

Caribou Exhibit at Yukon Bay Theme World | Hanover Adventure Zoo



In May 2010, Hanover Adventure Zoo opened its seventh theme world with Yukon Bay. At Yukon Bay, wolves, caribou, bison and prairie dogs are presented in the rugged wilderness of Canada. Here, visitors come eye to eye with polar bears, fur seals, sea lions and grey seals in an enormous saltwater harbour basin equipped with a wave generator. All enclosures can be viewed from a variety of angles. The Caribou Exhibit makes up part of the Yukon Bay theme world encompassing an overall surface area of approximately 26,500 sq. metres. The caribou have access to a 1000 sq. metre main enclosure as well as a 40 sq. metre side enclosure.

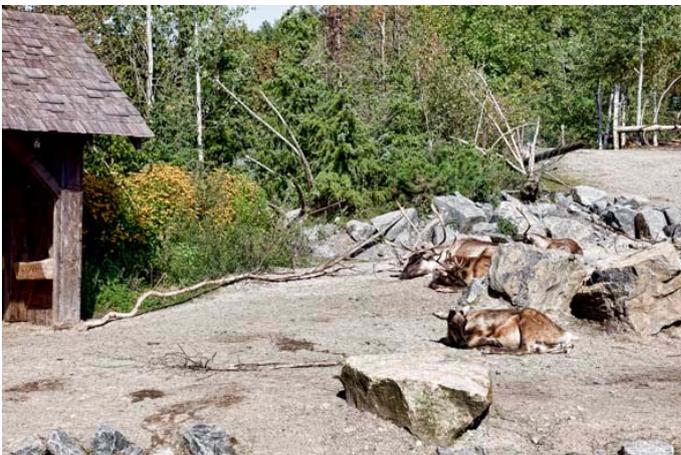
Visitors begin the tour of Yukon Bay by entering an old gold mine. Upon exiting, visitors encounter the first live animals: the timber wolves. Located in the background directly behind the wolves and separated by a dry ditch are the caribou. Visitors perceive the area as a single, continuous surface that illustrates the natural predator-prey relationship of the animals. After passing the Wolf Exhibit, visitors are treated to a second view of the Caribou Exhibit, designed to resemble an abandoned train station. Here, only a small ditch separates visitors and caribou, allowing them to be viewed up close.





The planting design of the enclosure resembles the natural habitat of the caribou and had over one and a half years to develop and mature before opening day. Evergreen coniferous trees as well as deciduous trees with intense autumn colouration form the background of the enclosure and create the look and feel of a forest's edge. Numerous shrubs, a birch grove as well as wild bushes, planted in a way to keep them protected, are also present. The necessary removal of trees within the enclosure was offset with plantings of native species.

Available space within the enclosure was put to optimal use. The tunnel visitors walk through to enter Yukon Bay runs underneath the enclosure, part of which required excavation. The substantial amount of earth removed was distributed around the enclosure. The earth removed for the deep basin used by the polar bears and sea lions was distributed around the caribou's side. This made it possible to situate the caribou above the Wolf Exhibit and to be able to observe them at the same time. The enclosure slopes gently uphill toward the back and was sculpted to provide the animals protected spots for lying around in the sun, which are used frequently. Also present are sand baths, a muddy clay pool, a shelter and two self-activated, frost-protected drinking fountains. A special feature is the so-called 'marriage protector'. Densely planted birch trunks provide females protection during rutting season from the buck whose wide antlers prevents him from entering.



The marriage protector is constructed with genuine trees to resemble a birch grove. In addition, there are birch-patterned inserts that can be moved around by the caretaker according to need. This allows the buck to also use the birch grove during non-rutting season. To increase visitor safety during the aggressive rutting season, caretakers can also install a temporary fence with anchor points in the ground along the V-shaped dry ditch in front of visitors. The animal stall is located in the back of the enclosure and connects in the rear to a side enclosure that allows individual animals to be housed when needed. The enclosure is accessible with a wheel loader.

The bison live alongside the caribou. A replica of an original steam locomotive forms the dividing barrier between enclosures. Two cargo cars behind the locomotive can be moved on tracks to create an access point to the enclosure that otherwise remains hidden.

The basic visitor education concept for all animal enclosures at Yukon Bay centres around three components: unexpected proximity to the animals, dynamic signage and educational feeding demonstrations.

The caribou enclosure features elaborate, hand painted signage and panels that appeal especially to children and dynamically illustrate the caribou's way of life.