



Canada confirms plans to repopulate at-risk caribou herds with a breeding program in Jasper National Park

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The Canadian government has formally announced their commitment to recover and repopulate woodland caribou herds in Jasper National Park through a conservation breeding program. The breeding program would aim to introduce new animals into the herds as soon as 2025.

This follows the Parks Canada public consultation on the proposed program. During the public consultation, [Parks Canada found that more than 95% of respondents strongly or conditionally supported the proposal.](#)

CPAWS Northern Alberta, Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA), and David Suzuki Foundation support urgent recovery measures for woodland caribou but recognize the sad history of management decisions in Jasper National Park that have not always favoured caribou survival. A series of recent decisions reflect renewed commitment from Parks Canada to prioritize caribou recovery, including extending winter access restrictions and retiring backcountry lodge leases.

"We should hold our national parks to a high standard for species at risk recovery and this breeding program is a good sign of Parks Canada's commitment to caribou," says Gillian Chow-Fraser with CPAWS Northern Alberta. "There is urgency and momentum to assure caribou habitat is also safe throughout their range, which means continuing to mitigate recreation and tourism impacts wherever and whenever possible."

"It feels like a constant human failing that we wait until it's almost too late to take meaningful action when it comes to species at risk. Captive breeding is costly and places stressors not only on individual caribou translocated into the park, but also the herds from which they are being removed. Building fences to protect wildlife is always an indication of past failures," says Rachel Plotkin with David Suzuki Foundation.

"AWA supports Parks Canada developing a conservation breeding program, combined with continuing precautionary habitat management actions, as a tragic but necessary interim measure to keep wild caribou in Jasper National Park, where they belong," says Carolyn Campbell with Alberta Wilderness Association.

Respondents during the public consultation also emphasized the need to minimize habituation of captive-raised calves, assess visitor use data to define thresholds for visitation in caribou habitat, reduce recreation pressures, build public awareness of human impacts, maintain and protect caribou habitat even in unoccupied ranges, and engage with tourism and recreational groups.

The final decision follows a public consultation, a detailed impact assessment, a scientific review, and engagement with Indigenous communities, government partners, and key stakeholders.



Experts have concluded that without intervention, the two remaining caribou herds in Jasper National Park will face extirpation, following in the footsteps of the Maligne caribou herd, which was confirmed as extirpated in 2020.

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