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Issue 3 | Summer 2018

NEWSLETTER

*A community bulletin on the ongoing
Comprehensive Research Program on COASTAL HABITAT of Eeyou Istchee.*

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*This is the third edition of the Steering Committee Newsletter. In this issue, we will explain in greater detail the **Waterfowl Harvest Study**. This is an essential component of the research project because it makes the link between the other studies on eelgrass and oceanography and the wildlife that use this habitat. It is important to remember that geese are not the only animals using eelgrass beds. In fact, they are important for numerous species, ranging from fish to invertebrates (small snails and worms).*

We understand that studying geese can sometimes conflict with Cree hunters. While we try to minimize this impact, sometimes it is unavoidable. We hope that through this newsletter, readers will understand that the long-term benefits of this study will outweigh the short-term inconveniences, and we are always available to further discuss these issues in person.

Meegwetch! Jinnaskumdinnan! Thank you! Merci!

The Steering Committee



In collaboration with the Niskamoon Corporation and the Cree Nation Government (CNG), the Cree Trappers Association (CTA) have been coordinating the Waterfowl Harvest study by ensuring the active participation by Cree hunters in collecting waterfowl and observational data for the next two years.





The goals of the study are to:

- Integrate waterfowl harvest information in regards to species, numbers, location and dates.
- Record observations of goose flocks when hunting and traveling.
- Encourage reports of bands recovered during the study and past.

It involves aerial surveys, GPS-GSM tracking migration, collecting band data, band recovery data, the Waterfowl Harvest Booklet and Cree knowledge.

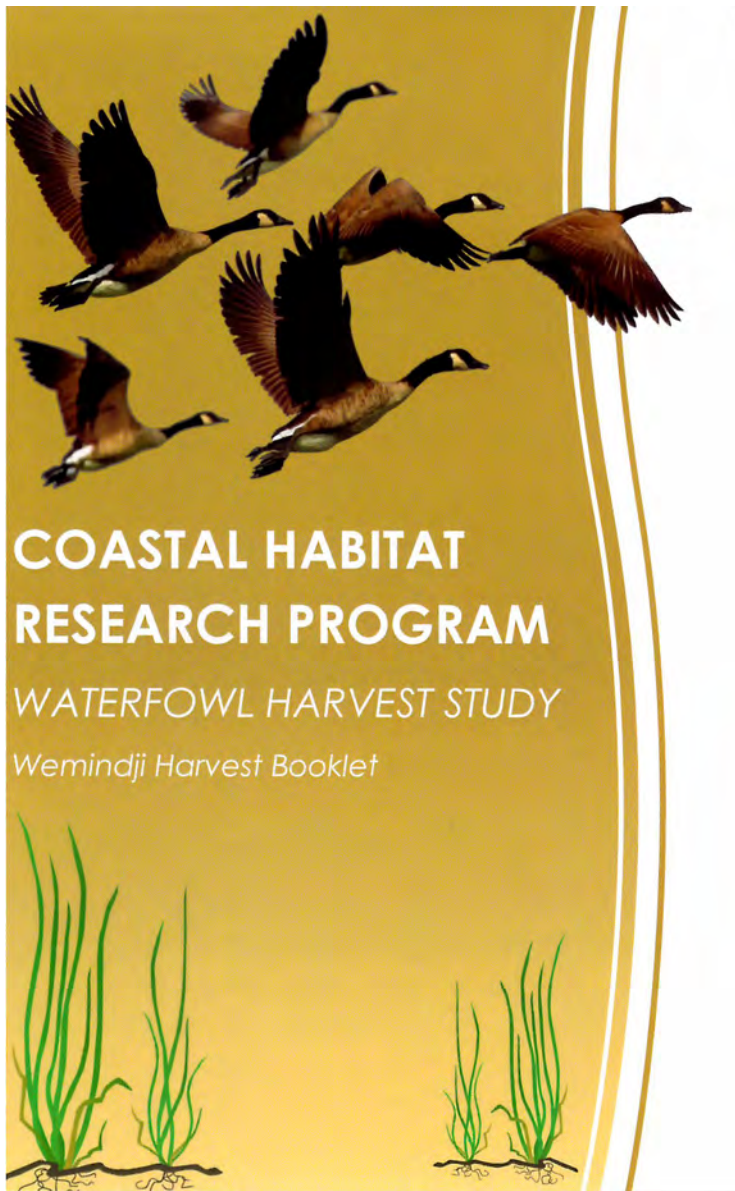
All the **data gathered** during this project along with information obtained from the literature and Cree knowledge will be summarized and will aim to understand how Canada geese are currently using the James Bay east coast during their spring and fall migrations and whether they have changed their behavior in the last 30 years.



