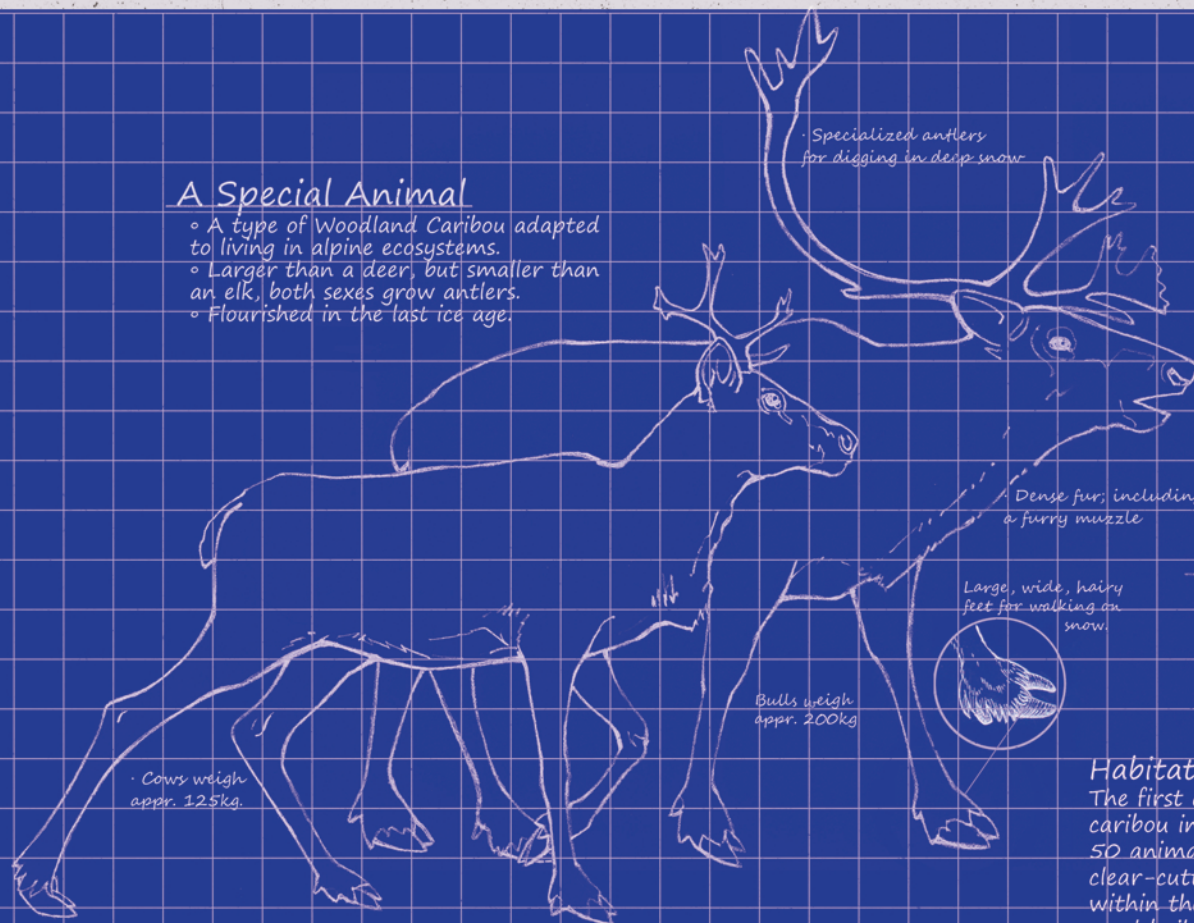


A Special Animal

- A type of Woodland Caribou adapted to living in alpine ecosystems.
- Larger than a deer, but smaller than an elk, both sexes grow antlers.
- Flourished in the last ice age.



The Decline & Disappearance of the South Purcell MOUNTAIN CARIBOU

Habitat Loss

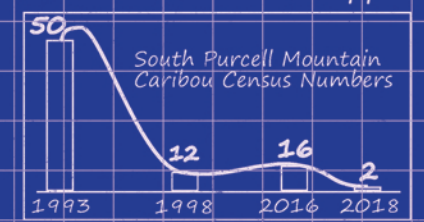
The first census of the Southern Purcell mountain caribou in 1993 recorded a population of about 50 animals.* The maps below show the expansion of clear-cutting within the St. Mary Lake drainage area within the Southern Purcells from 1984-2016. Logging, road building and the opening up of areas to snowmobiling have greatly reduced the area of undisturbed, lichen-bearing, old-growth forests suitable for sustaining mountain caribou.

Unique Winter Habitat and Behaviours

In the winter months, mountain caribou escape predators by moving up to mature subalpine where the snow is very deep and where lichens which hang from decaying tree limbs.



Population Decline and Disappearance

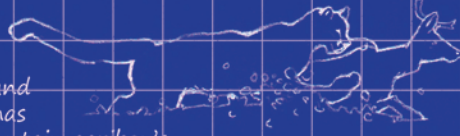


* Leo DeGroot: "2011 Mountain Caribou Census South Purcell Mountains, BC Ministry of Natural Resource Operations"

Loss to Predation

Cougars are the main predator of the South Purcell mountain caribou. Wolves typically prefer to hunt moose, deer and elk.

