



Summary Report on the Species at Risk in the Gwich'in Settlement Area Survey

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About the Survey

The purpose of this survey was to better understand how familiar people are with species at risk in the Gwich'in Settlement Area (GSA) and what species are of particular concern.

This survey was open to anyone age 16+ living in or originally from the GSA (Inuvik, Aklavik, Tsiigehtchic, Fort McPherson). The survey ran from March 25th to March 31st, 2026.

Those who completed the survey were entered in a draw to win a Cabella's gift certificate, however, personal information was stored separately from survey answers.

This survey was run by the Gwich'in Renewable Resources Board (GRRB). The GRRB is the main instrument of wildlife, fish and forest management in the GSA. We act in the public interest, representing all the parties to the Gwich'in Comprehensive Land Claim Agreement (GCLCA) – the Gwich'in, the people of the Northwest Territories and all Canadians.

This report provides a summary of information shared as part of the Species at Risk (SAR) in the GSA survey. Mahsi cho & thank you to those who took the time to complete this survey. This information provides the GRRB with direction and ideas for how to increase engagement around and knowledge sharing about SAR in the GSA moving forwards.



Demographics

106 people completed the online survey. Of this:

- 88% of respondents identified as Gwich'in participants;
- 9% of respondents identified as Inuvialuit;
- 5% of respondents identified as Indigenous;
- 4% of respondents identified as non-Indigenous; and
- 2% of respondents identified as “other”.

Respondents were able to select more than one answer for how they identified.

The age range of those who filled out the survey was as followed:

- 1% were in the age bracket of 16-17 years old;
- 24% were in the age bracket of 18-30 years old;
- 54% were in the age bracket of 31-55 years old; and
- 21% were in the age bracket of 55+ years old.



Familiarity with Species at Risk

The survey sought to find out the overall level of familiarity with species at risk (SAR) in the GSA, including the confidence that people in the GSA have regarding how to find information about species at risk.

Approximately one third of respondents felt “somewhat” familiar with SAR in the GSA and “somewhat” confident in being able to find information about SAR in the GSA.

Under 15% of respondents felt “not familiar” with SAR in the GSA or “not confident” in being able to find information about SAR in the GSA.



Changes Observed

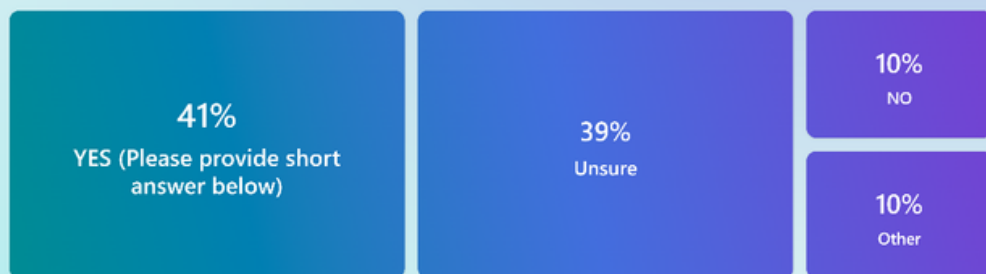
The survey also sought to find out what community members are observing on the land with respect to changing abundance of plants and animals over the past decade.

41% of respondents said “yes” they had noticed a change in abundance of plants and animals in the GSA in the past ten years (see next page). 10% of survey respondents said “no” and 39% were “unsure”.

10% of survey respondents noted “other”, and commented on:

- Seeing different **birds**;
- Seeing less **plants**, like trees and flowers, impacting traditional medicine;
- Seeing less **mushrooms** (specifically puffballs);
- Seeing less **butterflies**;
- The **caribou** herd not showing up as much as they used to;
- Concerns around **pollution** and damage to ecosystems; and
- Concerns around **permafrost**.

Have you noticed a change in abundance (i.e., amount) of any plants or animals in the GSA over the past 10 years? If so, please...



