



ARCTIC ISLANDS CARIBOU  
CANADA, Nunavut, Cambridge Bay  
OCTOBER 2016  
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BRONZE AWARD  
265 3/4

## Rangifer tarandus pearyi x groenlandicus

Called Peary caribou in early editions of the Record Book (*but please see taxonomic notes below*). Named for U.S. Rear Admiral Robert E. Peary, who was then believed to be the leader of the first expedition to reach the North Pole.

**DESCRIPTION** The smallest caribou. Mature bulls generally weigh 200-300 pounds (87-136 kg). Has the lightest coloration of any caribou, with the winter coat nearly all white, and the summer coat a much lighter shade of brown than in other caribou. The antler velvet is of a gray shade rather than the usual brown. The muzzle and ears are shorter than in other races, and the antlers are smaller and less developed, being spindly and rather straight instead of in the usual "C" shape.

**BEHAVIOR** Lives in fairly small herds. Tends to be fairly residential, migrating within a given range, but covering relatively short distances. The Banks Island and Queen Elizabeth herds are the principal ones.

**HABITAT** Tundra.

**DISTRIBUTION** The arctic islands of the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, plus the Boothia Peninsula. Specifically, the arctic islands include Banks, Victoria, Prince of Wales and Somerset islands, plus all the islands lying north of the Parry Channel, which connects the Beaufort Sea with Baffin Bay.

**TAXONOMIC NOTES** Gunn, et al (1987) feel that pure Peary caribou (*pearyi*) are probably found only north of the Parry Channel in the Parry Islands group of the Queen Elizabeth Islands, where non-resident caribou hunting is not permitted. They believe

that caribou from Ellesmere Island and the eastern part of Devon Island, as well as those from Banks, Victoria, Prince of Wales and Somerset islands, and from the Boothia Peninsula, contain genes of *groenlandicus* (central Canada barren ground caribou) as well as *pearyi* genes, in varying degrees of hybridization. Most Record

Book entries are from Banks Island, where it is believed that *pearyi* genes predominate, and Victoria Island, especially the Cambridge Bay area, where the *pearyi-groenlandicus* ratio appears to vary from one part of the island to another.

For now, we designate all caribou from these areas as *pearyi x groenlandicus* hybrids.

