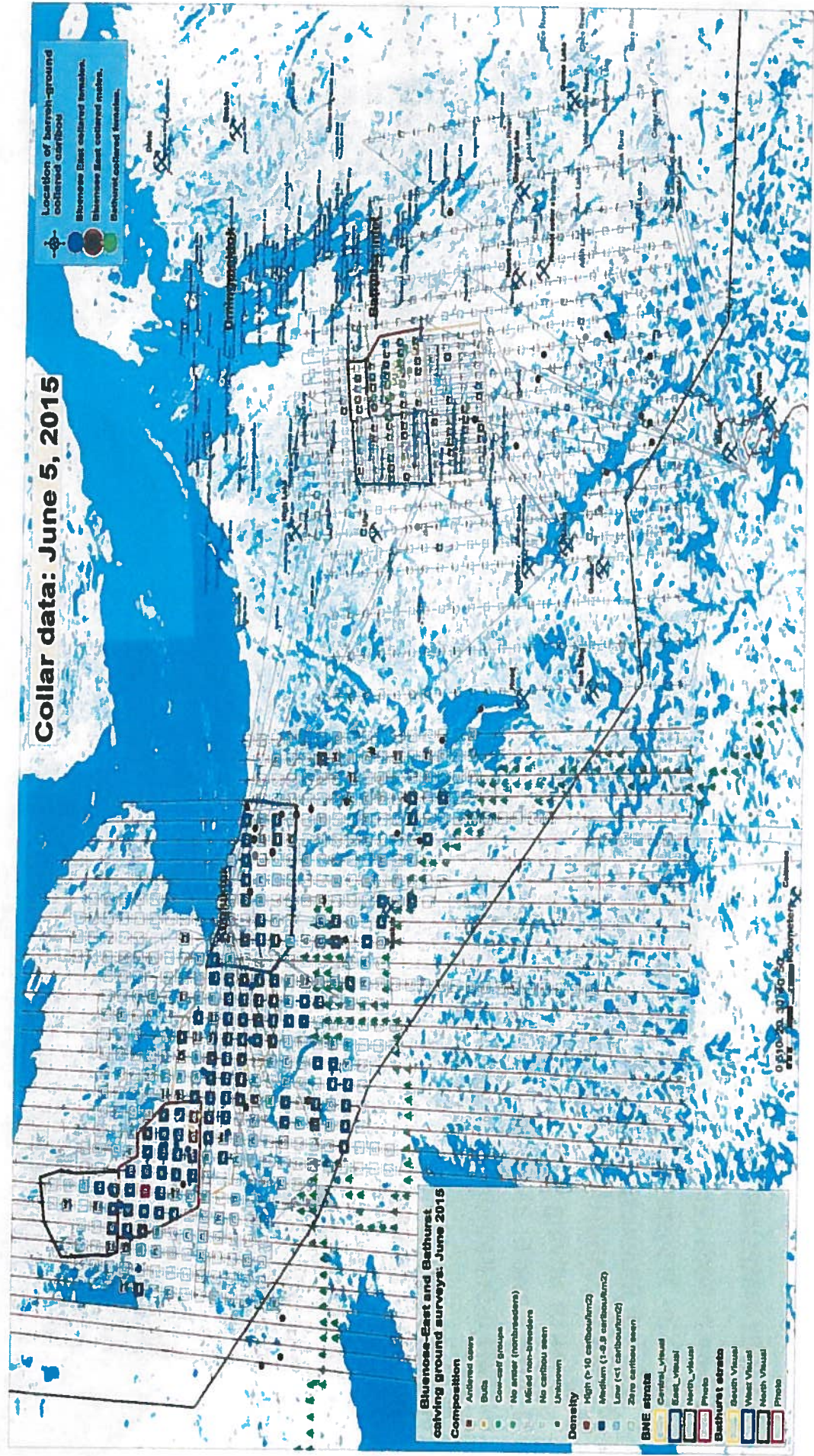


BATHURST AND BLUENOSE-EAST CALVING GROUND PHOTO SURVEYS

- Simultaneous surveys conducted on Bathurst and Bluenose-East calving grounds in early June.
- Good weather ensured successful completion of all parts of the surveys.
- Very good data and photos were collected, which will ensure good population estimates.
- Surveys covered very large area, ensuring complete coverage of both calving grounds.
- Collared cows were all in main calving areas.

