



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

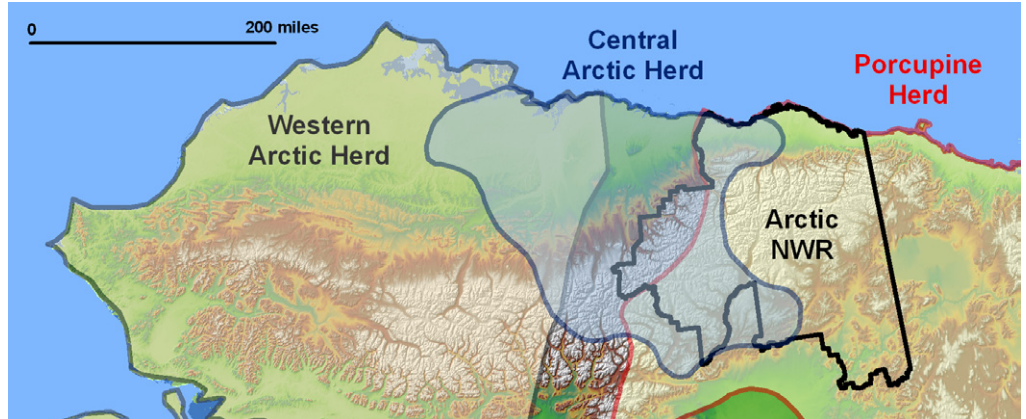
Arctic

National Wildlife Refuge

Central Arctic Caribou Herd

As its name suggests, the Central Arctic Caribou herd roams the central region of northern Alaska. Smaller than the Porcupine Caribou herd, which travels throughout the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, the Central Arctic herd (estimated at 32,000 in 2002) was once thought to be part of the Western Arctic Caribou herd, but is now recognized as a distinct herd. Caribou herds are identified by where females within the herd give birth to their calves. The female caribou of the Central Arctic herd calve across a broad swath of the Arctic coastal plain from the Canning River drainage of the Arctic Refuge west to the Colville River. Most calves are born in areas on either side of the Prudhoe Bay oil complex.

Soon after calving season, Central Arctic herd caribou move outward both east and west to their summer range, which extends from the 1002 Area of the Arctic Refuge well west beyond Prudhoe Bay. In the fall, many of these caribou migrate south through the Brooks Range



mountains to spend the winter along south slope river drainages deep within the Arctic Refuge. Some members of the herd, however, remain on their summer range north of the mountains throughout the year, seeking out wind-blown valleys and tundra benches they need in order to survive the long, cold winters.

Central Arctic herd animals that winter near Arctic Village, just beyond Arctic

Refuge's southern boundary, are an important subsistence resource for the people living in that community. These villagers harvest caribou for food throughout the winter. The herd is also hunted on its coastal summer range by villagers traveling by boat from Kaktovik. The Central Arctic herd has increased in numbers over the past 10 years, ensuring hunters that caribou are available in adequate numbers to supply villagers with this sustaining bounty.

