

Brad, Paul et al,

We are clearly in agreement that it is the action of humans that are responsible for mountain caribou being reduced to extremely low levels. And while you know I agree with most of your comments, we strongly disagree on the possibility of mountain caribou recovery.

You are well aware that endangered species have been recovered from apparently hopelessly low numbers in the past. The Mountain Caribou Science Team did not believe that there is a zero possibility of success for mountain caribou recovery when making its recommendations. Scientists regularly disagree about many issues, but the overwhelming majority of caribou biologists support the efforts of a recovery program. It is possible they are wrong, but I continue to believe recovery to be possible.

The loss of mountain caribou is more than the loss of a species, it comes with the loss of thousands of hectares of habitat protection from logging and road building that will impact the future of not only caribou but all other creatures dependent upon these habitats--- including wolves in the long term. It is an extremely unfortunate situation that these critical habitats across the Inland Temperate Rainforest are not protected for their own sake—but this is the political reality I have been trying to change for most of my adult life.

I am unaware of any long term concerted effort to control wolf populations to recover mountain caribou, but would be glad to have any references. But I am well aware that caribou recovery will certainly fail if habitat recovery is not successful and wolves will have died needlessly. I am committed to this not becoming the case.

The Selkirks will not be truly wild without both caribou and wolves.

I think it goes without saying that I find killing wolves and all predators abhorrent. I have been a vegetarian for almost 50 years simply because I do not believe humans in our present society need to be killing animals for sustenance or vanity. The decision to support killing in limited circumstances for the sake of biodiversity does not come easily.

For the wild---- including wolves,  
john

I am attaching an article by Barry Wilson who I think states the situation most clearly.

### [BC Cries Wolf - Barry Wilson, Salmon Arm](#)

Most of the media reports I have seen on BC's planned wolf cull are "crying wolf" and giving the public the wrong impression. What I have been hearing on radio, tv and online news is that the BC Government has announced it will be shooting 184 wolves from helicopters in the South Peace and Selkirk areas of BC before snowmelt this spring. It's reported that the Government feels it is necessary because, and I am paraphrasing:

BC caribou herds are shrinking to dangerously low levels,

Wolves eat caribou,

Therefore, the BC Government is killing wolves to save the caribou herds.

The stories position the narrative as a "war on wolves" to save the helpless caribou. It's a play on old fairy tales like the Three Little Pigs and the Big Bad Wolf. And this gets people all riled up – AND THEY SHOULD BE RILED UP!

But they should not be upset that we are killing a relatively small number of localized wolf packs as an emergency measure. Rather, they should be furious because

biologists feel they have no choice but to do this because we have not had the will to do what is necessary to maintain adequate caribou habitat and most importantly, to keep people and apex predators out of it. Check the press release backgrounders and you will see that this is known and documented.

Instead of playing on fairy-tales, we should be reflecting on stories like Farley Mowat's "Never Cry Wolf". In his book, Mowat tells how in the late 1940's, the Dominion Wildlife Service assigned him to investigate the cause of declining caribou populations and determine whether wolves are to blame for the shortage. Mowat discovered that rather than being wanton killers of caribou, the wolves subsist quite heavily on small mammals such as rodents and hares, "even choosing them over caribou when available." He concludes: "We have doomed the wolf not for what it is but for what we deliberately and mistakenly perceive it to be: the mythologized epitome of a savage, ruthless killer—which is, in reality, not more than the reflected image of ourselves. We have made it the scapewolf for our own sins."

Habitat degradation and avoidance of what little is left because of human land use and access is the primary cause of the caribou's predicament – not the presence of wolves. Reporters should be calling a spade a spade – the public deserves to have an informed discussion. Legislated approval processes and statutory decision makers have made trade-offs on the public's behalf – making resource extraction and unfettered access to recreational opportunities everywhere in our great Province the dominant priority, while risk to natural capital values such as species at risk have been evaluated to be "acceptable" or "within tolerance limits".

Human footprint development, particularly linear features and high elevation developments are creating transportation highways for wolves to get to caribou where they would have previously not gone because the forest itself would have been a barrier. And mountain caribou don't like hanging out with us. Human access by snowmobiles, atv's, even hikers, snowshoers and backcountry skiers to habitat results in caribou avoiding the little bit they do still have.

Biologists think the cull is the only way to avoid extirpation in the short term and so maybe this is the best short-term emergency measure. But if the real issues are not addressed, this will accomplish nothing but delay the inevitable.

Unintended consequences are occurring because comprehensive holistic cumulative effects analyses are not being employed to measure and evaluate the benefits and costs of simultaneous human land use like oil and gas exploration and development, surface mining, forestry, transportation, wind energy, agriculture, forest fire suppression, tourism and recreation and human settlement along with climate change and natural disturbance. The tools and processes to analyze these system dynamics exist and are being applied in many jurisdictions in the world. It is time for BC to catch up and for the public to have an opportunity to engage in understanding the trade-offs that may be necessary in order to address the primary causal agents of crises like declining caribou populations – humans.

Barry Wilson, R.P.F.

Systems Ecologist, Principal