

4. MUSKOX MONITORING AND MITIGATION

Muskox inhabit Arctic tundra environments and occur in varying densities throughout Nunavut. Muskox are not migratory, but may vary in group size throughout the year, with larger herds forming through the winter. Although muskox are not listed as a species of conservation concern, federally or in Nunavut, they are monitored at the Back River Mine.

4.1 FEIS PREDICTIONS

The predicted residual effects of the Back River Mine on muskox as identified in the FEIS included:

- Habitat loss (not significant, low magnitude);
- Disturbance (not significant, low magnitude); and
- Reduction in reproductive productivity (not significant, low magnitude).

Mitigation and management measures to reduce the potential for these effects to result in residual effects on muskox are discussed in Section 8 of the WMMP Plan (B2Gold 2024a).

4.2 MUSKOX BEHAVIOUR MONITORING

The muskox behaviour monitoring program is aimed at identifying if muskox display any behavioural responses in reaction to potential stressors at the Mine site, including aircraft, vehicles, and blasting, as described in Section 8.3.2.3 of the WMMP Plan (B2Gold 2024a).

4.2.1 METHODS

Behaviour monitoring for muskox is conducted by wildlife monitors if muskox are observed within 1 km of the Back River site. Surveys are conducted using the scan sampling method to characterize the predominant behaviour of muskox in relation to the Back River Mine activities. Surveys are conducted following the behaviour monitoring methods outlined for caribou in Section 3.6.1 and in the Caribou Behaviour Monitoring SOP (B2Gold 2024j).

4.2.2 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Muskox were observed within 1 km of the Mine on four occasions in 2024 (see Section 4.5). However, because muskox were observed moving through the area and not lingering, no behaviour surveys were completed in 2024.

4.3 ONSITE CAMERA MONITORING

Wildlife cameras were deployed at the Goose site, the MLA, and WIR in 2024. The 2024 onsite camera monitoring program methods are described in Section 3.7.1.

4.3.1 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

No muskox were recorded by onsite cameras in 2024. No additional mitigation was required for muskox in 2024.

4.4 REGIONAL CAMERA MONITORING

The regional camera monitoring program is described in Section 3.8, including detailed methods. Table 4.4-1 provides the number of muskox detections in each of the three zones (treatment, ZOI, control) during the study period. Figure 4.4-1 reflects the relative number of detections at each regional monitoring camera. The number of muskox detections recorded during this study period was not sufficient to achieve statistical model convergence for ZOI models. Muskox were detected closest to the Mine at camera BR29 (in the treatment zone), near the explosives magazine. Muskox were detected most commonly at camera BR25 west of the Mine (in the ZOI zone), where 13 detections occurred. Temporal distribution of detections is summarized in Table 4.4-2, showing that peak muskox detections occurred in March 2024 (n=6). Data will continue to be collected annually from cameras, with analysis planned every 3 years.

