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Canada's first national wilderness park created

The Northern Yukon is an arctic and subarctic wilderness of incredible beauty, a rich and varied ecosystem: nine million acres of land in its natural state, inhabited by thriving populations of plants and animals. This wilderness has come down through the ages, and it is a heritage that future generations, living in an industrial world even more complex than ours, will surely cherish.

Mr. Justice Thomas R. Berger

Some 38,700 km² (15,000 square miles) of the northern portion of the Yukon have been set aside for the creation of Canada's first national wilderness park.

Northern Affairs Minister Hugh Faulkner, who made the announcement on July 6, also said that a task force would formulate plans to manage the entire Canadian range of a 110,000-head Porcupine caribou herd, which migrate throughout the northern half of the Yukon, parts of the Northwest Territories and north-eastern Alaska.

"I have concluded that the conservation values of the region exceed the development potential and we must reserve all the land north of the Porcupine and Bell Rivers," said the minister. "This conclusion is supported by the recommendations of Justice Berger and evidence given the recent hearings by the National Energy Board," he added.

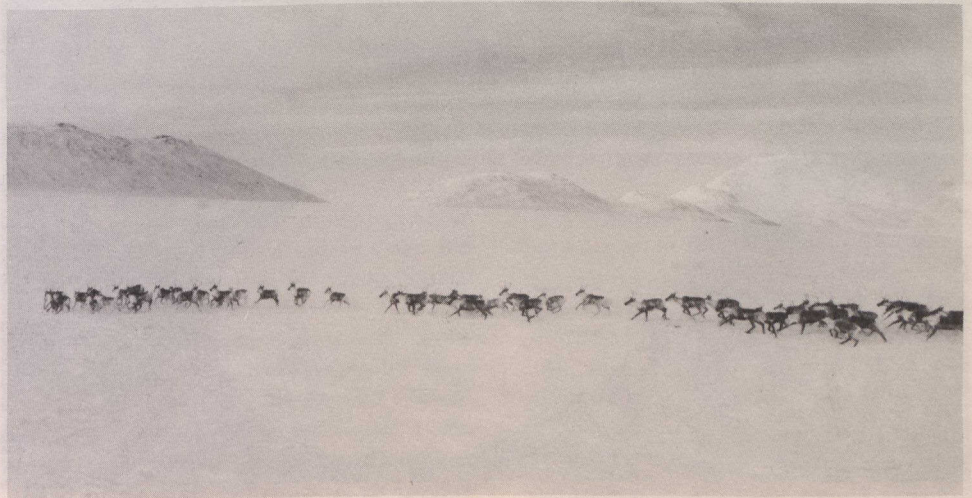
The minister also announced the Government's intention to discuss with the United States an international plan to

protect the caribou.

The action will not prejudice land claims discussions nor traditional native hunting, fishing and trapping activities in the area. Although the new plan stops further disposal of land under the Territorial Lands Act for oil and gas exploration, ends the sale or lease of surface rights, and prohibits entry for staking of mineral claims, it will not affect existing mineral claims and oil and gas interests.

Importance of area

The key habitats for the huge international wildlife populations of the region run east-west across the Yukon-Alaska border. These are the coastal plains vital to migratory birds and caribou; the British, Barn, and Richardson Mountains vital to caribou; and the Old Crow and Yukon Flats of the Yukon River system vital to migratory birds. Because of this east-west orientation of habitats, neither Canada nor the U.S. can protect and manage their components separately. Therefore these



A herd of barren-ground caribou cross the snow-covered tundra in northern Yukon.

One hundred years ago tomorrow... Alexander Graham Bell placed the first, one-way long-distance telephone call in the world, from Brantford to Paris, Ontario, a distance of 12.8 kilometres.

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