



Caribou on the road (YG – Jan Adamczewski)

Woodland Caribou

The name “Carcross” comes from “Caribou Crossing”, the original name of the community. The narrow Natasaheen River, between Bennett and Nares lakes, was a natural crossing for herds of Woodland Caribou during their seasonal movements.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, caribou populations have declined drastically. The Carcross/Tagish First Nation, in cooperation with the Yukon government, has voluntarily banned hunting caribou in the region since 1993. Thanks to the Southern Lakes Caribou Recovery Program, caribou numbers are stable today, though not as large as they once were. Keep your eyes open for these symbols of the north.

Protect the caribou: Drive carefully

Every year, an average of 10 Southern Lakes Caribou are killed by collisions with highway vehicles.

During the winter, when it is slippery and dark, please slow down and drive with extra care, for caribou may be on the road.

Carcross Dunes

The Carcross Desert and Dunes are the remains of sand and silt deposited on the bottom of ancient Lake Watson at the end of the last ice age 10,000 years ago.

After the lake disappeared with the glaciers, the Watson River cut through the sediment to bring a constant supply of sand and silt into Bennett Lake. This sand is continuously blown onto shore by the prevailing winds to form the current dynamic dune system.

Even though it is affectionately known as the Carcross Desert, the dunes are not dry enough to be a real desert. That said, the Carcross Dunes are home to a variety of rare plants and animals unique to this habitat.

A network of hiking trails allows you to explore the Carcross Dunes. This is a fragile ecosystem; please respect it by staying on the trails.



Hiking on the beach of Bennett Lake (YG – Emily Snow)

Montana Mountain

At 2,219m (7,280'), Montana Mountain offers spectacular views and alpine meadows with plants and animals that lived here throughout the last ice age. You may also see Hoary Marmots and Woodland Caribou wandering the mountain tops. Old mining roads offer easy access to this hiking area. It has also become a popular area for mountain biking.

Even from a distance you may spot white Dall Sheep grazing on the south-facing slopes of Montana Mountain.

The town of Carcross and surrounding area is within the traditional territory of the Carcross/Tagish First Nation. Montana Mountain is settlement land and should be treated with respect by those who visit it. Historic artifacts and heritage resources are protected by law. Please leave them in place for others to enjoy.

Bennett Lake

Bennett Lake is a glacial lake located on the border between B.C. and Yukon. During the Klondike Gold Rush of 1898, prospectors who had just crossed the Coastal Mountains via the Chilkoot Trail or White Pass would start their journey to Dawson City by raft or boat.

For a beautiful walk, follow the beach west down the lake to find the Bennett Lake viewing platform. This is a wonderful picnic area.

Bennett Lake is home to a variety of fish such as Arctic Grayling and Lake Trout. The clear water of the lake allows you to spot fish from the footbridge.

Natasaheen River

Nares Lake is very shallow near the highway and the Natasaheen River remains relatively ice-free in winter, making it very attractive for many animals. In the spring and fall, this part of the territory is host to waterbirds such as Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, American Wigeon, Tundra and Trumpeter swans. The gazebo is a wonderful picnic spot with views up and down this deep, narrow lake.

Arctic Grayling (YG – Kathi Egli)



WILDLIFE



VIEWING

Animals and plants around Carcross



NatureServe

The **Baikal Sedge** (*Carex sabulosa*) is the only listed endangered plant in Canada's North. It is a relic of Beringia and needs specific habitat, such as the Carcross Dunes, to live.



Stefan Gottermann

The rare **Yukon Lupine** (*Lupinus kuschei*) is only known from sites in Yukon, Alaska, and northwestern B.C. It is found in abundance in the Carcross Dunes.



Siberian Asters (*Aster sibiricus*) are browsed by a number of different animals, particularly deer and moose. Aster is Greek and Latin for “star”.



JF Landry (Agriculture Canada)

The **Gnorimoschema Moth** can be found in the Carcross Dunes. Although winged and fully capable of flight, they often run, hop, and flutter across their sandy home.



Mountain Goats inhabit the peaks of the Coast Mountains along the South Klondike Highway. Both males and females have slender, pointed horns.



Dall Sheep can be found in alpine meadows and on the sheer rock faces of the mountains around Carcross. Ewes have small horns while rams have large curved horns.



Carcross from above (Bruce Bennett)

Maps and Guidebooks

Available locally through retail outlets or the offices listed below.

Whitehorse & Area Hikes & Bikes by Yukon Conservation Society (2005 – Harbour Publishing Co. Ltd.)

The Yukon Hiking Guide by Curtis Vos (1999 – Borealis Books)

Carcross Desert orienteering and recreation map (1990 – Yukon Orienteering Association)

Yukon's Wildlife Viewing Guide (FREE)

For more information about wildlife viewing opportunities in Carcross, visit or contact:

Environment Yukon
10 Burns Road, Whitehorse
867-667-8291 or 1-800-661-0408 ext. 8291 (in Yukon)
www.wildlifeviewing.gov.yk.ca

Carcross Visitor Information Centre
867-821-4431 (open May – Sept.)