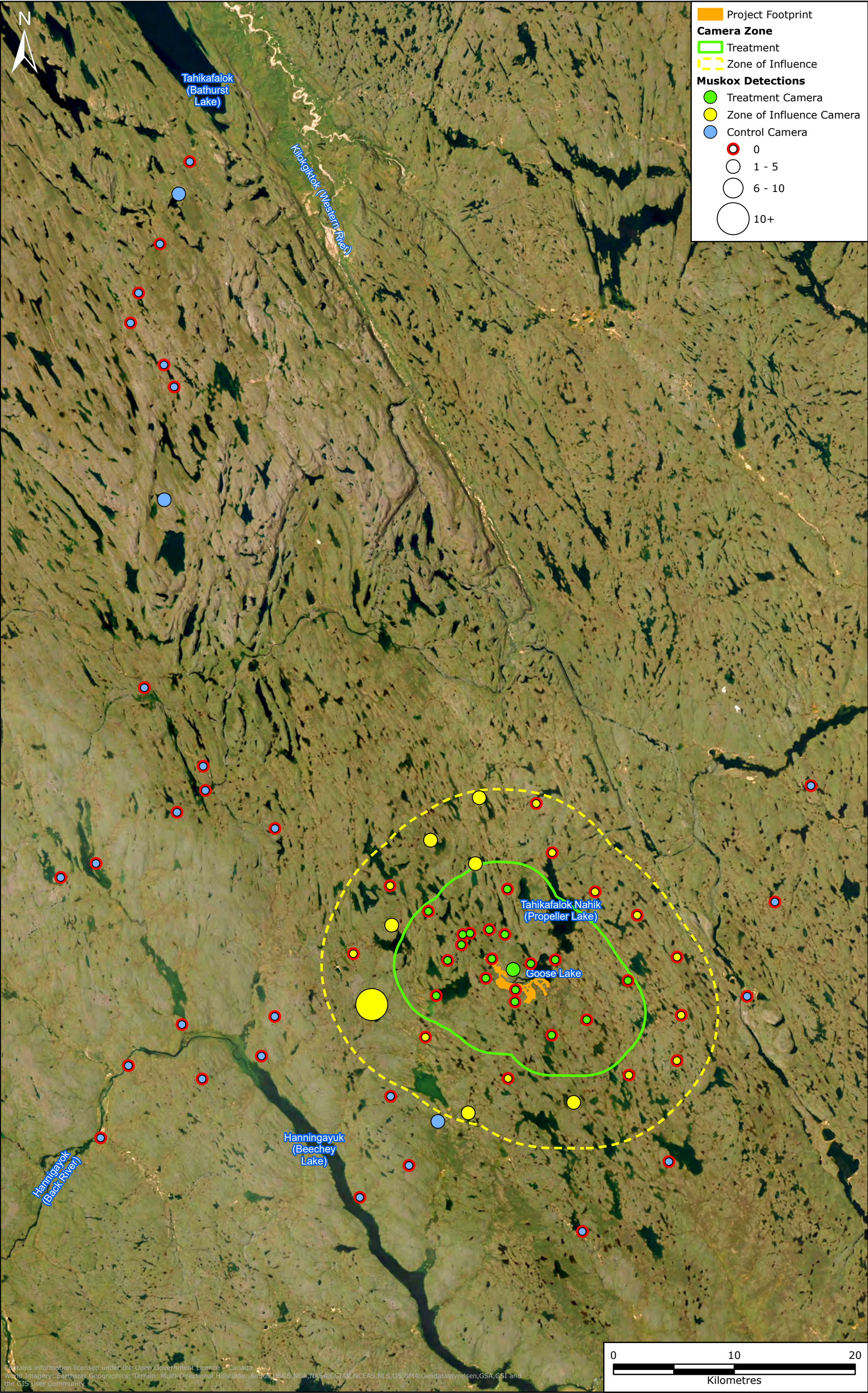
TABLE 4.4-1 MUSKOX DETECTIONS ON REGIONAL MONITORING CAMERAS, 2023 TO 2024

Treatment Category	Number of Muskox Detections
Control	4
ZOI	20
Treatment	1

TABLE 4.4-2 MONTHLY MUSKOX DETECTIONS ON REGIONAL MONITORING CAMERAS, 2023 TO 2024

Date	Number of Detections
July 2023	0
August 2023	4
September 2023	2
October 2023	1
November 2023	1
December 2023	0
January 2024	0
February 2024	5
March 2024	6
April 2024	1
May 2024	1
June 2024	2
July 2024	2

FIGURE 4.4-1 MUSKOX DETECTIONS AT REGIONAL MONITORING CAMERAS, 2023 TO 2024



4.5 INCIDENTAL OBSERVATIONS

All personnel are responsible for recording wildlife sightings in the camp's wildlife logs (Appendix I). These logs provide an indication of the wildlife species that occur in proximity to and interact with the Back River Mine infrastructure, as described in Section 8.3.1.2 of the WMMP Plan (B2Gold 2024a). Section 3.9 summarizes the number of personnel onsite collecting incidental sightings.

4.5.1 METHODS

All personnel at the Back River Mine are expected to report observations of wildlife occurring around or interacting with the Mine to the Environment Department. Incidental observation reports include location (GPS coordinates), date, time, species, number observed, behaviour, and any other descriptive information regarding the sighting.

Incidental observations were recorded in accordance with and using the data sheet provided in the Incidental Wildlife Observations SOP (B2Gold 2024k).

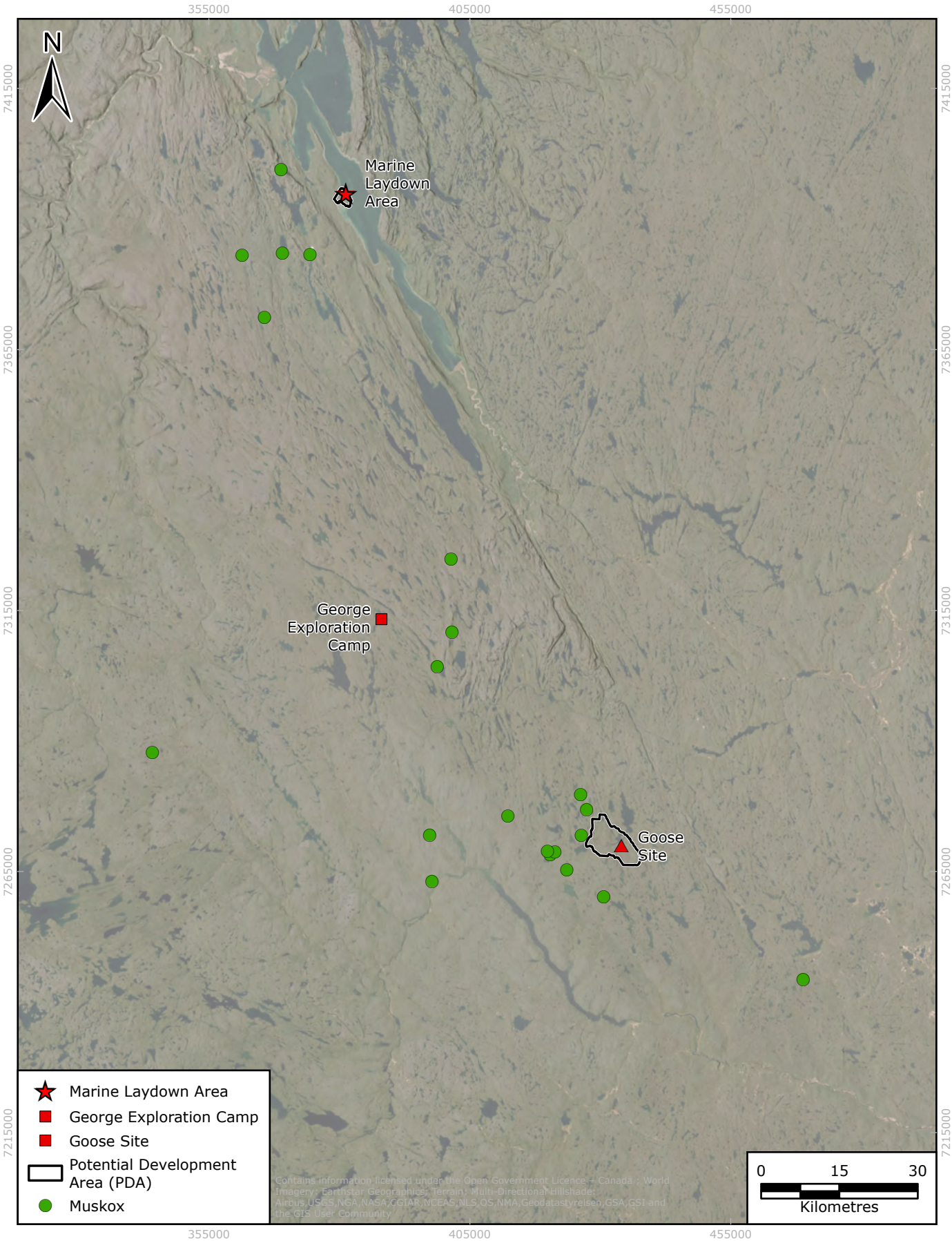
4.5.2 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In 2024, there were 29 separate incidental observations of muskox, totaling an estimated 220 animals (Figure 4.5-1; Appendix I). Six of these observations (29 animals) were made by site personnel at Goose and were observed between 50 m and 2 km from the Goose site. Observations at Goose occurred in February (one sighting), June (two sightings), July (one sighting), and August (two sightings). Three of the muskox observations were of single individuals, with groups of two, six, and 18 accounting for the remaining observations.

