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DATA REPORT

WILDLIFE OBSERVATIONS IN THE AREA AROUND GEORGE LAKE, NUNAVUT IN JUNE, 1997.

Prepared by Hubert and Associates Ltd.
July 1997

DATA REPORT ON WILDLIFE SURVEYS IN THE GEORGE LAKE AREA OF NUNAVUT - JUNE 1997

Background

Hubert and Associates Ltd. was retained to conduct terrestrial wildlife and wildlife habitat studies in the areas of the George Lake gold exploration program by Arauco (NWT) Ltd. The studies, in collaboration with Norecol, Dames & Moore Ltd. (the overall environmental consultants to Arauco), were initiated by conducting aerial surveys over the area at the time of caribou calving in early June and were repeated 10 days later at the time when caribou normally leave the area of the calving grounds in large cow/calf aggregations. The low price of gold curtailed any further study in 1997. This report is a summary of the observations made during the two surveys.

Issues

The survey design was based on the key wildlife issues likely to emerge during project development and related environmental screening and review. The configuration of the project's long term development is centred on several gold deposits to be served by an all-weather road to Bathurst Inlet and winter roads to satellite gold deposits and Echo Bay Mines Ltd. Lupin Mine on Contwoyto Lake (Arauco 1996 Annual Report). The major terrestrial wildlife issue addressed in the surveys conducted was caribou migrations related to calving in the Bathurst Inlet area.

The lands around Bathurst Inlet are known as calving grounds for the Bathurst herd of barren-ground caribou (Sutherland and Gunn, 1996). Since 1965 calving grounds for the Bathurst herd have been identified by aerial survey 14 times. None of these surveys showed the area around George Lake or the area of the preliminary all-weather road alignment to be in a high density calving area. In two years of the 14, 1986 and 1995, the lands adjacent to the southwestern shore of Bathurst Inlet were included in the overall calving ground. The 1986 calving ground surveys showed this area to be medium density; density of caribou in the area of interest to this study for 1995 was not indicated (Sutherland and Gunn, 1996).

Survey Methods

Flight lines for a systematic survey over the area most likely to be used by calving caribou were drawn on a 1:250,000 topographic map sheet (Figure 1). A 25% coverage survey was planned whereby 2 observers (placed on opposite sides of the a/c) can view the equivalent of 25% of the ground centred on the flight line. Data (wildlife and track observations) are recorded directly onto 1:250,000 map sheets with the flight lines marked. The a/c is flown at 140 kmph and 250 m agl.

Survey Observations

June 8, 1997

The initial survey was flown in a C-185 a/c on June 8, 1997. Survey conditions were good and the ground was still under snowcover with lakes frozen. While en route to the survey area (Figure 1) communication with the GNWT biologists in the process of delineating Bathurst herd calving ground indicated that the calving herd was on the Hood River down stream from Echo Bay's Ulu Project and that the peak of calving was in progress (Anne Gunn, personal communications - June 8, 1997).

On learning that the location of the calving herd was centred some 125 km to the northwest, it was decided to fly every other line. Figure 2 shows the lines flown and the wildlife observations made on June 8, 1997.

Four caribou and one wolf (at a caribou carcass) were noted in approximately 250 km of flight line surveyed. No caribou calves were noted.

June 18, 1997

The next survey for caribou and caribou calves was flown by helicopter on June 18. Conditions were good and the countryside was generally free of snow. Our search for wildlife concentrated on the preliminary location indicated for the all-weather road (map provided by Jane Howe of Arauco; Figure 3). The survey was restricted to this area on the report of George Woollett that on June 13 he observed the calving herd en masse along a 40 km front several km deep along the Hood River more than 100 km to the northwest.

During the survey 20 caribou (no calves) and 5 muskox were seen (Figure 3). A ground reconnaissance was made of the marine terminus of the all-weather road alignment to examine habitat conditions and check out the beach for fresh tracks of large carnivores. No recent sign of resident carnivores was noted. Sign of lemming, ground squirrel, muskox and caribou were common. Three species of bird were noted: horned lark, lapland longspur and herring gull.

It was noted that the landscape generally is missing the myriad of caribou trails on lake margins that are so prevalent to the west in the area of Contwoyto Lake. This feature suggests that the caribou occurrence in this area by large concentrations of animals, when it occurs, would be during a time of year when the ground is snowcovered and frozen.

Camp Wildlife Observation Log

Observations of wildlife recorded by persons at the George Lake camp between April 16 and June 12 are reproduced in Appendix 1 to this report.

Comment

The area of interest around George Lake and the preliminary all-weather road route to Bathurst Inlet was not occupied by the Bathurst caribou calving herd during the calving period in 1997 nor during the period immediately thereafter.

References

Arauco Ltd. 1996. 1996 Annual Report.

