

Caribou Habitat Protection Crucial for CeaseFire in War on Wildlife

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Caribou scientists published findings today indicating that an intense war on wildlife can increase endangered Alberta and BC woodland caribou populations. Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) is concerned that these findings could be misused by industry and government decision makers to prolong unsustainable forest exploitation while endlessly harming wildlife species.

“Relying on endlessly liquidating and penning our valued wildlife because of our forest mismanagement is unacceptable,” says Carolyn Campbell, AWA conservation specialist. “We must urgently shift to managing forests and alpine areas so human activities restore – rather than further degrade – the many benefits of older, intact forests that wild caribou require.”

The scientists found that, if wolf or moose populations are continuously culled and if caribou mothers and their young are held in fenced pens, caribou populations can rise even in caribou ranges that have been heavily degraded

by logging, mining, drilling and recreation impacts (R. Serrouya et al., PNAS journal). AWA calls for overdue protection and restoration of caribou critical habitat as the essential and responsible path to healthy forests and self-supporting caribou. AWA believes that protecting caribou habitat is crucial to meet Alberta's and Canada's commitments on climate change, biodiversity and the rights of First Nations.

Solutions are within reach to manage forests sustainably for jobs and the environment. An October 2018 [study](#) by eminent natural resource economist Dr. Thomas Michael Power concluded that optimal land use solutions can be found by valuing both caribou habitat and resources to generate the least-cost and most beneficial economic choices compatible with caribou recovery. This study noted that managing lands for woodland caribou recovery can grow the economy in the Bistcho-Yates caribou range lands of northwest Alberta owing to the stimulus of a needed habitat restoration program.

Human impacts have fragmented older forest areas that mountain and boreal woodland caribou depend upon, pushing many populations towards extinction, yet habitat disturbance continues to grow. Provinces have the responsibility to manage wildlife and natural resources, and the federal government has the responsibility to protect species-at-risk habitat if provinces fail to do so.

For more information:

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Dedicated to the conservation of wilderness and completion of a protected areas network, AWA inspires communities to care for Alberta's wild spaces through awareness and action.

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