SURVEY COVERAGE AREA

- Any line with small squares on line was flown during the survey.

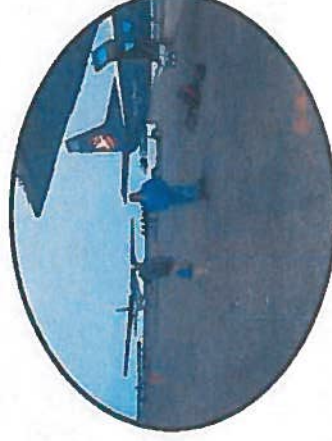
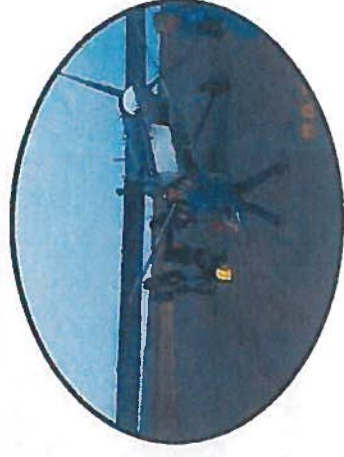
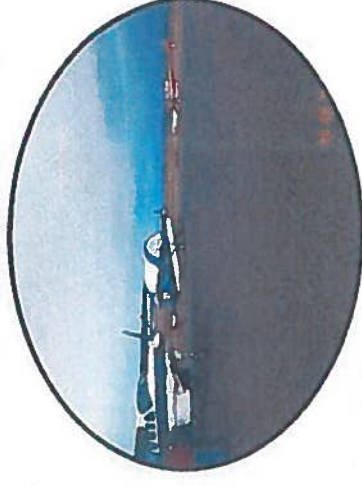


SURVEY TIMELINE:

- June 2: Both calving ground reconnaissance started, and status of calving assessed.
- June 3 - 7: Systematic reconnaissance survey for both calving grounds.
- June 5: Bluenose-East (BNE) photographic survey completed.
- June 6: Bathurst photographic survey completed.
- Peak of calving estimated June 5-6 both herds.
- June 5 and 6: BNE composition survey completed.
- June 6-9: Bathurst composition survey completed.

AIRCRAFT SUPPORT:

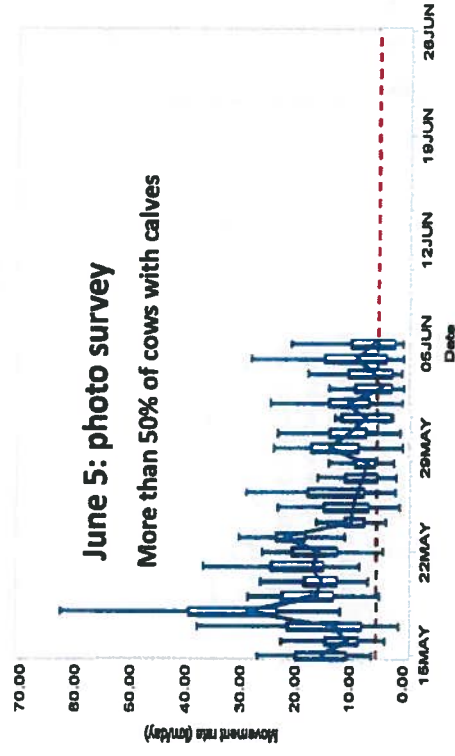
- 2 Cessna Caravans, 1 Pilatus Porter and 1 helicopter based out of Kugluktuk
- 1 Cessna Caravan and 1 helicopter based out of Ekati
- 2 photo planes based out of Kugluktuk (Piper Malibu and Cessna 206)