Twenty-three observations (191 individuals) were made within the RSA during regional monitoring programs for various wildlife species completed in 2024. Nearly half (11) of the muskox observations were of single individuals, with groups between three and 30 individuals accounting for the remaining observations. Muskox were observed in the RSA in May (four sightings), June (one sighting), July (13 sightings), and September (five sightings).

Observations of muskox were higher in 2024 than 2023 and 2022. This can be attributed to the completion of wildlife regional monitoring programs in 2024 across the RSA, which accounted for 79% of observation events and 87% of individuals incidentally recorded.

FIGURE 4.5-1 INCIDENTAL OBSERVATIONS OF MUSKOX, 2024



5. GRIZZLY BEARS, WOLVERINE, AND OTHER CARNIVORES

Grizzly bear and wolverine are considered a species of Special Concern by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) and on Schedule 1 of the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA; COSEWIC 2003, 2012; Government of Canada 2025). Additionally, in Nunavut, grizzly bear are territorially listed as vulnerable (S3), suggesting they are at moderate risk of extirpation (CESCC 2022). Other carnivore species known to occur in the area include Arctic and red fox species (*Vulpes lagopus* and *V. vulpes*, respectively), and grey wolf. These species are included as a focus at the Back River Mine due to their at-risk status, cultural importance, and potential for attraction to infrastructure or humans.

5.1 FEIS PREDICTIONS

The predicted residual effects of the Back River Mine on grizzly bear and wolverine as identified in the FEIS included:

- Habitat loss (not significant, low magnitude);
- Disturbance (not significant, low magnitude)
- Attraction (not significant, low magnitude); and
- Reduction in reproductive productivity (not significant, low magnitude).

Additionally, the predicted residual effects of the Back River Mine on wolves as identified in the FEIS included:

- Habitat loss (not significant, low magnitude); and
- Disturbance (not significant, low magnitude).

Mitigation and management measures to reduce the potential for these effects to result in residual effects on grizzly bear, wolverine, and wolves are discussed in Section 9 of the WMMP Plan (B2Gold 2024a).

5.2 WASTE MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING

Waste management and monitoring completed in 2024 is presented in Section 2.6. Wolverine were noted near the incinerator accessing waste in April 2024, with mitigative measures and deterrence being completed as outlined in Section 2.6. Additionally, deterrence of wolverine from Goose camp was completed on 10 occasions (Section 9). No other sightings of grizzly bears, wolverine, or other carnivores or their sign were recorded at waste management facilities in 2024.

5.3 BUILDING AND SKIRTING MONITORING

Building and skirting monitoring completed in 2024 is presented in Section 2.7. Wolverine were noted near the incinerator in April 2024. Measures to further secure the incinerator to prevent wildlife access were completed as outlined in Section 2.6 and 2.7. No other sightings of grizzly bears, wolverine, or other carnivores or their sign were recorded attempting to access facilities in 2024.

5.4 ONSITE CAMERA MONITORING

Wildlife cameras were deployed at the Goose site, the MLA, and WIR in 2024. The 2024 onsite camera monitoring program methods are described in Section 3.7.1.

5.4.1 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Full results of the onsite camera monitoring program are presented in Section 3.7.2 (Table 3.7-2). In 2024, arctic fox, red fox, grey wolf, and wolverine were detected onsite through the camera monitoring program (Table 5.4-1). Wolverine were recorded on two cameras: BR02 and BR06. There was one sighting of a wolverine on camera BR06, near the southwest shore of Goose Lake, on April 29, 2024 (see Section 3.1.2). At camera BR02, a wolverine was recorded on two consecutive nights, from April 6 to April 8, near exposed trash bags at the Goose waste incinerator (Photo 5.4-1). Air horns and bear bangers were used in April 2024 near the incinerator to deter wolverine following these sightings (see Section 9 for wildlife incidents).

TABLE 5.4-1 CARNIVORE SPECIES DETECTED VIA ONSITE CAMERA MONITORING, 2024

Species	Scientific Name	Camera Location ¹	Date	Behaviour
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	BR02	April 5	Walking
Wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo</i>	BR02	April 6	Interacting with infrastructure
Wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo</i>	BR02	April 6	Interacting with infrastructure
Wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo</i>	BR02	April 7	Walking
Wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo</i>	BR02	April 8	Interacting with infrastructure
Wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo</i>	BR02	April 8	Walking
Arctic Fox	<i>Vulpes lagopus</i>	BR02	April 12	Walking
Arctic Fox	<i>Vulpes lagopus</i>	BR78	April 23	Walking
Arctic Fox	<i>Vulpes lagopus</i>	BR78	April 25	Running
Arctic Fox	<i>Vulpes lagopus</i>	BR35	April 26	Running
Wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo</i>	BR06	April 29	Walking
Arctic Fox	<i>Vulpes lagopus</i>	BR73	July 25	Running
Arctic Fox	<i>Vulpes lagopus</i>	BR74	July 25	Walking
Arctic Fox	<i>Vulpes lagopus</i>	BR04	October 17	Walking
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	BR04	October 27	Walking
Arctic Fox	<i>Vulpes lagopus</i>	BR79	November 10	Walking
Arctic Fox	<i>Vulpes lagopus</i>	BR79	November 10	Walking
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	BR79	November 10	Feeding
Arctic Fox	<i>Vulpes lagopus</i>	BR79	November 11	Running
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	BR79	November 12	Running
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	BR77	November 13	Standing

