

# Wolf survey in the Coast Mountains, 2009

The Southern Lakes Wildlife Coordinating Committee is assessing wildlife populations in the Southern Lakes region. They have requested updated information about the wolf population in the Coast Mountains. Caribou numbers have increased and moose numbers have declined since the late 1980s. A wolf population assessment will give us a better understanding of predator prey system changes that may have taken place over the last 2 decades.

## When completed

This survey will give us the information needed to assess the impact wolves may be having on moose and caribou in the region.

## Project Description

We used the same study area boundaries (with minor modifications) as had been used in the past so that we could compare our information with historic information. *Minimum count aerial snow-tracking* is the standard wolf survey technique used in Yukon. The snow track count provides a minimum count of pack wolves based on track sign or wolves seen. Wolf trails are located and followed from the air until wolves are seen or the trails are lost. Tracking is particularly difficult in the Coast Mountains so repeated flights were made over the survey area until we were confident in the results.

## Project activities and results

The wolf density, average pack size and pack density determined for the Coast Mountains in 2009 was lower than previous surveys and indicated a continued decline in the wolf population since 2004.

Between 5 February and 22 March 2009 we flew 70 hours on 16 flights. We found

- Nine packs were resident within the study area.
- Average pack size was 4.9; down 17% since 2004.
- Wolf density was 45.5 wolves per 1000 km<sup>2</sup>; down 22% since 2004.
- Pack density was 1.01 packs per 1000km<sup>2</sup>; down 9% since 2004.
- Total wolf population was 49 down from 69 in 2004.

In October, we were able to refine the population estimate was refined based on wolves seen during a caribou survey. The overall wolf population assessment was unchanged.

## More information

Baer, A. (2010). Wolf Survey in the Coast Mountains, 2009. Yukon Fish and Wildlife Branch Report TR-10-01, Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada.

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