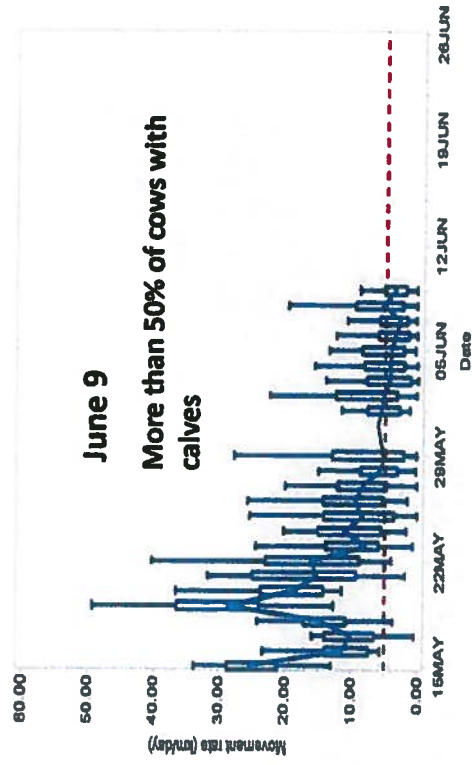
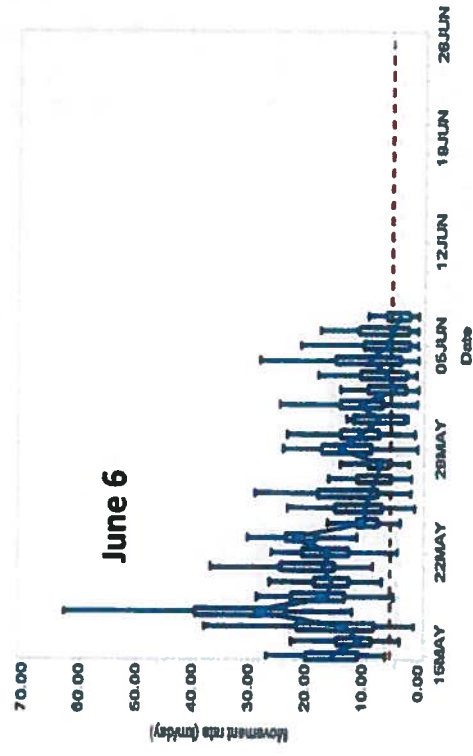
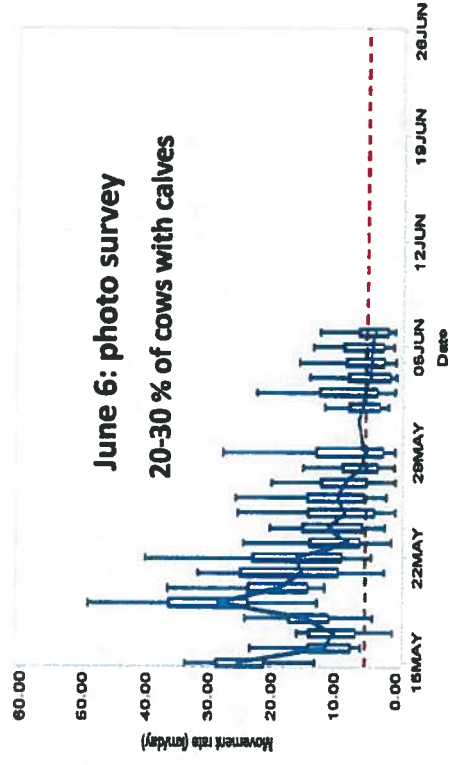
DAILY MOVEMENT RATES (KM) OF COLLARED COWS:

Used to confirm that surveys were done at the peak of calving;
Low movement rates suggest peak of calving around June 5.

