



Wild Lands Advocate, August 2008, Vol. 16. No. 4

Albertans Lose Scent of Wolf Sterilization Project

The scent may have gone cold for Alberta's public, but AWA continues to track the story of killing wolves for research in Alberta.

Last November, AWA learned of a research project near Rocky Mountain House that would trap and sterilize four "alpha pairs" of wolves while exterminating the rest of their packs. This joint project of the Government of Alberta and the University of Alberta is being carried out in hopes of increasing ungulate populations, especially elk, arguably to keep numbers up for hunting.

When the story hit the media, the flurry of responses from Albertans was staggering. The outcry against the project was loud and clear. But one week's hot topic quickly becomes the next week's dusty column – there has been little word since spring regarding the research.

According to Anne Hubbs, a senior wildlife biologist with Sustainable Resource Development, the project is still in the initial phase of capturing and collaring 3 members from each of 14 different packs in the area. So far, 16 wolves have been collared from 9 packs. After collaring, the project will move to the next stage of sterilization and slaughter, which is slated to begin this winter. Hubbs also told AWA that a special committee is being formed with 8 to 10 wolf experts from North America who will comment on the merits of the project and offer recommendations on the methods of research.

There is no denying that wolf predation is a pressure on ungulate populations, particularly caribou (which are not found in the research area), but killing wolves instead of dealing with the real issue of habitat destruction is as effective as putting a band-aid on a deadly wound. Without real protection for wildlife habitat of a size that can allow for natural predator-prey cycles, we will be forced to continue to micro-manage our environment with tools that should only be used as a last resort to correct serious errors on our part or stave off the extinction of a species.

Hubbs informed us that there are plans to convene a stakeholder committee to which AWA would be invited. As this research moves into future stages, AWA will continue to exert pressure to stop the needless killing of wolves for research and recreational pursuits.

– *Chris Wearmouth*

