



SCIENTISTS' PETITION TO SAVE BC'S MOUNTAIN CARIBOU

For Submission to BC Provincial Government

June 2007

WHEREAS

- ❖ The mountain caribou is a globally unique ecotype of the woodland caribou that is dependent on old-growth temperate forests at both low and high elevations for survival. Most of these forests are in the Interior Wet Belt of British Columbia, which has 98% of the world's surviving mountain caribou. In recent decades, mountain caribou have suffered catastrophic declines to less than 2,000 animals largely because of extensive clearcut logging of critical old-growth habitats. Over-hunting, poaching, and uncontrolled motorized recreation are other causal factors. The southern mountain caribou ecotype is now listed as "threatened" federally and "endangered" (red list) provincially. Many other species of plants and animals found in the Interior Cedar-Hemlock Forest are also at risk.
- ❖ A recent Conservation Area Design by the Craighead Environmental Research Institute of the Interior Wet Belt (Inland Temperate Rainforest) using mountain caribou as one of the focal species found that protection such as in provincial and national parks needed to be increased significantly.
- ❖ The 2006 Draft Mountain Caribou Recovery Strategy by the BC Species at Risk Coordination Office (SARCO) is deficient. Firstly, it fails to reflect 30 years of scientific research demonstrating that fragmentation and loss of old-growth forests are the primary reasons for the demise of the mountain caribou. Secondly, it fails to address the implications of climate change on mountain caribou habitat, including the increased risk of large, catastrophic wildfires. Thirdly, it places far too much emphasis on predator control, including grizzly bears, wolverines, and other species-at-risk as a course of action which, based on experience in other jurisdictions, is unlikely to maintain populations except in the very short term. Implementation of the current SARCO recovery plan options will not save the mountain caribou. Only one course of action will avert the loss over most or all of their current range: protected status for high-elevation and low-elevation old-growth forest.

PRIORITY CONSERVATION MEASURES SHOULD INCLUDE:

OLD-GROWTH PROTECTION

- A. An immediate moratorium on all logging in old-growth caribou habitat.
- B. As a first priority, legislated full protection of all mountain caribou old-growth forest 140 years or older through new provincial and national parks, fully protected caribou old-growth management reserves, and wildlife sanctuaries.
- C. Habitat recovery for caribou range already logged will take at least a century. No logging adjacent to critical caribou habitat can be permitted until recovery, and then a retention of a higher percentage of old-growth forest is required when timber is harvested in surrounding areas. Forests in southern mountain caribou range should be managed to recruit old-growth forest in current and potential caribou habitat.
- D. Retention of some beetle-killed pine forests as future lichen-feeding areas for caribou.
- E. Recognition that such protection of old-growth “caribou-lichen” forests will help save many other endangered species in British Columbia’s Interior Wet Belt, as well as help to reduce global warming through carbon sequestration.

INCREASED MANAGEMENT of ACCESS

- A. Much more aggressive restrictions on motorized recreation in caribou habitat, including snowmobiles, ATVs, and helicopters.
- B. Restrictions on commercial recreation developments and activities in caribou habitat, including lodges, ski hills, and so on.
- C. Decommissioning of roads in caribou habitat to help reduce predator and human access.

We, the undersigned scientists/biologists believe that only stronger protection of old-growth habitats will save the mountain caribou and hundreds of other endangered Interior Wet Belt species.

As with climate change, both the federal and provincial governments need to take immediate action to protect the mountain caribou old-growth habitat across their range.

Sincerely,*

Dr. Paul Paquet
Adjunct Professor, University of Calgary
Meacham, Sask.

Wayne P. McCrory, RPBio.
McCrory Wildlife Services Ltd.
Box 479

New Denver, British Columbia

Robert A Ruttan, Wildlife/Caribou Ecologist
Ruttan Consultants
Tewatinaw, Alberta

Reed F. Noss, Ph.D.
Davis-Shine Professor of Conservation Biology
University of Central Florida, Department of Biology
4000 Central Florida Blvd.
Orlando, FL 32816-2368

Dr. David Hamer
Northern Lights College
Fort St. John, B.C.

Troy Merrill, Research Director
LTB Institute of Landscape Ecology
Moscow, ID. 83843

D.W. Schindler, O.C., F.R.S., F.R.S.C.
Killam Memorial Chair and Professor of Ecology
Dept of Biological Sciences, University of Alberta
Edmonton AB T6G 2E9

Dr Bristol Foster
Mammal ecologist
Saltspring Island, BC

Farley Mowat
Biologist and author
Port Hope, Ontario, L1A 2R4

Steve Herrero, Ph.D
Professor emeritus of environmental science, University of Calgary
Calgary, Alberta

Karsten Heuer, Wildlife biologist
637 3rd Street
Canmore, Alberta T1W 2H9

Rick Zammuto, Ph.D.,
Head, SEE ME Consultations
Crescent Spur, BC, V0J 3E0.