Bluenose-East Caribou



Bathurst Caribou



BLUENOSE-EAST PHOTO STRATA JUNE 2015

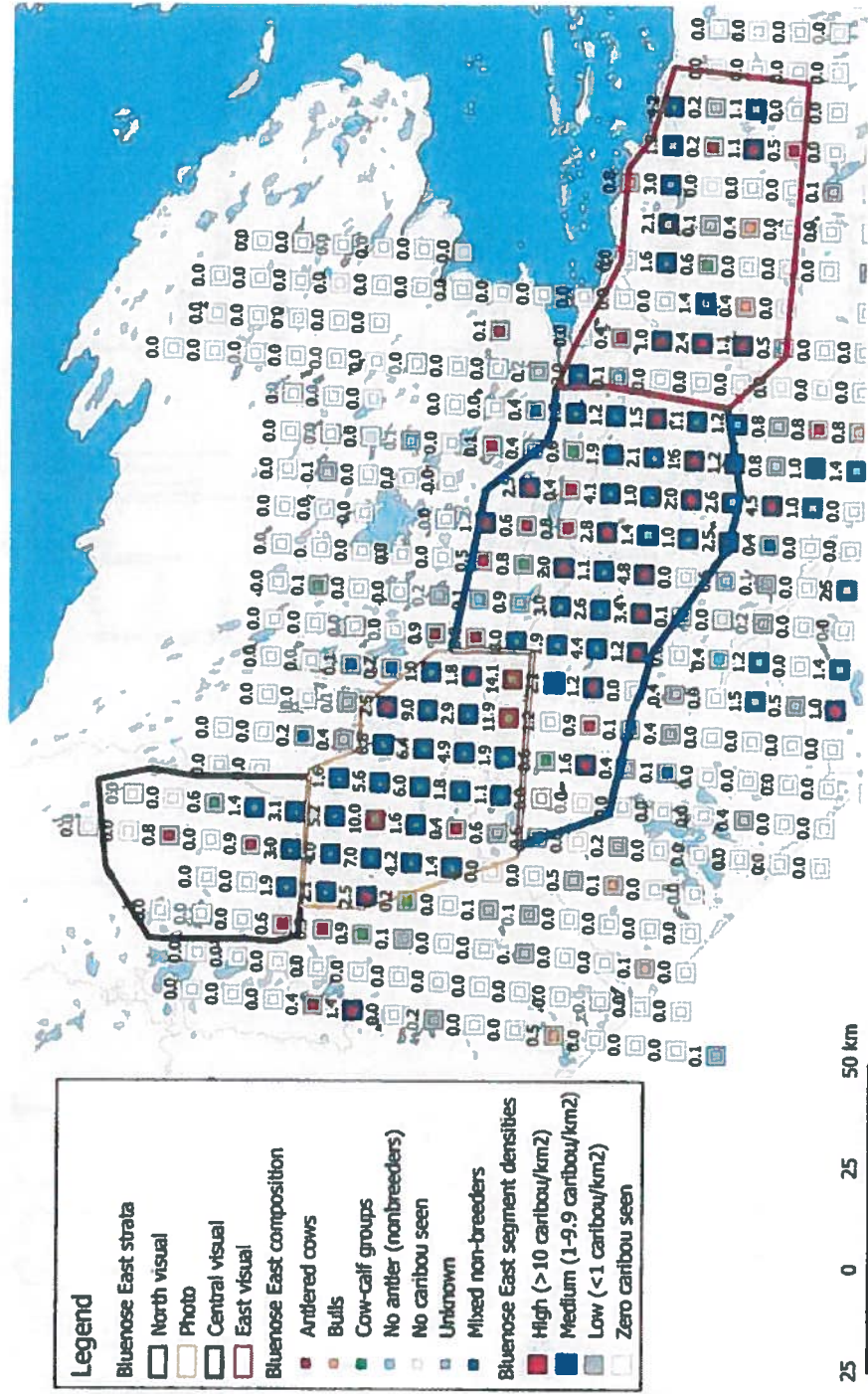


Figure 3: Estimates of segment based densities and composition on the Bluenose East calving ground from the 2015 survey. Densities of caribou in each segment are displayed above each segment. The photo, central, and northern strata were used for reconnaissance-based estimates

