

Hi John,

I read your blog entry entitled "[Protecting Endangered Mountain Caribou](#)" last night. While I was greatly disappointed in your position supporting the aerial wolf cull in the South Selkirks, given Wildsight's previous public stances - or lack thereof - on wolf management in BC, I wasn't at all surprised. I feel compelled to write to you to clearly express my disagreement with the position you have taken. And please note that this email represents my position and feelings alone. I have worked with some of the folks on the CC list on carnivore and wolf conservation issues (sometimes, but not always, behind the scenes), but I am not claiming they are in full agreement with everything I about to say. Also please note I am in full support of any comprehensive plan on caribou recovery that addresses all issues associated with the decline of the caribou and that has a non-zero probability of success.

John, I've long admired your passion and near-obsession with protecting the mountain caribou of the South Selkirks. You're a determined and bright guy. I don't need to tell you that wolves didn't cause the near (and looming) extirpation of the caribou in this population. Indeed, I'm sure you know the downward trend began before wolves had rebounded to the point where they could have a significant ecological effect in the region. I don't need to tell you that habitat loss of old growth forest (along with the loss of key lichens needed to sustain the caribou is the primary issue (as well as all the other human-induced changes to the habitat, some of which can function to make the caribou more susceptible to predation). Hell, we've known that habitat loss was the problem since studies in the 1970's pointed it out. I don't need to tell you that historically - and right through to the present - wolves have not been and are not the only predators who add to the mortality rate of caribou. I don't need to tell you that in other instances where aggressive, prolonged lethal wolf-control has been used as a last-ditch effort to stop the decrease in mountain caribou populations it has had NO effect whatsoever. And I'm sure I don't need to tell you when a genetically-isolated population is reduced to 18 or fewer individuals of slow-reproducing large mammals their probability of medium- or long-term survival in an impoverished habitat is virtually indistinguishable from zero.

In your blog entry you state:

"Predators are often scapegoated and pay the price for human caused habitat loss and when government policies result in reduction of ungulate species. We share the public sentiment against wolf kills. But we recognize that in some rare cases it may be necessary to keep a globally unique animal like mountain caribou on the landscape and, in so doing maintain its protected habitats."

This might be true (though still debatable) if we were dealing with a population that had ANY chance of recovery. If, perhaps 30 or 40 years ago, we had truly protected sufficient habitat for the caribou and had begun mitigating all mortality factors - including from all predators, not just wolves - when the caribou numbered in the hundreds, then perhaps your argument would have some validity to it. Perhaps then a strategic cull of all predators could have been rationalized. But when down to 18 or fewer animals who have habitat that is sub-standard at best, inhumanely killing wolves has ONE effect only - the slaughter of the wolves. It will not bring the habitat back. In fact - and almost ironically - removal of predators from the landscape for long time periods will very likely inhibit the return of the exact habitat configuration necessary for caribou survival. And, most importantly, killing wolves will not bring the caribou back. Sadly (and I do mean that) the mountain caribou population of the South Selkirks is done. It may be a wolf that takes the last one. It may be a cougar or a grizzly. Or, it may be hit by motor vehicle. Or, probably most likely, it will starve to death in the midst of a winter. But the POPULATION was wiped out by the action of humans, not wolves. I've heard some refer to this cull as a last ditch "Hail Mary" pass - and it seems that's your position. But it's not even that - Hail Mary's have a chance of succeeding. This wolf cull doesn't.

As one who spends almost every waking moment pondering the plight of carnivores in BC (and North American in general) there's one more thing about your blog entry that really irks me. It's my view that the biggest single hurdle we face in carnivore conservation (and in changing our archaic carnivore management plans) is the public perception of predators. Quite frankly, most laypersons in BC either don't care about them or view them as dangerous and vicious parts of the wilderness that serve no useful purpose. I'm talking about the Big Bad Wolf attitude that permeates public opinion and our current management plans. Very few people will read your full (and I would argue faulty) justification for supporting the wolf cull - most will just hear "Wildsight is against wolves". This will only further support and propagate this outdated, incorrect, and harmful perception towards predators.

Finally - I can't end this without expressing shock at the final sentence in your blog. You can actually justify culling a population of predators just *because it will rebound*? My gawd, that thinking could be used to justify *any of the genocides of any species* that have ever taken place, including humans. Stop and think about the consequences of that logic. Hitler and Pol Pot would have loved that one! Hell, there's billions of humans - they'll rebound! What has happened to your ethical boundaries?

If you haven't already guessed this, I'll be fighting this cull - and indirectly - Wildsight as hard as I can.

Regards,

Brad