

July 2007



What's new at the Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board?

A monthly update from the GRRB

Introduction

Welcome to our Newsletter for July 2007. The summer is probably the busiest time of year for GRRB staff as projects are on the go and that means a lot of field work. Full time and Seasonal employees are happy to get out of the office environment and do their work out on the beautiful land.

The Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board (GRRB) was established under the guidance of the 1992 *Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim*

Agreement (GCLCA) to be the main instrument of wildlife, fish and forest management in the Gwich'in Settlement Area (GSA). The powers and responsibilities of the Board are detailed in Chapters 12 & 13, Vol.1 of the Agreement.

This month's newsletter will provide some short updates on Board Activities and some news from around the Gwich'in Settlement Area (GSA).

Please contact us if you have any comments or

ideas to share. We are always happy to hear from the people living in the communities and those who know the land and resources very well.

Working together we can ensure that the wildlife and resources are managed in a sustainable manner so that future generations will be able to enjoy them.

Mahsi Cho

Bobbie Jo Greenland

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Dall Sheep, Grizzly Bears and Wolves Project in the Richardsons

The GRRB Wildlife Biologist Catherine Lambert and her crew returned from the Richardson Mountains on Thursday June 28, 2007. Here is a summary from Catherine for our newsletter.

Drin Gwiinzii!

We are gifted with a beautiful summer, and I hope all of you enjoy it and spend some time on the land. At the GRRB, we have been very active in the last two months. Here is a quick summary of our Dall Sheep, Grizzly Bear and Wolf Project:

Wolf and Grizzly Bear Movements

As mentioned in the May Newsletter, five wolves were equipped with radio-satellite collars at the end of April 2007. In May, we also collared seven grizzly bears within the Richardson Mountains. The collars collect important information about the animals' movements, home ranges and habitat selection, and will automatically drop on the ground in two years. The locations will then be analyzed and the project completed.

Dall Sheep Behavior Camp

To understand the dynamics of the Dall sheep population in the Richardson Mountains, and learn about where they daily live and behavior, our crew spent the whole month of June camping in the Richardson Mountains, hiking 10-20 km per day, and observing sheep for few hours. Thanks to Ryan McLeod, Freddie Furlong,

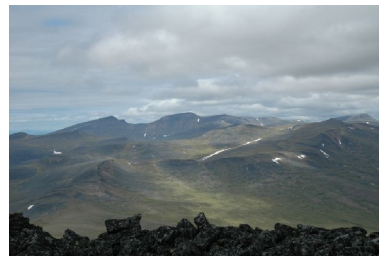
Corey Greenland, Rhonda Ransome, Hideaki Koizumi and Brian Dokum for their amazing participation to the camp! This was a very demanding camp, and I am very pleased to say that we had the perfect team. Thanks also to the Ehdiiat Renewable Resource Council for supporting our program!

Traditional Knowledge Interviews

To increase our understanding of Dall sheep, grizzly bear and wolf interactions, we are planning to launch the Traditional Knowledge component of the study during the course of the summer. We will meet elders and community members and inquire about the animals' ecology, habitat use, predation, conservation, etc. Dates and details of the workshops are still pending, but you should hear about us soon!

Have a great summer!

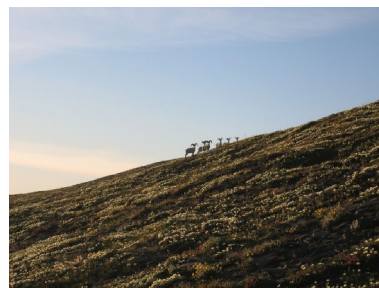
Catherine Lambert
Wildlife Biologist -Nin Eenjit
Gàtr'oonahntan Nili



*Richardson Mountains
Gwich'in Settlement Area*



Divii (Dall Sheep)



Divii (Dall Sheep)



One of the tent's at camp

Cotton Grass in the Gwich'in Settlement Area

The GRRB Chairman Robert Charlie recently talked with many elders in Fort McPherson about the increased amounts of cotton grass growing this year.

Basically, no one remembers ever seeing this much cotton grass growing in Gwich'in Settlement Area. Many people are wondering why is this happening? Is it due to climate change?

Gwich'in Elder and Board Member Robert Alexie Sr. is one of the people who directed this concern and question to Pippa Secombe-Hett of the Aurora Research Institute. Pippa is the Manager of the technology department. She says the phenomenon was likely caused by a combination of a warm fall and a warm spring. She says that such a combination is what provides the environmental conditions that allow for the cotton grass to produce many more

flowers than average. She also stated that the large number of cotton grass flowers have been observed in a number of areas around the Delta. Such areas reported were the Richardson Mountains as well as Noel Lake North of Inuvik and on the Uplands towards the Coast.

The GRRB believe it is important for people in the communities to make a note of any changes that they have observed in and around the community. It is a good thing for people who live on the land or spend time on the land to share their concerns and observations with the GRRB and other organizations that work with renewable resources issues. Sharing our observations with each other will help us all to better understand the changes occurring in our environment and also understand why.



Cotton Grass on the Dempster Highway. Photo: Robert Charlie



Cotton Grass in the Richardson Mountains. Photo: GRRB

Tetlit Gwich'in sawmilling workshop. By: Amy Thompson

A 1-week sawmilling workshop is being hosted in Fort McPherson by FERIC (Forestry Engineering Research Institute of Canada). It is designed to teach 8 interested Gwich'in harvesters about sawmilling.

