



# Wood Bison Banter

The latest on Yukon Wood Bison: Fall 2007

## Changes in the 2007-2008 Bison Hunt

This year, each of the two bison permit hunt seasons will be extended by one month. Hunters will hunt in either December, January and February, or December, January, and March.

The number of permits being issued to resident hunters has increased to 281 this year, up from 244 last year. The number of hunting zones has also increased. Almost all hunting sub-zones from the Haines Junction area, east to Teslin and then north to Stewart Crossing, will be open to bison hunting.



Beginning this 2007–08 season, hunters have an incentive to take cows rather than bulls. Yukon government biologists are concerned about the herd's composition and hope harvesting more cows, and fewer bulls, will bring the herd's gender ratio to a level that is more even. The overall harvest has been about 65% bulls to 35% cows.

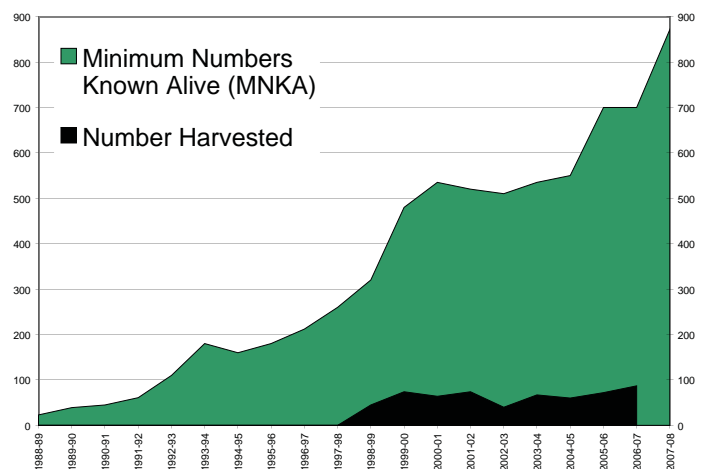
Now, hunters who take a cow will be able to apply for a bison permit in the next license year, rather than five years later. However, they will only be eligible for a permit if there are some left over after the annual lottery.

*See more information on harvest ratios and ranges inside.*

## New population estimate

### Latest census higher than expected

A population census of the Aishihik Wood Bison Herd was done in late July by Environment Yukon. The current population size (including calves of the year) is estimated to be 1089 animals. The graph below reflects the bison observed in the Yukon, or the 'minimum number of bison known to be alive', from 1988 to July 2007.



### How was this year's Bison estimate calculated?

In order to generate data for this year's estimated bison population, Environment Yukon biologists counted animals from a helicopter and, for the first time, used the 'mark-resight methodology' to generate an estimate. In total, 872 wood bison were counted, including 24 of 30 of radio-collared animals. Using these data, a population model was generated that estimated the herd at 1089 animals, with a estimated minimum of 970 animals and estimated maximum of 1309 animals. The survey was completed by biologists Tom Jung and Linaya Workman, District CO Dan Drummond, and DCO, Shane Oakley.

Questions? Contact the Wood Bison Management Program Yukon Department of Environment, Phone: (867) 667-5721

## Environment Yukon Collars 17 Bison

This spring Environment Yukon biologists collared 14 animals: 13 with new or minorly refurbished GPS units and 1 with a standard radio-collar. In July another 3 bison were collared with GPS units. In total, there are currently 27 collared animals in the Aishihik Wood Bison Herd: 16 with GPS collars and 11 with standard radio collars. The GPS collars allow satellite-based tracking whereas radio collars require biologists to be in close proximity to track the animal. Environment Yukon hopes to collar an additional 8 bison before Christmas.

### *Why does Environment Yukon collar Bison?*

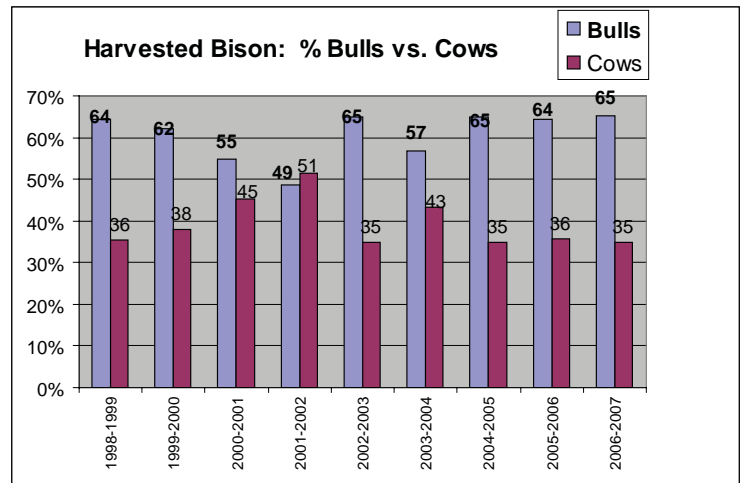
Collars help to:

- assess population size
- determine their range
- identify calving areas
- identify where bison spend their time throughout the year
- and to assess which places meet the habitat needs for wood bison.



*What Colour is Your Collar?*

Bison collars come in three colours. Yellow collars are the ones most recently added to the herd, and are the most easy to see. Blue and black collars are older and will be phased out. Remember: All collared wildlife - including bison - are protected from hunting.



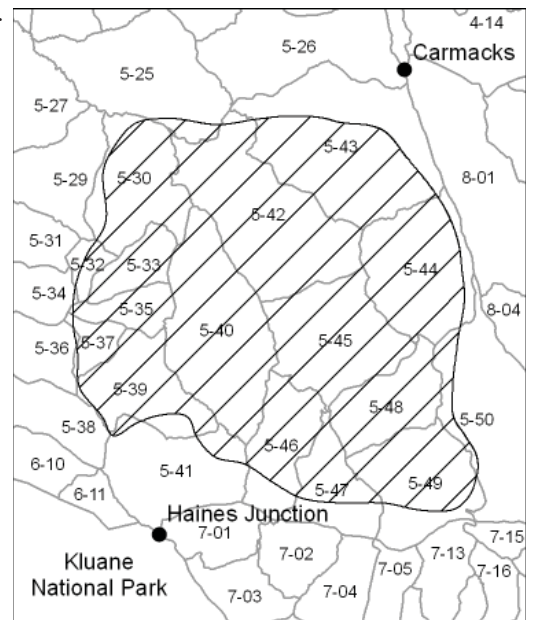
*Hunters are encouraged to harvest bison cows to bring the herd's gender ratio closer to 50:50.*

### Range of the Aishihik Wood Bison Herd

Over 95% of the bison population resides year round within the core range. Core range was determined through aerial surveys and radio-telemetry conducted by the Yukon

Department of Environment.

Although it is possible to encounter small numbers of bison outside the core range, the farther outside the core range you travel, the less likely you are to find bison.



### *Bison biologists need your help!*

There are 3 bison with blue collars in the Aishihik herd. The collars are not working anymore.

If you see a bison with one of these blue collars, please take note of the location, and report your sighting to Tom Jung, Senior Wildlife Biologist in Whitehorse, at (867) 667-5766 or call toll-free at 1-800-661-0408, local 5766.

All photos Yukon government unless otherwise stated.

# Champagne & Aishihik First Nations Community Bison Harvest

During the month of March for the last two years the Champagne & Aishihik First Nations (CAFN) Renewable Resources Department has initiated a Community Bison Hunt. CAFN allocates a set number of permits from its annual allocation towards this combined harvest opportunity and we have invited other CAFN permit holders to join our hunt.

The Community Hunts have been based out of the Aishihik's *Äsheyì*

*Shäkat Ku* Harvest Camp. Our bison hunts have been successful in harvesting bison each season and some of the other CAFN permit holders were also successful. This was an opportunity to further help in strengthening our role in the community, to maintain our intimate relationship with the land and its resources.

The meat from the community bison is distributed amongst our CAFN communities. A big thanks

goes out to CAFN permit holders who have participated and contributed a portion of their harvest towards the Community Hunt program. CAFN Renewable Resources Department would like to thank all who participate and sends congratulations to all our successful bison hunters each season.

*(Contributed by Micheal Jim, Renewable Resources Manager, Champagne and Aishihik First Nations)*

## School Hunts

In 2006-07, students from Eliza Van Bibber School (Pelly Crossing), St. Elias Community School (Haines Junction), Elijah Smith Elementary School (Whitehorse), and F.H. Collins Secondary School French Immersion (Whitehorse), and *Ghuch Tlâ* Community School (Carcross) participated in a bison hunt. For some, it was their first time sleeping in wall tents outside.