Species	Scientific Name	Camera Location ¹	Date	Behaviour
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	BR05	November 20	Walking
Arctic Fox	<i>Vulpes lagopus</i>	BR04	November 24	Walking
Arctic Fox	<i>Vulpes lagopus</i>	BR04	November 24	Walking
Arctic Fox	<i>Vulpes lagopus</i>	BR04	November 26	Walking
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	BR04	November 26	Walking
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	BR79	November 30	Walking
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	BR79	December 14	Running
Arctic Fox	<i>Vulpes lagopus</i>	BR79	December 15	Walking
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	BR79	December 17	Walking
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	BR79	December 17	Walking
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	BR79	December 24	Walking
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	BR79	December 25	Walking
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	BR79	December 26	Walking

¹ See Table 3.7-1 for camera location descriptions.



Photo 5.4-1 Wolverine recorded on BR02, near Goose waste incinerator, April 6, 2024.

Red fox was also recorded near the Goose waste incinerator on cameras BR02, BR77, and BR79. Red fox was recorded once on camera BR02, and ninefold on camera BR79, walking near camp facilities. Neither camera BR02 nor BR79 recorded red fox interacting with camp facilities. However, camera BR79 recorded red fox interacting with camp facilities on two occasions. On November 10, red fox was recorded feeding, but was too far away from the camera to be able

to determine what the red fox was feeding on (Photo 5.4-2). Red fox was also recorded on December 26, leaving the camp area carrying an unknown object in its mouth (Photo 5.4-3). Red fox was recorded on camera BR79 on nine separate days.



Photo 5.4-2 Red fox recorded on BR79, feeding near Goose waste incinerator, November 10, 2024.



Photo 5.4-3 Red fox recorded on BR79 with an unknown object, near Goose waste incinerator, December 26, 2024.

Onsite camera monitoring in place by B2Gold Nunavut was effective at monitoring carnivore activity around site infrastructure. In 2024, onsite monitoring cameras recorded wolverine and red fox interacting with site infrastructure in a manner that may reflect attraction or access to food sources. Wolverine were recorded by cameras near the waste incinerator and deterred using air horns and bear bangers following these observations via an adaptive management approach (see Section 9 for wildlife incidents). Red fox were also recorded by cameras near site infrastructure, and were recorded and on one occasion eating an unknown item and on another occasion carrying an object in its mouth. Although it was not possible to confirm if the food and object were non-natural food sources, red fox were recorded around camp in search of food. Adaptive management measures triggered by this program in conjunction with incidental observations in 2024 included an audit of waste management and the incinerator following wolverine observations in the area, reinforcing skirting and garage door sill plates at the incinerator storage building, and use of deterrents to reinforce negative stimuli in the waste management area for wolverines investigating the area.

5.5 REGIONAL CAMERA MONITORING

The regional camera monitoring program is described in Section 3.8, including detailed methods. Table 5.5-1 provides the number of carnivore detections in each of the three zones (treatment, ZOI, control) during the study period. Figures 5.5-1, 5.5-2, and 5.5-3 reflect the relative number of detections at each regional monitoring camera for grizzly bear, wolverine, and combined (red and Arctic) fox. The number of detections recorded for each carnivore species during this study period were not sufficient to achieve statistical model convergence for ZOI models. Data will continue to be collected annually from cameras, with analysis planned every 3 years.

TABLE 5.5-1 CARNIVORE DETECTIONS ON REGIONAL MONITORING CAMERAS, 2023 TO 2024

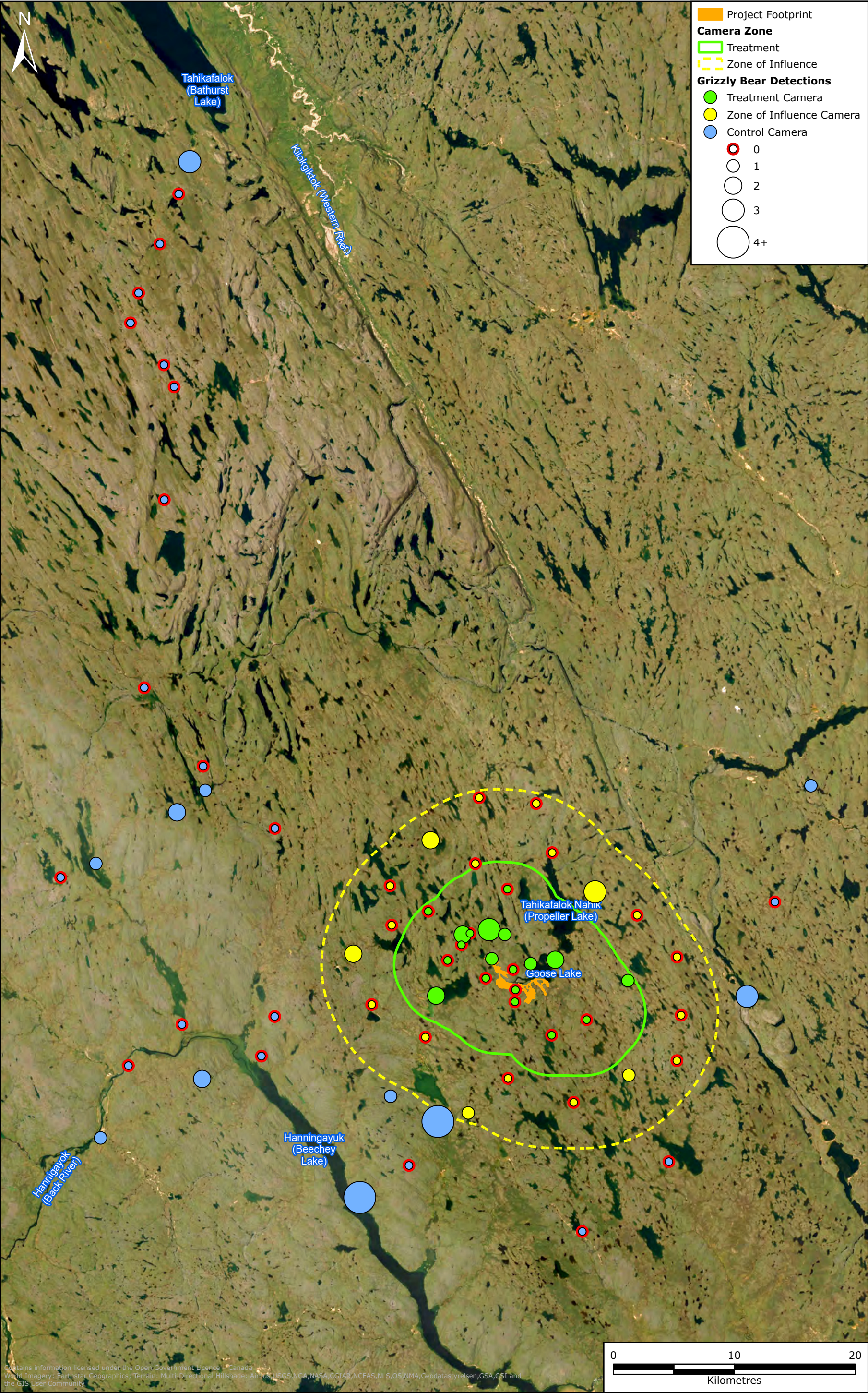
Treatment Category	Number of Grizzly Bear Detections	Number of Wolverine Detections	Number of Combined Fox Detections
Control	23	4	14
ZOI	9	1	3
Treatment	13	3	5