If you answered YES to Question 6 above, please share what you have observed.

caribou around because of predators
caribou and muskrats
not much caribou
Berry
Porcupine caribou
herds of caribou
decline
years
No caribou
change
caribou
animals caribou tracks
level of caribou falling
wolves
plants
Animals - caribou
sightings of wolves
certain areas

40% of survey respondents said “yes” they have noticed changes in abundance of plants and animals over the past ten years, with a general sentiment of seeing less animals in the GSA than in the past. Some of the changes noted include:

- Seeing much less **caribou** & a change in the Porcupine caribou migration route (noted by 35% of those who responded to this question);
- Seeing different types of **birds**, both new species and declining abundance, with less songbirds noted specifically;
- Seeing different types of **insects** and less caterpillars, ladybugs, and pollinating insects like bees and butterflies;
- Seeing less **frogs** than previous generations;
- Seeing less **ducks and swans**;
- Seeing changes in **muskrat** populations, with muskrats being more concentrated in only some areas;
- Seeing changes in where **moose** go in certain seasons;
- Seeing less **bears**;
- Seeing less **foxes**;
- Seeing more **wolves** in new areas;
- Seeing less **fish**, and specifically less loche (burbot) and herring;
- Changing **plant varieties & less berry growth**, with cranberries & cloudberry noted as hard to find, and blueberries & cranberries being much smaller;
- Changing **weather patterns**, including hot summers, windy winters, shorter springs and longer falls, which impact plant and animal cycles;
- Increasing **beaver and otter** populations which impacts watersheds;
- Increasing reliance of wildlife on **local dumps**;
- Increasing spread of **invasive plants** that impact native flora; and
- Increasing observations of **low water levels, warm water, permafrost thaw, slumping, and bank erosion** which impact wildlife.

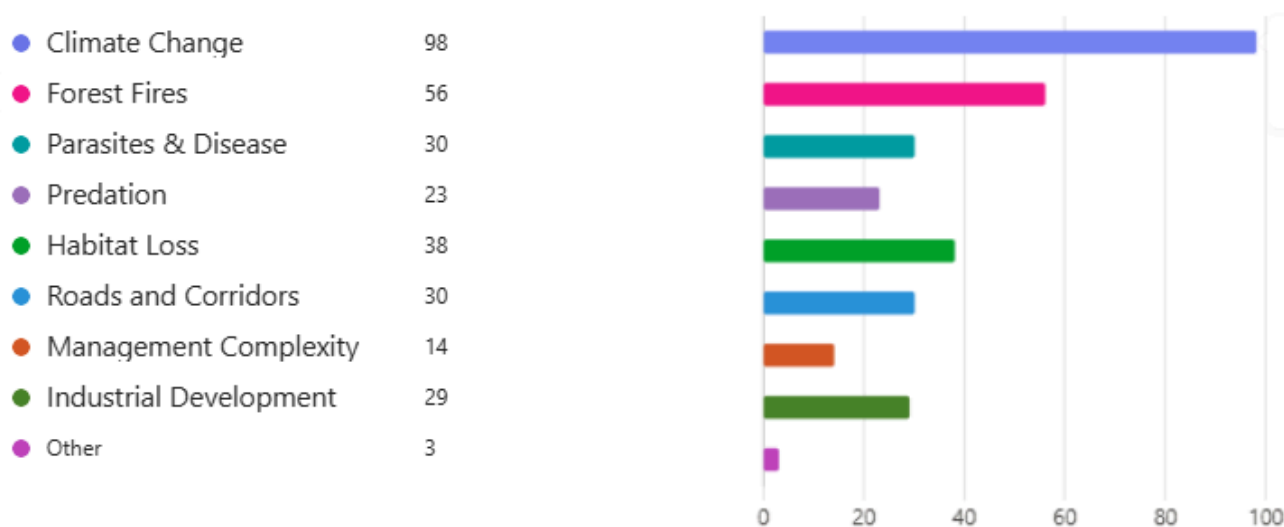
Threats

This multiple choice question asked what community members felt are the biggest threats to species at risk in the GSA. This list of broad-scale threats was based on the list of threats in the IUCN-CMP (International Union for the Conservation of Nature- Conservation Measures Partnership) unified threats classification system.