The collaboration of all waterfowl hunters is requested to participate in this study with a harvest booklet available to all hunters from the coastal communities.

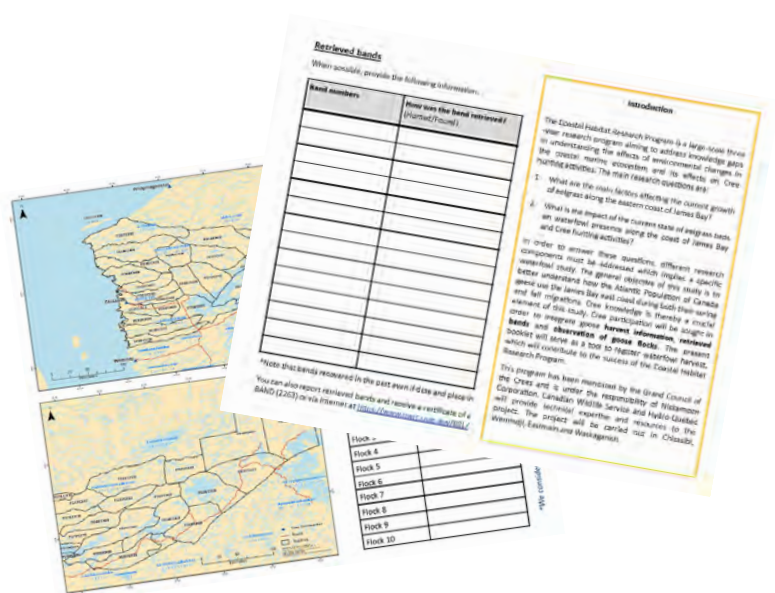
The Waterfowl Harvest booklets were distributed by the local Eeyou Marine Cree Trappers Association (EMR CTA) Local Officers at the end of this past April.

The officers along with Sanford Diamond, Brandon Moses, George Natawapineskum and John Lameboy are providing the coordination and support.



Over a thousand booklet were distributed to hunters throughout the four coastal communities of Waskaganish, Eastmain, Wemindji and Chisasibi.

The hunters were ask to record their waterfowl harvest and observations of flocks for the duration of the past spring hunt and upcoming fall hunt. The harvest booklet serves as a tool to register waterfowl harvest which will contribute greatly to the overall success of the Coastal Habitat Research Program.



The Waterfowl Harvest study was advertised through the local radio stations, social media, as well as posters in the communities. Compensations was also provided to encourage participation of hunters.

The return of the booklets by hunters has been more challenging and efforts will be made by the EMR CTA Local officers to retrieve the booklets throughout the summer. We encourage all hunters to bring back the booklets to their EMR CTA local officers as soon as possible so that results can be integrated into the Coastal Habitat Research Program and in turn the information provided to the hunters and communities.

The success of the study relies on the participation of all the hunters and we greatly appreciate your support.

An update on the overall research program is also planned to be provided at the upcoming CTA Annual General Assembly.