Grizzly bear were most commonly detected in September 2023, with 10 detection events in that month (Table 5.5-2). Nine monthly grizzly bear detection events also occurred in August 2023, May 2024, and June 2024. Wolverine detections peaked in October 2023 and May 2024, with two detection events in each month. Combined fox detections peaked in May 2024, with seven detection events.

5.6 INCIDENTAL OBSERVATIONS—TERRESTRIAL MAMMALS

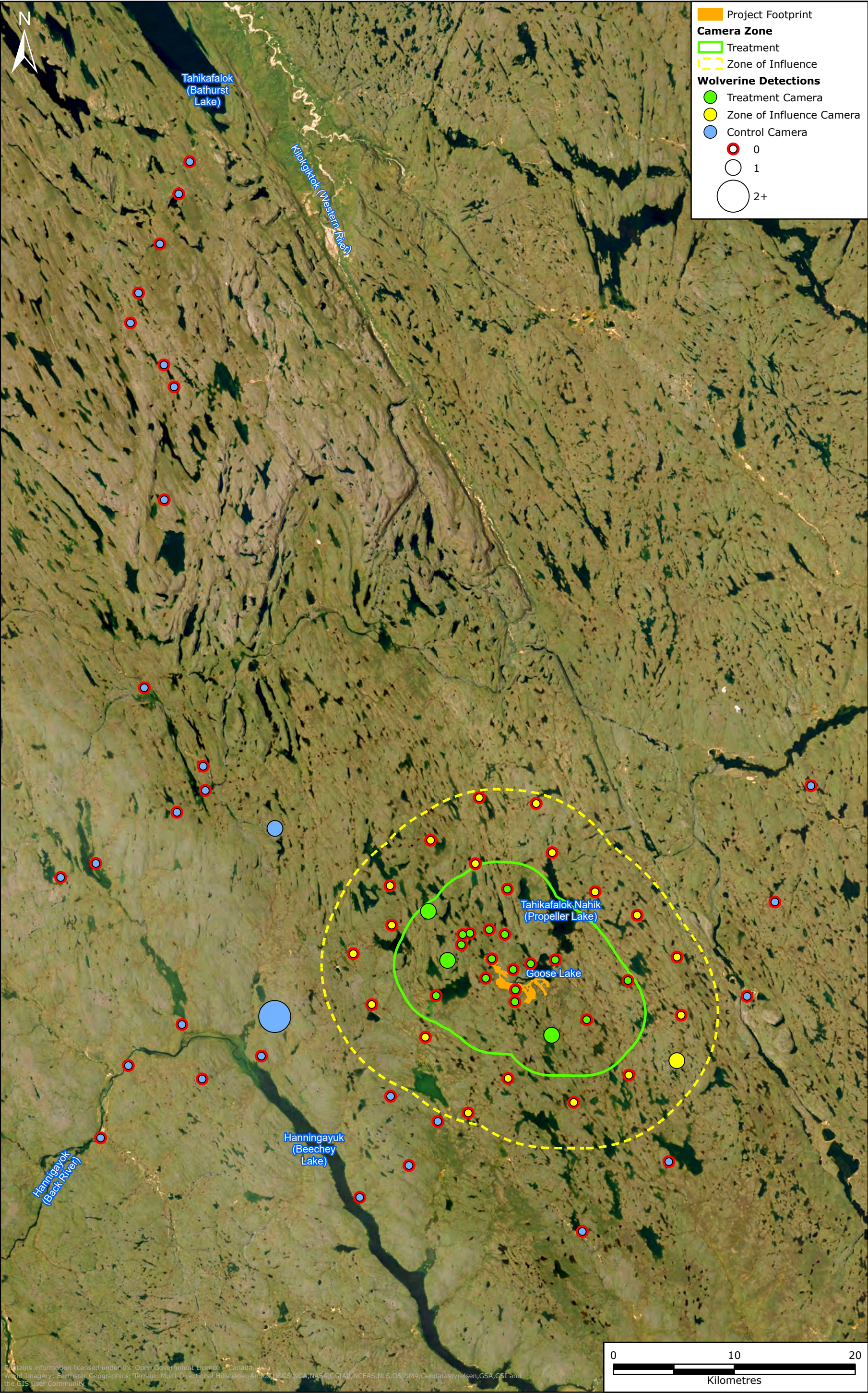
All personnel are responsible for recording wildlife sightings in the camp's wildlife logs (Appendix I). These logs provide an indication of the wildlife species that occur in proximity to and interact with the Back River Mine infrastructure, as described in Section 9.3.1.2 of the WMMP Plan (B2Gold 2024a). Section 3.9 summarizes the number of personnel onsite collecting incidental sightings.

