

Selkirk Mountain Caribou Park Proposal

Valhalla Wilderness Society



BC has the world's only mountain caribou and they live in the Inland Rainforest Region, shown in dark green on the map. The mountain caribou depends upon old-growth forest for its survival needs. As a result of excessive logging, it is in serious danger of going extinct.

The government has been somewhat increasing protection of mountain caribou habitat in the northern half of the region, but the southern herds have received very little habitat protection. As a result, the southern herds have been nearly annihilated by clearcut logging of their habitat.

With almost 100 animals, the Central Selkirk herd is the most viable of the southern herds. After three years of a federal-provincial recovery process for mountain caribou, there has been no increased protection of the old-growth forest used by these animals.

The key to protecting mountain caribou is large, intact areas of old-growth forest. The Central Selkirks have a number of protected areas, but in this mountainous region the parks contain large amounts of rock, ice, alpine meadows and sparsely treed subalpine slopes. Most of the adjoining forest at mid and low elevations has been sacrificed to the logging industry.

67% of the Inland Rainforest Region is forest, but only 17% of the region is old-growth forest that is intact (continuous for 1,000 hectares or more).

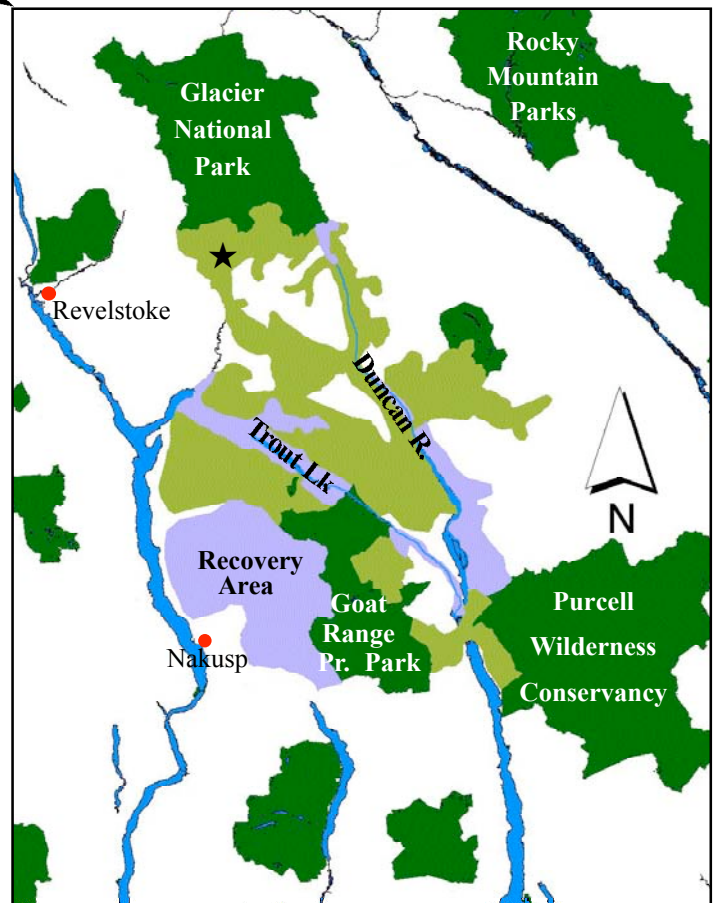
About 16% of the region is in protected areas, but only 4.5% of the region is protected, intact, old-growth forest.


The northern half of the region has 2.5 times more protected, intact old-growth than the southern half.


The mountain caribou is endangered because the old-growth forest is endangered. In losing our old-growth, we are also losing other old-growth dependent species. For instance, many species of rainforest lichens in the Central Selkirks are dependent upon old-growth forest.

To fill this gap, the Valhalla Wilderness Society has proposed the Selkirk Mountain Caribou Park plus a number of Recovery Areas for the rehabilitation of wildlife habitat that has already been logged. This would protect:

- ★ The critical habitat of the Central Selkirk mountain caribou.
- ★ Grizzly bear-Kokanee salmon ecosystems on the Lardeau, Incomappleux and Duncan Rivers.
- ★ BC's most southerly Inland Rainforest with trees up to 1,800 years old and many recently discovered lichen species new to science.



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 Existing Parks

 Recovery Areas

★ Ancient forest of the Incomappleux Valley

MORE 

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- Proposes 251,016 hectares of new park and 152,207 hectares of Recovery Areas.
- Recovery Areas are river corridors or gentle mountain terrain that are still being used by wildlife that have nowhere else to go to find critical food and shelter. These areas have been so heavily clearcut that all logging should stop and logging roads should be naturalized.
- The precursor to the Selkirk Mountain Caribou Park

Proposal is the Bugaboo Park Extension proposed by Western Canada Wilderness Committee in 1998. The Valhalla proposal has removed some large areas of rock and ice or clearcuts and added critical mountain caribou habitat.

- VWS has not yet assessed the impact upon the timber industry, but expects it to be relatively small because this is an area of often steep slopes, and huge amounts of the most accessible valley-bottom and high-elevation forest have already been logged.

CENTRAL SELKIRK CARIBOU

The mountain caribou is an endangered species that is currently the subject of a recovery program under the federal *Species at Risk Act*, with management by BC's Species at Risk Coordination Office (SaRCO).

Repeatedly mountain caribou are concentrated close to parks but outside the boundaries, because the key low- and mid-elevation forest was excluded from protection. The Central Selkirk herd tends to concentrate north of Nakusp and west and north of the Goat Range Provincial Park. The VWS proposal would fully protect the most intact habitat, and also stop logging in the severely clearcut areas and begin rehabilitating the habitat.

Various land use plans in the southern part of the Inland Rainforest Region have designated 435,097 hectares outside of parks as "no logging zones" for the mountain caribou. These plans are not considered to be a stable form of protection; they are sometimes violated and always in danger of collapsing. Of the area they have set aside for caribou, 94% is high elevation forest; another 4% is alpine tundra. Shamefully, only 2% is low- or mid-elevation Interior Cedar-Hemlock essential to these caribou in early winter and spring. Almost half of the area is on slopes of 45% or steeper. Mountain caribou need slopes less than 45%.

GRIZZLY BEARS

Grizzly bears live in the Goat Range Provincial Park, Glacier National Park and the Purcell Wilderness Conservancy. Unfortunately, these are largely rock, ice and alpine parks. Grizzly bears come to the valley bottoms briefly in spring, and again in fall to fish for Kokanee salmon in the Lardeau and Duncan Rivers. There they find huge clearcuts because the valley bottom forest was left out of the parks. The bears are using the forest patches in these watersheds for travel corridors. The Recovery Areas along the Duncan and Lardeau Rivers would retain those patches.

INLAND RAINFOREST

This proposal would protect the most southerly example of Inland Rainforest, and the oldest, that has been documented by scientists: the upper Incomappleux Valley. Recently 9 species of lichens new to science were discovered there and scientists are studying many more possible new-to-science species. Many rare, or red- and blue-listed, plant species have also been found. A number of intact watersheds of ancient cedar-hemlock forest are also in this proposal.

More information and many colour photos of the proposal are available at <http://www.vws.org>.