

Valhalla Wilderness Society

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GOVERNMENT POLICY CONTINUES TO ENDANGER MOUNTAIN CARIBOU – THE SOLUTION

THE SELKIRK MOUNTAIN CARIBOU PARK PROPOSAL

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WEST KOOTENAYS, BC — The last remaining habitat for a herd of 100 endangered mountain caribou in the Central Selkirk Mountains is open for continued logging in the coming year. Although the provincial and federal governments are conducting a recovery process for the mountain caribou, they have done nothing to prevent another year of destruction that will take the animals' life support out from under them.

The Valhalla Wilderness Society has put the area on a map and proposed an end to further logging in it. The 251,016-hectare area, called the Selkirk Mountain Caribou Park Proposal, would connect the Goat Range Provincial Park and Glacier National Park. "So much of the Central Selkirk herd's habitat has been clearcut that what's left of it is very limited and identifiable," says Craig Pettitt, a director of the Society. "The government knows about it. Either they protect it or they're killing the most viable of the southern mountain caribou herds."

An extensive part of the area, north of Nakusp and west and north of the Goat Range Provincial Park, is already designated for 100% forest retention under the Kootenay-Boundary Higher Level Plan. But the area set aside is very high elevation forest that is largely worthless to the timber industry. "What's killing the caribou is that they're logging the low- and mid-elevation forest to shreds," says Pettitt. "This forest is essential to the survival of the mountain caribou."

"BC's Species at Risk Coordination Office (SaRKO) and its Mountain Caribou Science Team are proposing a substantial increase in habitat protection in the northern part of the mountain caribou range, but very little real change in the Central Selkirks," says Colleen McCrory, Executive Director of the Society. "Their solution is predominantly to shoot bears, wolverines, cougars, wolves, moose, and deer. When the logging companies come to log in the Westfall, in the Halfway River and other key mountain caribou areas this

year, we'll see that this recovery process is just killing our predators while it kills our caribou too. We are asking for an immediate moratorium on logging in this proposed park and habitat recovery area so its fate can be decided in a rational way rather than logging it under the false excuse that killing predators will save the caribou.”

The proposed new park would also protect endangered ecosystems such as ancient rainforest. It includes the upper Incomappleux Valley and some intact watersheds such as East Creek and Giegrich Creek. “We should be protecting endangered ecosystems because when they are lost, we lose many more species than just one,” says McCrory.

The Society is also proposing 152,207 hectares as Recovery Areas for the rehabilitation of mountain caribou habitat that has already been logged. “Rehabilitation of clearcuts and logging roads is essential as a non-lethal way to reduce predation on caribou,” says Pettitt. It could help to create new sustainable forest jobs by such methods as the naturalization of roads, and thinning and brushing of young forest.

“The new park proposal is the last opportunity in this area to capture some intact old-growth forest for wildlife and future generations,” says McCrory. “Despite heavy clearcutting in some areas, it still has 1,800-year-old trees, mountain caribou, and grizzlies. At a time when global warming is destabilizing our environment and beetles are killing all our pine forests, we need what little remains of our humid forests and rainforests, of our surviving species, to maintain what little ecosystem stability we can.”

See maps, colour photographs and a Fact Sheet on the Selkirk Mountain Caribou Park Proposal at <http://www.vws.org>.

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