FIGURE 5.5-1 GRIZZLY BEAR DETECTIONS AT REGIONAL MONITORING CAMERAS, 2023 TO 2024



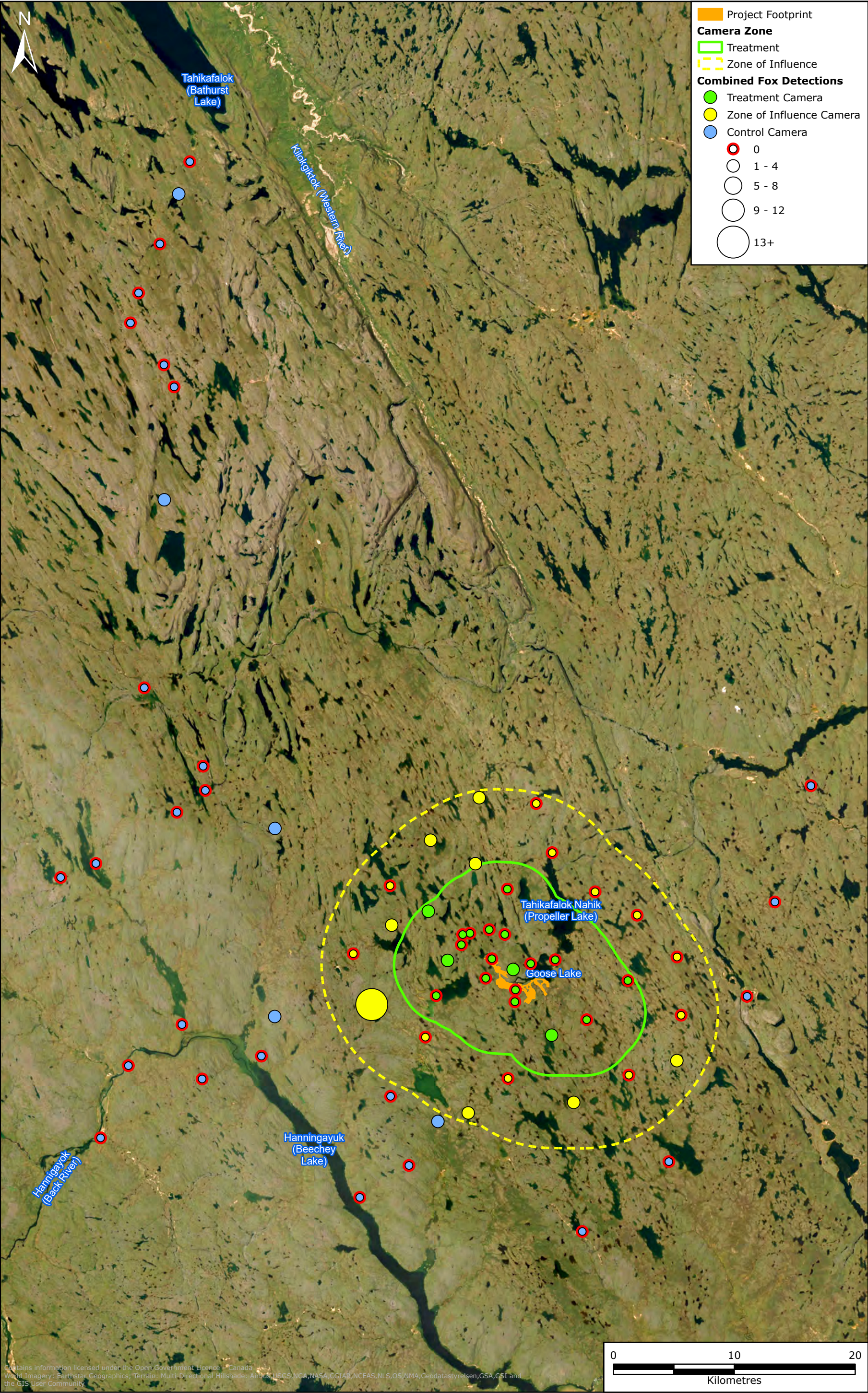
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World Imagery: Earthstar Geographics; Terrain: Multi-Directional Hillshade; Airphoto: USGS, NASA, CGIAR, NCEAS, NLS, OS, NMA, Geodatastyrelsen, GSA, GSI and the GIS User Community

FIGURE 5.5-2 WOLVERINE DETECTIONS AT REGIONAL MONITORING CAMERAS, 2023 TO 2024



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FIGURE 5.5-3 COMBINED (RED AND ARCTIC) FOX DETECTIONS AT REGIONAL MONITORING CAMERAS, 2023 TO 2024



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TABLE 5.5-2 MONTHLY CARNIVORE DETECTIONS ON REGIONAL MONITORING CAMERAS, 2023 TO 2024

Date	Number of Grizzly Bear Detections	Number of Wolverine Detections	Number of Combined Fox Detections
July 2023	0	0	0
August 2023	9	1	6
September 2023	10	1	5
October 2023	2	2	1
November 2023	0	0	0
December 2023	0	0	0
January 2024	0	0	0
February 2024	0	0	0
March 2024	1	0	0
April 2024	1	1	1
May 2024	9	2	7
June 2024	9	0	2
July 2024	4	1	0

5.6.1 METHODS

All personnel at the Back River Mine are expected to report observations of wildlife occurring around or interacting with the Mine to the Environment Department. Incidental observation reports include location (GPS coordinates), date, time, species, number observed, behaviour, and any other descriptive information regarding the sighting.

