



photo courtesy of Edouard Bélanger

The Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board has been tracking the population of dall sheep in the Richardson Mountains. A recent survey indicates the population is up and a voluntary closure on hunting has been lifted.

Sheep's back on the menu

Dall sheep population climbs; voluntary hunting closure lifted

by Stewart Burnett
Northern News Services

A new survey of dall sheep in the Richardson Mountains, between Aklavik and Fort McPherson, shows the popu-

lation's numbers on the rise, which means the Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board is lifting its voluntary closure on hunting the animals.

The GRRB's June survey

showed the population has climbed from 496 in 2014 to 647 now.

When the population fell

Please see **Population, page 8**

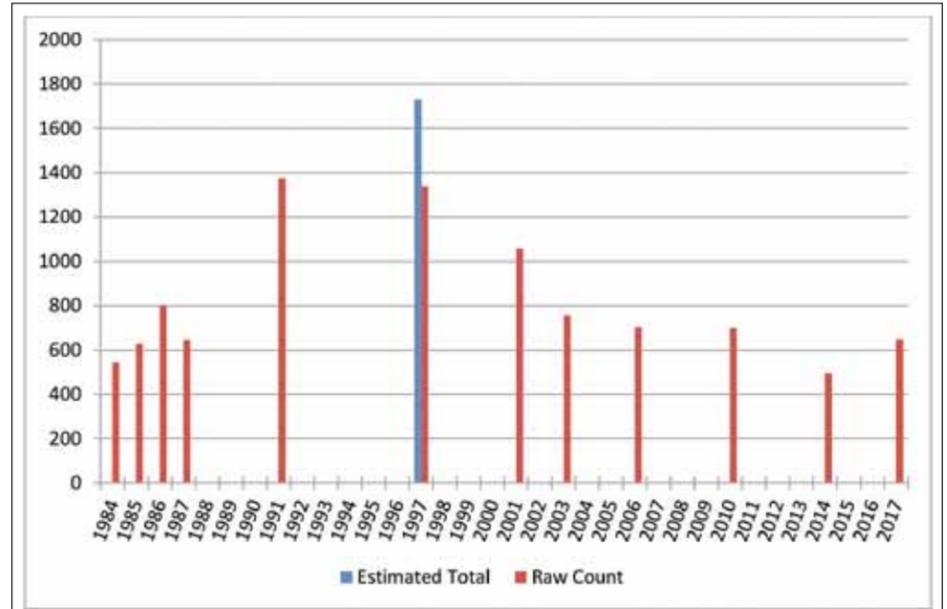


Figure 2: Population trend of Dall's sheep in the Northern Richardson Mountains.

graph courtesy of Edouard Bélanger

This graph shows the swinging population of the Richardson Mountain dall sheep since the 1980s.



LET'S DISPENSE SOME PLEASANTRIES.

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BioBlitz charts Inuvik's nature

Event uses community help to document plants and animals in area

by Stewart Burnett
Northern News Services

Inuvik's streets are filled with more than 100 species of plants, and most of them are native to the area.

That's in stark contrast

to most cities in the south, which are full of weeds and introduced plants.

Paul M. Catling, who was in Inuvik during BioBlitz this week, said 95 per cent of the plants in town are native to

the area.

"In town is a special kind of habitat," said Catling, speaking during an introduction to BioBlitz at the Aurora Research Institute Sunday, July 30.

The event challenges residents to document the plant and animal life in their own community. After an introduction at ARI, community members set off with scientists to check out what could be found around Inuvik.

Catling pointed to the large amount of foxtail grass in town, which he said would have been the same grass the mammoths were trampling thousands of years ago.

The reason it grows in town more so than out on the land is because of the disturbed conditions in the city limits, he said.

"This part of the North is fascinating," said Catling. "It has a lot of stuff that isn't anywhere else in Canada. It's unique and it's fascinating and it's rich."

Runel Jimenez, organizer of the BioBlitz with the Canadian Wildlife Federation, was touring with the group throughout the territory, having just spent some time in Tuktoyaktuk.

"At its heart, (the BioBlitz) is an event where we bring the public and scientists together to identify as many species in the local area (as possible) in a specific time period," said Jimenez.

"In Inuvik, there is all sorts of life and we're here to examine how great our biodiversity is."

In Tuktoyaktuk, the group

found a lot of bumblebees, Arctic orchids and of course mosquitos and sandflies.

Talking to locals about the differences over the last 20 years, Jimenez heard there were more eagles and robins in the area now.

Anyone who didn't get to join the group on the Sunday blitz

can still take part in the Canada 150 event by uploading photos of plants and species in the area to inaturalist.ca, an open-source data base for Canadian scientists to investigate the country's biodiversity.

"This part of the North is fascinating."

Paul M. Catling



photo courtesy of Catarina Owen

Matthew Owen peers through the scope to see what nature lies around him.



photo courtesy of Catarina Owen

Brooke Smith holds up a dead dragonfly she found during the BioBlitz.



Stewart Burnett/NNSL photo

Paul M. Catling gives a presentation on plant life in and around Inuvik at the Aurora Research Institute Sunday, July 30.

Population rise ends sheep hunting ban

Sheep's, from page 4

below 500, the GRRB enacted a recommendation in its management plan to call for a voluntary closure of hunting dall sheep, but now the population is back in a safer range.

Wildlife biologist Édouard Bélanger, who took part in

the survey, said it's difficult to pinpoint the exact reasons for the population change.

"Why it increased in the last three years, it's hard to say," he said. "It's hard to speculate. There are a lot of potential ecological processes that could explain that."

The population has been tracked since the 1980s and appears to be cyclical. It reached a high of more than 1,200 in 1997 before steadily declining to the 2014 low. Members of the GRRB hope the bounce upwards in 2017 is a sign of things to come but say it's difficult to speculate in that regard.

The GRRB's management plan states that a legislated closure, instead of a voluntary one, would be enacted if the population fell below 350.

Dall sheep, or divii in Gwich'in, have been trad-

itionally used for food, hides, medicines and tools.

Bélanger said there is another population of dall sheep in the southern Gwich'in Settlement Area in the Mackenzie Mountains.

He took part in the helicopter survey of the Richardson population in June and said community members and hunters have helped the GRRB a lot to track the population.

Amy Amos, executive director of the GRRB, said the board is going to try to work with the communities on more monitoring in between survey years. The next helicopter survey is scheduled to be in 2020.

"The board is going to start some communication to let people know that voluntary closure is now lifted," said Amos.

