

# Caribou Caravan



## Objectives

Students will trace the migration route of caribou (reindeer) and learn the animal's natural history.

## Materials

### Per student:

- pencil
- ruler
- calculator
- Caribou Caravan funsheet
- picture of caribou
- thread or string, at least 15" long

## Background

Caribou Rangifer tarandus inhabit the land above the tree-line in arctic North America and Greenland. Both caribou cows and bulls grow antlers, some antlers reach 4 feet in width. Caribou are well adapted to living in the tundra habitat. They have unique hairs that trap air to provide an isolative layer against the cold air and water. These hairs also help them float in the water. Their large feet are cloven (have two parts) and are concave. When caribou walk, the hooves spread wide, providing a secure hold in slippery snow or mud. The big feet also easily scoop away snow when caribou are foraging for lichens. They are very strong swimmers and can move across wide rushing rivers and even the frozen ice of the Arctic Ocean.

Caribou populations have seasonal shifts in their range. Most (about 1.2 million) of the barren-ground caribou in Canada migrate seasonally from the tundra to the sparsely treed northern coniferous forests, known as taiga. The population is defined within five large herds which, in order from Alaska to Hudson Bay, are the Porcupine Herd, Bluenose Herd, Bathurst Herd, Beverly Herd, and Kaminuriak Herd. Some individuals can migrate more than 3,000 miles each year, one of the longest migration distances for land mammals.

## Action

1. Distribute Caribou Caravan funsheets to students. Ask students to read the story on the second side to track a season of caribou migration on the first side.
2. After students complete funsheets, review as a class. To review an on-going caribou tracking study, see <http://www.taiga.net/satellite/index.html>

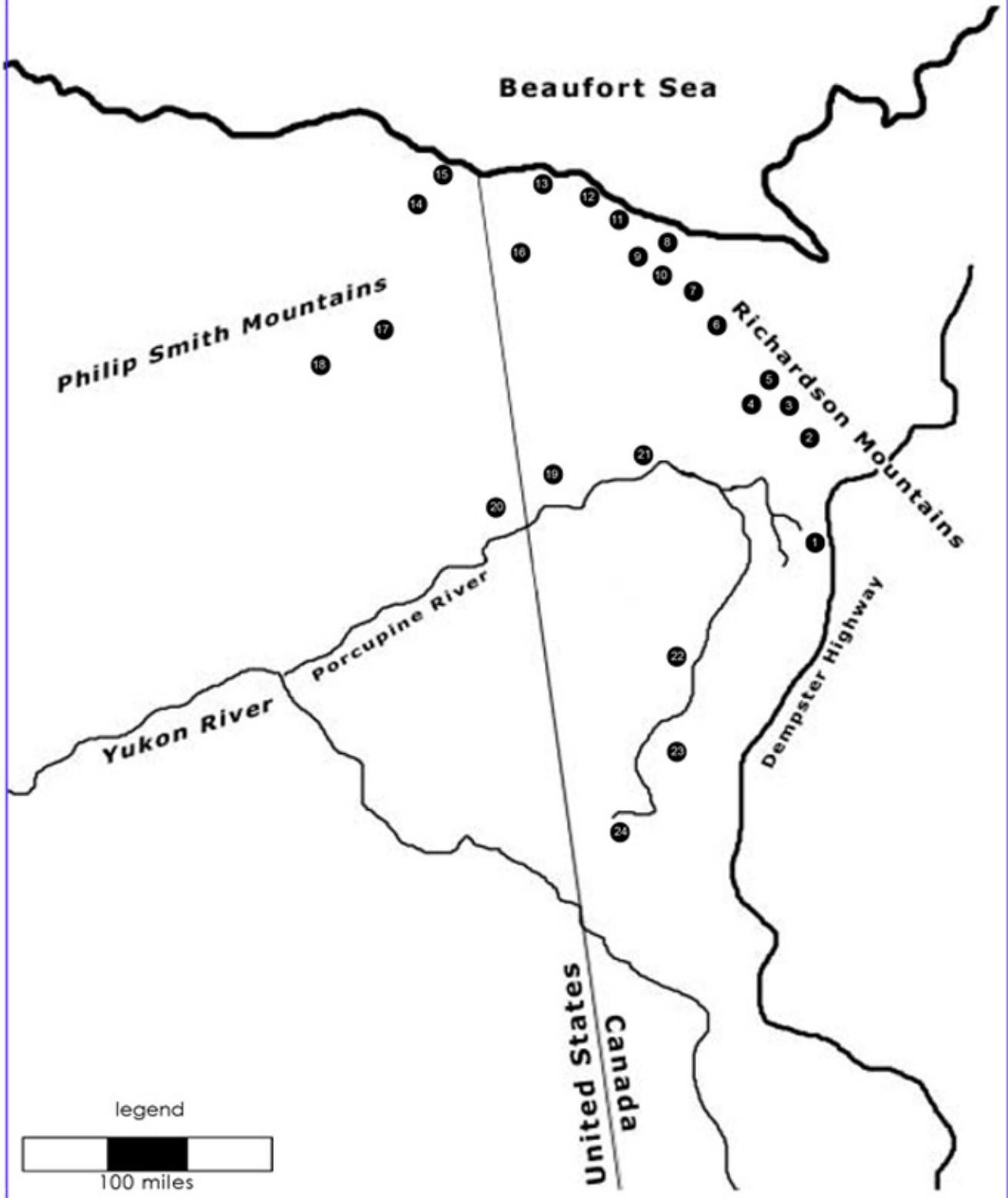
## Answers

1. The string should measure about 14 inches long. When measured against the map legend, the distance is about 830 to 850 miles (1335 to 1368 km).
2. From January 2 to December 7, 1998 or 339 days.
3. Between point 18 and 19, about 100 miles (160.9 km). 15 days
4. four times
5. Philip Smith Mountains and Richardson Mountains



name \_\_\_\_\_

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Canadian research scientist Goeff Hinbacher places satellite-radio collars on caribou to track their migration during the year. He collected the following information on one individual during 1998. The map on the front shows the location of caribou #P470. Connect the points in order to show the migration route. When finished, answer the following questions. Use the map's legend to calculate the distance traveled.

## TRAVEL DATES AND LOCATIONS FOR CARIBOU #P470

DATE	LOC. #	DATE	LOC. #	DATE	LOC.#
01/02/98	1	04/27/98	9	08/14/98	17
01/16/98	2	05/08/98	10	08/31/98	18
01/30/98	3	05/25/98	11	09/14/98	19
02/13/98	4	06/08/98	12	09/29/98	20
02/27/98	5	06/19/98	13	10/12/98	21
03/13/98	6	07/03/98	14	10/26/98	22
03/27/98	7	07/17/98	15	11/09/98	23
04/13/98	8	08/03/98	16	12/07/98	24

What was the total distance traveled for this individual? (Use a string or thread to outline the route traveled, then measure the string or thread)

\_\_\_\_\_ miles or \_\_\_\_\_ km (miles x 1.609)

How many days did it take? \_\_\_\_\_

What was the single longest distance traveled between data points?

\_\_\_\_\_ miles How many days was this? \_\_\_\_\_

How many times did this individual cross between Canada and the United States?

\_\_\_\_\_

What mountain ranges did #P470 travel between?

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_