

top: A number of Critical Wildlife Areas were proposed in the 1970's for the protection of critical sheep habitat. [JP]
bottom: The Chappie Lake wetland complex provides important migratory bird habitat. [RR]

areas previously identified for wildlife conservation

The Peel River Watershed has been an area of interest for wildlife conservation for a long time. Outlined below are some of the areas identified previously as having high conservation value.

1. Peel-Caribou River Complex Migratory Bird Habitat

This large wetland complex is also known as the Peel Plateau wetlands or the Turner Lake wetlands. It is a complex of small lakes and ponds ~ see section 17 for a more detailed description of the wetland. In 1979, Yukon ornithologist Dave Mossop conducted an extensive waterfowl survey of the wetland complex (Mossop, 2001). Based on his findings and the fact that the wetland is so extensive, the area was identified as needing protection for waterfowl breeding and staging habitat by the Canadian Wildlife Service in 1981.

2. Chappie Lake Complex Migratory Bird Habitat

The Chappie Lake wetland complex was also highlighted by the Canadian Wildlife Service in the early 1980's for its important waterfowl breeding and staging habitat. Dave Mossop conducted preliminary surveys of the wetland at that time, however a more detailed survey was not conducted until 2002 (Mossop et al., 2002).

3. Snake River International Biological Program Site #30

Straddling the Yukon/NWT border, this approximately 1,735 km² area, is characterized by alpine tundra. The alpine forest-tundra transition is found in the lower valleys. Unlike the other areas on this map, this particular site was not chosen as a conservation site, but

rather as site to use for the monitoring and documenting of the effects of mining activity on wildlife, due to the presence of the Crest Iron Ore Deposit. The IBP Working Group proposed that this site be set aside for research purposes in the early 1970's.

4. Snake River Critical Wildlife Area

The Snake River Critical Wildlife Area is on the northeast side of the upper Snake River and was identified in 1974 by the Yukon Game Branch and the Canadian Wildlife Service. This area is part of the Backbone Ranges and provides critical winter habitat for sheep.

5. Backbone Ranges Critical Wildlife Area

The Backbone Ranges contain good habitat for sheep. Sheep are found in greater numbers here than in the adjacent Canyon Ranges. Sheep are usually found in winter low on valley rims and on wind-swept vegetated slopes in the Backbone Ranges. The wintering areas were identified by the Yukon Game Branch and Canadian Wildlife Service and rated as critical habitat in 1974.

6. Rapitan Creek Critical Wildlife Area

This area was identified as critical habitat requiring protection due to the presence of grizzly bear dens by the Yukon Game Branch and the Canadian Wildlife Service in 1974.

7. Fairchild Lake Critical Wildlife Area

This area contains several mineral licks that are used by both sheep and moose. The sheep are

attracted to the lowland from their usual alpine areas, making them vulnerable to disturbance and predation. Protection of critical habitat for sheep and moose was proposed in 1974 by the Yukon Game Branch and the Canadian Wildlife Service.

8. Illyd Range Critical Wildlife Area

This is a cluster of 7 critical areas for thimhorn sheep. The high and isolated area in the Illyd Range contains large numbers of sheep year-round. Here, the limestone cliffs provide excellent escape terrain and the gentle slopes and flat tops covered with grasses and sedges provide abundant food. The southern-most area along the Wind River contains mineral licks that are critical to the sheep. Sheep come down from the alpine areas to obtain essential minerals from the licks. When they are in these lowlands they are particularly vulnerable to disturbance and predation. The other 5 areas shown contain essential winter range for sheep. This Critical Wildlife Area was proposed by the Yukon Game Branch and the Canadian Wildlife Service in 1974.

9. Hart River Critical Wildlife Area

In winter, thimhorn sheep use the snow-free cliffs and sparsely-wooded bluffs along the Hart River. This was identified as critical habitat by the Yukon Game Branch and the Canadian Wildlife Service in 1973.



10. Wernecke Mountains Critical Wildlife Area

At the headwaters of the Hart River, this area contains critical mineral licks that attract sheep. Summer is the peak period of use and the lambs and ewes are particularly susceptible to disturbance and predation at this time. The area also contains critical winter habitat in the form of low valley rims and wind-swept vegetated slopes. This Critical Wildlife Area was proposed by the Yukon Game Branch and the Canadian Wildlife Service in 1974.

11. Wernecke Mountains International Biological Program Site #77

This area was identified as having high potential for a major ecological research station for the study of a representative montane arctic environment. It contains a great diversity of habitats and as of yet undisturbed wildlife populations. The IBP Working Group proposed this site for protection in the early 1970's.

Sources: Beckel 1975; Dennington, 1985; Indian and Northern Affairs, 1973 and 1974; MacPherson et al., 1987.

