



Plain Language Summary

Abundance estimates for the Dolphin and Union caribou herd

Fall 2023

The Canadian Arctic is the home of caribou subspecies, such as the Peary (*Rangifer tarandus pearyi*), barren-ground (*Rangifer tarandus groenlandicus*), and the Dolphin and Union (*Rangifer tarandus groenlandicus x pearyi*). The Dolphin and Union caribou herd habitat includes most of Victoria Island and the north of the Canadian mainland.

The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) assessed Dolphin and Union caribou herd as Endangered. Subsequently, in 2022, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board and the Federal Minister of Environment recommended up listing the status of the subspecies to Endangered.

An aerial abundance survey conducted in 2018 showed the population has declined further to about 4,105 caribou on Victoria Island. However, the population had stabilized in 2020, where the population was reassessed and estimated at 3,815 caribou, including Victoria Island and the mainland.

The two main objectives of this survey were: 1) to provide an abundance estimate of Dolphin and Union caribou herd and 2) to detect a trend in Dolphin and Union caribou herd trajectory.

The results were an estimate of 4,589 for Victoria Island and 5,229 caribou for Victoria Island and the mainland. The population trend can be deemed stable when comparing the 2023 population estimates with the two previous assessments.

The Dolphin and Union caribou herd with an estimate of 5,229 caribou, is still considered in a low phase in its cycle (less than 8,000). Because of the importance of this herd in Inuit subsistence and culture, management actions should aim to continue to support its recovery.