BLUENOSE-EAST CARIBOU HERD

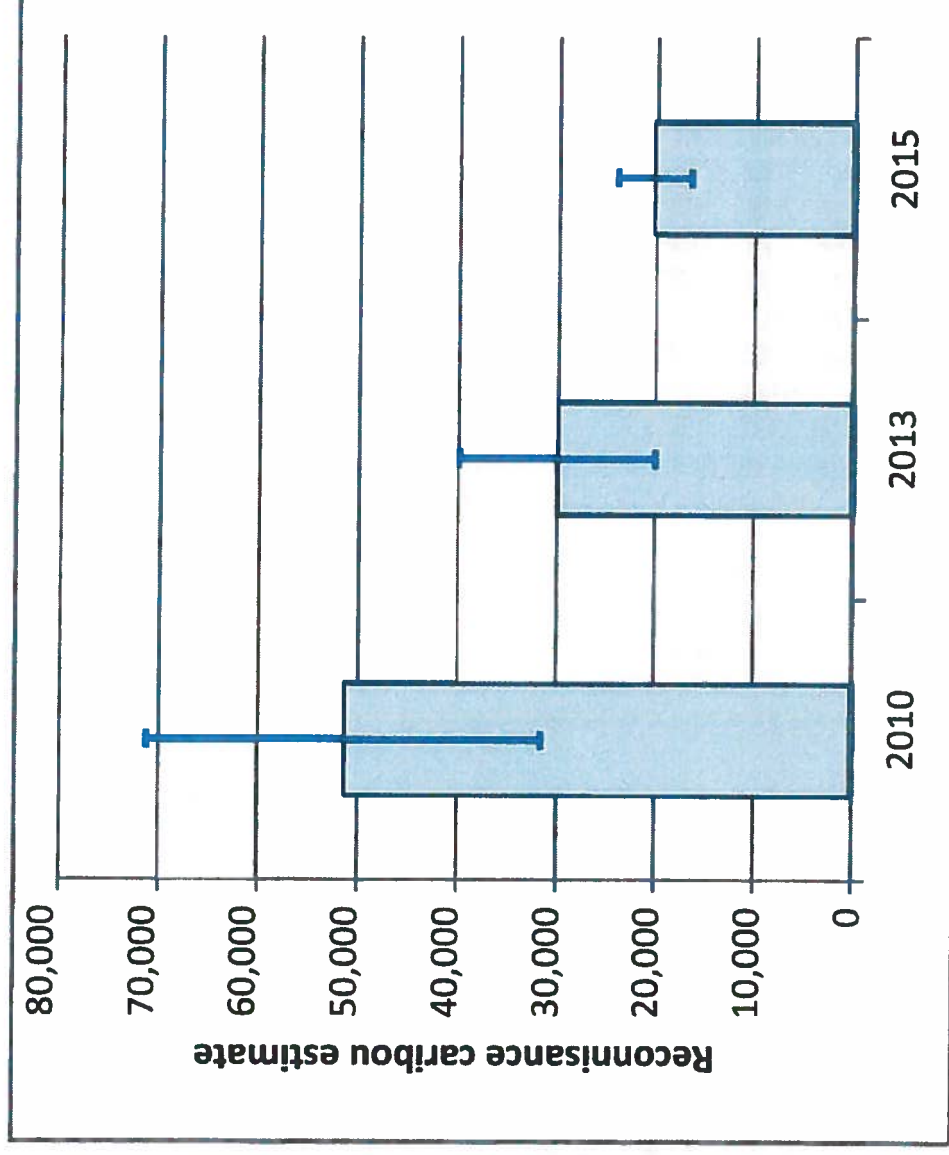