Yesterday, I attended the first day of the workshop which included presentations in the morning on management practices and business opportunities for sawmilling.

The afternoon included a boat ride up the Peel River to a site where the FERIC employees showed the participants how to select good trees for sawmilling as well as how to avoid selecting poor quality trees. They also talked about safety and how to be sustainable.



*GSA
Photo: GRRB*

GRRB bids farewell to Jari Heikkila

The Gwich'in Renewable Resource Board bids farewell to Executive Director Jari Heikkila. July 27th will be Jari's official last day as the GRRB's Executive Director. Jari will be returning to his homeland of Finland where he has a new job opportunity and where he will be near his family. The Board Members and Staff of the GRRB would like to wish Jari all the best in his move back to Finland and much success in his new job.

Here are some words from Jari;

I will be leaving the GRRB, Inuvik and Canada for Finland in the beginning of August. I have been working for the Board since the beginning of February 2004. These 3.5 years have been very good for me, but now it is time for me to return back to my family before it would be too late.

Learning from our parents and elders is not possible unless we spend a lot of time with them. I have mixed feelings about leaving right now, but I know that if I don't do it I will regret it later.

In my opinion, two management issues have been, and continue to be, very important from the Gwich'in perspective. These two

issues are the decline of the caribou in the GSA and adjacent areas, and the decline of the Rat River Char.

The decline of the "Bluenose" caribou is not over yet, which means that people need to continue being aware of it. Another caribou related issue, namely the obvious decline of the Porcupine caribou herd, is currently hiding behind the corner and will require strong actions at some point in the future.

As far as the Rat River Char is concern, Gwich'in have taken voluntary actions to stop the ongoing decline of this population, and only the future will show if the recovery of this population will happen.

I am fortunate of having had this opportunity to be involved in the co-management process in the Gwich'in Settlement Area. I have learned a lot, not only of the process, but also of Gwich'in People and your values. I wish all the best to all of you for the future. Who knows, one day maybe our paths will cross again.

Respectfully,

Jari



Jari Heikkila
Photo: GRRB

"Learning from our parents and elders is not possible unless we spend a lot of time with them."



Jari Heikkila
Photo: GRRB



Rat River Char Update: voluntary fishing closure continues.

The number of char in the Rat River has declined rapidly over the last few years. In 2002 there were around **12,000 fish**, while in 2005 there were only **3,000 fish**. This is a steep decline and we must take action to preserve this precious resource for future generations.

Since we found out about the decline, the GRRB has been working closely with the Fort McPherson RRC, the Aklavik RRC, the Aklavik HTC, the Fisheries Joint Management Committee (Inuvialuit), and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) to address this problem. (*Together, these organization constitute the Rat River Char Working Group*).

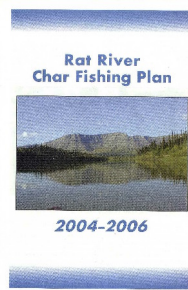
Though there are several possible causes of the decline (including changes in the habitat used by the char), the only factor over which we have any control is **harvest** level. We all need to work together to preserve this important resource. To do this, the GRRB has made several recommendations. These recommendations are all **voluntary** – we are counting on your co-operation to make this work! The recommendations are to:

1. **Close all fisheries** (including sport fishing, domestic, science, and subsistence) along the migratory route of the char when they are running (going up to the spawning grounds).
2. **Dates of closure:** August 7th to September 15th, for

the next two fishing seasons (2007 and 2008).

3. **Area of closure (migratory route):** this closure would apply to the Rat River proper, Husky Channel, Peel Channel, and West Channel all the way to the coast (see map). This means that even if you are not targeting char (trying to catch char specifically), we still recommend that you do not fish along their migratory route during this period.
4. Open the fishery to allow the **char monitors** to harvest no more than 5% of the estimated population (i.e., no more than 120 fish total) to allow continued monitoring of the fishery.
5. **Permanently close** the spawning and over wintering grounds of Rat River char (i.e., **the Fish Hole** on Rat River) to all fishing.
6. That the Rat River Char Working Group re-examine this plan yearly and consult regularly with Fort McPherson and Aklavik.

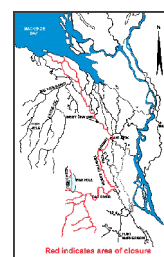
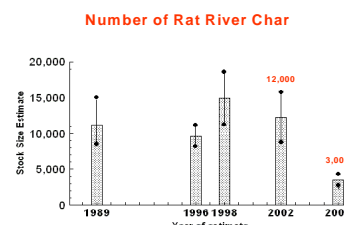
Thank you for your support. If you have any questions or concerns please contact the GRRB or your local RRC.



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Dhik'ii(Char)



Closure area is marked in red



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GRRB Mission

To conserve and manage
renewable resources within
the Gwich'in Settlement Area
(GSA) in a sustainable
manner to meet the needs of
the public today and in the
future.

GRRB Vision

We believe that people in the
GSA are responsible for using,
protecting and conserving
their resources, as well as,
active partners with the
GRRB in managing their
resources.

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