



Release Date: December 12, 2007

Blame the Wolf: Killing Wildlife to Save Wildlife

Recent initiatives to protect 2.2 million hectares of land in British Columbia for mountain caribou contrast strikingly with Alberta's miserable failure to do anything meaningful to protect its own caribou habitat.

"While the BC government protects habitat and commits to more environmentally sensitive forest management, in Alberta we kill wolves," say Nigel Douglas, AWA conservation specialist.

Over the past two winters, the Alberta government shot 155 wolves from helicopters, supposedly to reduce predation on the endangered woodland caribou herds west of Hinton. This is despite the fact that the government's own Caribou Recovery Plan states clearly "Predator control will not succeed as a sole, or predominant, tool for caribou recovery." The plan stresses that "ultimately, habitat conservation and management is the fundamental tool to reduce undue predation on caribou." Unlike in B.C., nothing has been done to protect caribou habitat in Alberta.

"It's a double whammy for Alberta's wildlife," says Cliff Wallis, AWA vice-president and member of the government's Alberta Caribou Committee. "Wildlife pays the price when we fail to protect the habitat in the stampede to extract resources; and then wildlife pays again when we resort to a 'blame the wolf' policy while doing nothing to address the root causes of the problem."

The Alberta government now has more wolves in its crosshairs, this time with a plan to restore high elk populations in west-central Alberta. A new research program is looking at sterilizing the "alpha pair" of wolves in a pack and killing the remaining members of the pack.

"Linear disturbances are making it easier for wolves to prey on both caribou and elk," says AWA conservation specialist Chris Wearmouth. "Once again the Alberta government is responding to the effects of habitat destruction and not the causes."

Killing wolves is fast becoming the first option in Alberta instead of addressing the serious issues that are afflicting wildlife. "Why is it so easy for Alberta to kill wolves as the quick fix to the problems the forest and energy industries created in the first place?" asks Wallis. "Our wildlife need large areas of unspoiled habitat where they can thrive. Until we begin to accept this basic principle, we are stuck in a costly, never-ending cycle of killing wildlife to save wildlife."

For more information:

Nigel Douglas, Chris Wearmouth, Alberta Wilderness Association (403) 283-2025