Extensive clear-cutting of the thick, old-growth spruce and fir subalpine forest has fragmented the mountain caribou's preferred habitat and allowed other ungulates, such as mule deer, elk and moose (along with their predators) to move closer to the mountain caribou in their winter range.



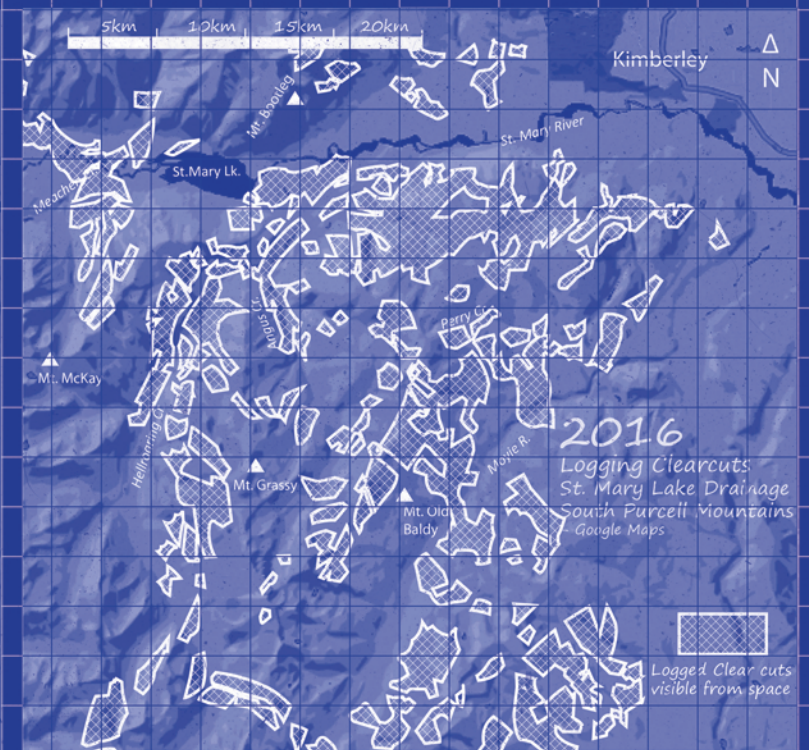
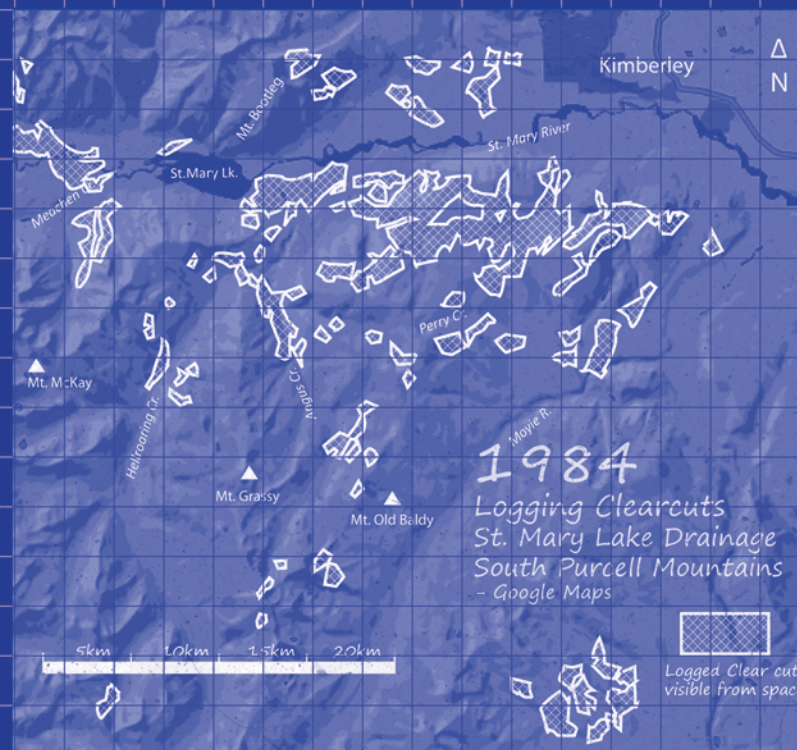
Failure to Protect

Although troubling declines in mountain caribou numbers were reported in the 1990's, it was not until 2006 that the BC Government announced a plan to help recover mountain caribou populations by:

- Protecting more high-quality caribou habitat from logging, road building and recreational usage.
- Reducing the number of predators through changes in hunting regulations and controversial aerial wolf kills.
- Relocating mountain caribou from larger northern herds to smaller southern herds and creating maternal pens to protect new calves from early predation.

The failure to legislate protection earlier caused additional mountain caribou habitat to be lost and the recovery plan has been set back by arguments over its interpretation and implementation.

By 2018, these initiatives had come too late to save the South Purcell Mountain Caribou from extirpation.



Sources: Northwest Wildlife Preservation Society and Wildsight - Mountain Caribou Publication / BC Ministry of Natural Resource Operations: 2011 South Purcell Caribou Census / Gov. of Canada: Southern Mountain Caribou Protection Study 2017