

CARIBOU ON THE QUEEN CHARLOTTE ISLANDS.

News comes from Massett, Queen Charlotte Islands, that some Indians have just arrived there from the interior of Graham Island, bringing with them the heads and hides of three caribou. They stated that they had also seen a calf, which, however, escaped. A letter just received from the Rev. W. E. Collison confirms this report, and encloses a photograph he had himself taken of the animals.

The British Columbian Government had already despatched the curator of the Victoria Museum to look for deer on the Queen Charlotte Island, but the specimens just referred to reached Massett before his arrival there. He will, however, doubtless secure them, and before long we shall have a specialist's report on them. They presumably belong to the species described by Mr. Ernest Thompson Seton, in the OTTAWA NATURALIST for February, 1900, as *Rangifer dawsoni*.

At last, then, the long debated question as to the existence of caribou on the Queen Charlotte Islands has been settled in the affirmative. The present writer, whose intimate acquaintance with the Islands extends nearly over twenty years—eight of which he resided at Massett—has been amongst those who disbelieved in the existence of caribou there. It seemed so improbable that such large and active animals could have existed so long in so comparatively small an area, and yet remain unseen; for, if we except the fragment on which Mr. Thompson Seton founded his species, which seemed to have a doubtful history, it is a well-known fact that no caribou have been killed during the period just named, nor are there any animals on the Islands likely to prey on caribou. Even if only moderately prolific, they must in this period have increased to such an extent that they could hardly escape notice. However, they are there, and they must be another example of the truth of Darwin's statement in his Origin of Species: "Where any species becomes very rare, close interbreeding will help to exterminate it. Authors have thought that this comes into play in accounting for the deterioration of the aurochs in Lithuania, of red deer in Scotland, and of bears in Norway."

It is comforting to see that the provincial government have passed an Order in Council prohibiting the hunting, killing, or taking of caribou on the Queen Charlotte Islands. One only hopes that the order will reach Massett in time to prevent the Haidas making an indiscriminate slaughter of what remains of these interesting animals.

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