

Caribou/Snowmobile Aerial Monitoring Report

Of May 14, 2012

Methods

The aerial monitoring program is conducted as a cooperative program between the Advocacy of the West, the Defenders of Wildlife, the Idaho Conservation League, and the Selkirk Conservation Alliance.

An aerial over-flight was conducted of the Southern Selkirk Mountains woodland caribou recovery area to monitor snowmobile user compliance with existing snowmobile use restrictions and to monitor and locate caribou and other important wildlife use areas in relation to areas with snowmobile use restrictions. To conduct aerial monitoring a Cessna 182 fixed wing type aircraft was utilized.

To accurately locate boundaries of areas with snowmobile use restrictions in place, a laptop computer running a geographical information-mapping program (Arc view ver. 3.3) was utilized. In addition to mapping software, the existing arc view extension, DNR gamin, was utilized to connect a handheld GPS system to computer for real-time mapping. In addition to a pilot, a single observer/recorder was utilized. Because of the conditions of the community airport at Priest River, the monitoring flight originated and ended at the community airport in Sandpoint, Idaho.

Conditions

Weather conditions were clear with temperature being about 50 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit within the survey area, no wind. Weather had been clear for approximately nine days prior to flight. The flight originated and concluded from the community airport in Sandpoint, Idaho. The flight began at approximately 1100 and ended at approximately 1230; total flight time was approximately 3.5 hours. A map of the flight path is shown in Figure 1.

Results

Snowmobile Use

Observed snowmobile violations along west side of Chimney Rock. Fresh Snowmobile tracks within closure area east of Lions head Rock, into Smith Creek drainage.

Snowmobile track observed within Abandon Creek drainage. It appeared that they traveled on closed road on IDL ground to gain access.

Snowmobile tracks within Upper Cow Creek. It appeared that snowmobilers gained access to Cow Creek by traveling along south side of Phoebe Tip.

Snowmobile tracks within Upper portion of Blue Joe Creek, south of the Continental Mine and within Upper portions of Grass Creek. Snowmobile tracks leading from Continental Mine to approximately 100 yards north of antenna site on Continental mine.

Snowmobile tracks on road through Saddle Pass.

Snowmobile tracks on and south of small lake that is to west of Big Snowy Top. Snowmobilers were 'high marking' along north side of 'finger ridge' that comes off of Big Snowy Top, south of the lake

Wildlife

Fresh bear tracks observed crossing Caribou Lake within the upper portion of Smith Creek drainage and another set of bear tracks approximately 200 yards west of West Fork Cabin.

Mountain goat track observed north of Kanisku Mountain and north of Indian Rock.

Unidentified set of two ungulate tracks, south of Little Snowy Top crossing east west over ridge. Possible caribou or moose tracks.

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