



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
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Denali National Park Wildlife Update October 2026

SHEEP

This marked the third summer of the ongoing collaborative study of Dall's sheep with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. This interagency and multi-park research project on Dall's sheep is the first of its kind and will compare dynamics of sheep populations among two park units (Denali and Gates of the Arctic) and areas adjacent to the parks on state lands. No additional sheep were collared in 2026, and there were approximately 6 mortalities in 2026 to date. The data from these collars will help inform about sheep movements, health, and demographics and their connectivity with the rest of the population.

This year the park service conducted our customary aerial distance sampling surveys and we coordinated concurrent minimum count, ground-based composition, and sightability surveys with our collaborators at ADFG. All of these surveys took place in mid-July, and by collecting this complementary data, we will be able to provide valuable insights and direct comparisons of survey methods.

CARIBOU

Annual monitoring on the Denali Caribou Herd began in 1984 and this year marks the 43rd consecutive year of our annual monitoring efforts. In 2026, pregnancy surveys were conducted May 14-16, and a post calving census June 8-11. In late September a fall census will help provide an estimate of the fall herd size.

The Fall 2024 preliminary herd size estimate was 1590, continuing the pattern of herd decline, down from a high estimate of 3190 in 2018, but at a slower rate than in the prior three years. Fall herd size estimates for 2025 and 2026 have not yet been calculated; however the 2025 birth rate increased about 10% from the previous year.

BEARS

We continue to monitor a sample of collared bears in a study to assess bear response to the park road being closed and re-opened. With the opening of the park road this year, the study is transitioning to its second period. Bear-human management continues to focus on the goals of public education, use of BRFCs and other appropriate storage for food and attractants, and preventing bears from becoming food-conditioned or habituated to pedestrians.

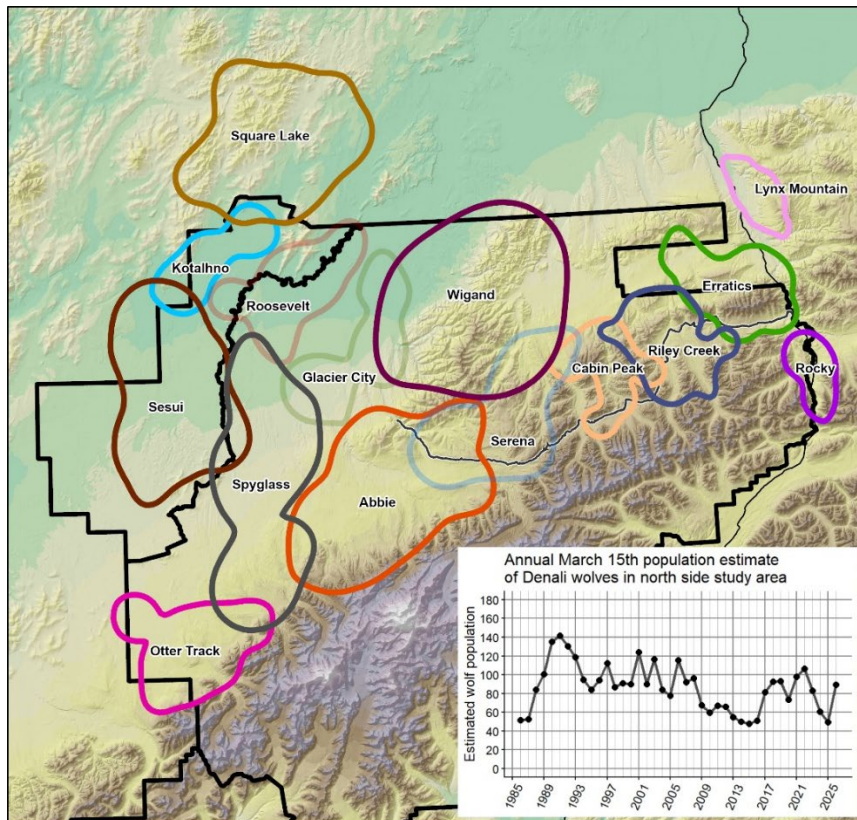
MOOSE

No additional moose surveys have been conducted in 2026.

WOLVES

In March 2026, 6 wolves were collared in 4 packs, including 1 new pack. Of the 6 wolves collared, 4 were animals recollared to replace collars at the end of their battery life and 2 were wolves previously uncollared. The spring count of wolves was 68 wolves in 10 packs, with study-area population estimate of 89 wolves.

The spring territory map which shows the location of wolf pack territories and the spring pack counts are shown below and available on our webpage: <https://www.nps.gov/dena/learn/nature/wolves.htm>



Study area wolves observed March 2026: 68 wolves in 10 groups
(Square Lake and Lynx Mountain majority outside study area).

Population estimate north side: 89 wolves

Home ranges based on locations from April 1, 2025 - March 31, 2026.

Pack name (Pack size as of 3/15/2026)

Abbie (12)	Lynx Mountain (unk)	Serena (0)
Cabin Peak (5)	Otter Track (11)	Sesui (11)
Erratics (3)	Riley Creek (11)	Spyglass (4)
Glacier City (0)	Rocky (4)	Square Lake (unk)
Kotalhno (5)	Roosevelt (0)	Wigand (2)