Activities included setting snares, ice fishing, setting nets under ice, setting up camps, traveling by snowmobile and toboggan, butchering bison, practicing shooting skills, keeping journals, flying kites, star gazing, and making new friends around the campfire (excerpted from SFN News Vol.4, Issue 3/4. Article written by Gordon Schmiedge, EVBS teacher).

*Thursday March 22, 2007.*

*This was the day I went out on the hunt. It was sooooo much fun. The best part about the hunt was riding on the back of the dog-sled- it was so cool. I'm so glad I went on the bison hunt and we got two bison. There was a lot of blood."*



*~ from Jessie Pemberton's journal, Elijah Smith Elementary School.*

Eliza Van Bibber School students (Pelly Crossing) during their Spring 2007 school bison hunt.

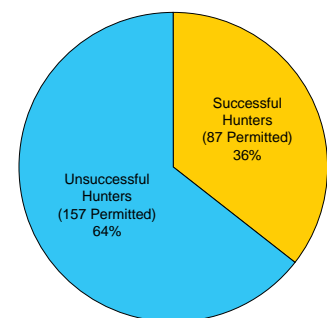
Photo: Gordon Schmiedge



*Ghuch Tlâ Community School (Carcross) Bison Hunt 2007*

### Breaking Down the Numbers: 2006-2007 Bison Harvest Data

Last year, Environment Yukon received 504 applications for bison hunting permits. Out of the 244 permits issued, 87 permittees were successful with their bison harvest.



## Community Monitoring Program to be launched

This fall a new biological sampling program will begin with the goal of monitoring bison health using hunter-collected samples. The program will train selected bison hunters in biological sampling methods. The hunters will be asked to collect several samples (blood, feces, rumen contents, measurements, etc) and fill out a data sheet. Participating hunters will be compensated for their time.

Typically, biologists have only been able to get these samples during collaring work, which is expensive and only gathers information from a small number of animals.



In the past, collecting blood samples has been tough for hunters to do out in the field and did not provide good laboratory results—because regular blood samples have special requirements: they have to be collected in special tubes and kept cool (but not frozen). The new technique requires hunters only to dip and dry filter paper which will not be damaged by freezing. No special handling or storage is required. The samples simply need to be sent in or dropped off to Environment Yukon.

For more information on the program, contact Dr. Michelle Oakley, Wildlife Veterinarian at (867) 634-2439.

## Bison Hunter Etiquette Around Traps

- Contact the trapper before making use of any trapping cabins and trails
- Watch for blue “active trapline” signs- they indicate where trapping activity may occur. Remember that it is unlawful to knowingly interfere with a lawfully set trap.
- Some trapping trails may have traps and snares set directly on the traveled portion of the trail itself. Hunters should avoid these trails for safety and to avoid interference with lawful trapping activities.
- A trappers’ catch should not be disturbed; it should be left alone for the trapper to deal with.
- Trapping activities may change; it is important to contact the trapper before every trip.
- And remember that trappers can be a helpful source of information on local trails, on bison activity, on snow, weather and ice conditions, etc.



## Spice up your Bison!

### Bison Fajitas

1lb. bison skirt, flank or round steak cut into ½ inch slices

Marinade -

- Juice of 2-3 limes
- ½ tsp. pepper
- ½ tsp. garlic salt
- or buy fajita marinade at your local grocery store

Garnishes -

- 1 large tomato chopped
- 1 large green pepper sliced
- 3 green onions chopped
- guacamole
- picante sauce
- sour cream
- 4 flour or corn tortillas, warmed

Pound meat into ½ inch thickness. Place steak slices in plastic bag. Sprinkle both sides of steak with lime juice, garlic salt and pepper. Tie bag securely and marinate in refrigerator for 6 to 8 hours.

Drain marinade, broil meat over medium high mequite coals 2 to 3 minutes on each side. Carve into thin slices, serve in warmed tortillas. Add garnishes as desired.

## Yukon Wood Bison Technical Team

Working together to provide recommendations about wood bison in the Yukon.

- Alsek Renewable Resources Council
- Carmacks Renewable Resources Council
- Laberge Renewable Resources Council
- Champagne and Aishihik First Nations
- Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation
- Environment Yukon
- Yukon Fish & Wildlife Mgmt. Board
- Environment Canada