SUMMARY OF THE AERIAL CANADA GOOSE SURVEYS CONDUCTED IN MAY 2018

Two fly-overs along James Bay coast from Waskaganish to Wemindji were done this past May to conduct the Canada Goose surveys. These fly-overs were approved by tallymen along the coast from trapline R3 to trapline VC9 included. Flying over traplines located further north in the Chisasibi area was not authorized. Here are the preliminary results of each survey conducted on two successive Sundays.



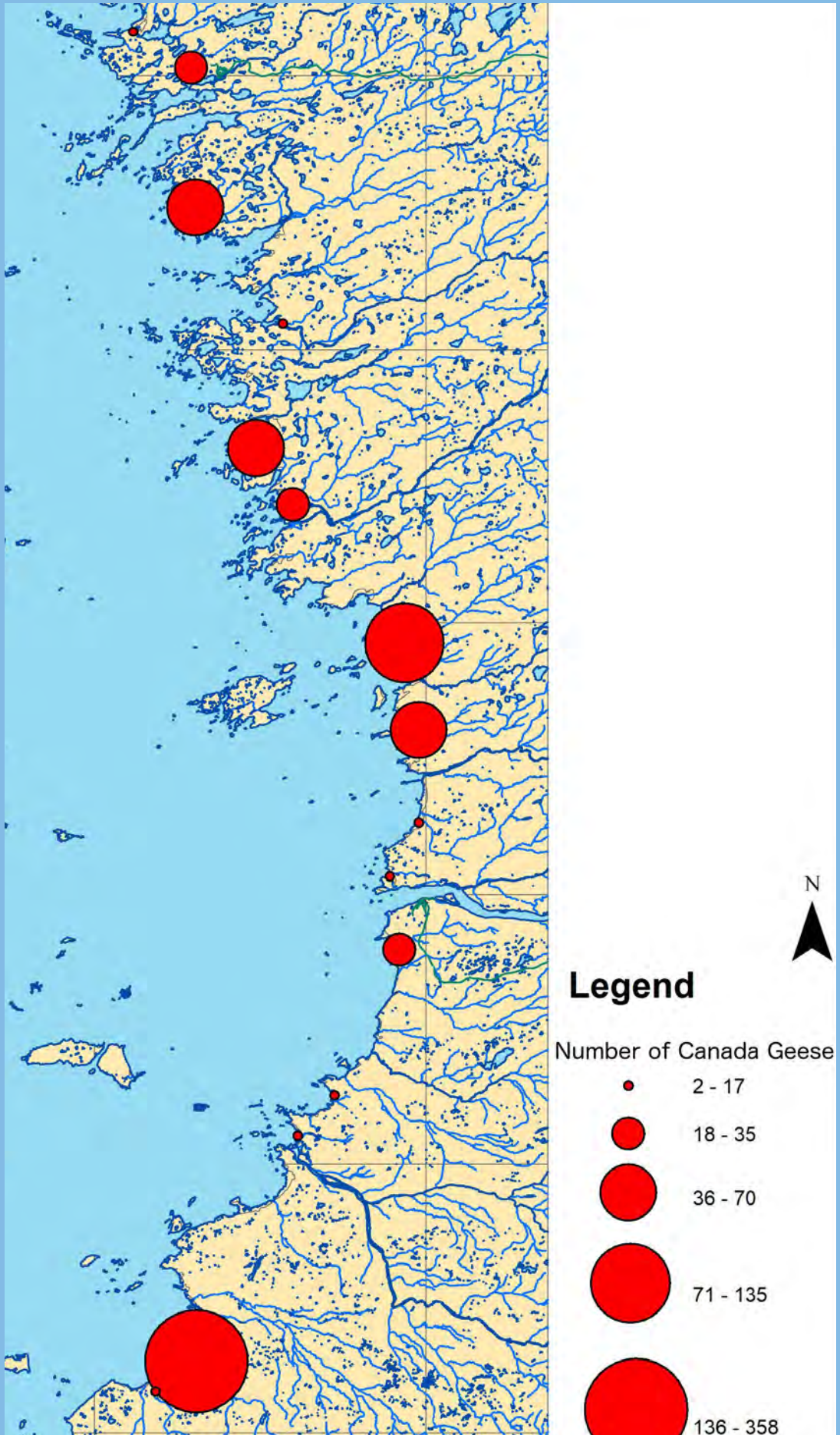
From left to right: Martin Patenaude-Monette (UQAM Biologist), Natalie Hamel (UQAM Wildlife Technician), Ernie Rabbitskin (Niskamoon Coastal Habitat Research Liaison Officer), Francis Deschesnes, (Héli-Inter Pilot).