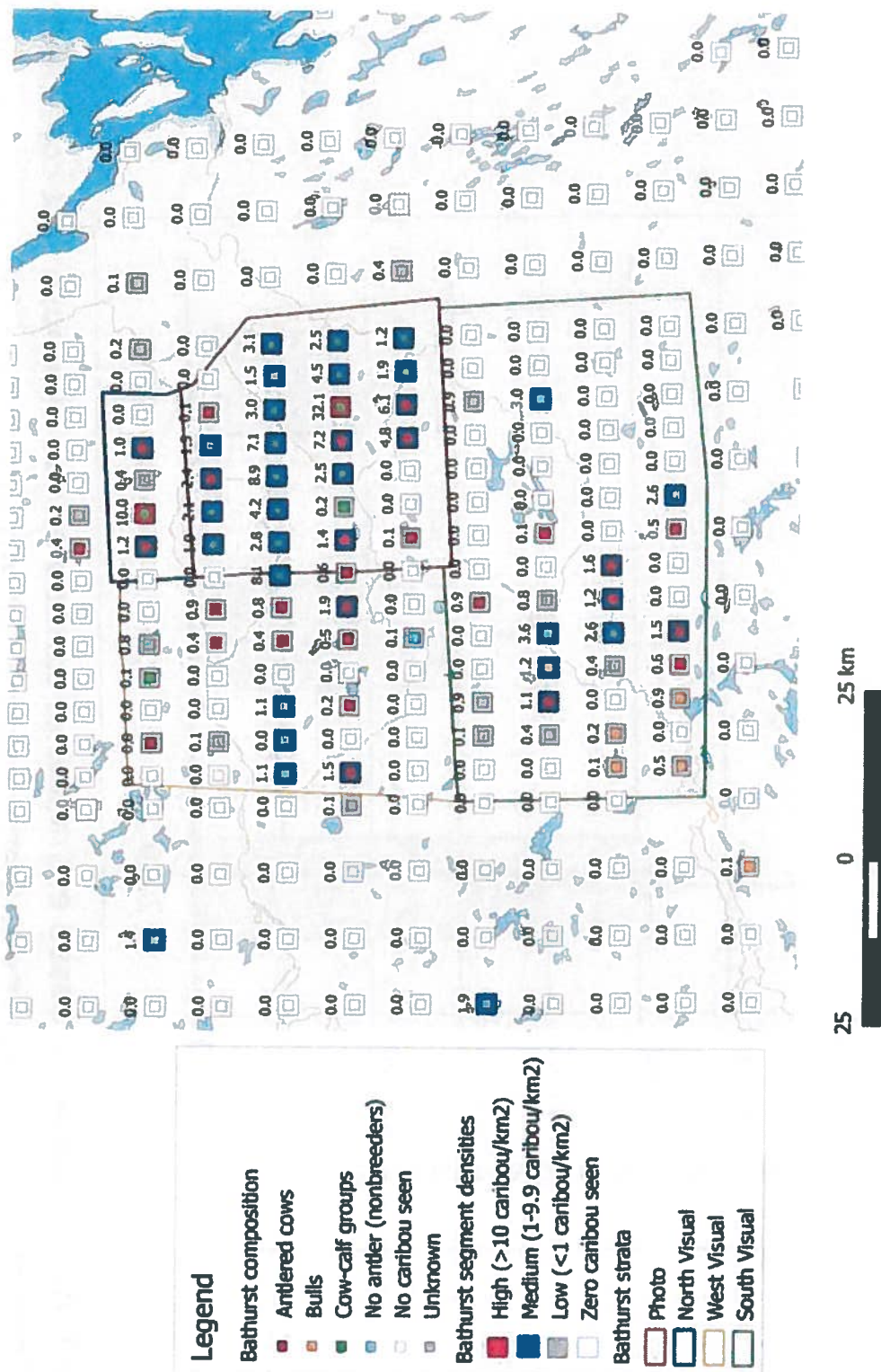