Sutherland, M. and A. Gunn, 1996. Bathurst Calving Ground Surveys 1965 - 1996. File Report No. 118. Department of Resources, Wildlife & Economic Development. 97pp.

Appendix 1: Wildife Observations at George Lake Camp 1997

GEORGE LAKE - 1997
WILDLIFE REPORT

MONTH: April, May, June

DATE	TIME	ANIMAL	NUMBER	LOCATION	DIRECTION OF MOVEMENT
April 16	afternoon	wolf, herd of caribou	1, 20	south of camp, east of camp	south
April 18	afternoon	2 wolves, herd of caribou	2, 20	outhouse, east of camp	north, south
May 2	9:45 pm	wolverine	1	east of GH	
May 3	11:00 pm	wolf	1	camp	
May 8	morning	caribou	8	Lone cow pond	
May 8	morning	arctic fox	1	Lone cow pond	
May 8	morning	ptarmigan	4	Lone cow pond	
May 13	morning	caribou	1 male, 1 female	Locale 1	
May 14	morning	caribou	10	George lake	?
May 15	evening	arctic fox	2	Locale 1	?
May 17	evening 11 pm	arctic fox (white)	2	right in camp	south
May 18	evening 9 pm	caribou	10 ?	south of camp ~ 3 km	?
May 19	evening	geese (Canada & Snow)	30 ?	camp	
May 21	morning	tern	1	camp	
May 20	afternoon	wolves	2	Lyttle lake	east
June 12	afternoon	caribou	5	north end of George Lake	east
June 14	morning - night	muskox	1	Lone cow pond	
June 18	morning - evening	fox	1	camp	around camp
June 18	afternoon	caribou	5	west of Lyttle Lake	

