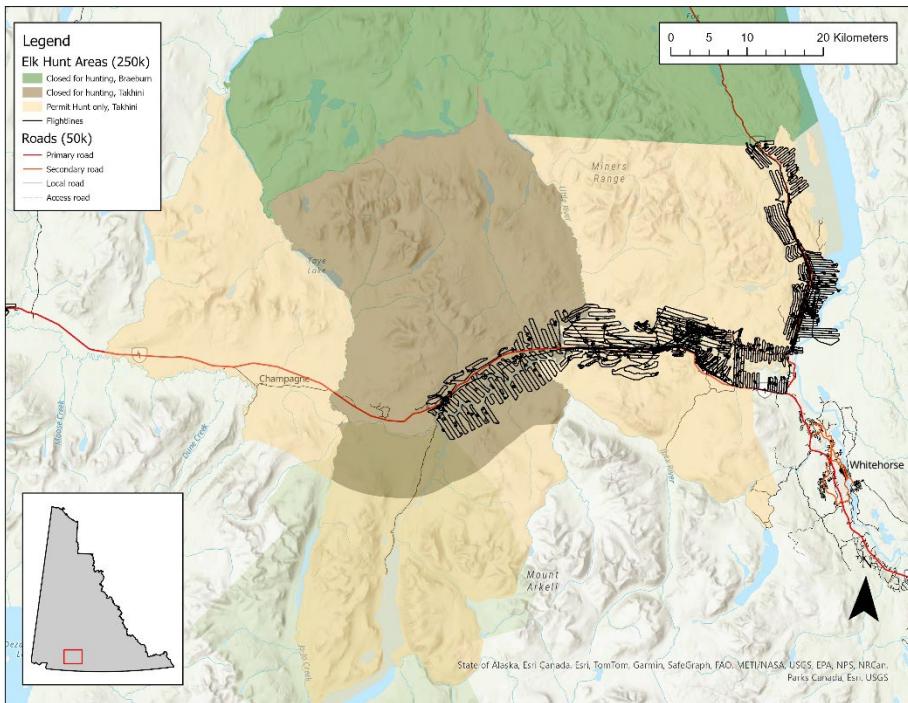
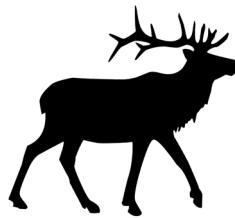


Takhini elk herd survey

Early-winter 2024



Summary

Total number of elk: 270

Total number of mature bulls: 36

Location

The survey was conducted in the Takhini Valley northwest of Whitehorse and in the agricultural area along the North Klondike highway. This survey area encompasses the range of the Takhini elk herd and is within the Traditional Territories of the Kwanlin Dün First Nation, the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council, and the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations.

Methods

Two fixed-wing remotely piloted drones (Superwake Inc.) equipped with infrared and colour cameras were flown between November 6 and December 1, 2024. Transects were spaced 500 m apart to provide complete coverage of the survey area. Upon detection, all observed animals were counted and classified by sex and age class in real-time. Subsequently, we reviewed all video footage with wildlife observations to confirm observations, counts, and classifications. We quantified drone sightability by comparing known locations of collared elk during the survey to the drone footage and determined whether elk were double-counted or missed.



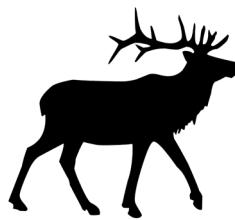
FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

Sophie Czetwertynski, Moose Program Biologist, Department of Environment. 867-334-9737

OR

Tyler Ross, Moose Program Biologist, Department of Environment. 867-471-0982





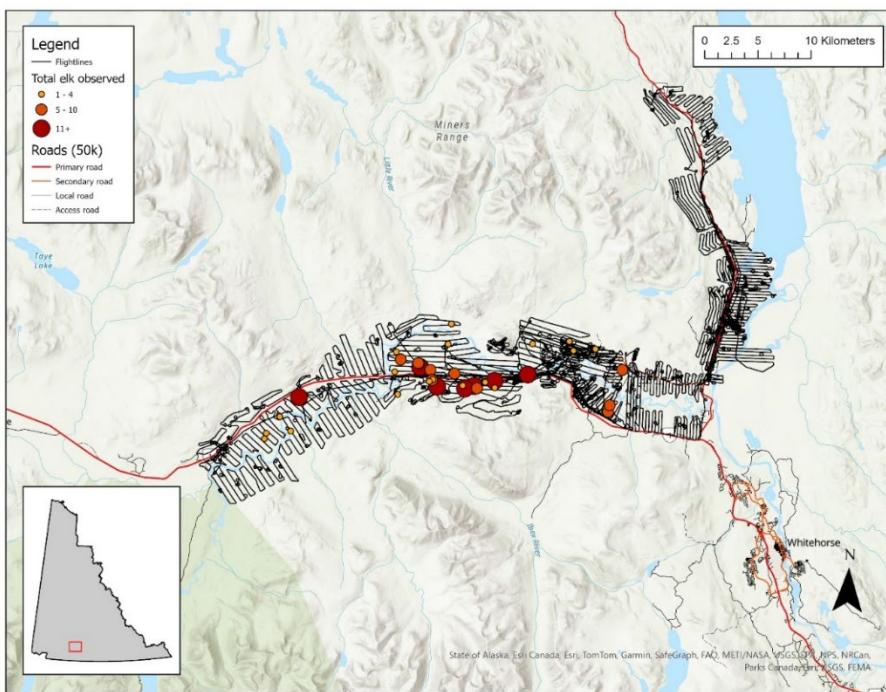
Photos: infrared and colour drone images of elk.



Survey results

Drone sightability

During the survey, 9 collared elk overlapped spatially and temporally with the drone flight paths. Of these, 8 individuals were detected by the drone, and one was missed, yielding an estimated sightability of 89% (11% missed).



Population abundance and composition

The drone survey detected **270 elk** within the survey area. Therefore, we estimate the population to be 270-300 elk based on the drone sightability.

We **confidently classified 244 elk** according to sex and age class: **36 mature bulls, 21 yearling bulls, 132 cows, and 55 calves**. The remaining 26 elk could not be reliably classified because of grainy imagery.

The bull-to-cow ratio among classified elk was a maximum of **27 mature bulls per 100 cows**. Therefore, the current mature bull harvest is likely near the maximum level that can be sustained to maintain an appropriate sex ratio. For more information on this survey please see our full report.

Acknowledgements

We sincerely thank the landowners along the North Klondike Highway and Alaska Highway who granted permission to launch and land drones on their properties. Thank you to the entire crew from Superwake for their expertise.

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