MAY 6, 2018 SURVEY DATA

Departure from Waskaganish was at 9:40am and the survey was conducted until 3:02pm. The temperature ranged from -7°C to -2°C with winds ranging from NW 8km to 10km and overall cloudy conditions.

A total of 815 Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) were seen, mostly in the southern area where some open water and dried vegetable were available between wide areas of ice and snow.

No Brant Geese (*Branta bernicla*) were seen during the survey, but more than 800 ducks were encountered.



May 6th 2018: Waskaganish to trapline VC9, north of Wemindji.

MAY 13, 2018

Departure from Waskaganish was at 8:40am and the survey was done until 2:33pm. They flew along the area north of Eastmain in a straight line without any circling to avoid disturbing the numerous hunters in the area.

The zone where no survey was conducted includes traplines VC30 to VC32.

The temperature ranged from 4°C to 10°C with winds ranging from SW 7km to WSW 25km and overall cloudy conditions.

A total of 11,332 Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) were encountered, with

concentrations south of Eastmain up to the southern part of Wemindji area where some open water and dried vegetation were available among scattered areas of ice and snow.

On the other hand, few Canadian Geese were encountered in the Waskaganish area where there was a lot of open water and open marshes.

No Brant Geese (*Branta bernicla*) were seen during the survey, but more than 3,500 ducks were.