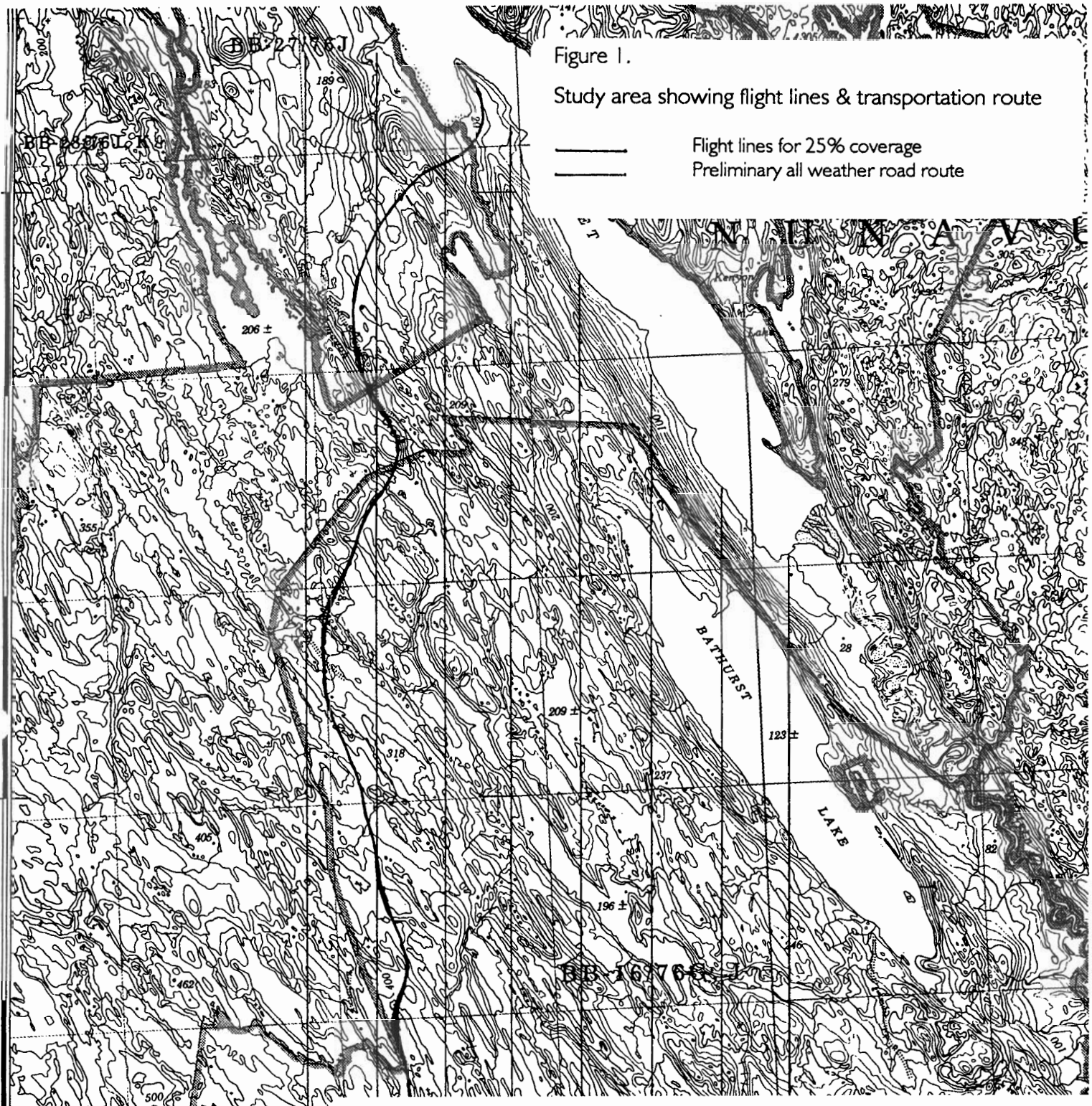

Figure 1.

Study area showing flight lines & transportation route

Flight lines for 25% coverage

Preliminary all weather road route

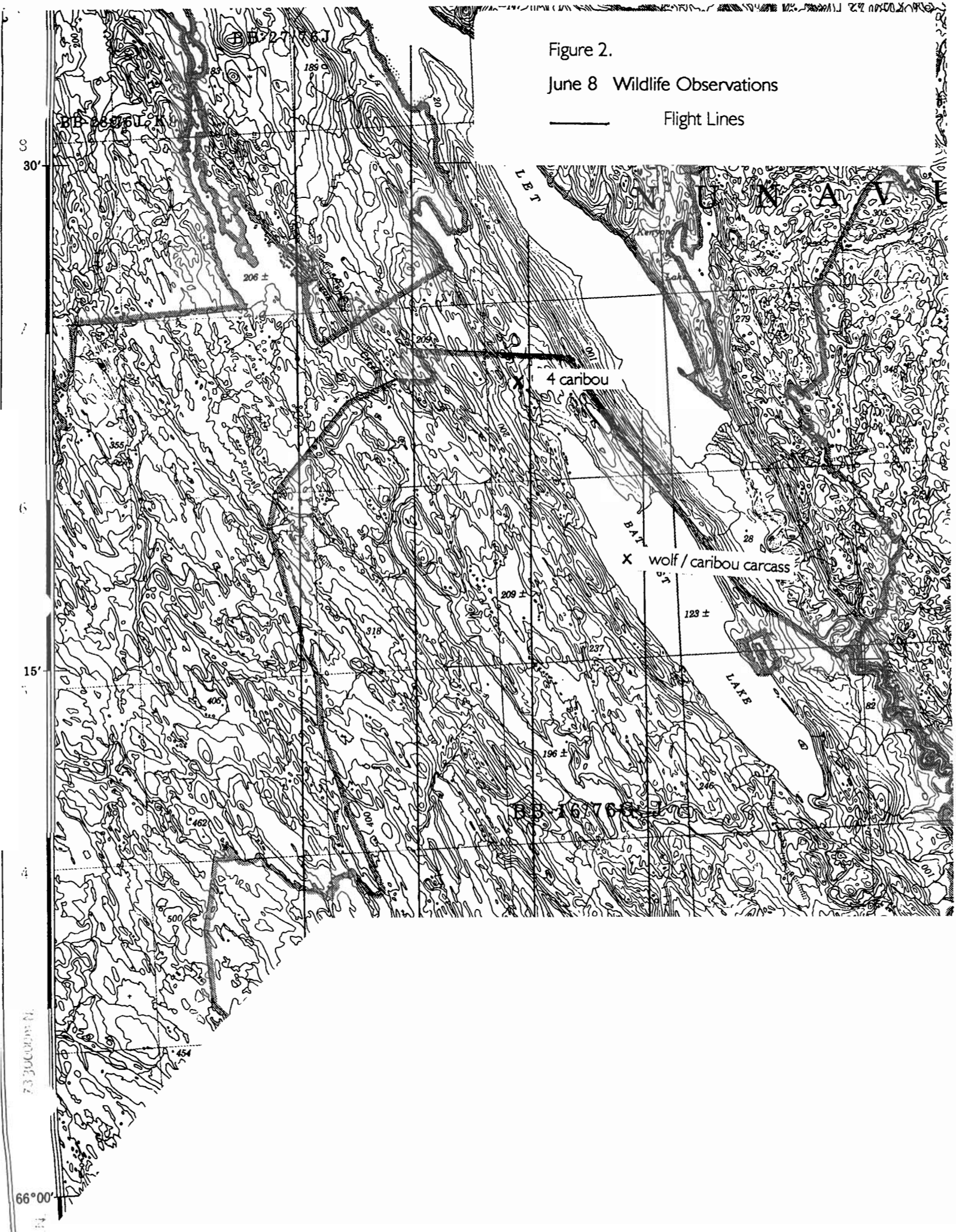
Figure 2.
June 8 Wildlife Observations
Flight Lines
4 caribou
wolf / caribou carcass
LAKE
30'
15'
66°00'

