

# HAINES JUNCTION 2008 LATE WINTER MOOSE MONITORING



**Yukon**  
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**Fish and Wildlife Branch  
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## **Haines Junction Late Winter Moose Monitoring**

**Dates:** March 12-14<sup>th</sup>, 2008

**Pilot:** Gerd Mannsperger, Alpine Aviation

**Aircraft:** Maule M7 (C-GHNT)

**Observer:** Lorne LaRocque, YTG Environment

**Aircraft time used:** 19.8 hrs, including ferrying time to and from Whitehorse

**Survey time:** 1017 minutes (17 hours)

**Search intensity:** about 0.8 square kms per minute (or 1.2 minutes per km<sup>2</sup>)

**Survey Area:** Haines Jct. area as far south as Kathleen Lake, east to Marshall Creek and west to Bear Creek.

**Coverage:** fifty sample units, Ver Hoef survey units of about 16.9 km square each totaling about 844 square kms (see attached map)

**Snow conditions:** This area has experienced relatively low snow with no significant melting or rainfall during winter 07/08. Snow was old with nothing new for a couple weeks. Depths varied from about 25 cms near Haines Jct to a maximum of about 60 cms on north facing subalpine areas. Average depths throughout were about 30 cms. A light to moderate ice crust had formed in open areas during a several day warm period in early March.

**Weather during survey:** Generally bright with direct sun about half the time and high overcast but bright the rest. On day two and three of the survey, occasional flurries and some fog were encountered. Winds were light and variable with a northerly flow. Night time temperatures were in the minus teens with daytime temperatures of about minus two. Some turbulence was encountered at higher elevations. Biggest effects of turbulence were in limiting ability of the pilot to also watch for moose

**Habitat:** valley bottom spruce and aspen forest and riparian habitat along Dezadeash and Kathleen rivers to subalpine in Auriol and Ruby Ranges.

**Sightability:** Poor sightability. Old snow, lots of bare ground around tree wells and extensive forest canopy in the survey area made for poor sightability. Most of the moose tracking and sightings were in areas with extensive forest cover.

**Results:** a total of 36 moose were seen in 20 of the 50 sample units. Two cows with single calves were seen. Most observations were of single animals. Eight of 28 groups had two moose, and one group of three moose, observed just south of the study area in subalpine habitat, was the largest seen. Conditions were not suitable for getting more information about sex and age of moose counted. No antlers were seen.

In each sample unit a subjective description of the amount of moose tracking was noted. Some tracking was seen in every sample unit. Moose tracking was described as light, moderate or heavy.

**Discussion:** Moose appear to be scattered at lower densities throughout our survey area. It's likely that snow depth and condition were not limiting their ability to move through most of the survey area. We did look at some of our productive subalpine post rut areas and saw some limited use of willow habitats. Our impression after doing the survey is that the most heavily used areas were mixed forest types about mid slope between subalpine and river bottom. Most of the moose counted were in, or close to mature spruce forest. We saw minimal use of extensive willow patches or recent burns.

Riparian habitat along the major drainages showed the lightest tracking during this survey. These same habitats also had the most sign of wolf travel. Cultivated fields near the Haines Junction airport, owned by the Tait family, are an attraction to moose in the area. Between nine and thirteen moose have been seen regularly on one field this winter. Nine were seen by airport staff on the day we counted this area. Later in the day when we surveyed, this field was vacant but we did count five in the sample unit. Moose distribution during this low snow year is in marked contrast to deep snow winters when riparian and valley bottom habitats appear to be used much more extensively.