Respondents were able to select up to five threats they saw as being of concern to SAR in the GSA. Of these threats:

- 92% of respondents saw **climate change** as a big threat to SAR;
- 53% of respondents saw **forest fires** as a big threat to SAR;
- 36% of respondents saw **habitat loss** as a big threat to SAR;
- 28% of respondents saw **parasites & disease** as a big threat to SAR;
- 28% of respondents saw **roads & corridors** as a big threat to SAR;
- 27% of respondents saw **industrial development** as a big threat to SAR;
- 22% of respondents saw **predation** as a big threat to SAR;
- 13% of respondents saw **management complexity** as a big threat to SAR; and
- 3% responded “**other**”, which included concerns about erosion, lakes drying up, permafrost melt, iron bacteria, and transportation corridors increasing hunting pressure.

8. What do you think are the biggest threats to species at risk in the GSA?



Concerns

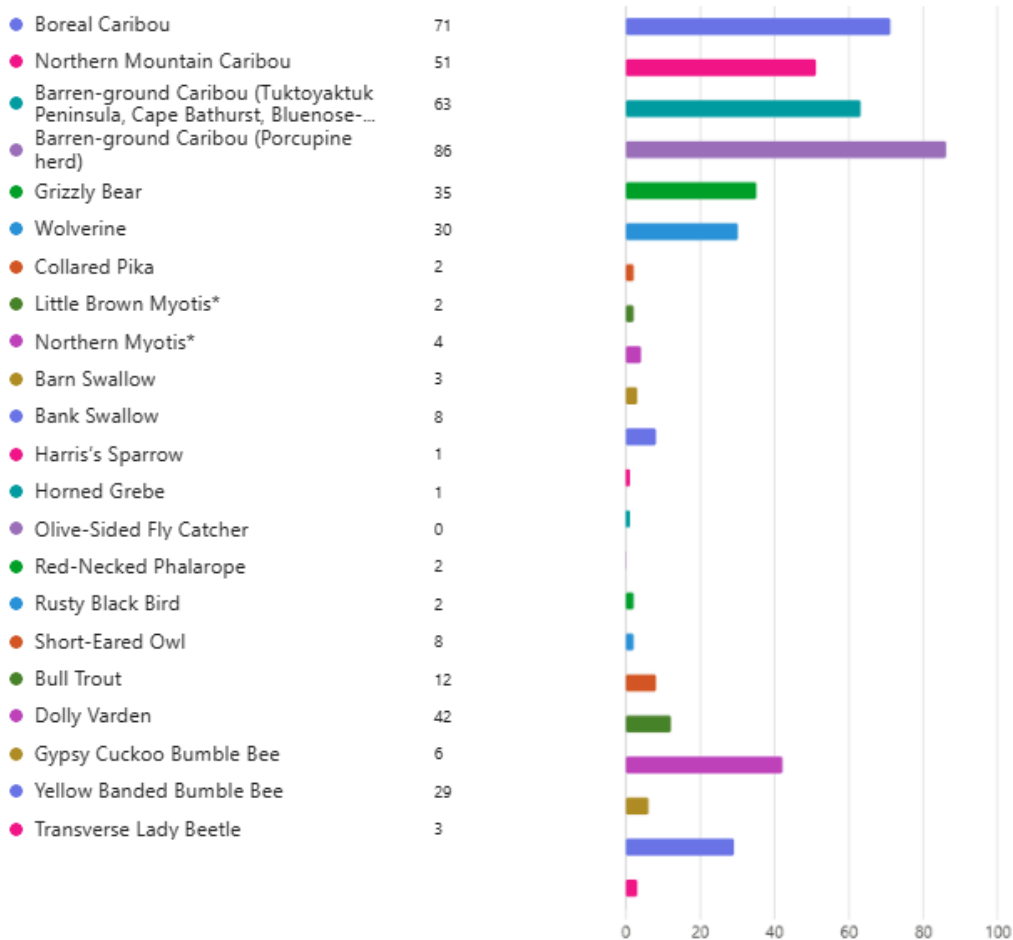
A list of species at risk in the GSA was provided in a chart that included the territorial and federal listing status, and respondents were asked to select up to five species that they were the most concerned about.