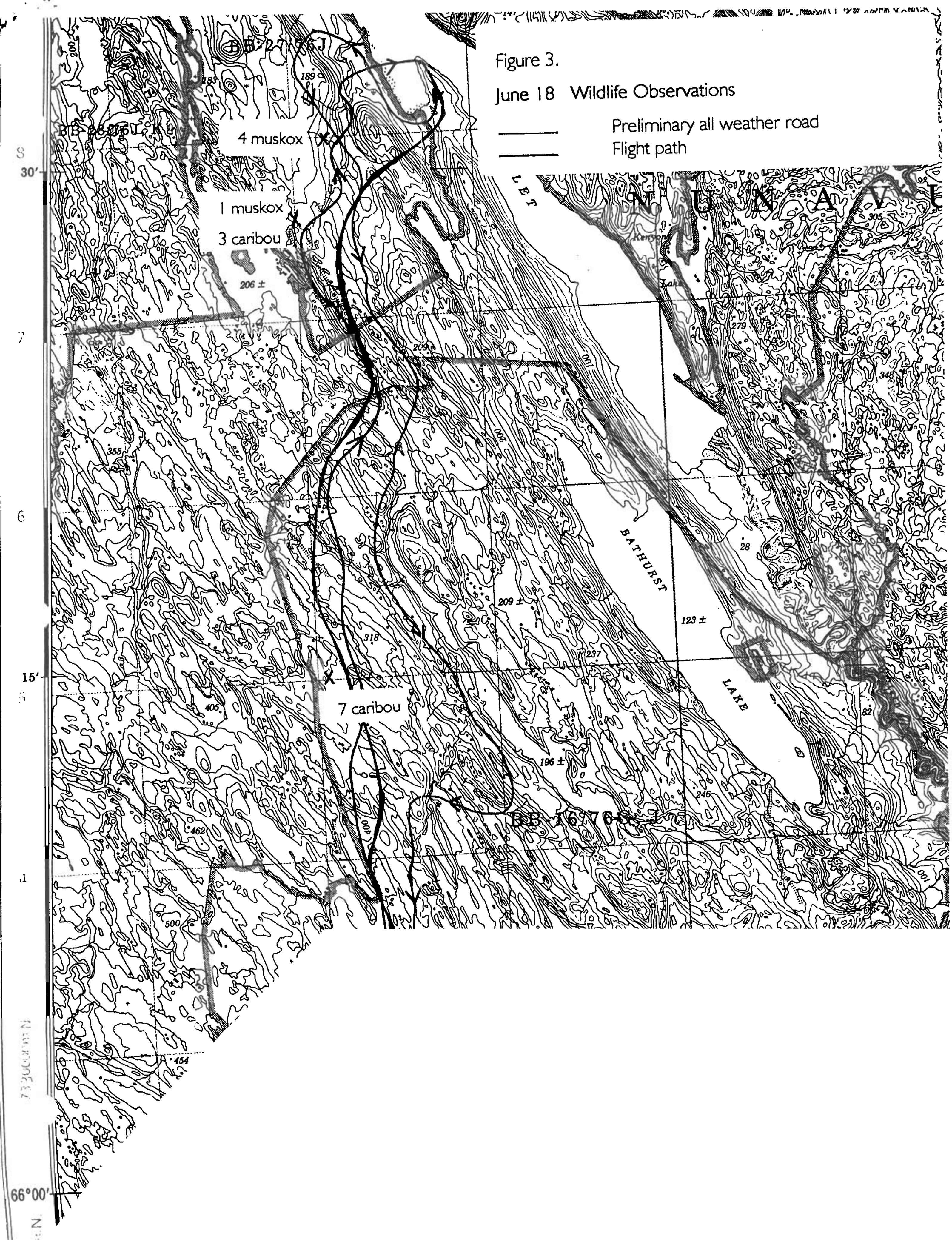

Figure 3.
June 18 Wildlife Observations

COVER SHEET

FAX

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Date: July 3, 1997
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COMMENTS:

Aerial surveys for caribou calving and post calving aggregations were flown on June 8 and June 18 respectively over the George Lake study area and the George Lake / Bathurst Inlet corridor. No evidence of caribou calving or post calving presence were observed. Also, preliminary observations of the area in general show no major issues regarding wildlife populations or wildlife habitat.

We expect to be back in the area in the July 9 to 16 period. Specific dates will depend on logistic considerations at George Lake and Lupin where we are currently doing similar work for Echo Bay.

Best regards.