Incidental observations were recorded in accordance with and using the data sheet provided in the Incidental Wildlife Observations SOP (B2Gold 2024k).

5.6.2 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In 2024, B2Gold Nunavut staff onsite and biologists completing regional monitoring surveys recorded a total of 200 incidental observations of terrestrial mammals (excluding caribou), totaling an estimate of 284 individuals of grizzly bear, wolf, wolverine, Arctic fox, moose, red fox, ermine, weasel, unspecified fox species, and unidentified species (Table 5.6-1; Appendix I). Of those, 149 observations were made by onsite personnel, with 70% of observations made at Goose (n=104), 17% made along the WIR (n=25), and 14% were made at MLA (n=20). A total of 45 incidental observations were made within the RSA during wildlife regional monitoring programs (Figure 5.6-1). In addition to observations of wildlife, wildlife signs were recorded in 2024, including three potential dens in the RSA, fox scat on two occasions, wolverine tracks on two occasions, and wolf tracks on one occasion. All three potential dens were noted during regional monitoring programs, and none were located near Mine activity (Figure 5.6-1).

FIGURE 5.6-1 INCIDENTAL OBSERVATIONS OF TERRESTRIAL MAMMAL, 2024

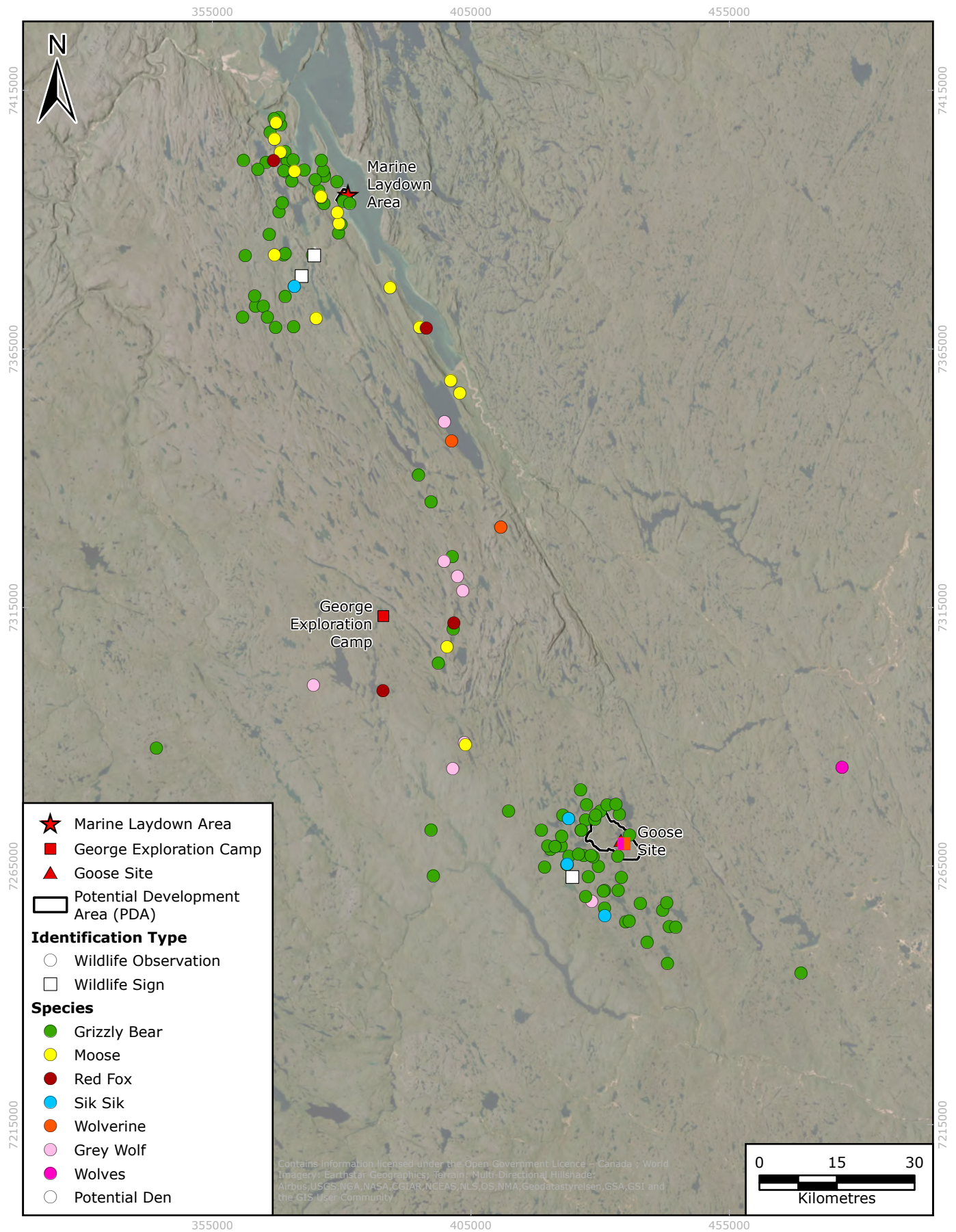


TABLE 5.6-1 SUMMARY OF INCIDENTAL OBSERVATIONS OF TERRESTRIAL MAMMALS IN 2024

Species	Scientific Name	General Locations	Observation Events	Estimated Number of Individuals ¹
Arctic Fox	<i>Vulpes lagopus</i>	Goose/MLA	6	6
Arctic Hare	<i>Lepus arcticus</i>	Goose	3	3
Ermine/Stoat/Weasel ²	<i>Mustela erminea</i>	Exploration	1	4
Grey Wolf	<i>Canis lupus</i>	Goose/WIR/MLA/RSA	47	88
Grizzly Bear	<i>Ursus arctos horribilis</i>	Goose/MLA/WIR/RSA	28	50
Moose	<i>Alces alces</i>	MLA/WIR/RSA	27	33
Red Fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>	Goose/WIR	13	18
Sik Sik	<i>Urocyon parryi</i>	RSA	4	6
Weasel	<i>Mustela</i> sp.	Goose	1	1
Wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo</i>	Goose/WIR/MLA/RSA	36	36
Unknown Wolverine or Bear	-	Goose	1	1
Unspecified Fox ³	-	Goose/WIR/MLA/RSA	33	38
Total			195	273

Notes:

¹ Note that it is not possible to identify individuals and it is likely that some of the same animals observed were observed on multiple occasions.