CONCLUSION of the Aerial Surveys

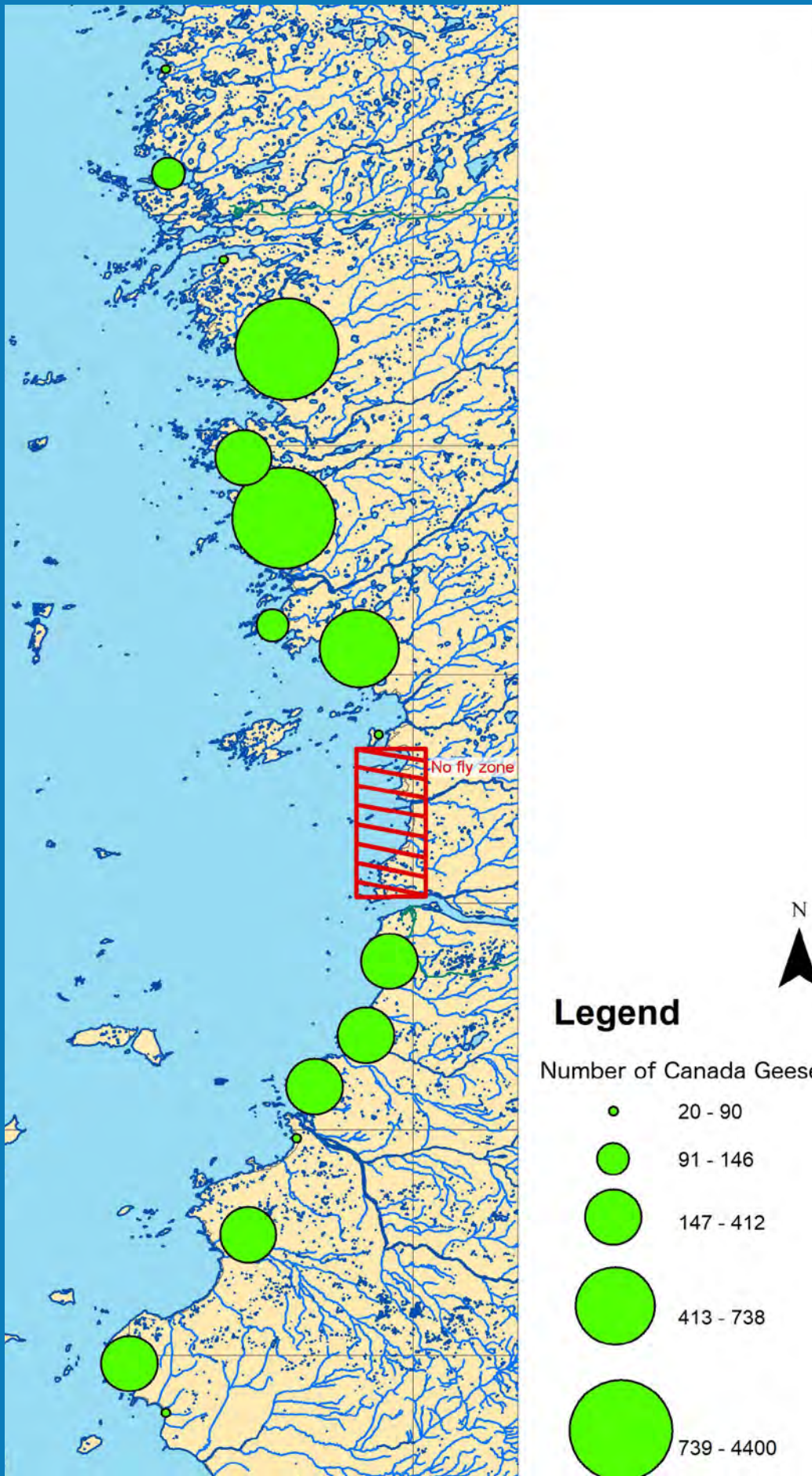
The data will be further analyzed to link the types of habitats where the goose flocks were recorded. Hopefully, similar surveys will be conducted during the fall migration and again next spring to allow for seasonal comparisons. It would be very useful to be able to fly the entire coast to better understand how Canada Geese use the James Bay east coast during their migration.



Natalie Hamel, Wildlife Technician UQAM



Ernie Rabbitskin, Coastal Habitat Research Liaison Officer, Niskamoon



May 13th, 2018: From Waskaganish to trapline VC9, north of Wemindji, with a no fly zone around Eastmain.

WATERFOWL RESEARCH STUDY'S TEAM

Jean-François Giroux, a professor and the chair of the Département des sciences biologiques at Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), is the principal investigator. He coordinates the tracking of geese, supervises the data analyses, and participates in report writing.

Jean Rodrigue, a biologist at the Canadian Wildlife Service of Environment and Climatic Change Canada, has vast experience with surveying geese populations, and his role on the team is to help to better understand the geese migration. He is also a member of the steering committee.

Martin Patenaude-Monette was hired as a research professional. He is responsible for retrieving the telemetry data, building a database, conducting the spatial analyses, analysing the banding data, and writing reports. He will also participate in the marking operation in Boatswain Bay and in the two aerial surveys.

Francis St-Pierre, a wildlife technician, with UQAM and CWS, is an expert in catching and marking waterfowl.

Manon Sorais, a UQAM graduate student, was hired as field assistant for the marking operation.

Two specialist technicians were hired for the aerial surveys, including **Natalie Hamel**.

Ernie Rabbitskin, the Niskamoon Coastal Habitat Representative Research Liaison Officer, coordinates the field work between the researchers and the coastal land users.

We also work with the **Cree** communities to delegate **assistants** for the marking operation and the aerial surveys.

For more information or questions, please contact your local representative or email info@niskamoon.org