Figure 4; Reconnaissance-based estimates of caribou on the Bluenose East core calving ground as defined by the 2015 survey and previous calving ground surveys (Boulanger et al. 2014).

BATHURST PHOTO STRATA JUNE 2015



BATHURST CARIBOU HERD

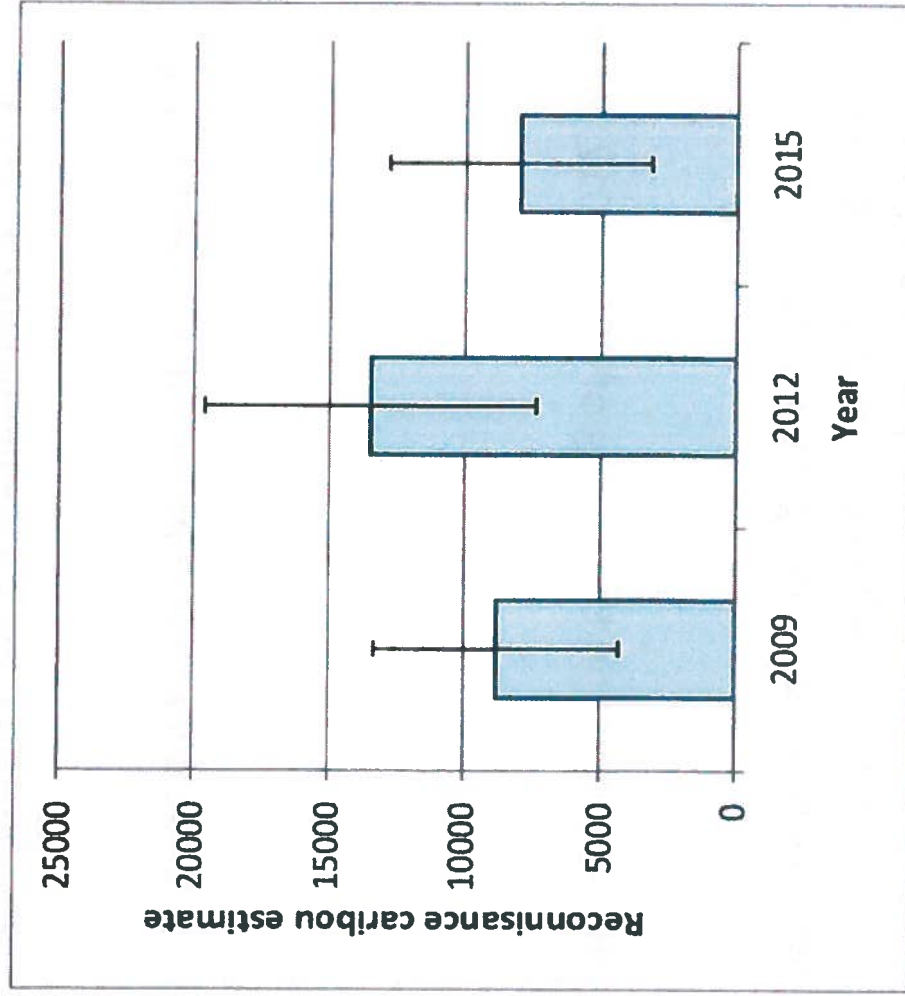


Figure 2: Reconnaissance-based estimates of caribou on the core Bathurst calving ground as defined by the 2015 survey and previous calving ground surveys (Boulanger et.al. 2014b).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Breeding cows seen on the calving grounds:

- Proportion of breeding cows in the high density strata observed during the most recent photo surveys were 87% (2006), 68%(2009), 68%(2012) and 59% (2015 – this survey).
- Suggests lower pregnancy rates and calving rates in 2015.

Calf Survival:

- Low calf survival rates observed in the spring of 2011, 2012, 2014 and 2015 (below 30 calves: 100 cows).

Adult Cow Survival:

- Bathurst Herd:
 - 2007-2008: 73%
 - 2009-2012: 79%
- Recent cow survival rates below annual rates needed to maintain a healthy herd (82-85%).

❖ **These other indicators consistent with a declining natural trend.**

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS & NEXT STEPS

- Preliminary findings suggest a decrease in both herds since the last calving ground photo surveys.
 - Last surveys: 2012 (Bathurst) and 2013 (Bluenose-East)
- This is consistent with other recent sources of information on both herds.
- Estimates of breeding females will be available in early fall (once photos counted)
- Final population estimates will be available this fall
 - Bathurst: late September
 - Bluenose-East: early November (following composition survey in October)
- Management actions for both herds will need to be continued.
- Need to begin discussion now (SUMMER 2015) on how to deal with the declines.
 - ENR, communities, aboriginal governments and co-management boards need to work together

