

DISTRIBUTION OF CARIBOU CALVING IN RELATION TO THE PRUDHOE BAY OIL FIELD

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The calving grounds of the Central Arctic Herd (CAH) were surveyed from 1978 - 82. Consistently low numbers of caribou and generally low percentages of calves were observed in the Prudhoe Bay oil field. Mean densities of caribou in 5 other areas of the calving grounds were 2 to 18 times higher than at Prudhoe Bay, presumably due to avoidance of the oil field by parturient cows. So far, displacement of calving from Prudhoe has been to adjacent areas already used for calving. The CAH has increased rapidly in spite of displacement from part of its calving grounds. This apparent paradox is best explained by the relatively low density of the CAH on its present calving/summer range. Overall density of CAH caribou on calving/summer range was only about one-fourth that of the nearby Western Arctic and Porcupine Caribou herds.



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ABSTRACTS