Shirley Nalbach-Ruttan, Wildlife Biologist
Tewatinaw, Alberta

Tuomas Kukkonen
B.Sc.Agr.Env. (Wildlife Biology)
Senior Research Assistant

White Lion Reintroduction
South Africa

Dr. Peter Wallis
Dean of Science, Medicine Hat College,
Medicine Hat, Alberta

Trevor Goward,
Curator of Lichens, UBC
Clearwater, BC

Louise Horstman, Biologist
10119-102 Ave.
Morinville, AB T8R 1A7

Alysha Pape, M.Sc
Research Technician
University of Saskatchewan
2-117 Science Place
Saskatoon, SK S7N 5C8

Marcy Mahr, MSc Plant Ecology
Ecological Consultant
Conservation Steward, Flathead Land Trust
P.O. Box 423
Kila, MT 59920 USA

Gudrun Pflueger
Wildlife Biologist,
Canmore, AB

Peter Jonker
Environment, Science, and Technology Program Director
(Retired), University of Saskatchewan
1514 Hilliard Street East, Saskatoon, SK. S7J 0G4

Mart Williams, Wildlife Biologist
141 South Davidsen Road
Cadillac, Michigan 49601

Lee Harding, PhD, RPBio
President, SciWrite Environmental Sciences Ltd.
2339 Sumpter Drive
Coquitlam, British Columbia V3J 6Y3

Lance Craighead, Ph.D.
Craighead Environmental Research Institute
Bozeman, Montana

Tom Olenicki, Ph D. Candidate
Craighead Environmental Research Institute

Bozeman, Montana

Chris Darimont, Ph D. Candidate
Department of Biology, University of Victoria
PO Box 3020 Stn. CSC
Victoria, British Columbia V8W 3N5

Erica Mallam, Staff biologist
Valhalla Wilderness Society
New Denver, British Columbia

Astrid Vik Stronen, PhD Candidate
Department of Biology, University of New Brunswick
Fredericton, New Brunswick E3B 6C2

Toby Spribille, Dipl.-Biol.,
University of Göttingen,
Germany

Dr. Charles Jonkel, PhD.
Zoology with Wildlife Emphasis (UBC)
Box 9383
Missoula, MT 59807

Viktoria Wagner, Dipl.-Biologist
Department of Vegetation and Phytodiversity Analysis
Albrecht von Haller Institute for Plant Sciences
University of Göttingen
Untere Karspüle 2
37073 Göttingen, Germany

Dr. Barrie Gilbert, Professor Emeritus
Utah Wildland Resources Dept.
P.O. Box #252
Wolfe Island, Ontario K0H 2Y0

John Russell, Caribou biologist
Box 68
Waterton Park, AB T0K 2M0

Dr. Suzanne Bayley
Professor, Department of Biological Sciences University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta,
Canada, T6G 2E9

Dr. Brian Horejsi
Speak Up for Wildlife Foundation
Calgary, Alberta

Karen Oldershaw, B.Sc., M.E.Des.
Aspen Wildlife and Environmental Services

Terrestrial (Wildlife) Ecologist
Bragg Creek, Alberta

Dr. Claudia Notzke, Associate Professor
Faculty of Management (Environmental Management and Sustainable Tourism)
University of Lethbridge
4401 University Drive
Lethbridge, Alberta, T1K 3M4

Kathleen Wilkinson, M.Sc.
Environmental Biologist
2402 Mountain Drive,
Abbotsford, BC, V3G 1E7.

Joan Snyder, Ph.D., Biologist
Snowdance Research and Consulting, Ltd.
Slocan Park, BC

Annette Dehalt
Biology Department, Camosun College
Victoria, B.C.

Faisal Moola, PhD, Director of Science
David Suzuki Foundation
2211 West 4th Avenue, Suite 219
Vancouver, BC

Rosemary Mason, Instructor
Biology Department, Camosun College
3100 Foul Bay Road
Victoria, BC V8P 5J2

Pamela Zevit, Biologist
Principle - Adamah Consultants
Coquitlam BC. V3K 4X7

Maggie Paquet, Biologist, Researcher
Author: *Toward A Mountain Caribou Management Strategy for British Columbia—Background Report* [published Oct 1997, Wildlife Branch, Ministry of Environment, Victoria, BC]
5232A Margaret Street
Port Alberni, BC V9Y 6J2

G.F. Hartman, Ph.D. Research Scientist, DFO, Ret.
1217 Rose Ann Drive
Nanaimo, BC, V9T 3Z4

Leslie Glover
Microbiology
Camosun College
Victoria, BC
V8P 5J2

Luce Paquin, BSc., MSc., RP.Bio.
Galena Environmental Consultants Ltd.
Upper Galena Farm Road
Silverton, BC
V0G 2B0

Dave M. Augeri, Ph.D.
Coordinator of Conservation Biology
Denver Zoological Foundation
2900 E. 23rd Ave
Denver, CO 80205

Moraia Grau López, M.Sc., RPBio
Environmental Consultant
PO Box 118
Silverton, B.C.
V0G 2B0

Dr. Stephen F. Stringham, PhD
Wildlife Biologist & Author
Director, Bear Viewing Association
President, WildWatch Consulting
39200 Alma Ave.
Soldotna, Alaska 99669

* Affiliations for identification purposes only.