Carcross/Tagish First Nation
867-821-8216
www.ctfn.ca

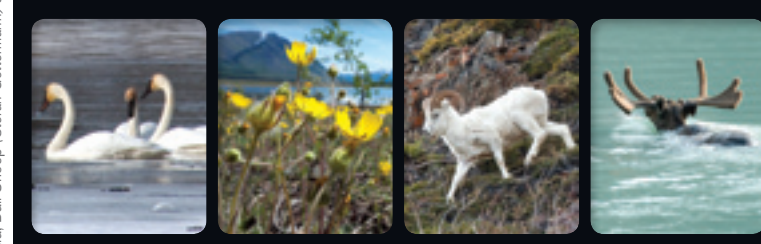
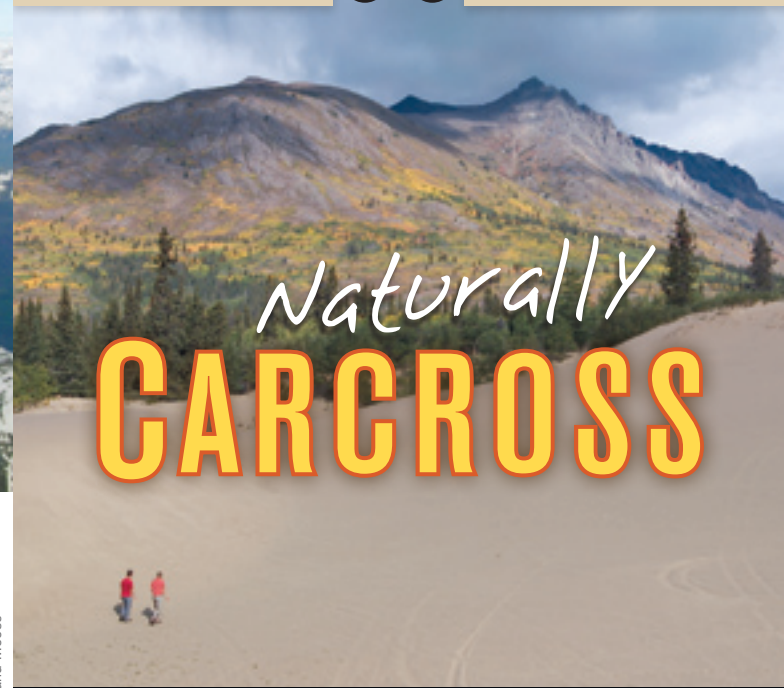
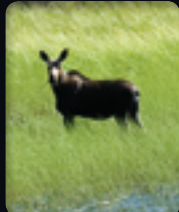
ISBN 978-1-55362-453-0

July 2011

Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper

All photos Yukon government unless otherwise noted.

Below: Cow Moose (Stefan Gottermann), Showy Jacob's Ladder, Arctic Ground Squirrel (SG) and Rocky Mountain Parnassian Butterfly



On front cover: Carcross Desert and town of Carcross (Stefan Gottermann) and Moose (Stefan Gottermann), Hooker's Potentilla, Dall Sheep (Stefan Gottermann) and Moose



Yukon
Environment

Naturally CARCROSS

Early birds

River outlets and the narrow channels between large lakes are ideal habitat for waterbirds. In the early spring, thousands of Trumpeter and Tundra swans migrate through the region resting and feeding at these sites. These wetlands are essential for waterbirds as they are the only sources of open water in March and April, and therefore the only place for birds to rest on their journey north. Every year Environment Yukon and community partners host the Celebration of Swans directing people's attention to areas of open water where they can discreetly observe these magnificent birds.



