

John P. Kelsall - Wildlife Pioneer

John P. Kelsall is a well-known wildlife biologist who conducted some of the first barren-ground caribou studies in northern Canada. John was born in Nova Scotia in 1924 and, as a young man, obtained a B.A. at Acadia University. He continued his graduate training at the University of Toronto for his M.A. and on to the University of Western Australia for his PhD. In 1948, he returned to Canada and joined the Dominion (Canadian) Wildlife Service. From 1950 to 1959, John conducted ecological studies of barren ground caribou from his location in Yellowknife, N.W.T. His work culminated in a monograph published in 1968 entitled *The Caribou of Canada*. It summarized all that was known about the morphology, behaviour and ecology of the forest-tundra ecotype of caribou in Canada. The publication won the Wildlife Society's Outstanding Publication Award and remains one of the most quoted references in caribou literature. John's review of woodland caribou in Canada caused the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada to list western woodland caribou as "rare" and, later, as "vulnerable." In retirement, John continued to serve as an active reviewer for scientific journals. He helped develop a curriculum for Thebacha College, the first technical school in the Northwest Territories located at Fort Smith. He was a long time Fellow of the Arctic Institute of North America. John died in Vancouver, British Columbia on July 24, 1995.