Caribou was the most highly selected species of concern, with:

- 81% of respondents concerned about **Porcupine caribou**;
- 67% of respondents concerned about **Boreal caribou**;
- 59% of respondents concerned about **Barren-ground caribou**; and
- 48% of respondents concerned about **Northern Mountain caribou**.

Other species that were notably of concern (>25%) included:

- 40% of respondents were concerned about **Dolly Varden**;
- 33% of respondents were concerned about **Grizzly Bear**;
- 28% of respondents were concerned about **Wolverine**; and
- 27% of respondents were concerned about **Yellow-Banded Bumble Bees**.



The next question provided an option to express concern about other species in the GSA that are not formally listed as a species at risk federally or territorially, but that might be worth looking into more.

Concerns mentioned by respondents to this question included:

- Concerns around reduced **black duck** populations (Surf Scoter and White-winged Scoter) and “ducks” in general;
- Concerns around **Canada Geese** populations and geese in general;
- Concerns around seeing less **birds in general**;
- Concerns around less **traditional berries**;
- Concerns around seeing less **ground squirrels**;
- Concerns around **moose habitat** declining;
- Concerns around the impact of **too many otters**; and
- Concerns around having **less fish** because rivers, lakes, and creeks are drying up and being overgrown by willows.

Are there any species that you are concerned about that are not currently listed? If so, please explain:

A word cloud visualization of responses to the question 'Are there any species that you are concerned about that are not currently listed? If so, please explain:'. The words are arranged in a light blue background with varying sizes and orientations. The most prominent words are 'birds' and 'ducks', which are the largest. Other significant words include 'fish', 'ground squirrels', 'porcupine', 'caribou', 'change from erosion', 'Geese and ducks', 'freezing in layers', 'fish Loche', 'Surf', 'fish', 'song birds', 'no birds', 'birds with worms', 'scoter', 'land', 'white', 'route change', 'River route', 'Bumble Bee', and 'change from erosion'.

Suggestions for the GRRB

Survey respondents were asked to share suggestions for how the GRRB can increase awareness about or gather information on species at risk in the GSA.

Ideas that were suggested to inform how the GRRB can increase awareness or gather information on SAR in the GSA included:

- Providing more opportunities for **youth** to be involved in SAR work;
- Providing **training and materials** to harvesters, youth, and land users on how to document SAR;
- Running **school programs and on-the-land activities** that engage youth and Elders around SAR;
- Having more **community meetings** to make people aware of SAR and what they can do;
- Setting up a **table/booth at community fairs or festivals** to share information;
- Hosting an **open house** about SAR;
- Making and sharing short **information articles** about the SAR including their role and use in the GSA;
- Posting **regular updates** on social media, radio, and local posters on community notice boards;
- Having **online forms** to encourage local reporting of species sightings;
- Sharing **videos**;
- Doing more **online surveys**;
- Doing more **field surveys & population counts**;
- Going **door-to-door** to ask community members questions about SAR;
- Conducting **interviews about black duck** abundance and movements; and
- Continued **Traditional Knowledge documentation** on SAR.

Questions & Comments

The final question of the survey asked whether survey respondents had any remaining questions or comments about SAR in the GSA.

Some of the questions posed included:

- Where have the **birds** gone?
- What will look like for the **next generation** if we are seeing fewer animals now?
- How can community members get **more involved** with the information that is shared?

There were also questions about actions that the GRRB could take:

- Whether the GRRB can make **calendars** with information you can fill each month;
- Whether the GRRB can do **more surveys and research on fish** in the GSA;
- Whether the GRRB could run a **youth hunter education program** to show how to watch for species at risk and to take mental notes of changing environments;
- Whether the GRRB can make a **written document on species at risk in the GSA** to get more information on them; and
- Whether the GRRB can hold **community meetings** once a year.

Some of the other comments about SAR in the GSA included:

- Concerns around **Dolly Varden sampling**;
- Concerns around the use of **ATVs in the fall disturbing caribou migration**;
- That **wolverine** are seen as abundant in the GSA;
- The need to support **Alaskan Gwich'in** in their fight against oil exploration on 1002 land; and
- Concerns around **pollinator decline**.