Carcross Dune trails

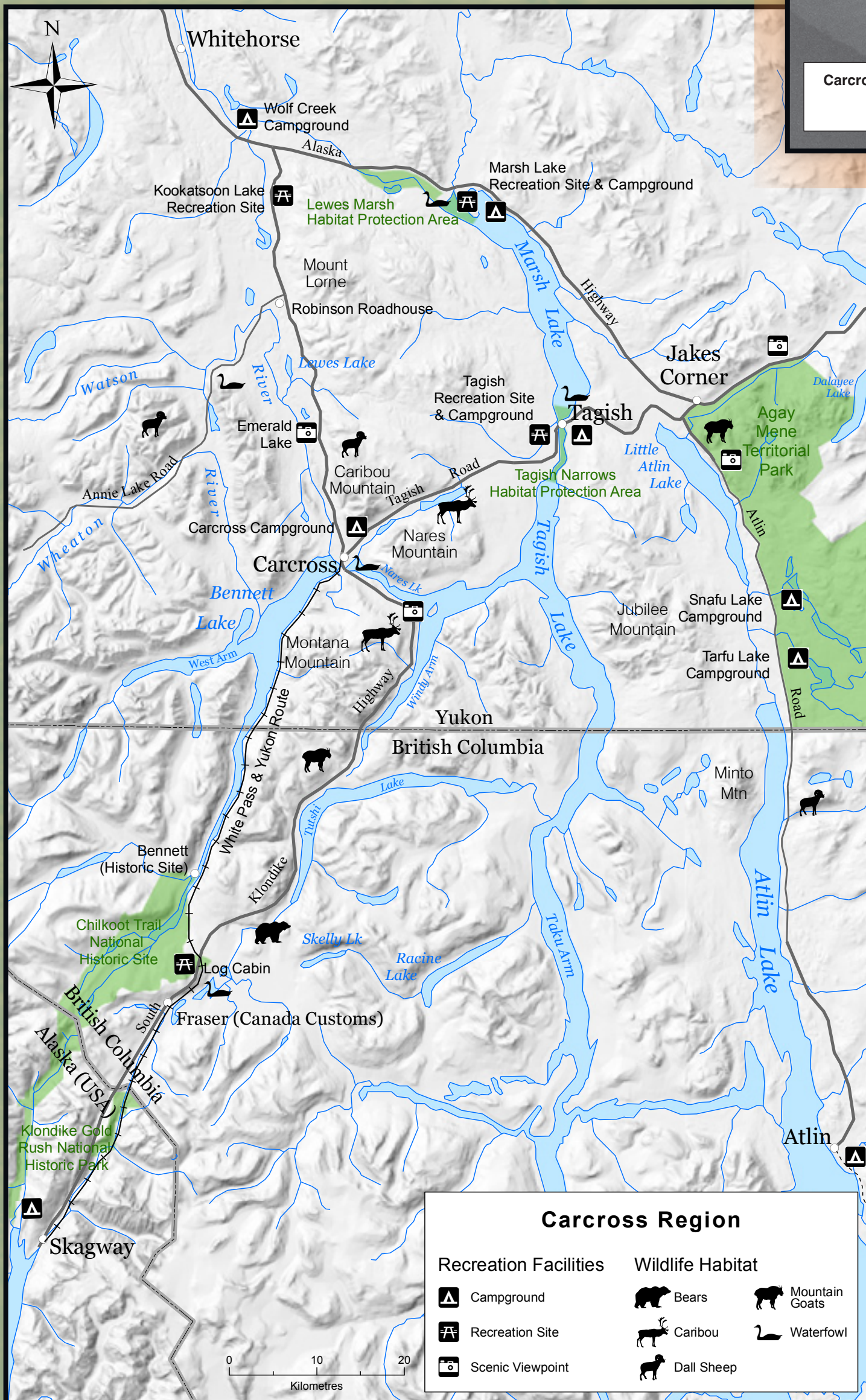
From downtown Carcross you have access to an extensive network of walking trails through the Carcross Dunes.

Access the trails from behind the school where a sign and route map is posted. There is plenty of room for exploration as many smaller trails weave their way throughout the dunes.

You can use the railway tracks, powerlines, and lakeshore to get your bearings, and the trail junctions are well marked, but be sure to leave some extra time in case you get turned around.

Hiking tips:

- Let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return.
- Take appropriate clothing and dress in layers.
- Take note of trail junctions, and pay attention to distance and direction walked.
- Avoid damaging plants and habitat by staying on the trails.



Woodland Caribou (Alan Baer), Dall Sheep (Stefan Gottermann) and Mule Deer

Viewing wildlife around Carcross

The roads around Carcross traverse spectacular landscapes with many opportunities to look for wildlife.

A one-hour drive south on the Klondike Highway towards Skagway will take you from the boreal forest of southern Yukon, to high alpine meadows, and down into the lush temperate rainforest of the Pacific coast. The diversity of habitats provides some of the best birding and botany opportunities in the region.

Take a leisurely three hours and drive the Tagish Loop (Carcross, Tagish, Jake's Corner, to South Klondike Highway, back to Carcross) for a chance to see Woodland Caribou, Dall Sheep, Mule Deer, and an amazing collection of waterbirds.

Watch for wildlife everywhere you go. The symbols on this map show where certain species have been found before and where you might see them again.

Wildlife viewing tips:

- Use a telephoto lens, binoculars or a spotting scope to get a closer look without disturbing animals.
- Get to know the species you want to see. Find out which habitat it prefers and where it is most likely to be found.
- Spend time quietly observing upon arrival. If you are quiet and still, animals may come out of hiding. You may also see plants and animals that are easily overlooked by the hurried observer.
- If you find what appears to be an "orphaned" bird or other animal, please leave it alone. Its parents are most certainly nearby, waiting for you to move away before coming back to retrieve their offspring.



Be Bear Aware

Bears can often be seen feeding on roots and berries by the roadside. It's extremely important that you stay in your car while bear viewing and maintain a safe distance so that the bear is not disturbed.

Do not leave your vehicle as a bear may suddenly become defensive if you approach.