² Four individuals were trapped and relocated. Number of each species was not specified.

³ Observations were recorded as “fox”; therefore, species (i.e., red fox or Arctic fox) is unknown.

Wolves were the most commonly recorded species, accounting for 24% of observation events (n=47) and 31% of estimated individuals recorded (n=88; Table 5.6-1). Observations of individual wolves comprised 78% of observation events, with groups of two to nine individuals accounting for the remaining observations. Of the observations made by onsite personnel, wolves were most frequently observed at Goose (74%) followed by the WIR (22%). Hazing was required for wolves on eight occasions, with seven at Goose and one along the WIR. Additionally, one wolf was euthanized due to demonstrating signs of poor health, following communication with the Government of Nunavut. Hazing and mortalities are further described in Section 9.

Grizzly bear and wolverine are both assessed as Special Concern by COSEWIC and are listed on Schedule 1 of SARA (Government of Canada 2025). They are also both territorially ranked as vulnerable (NatureServe 2025).

Grizzly bear were observed 28 times, totaling an estimated 50 animals (Table 5.6-1). This does not mean 50 different animals were observed, as some sightings are likely re-sightings of the same individuals. Grizzly bear sightings occurred in April (two sightings), May (five sightings),

June (10 sightings), July (seven sightings), August (one sighting), September (one sighting), and October (two sightings). The earliest detection of Grizzly bear was April 21 when an individual was observed at Portage 15 of the WIR. Of the 28 grizzly bear observation events, 46% were made from Goose (n=13), 43% were made in the RSA during WMMP regional monitoring (n=12), with the remaining made along the WIR (n=2) and at MLA (n=1). Observations of individual grizzly bear comprised 64% of observation events (n=18), with sow and cubs accounting for the remaining observations (n=10). Sow and cubs were recorded 10 times, including two records of a sow and one cub, four records of a sow and two cubs, and four records of a sow and three cubs. Seven of the 10 sow and cub pairings were observed within the RSA during regional monitoring programs, between 10 and 70 km from the Mine site (Figure 5.6-1), with the remaining three sightings recorded by personnel at Goose. These three sightings were between 150 m and 4 km from the Goose site. This is the fourth year that a sow and cubs have been incidentally detected near the Goose site, with a sow and three cubs observed 400 m southwest of Echo Pit in 2023, a sow and cub observed approximately 5 km west of Goose camp in 2022, and a sow and two cubs approximately 2 km north of Goose camp in 2021. Additionally, hazing was required for grizzly bear on six occasions at Goose and is further described in Section 9.

Wolverine were observed 37 times, all being of one individual (Table 5.6-1). Wolverine sightings occurred in January (three sightings), February (three sightings), March (eight sightings), April (18 sightings), May (four sightings), and August (one sighting). Of the 37 wolverine observation events, 78% were made from Goose (n=30), with the remaining made along the WIR (n=5), at MLA (n=1), and in the RSA during WMMP regional monitoring (n=1). Hazing was required for wolverine on nine occasions at Goose and are further described in Section 9. All of the hazing events were associated with the implementation of adaptive management following the attraction event at the Goose incinerator in April 2024 (as described in Section 2.6). Mitigative measures were determined to be successful at excluding and deterring wolverine and as a result, no hazing of wolverine occurred after April in 2024. Additionally, only three observations of wolverine were recorded at Goose after April, with all individuals recorded passing through the area and not being near the incinerator. Compared to previous years, there were more wolverine observations in 2024; however, the higher numbers of wolverine are likely due to multiple observations of the same individual near the incinerator, as described in Sections 2.6 and 9, rather than an increase in wolverine in the area.

Fox were observed 52 times, totaling an estimated 62 animals (Table 5.6-1). Observations included Arctic fox (6 observation events), red fox (13 observation events), and unspecified fox species (33 observation events). Of the 52 fox sightings, 62% were made from Goose (n=32), 17% at MLA (n=9), 17 % along the WIR (n=9), and 4% in the RSA during wildlife regional monitoring (n=2). The number of observations at Goose are likely not a reflection of unique individuals and likely include multiple repeat observation associated with a red fox den that was located near the haul road. Once identified, adaptive management was applied to the area of this den, including a site-wide email, establishment of signage, and reduction of speed limits in the area to 10 km/h (Photo 5.6-1).



Photo 5.6-1 Red fox kits observed near the Goose Haul Road, July 27 2024.

Moose were observed 27 times, totaling an estimated 33 animals (Table 5.6-1) between March 4 and December 2, 2024. Of the 27 moose observation events, 44% were made in the RSA during wildlife regional monitoring ($n=12$), 30% were made along the WIR ($n=8$), and 26% were made at the MLA ($n=7$). The moose were observed at similar locations to the five sightings in 2023. An area west of Bathurst Inlet, stretching north from Bathurst Lake to just south of the MLA, was identified by the KitIA as a preferred moose hunting area by Inuit.

Other species incidentally observed included sik sik, Arctic hare, weasel, ermine, and stoat (Table 5.6-1). One hare was found deceased by natural predation beside the haul road and is further discussed in Section 9.