

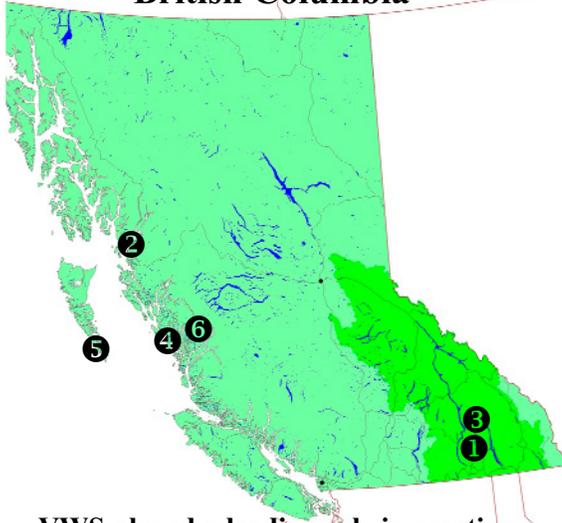
Large Carnivore Conservation by The Valhalla Wilderness Society

“Top carnivores ... are predestined by their perch at the apex of the food web to be big in size and sparse in numbers. They always live on such a small portion of life’s available energy as always to skirt the edge of extinction, and they are the first to suffer when the ecosystem around them starts to erode.”

Professor Edward.O. Wilson
The Diversity of Life



British Columbia



VWS played a leading role in creating:

- 1 Valhalla Provincial Park
- 2 Khutzeymateen Grizzly Sanctuary
- 3 Goat Range Provincial Park
- 4 Spirit Bear Conservancy
- 5 South Moresby National Park Reserve

VWS played a supporting role in creating:

- 6 Kitlope Reserve

Current Project Areas

- Inland Rainforest Region
- Work continuing on the mid-coast

Why protect large carnivores?

Areas that still retain their large carnivores are rare. Large carnivores need seclusion from humans. They survive only in the largest, wildest, most natural ecosystems left on Earth. To protect large carnivores, we must fully protect large areas, which protects hundreds or thousands of smaller species. The presence of top predators is an indicator of high biodiversity, not only because the area is large and wild, but also because top predators function to keep lower parts of the food chain in balance. They keep mid-sized predators in check, which enables many kinds of small wildlife that are prey to mid-sized predators, such as beavers and birds, to flourish. They limit the populations of hooved animals (ungulates) such as deer, elk, and moose, which maintains healthy plant communities and healthy herbivores.

Habitat protection is critical. The Valhalla Wilderness Society uses field knowledge, scientific studies and GIS mapping to locate high-value habitat. Its focus is mainly on grizzly and black bears, including the white phase of black bear, the Spirit Bear. However, wolverines, wolves and/or cougars, as well as many smaller carnivores, are often present as well.

In its 30-year history, VWS has fought hard for the protection of old-growth forest and coastal estuaries. By working to protect coastal bears, we helped to protect numerous salmon streams and extensive wetlands. In the Interior of BC VWS is now working with other grass roots groups to protect the old-growth forest that in turn protects salmon runs hundreds of kilometres inland. Here there is found some of the best bear habitat in BC.



New Spirit Bear Conservancy

On February 7, 2006 the BC government and First Nations increased protection from about 9 % to 28% on BC's Central-North Coast. Another 4-6% has been protected from logging but not from mining or tourism development. The protection includes about 100 large and small parks scattered over 6.4 million hectares of coast. The protected areas are most concentrated in the area of the Valhalla Wilderness Society's proposal for a Spirit Bear Sanctuary, and the Khutzeymateen Grizzly Sanctuary spearheaded by the Society and protected in 1993. Eighty percent of VWS's original Spirit Bear proposal has been protected, and the Khutzeymateen Sanctuary has been tripled from 44,400 hectares to 143,000 hectares.

White Grizzlies of the Goat Range Provincial Park

In 1994 the BC government announced creation of the Goat Range Provincial Park, proposed by the Valhalla Wilderness Society to protect a population of grizzly bears with a high percentage of "white" individuals. Their coloration is similar to that of a Siamese cat. Despite the efforts of VWS to include mountain caribou habitat to the west of the proposal, the government omitted this well-forested area from protection, although it did protect some forested valleys. Today the old-growth dependent mountain caribou is in danger of going extinct and VWS is carrying on a major campaign to increase protection of low- and mid-elevation inland temperate rainforest.



Inland Rainforest Conservation Area Design

As part of its campaign to protect rare old-growth Inland Temperate Rainforest, VWS commissioned a Conservation Area Design by Dr. Lance Craighead of the Craighead Environmental Research Institute. The design identifies core areas and travel corridors for five large carnivores —grey wolf, cougar, lynx, wolverine and grizzly bear — as well as mountain caribou and salmon, over a 14.3-million hectare project area. The analysis shows that 55% of the region must be protected to maintain all these species, and an additional 30% managed for biodiversity. VWS has been working with other environmental groups to identify priority areas for protection

Ecosystem protection on the coast and in the Interior of BC is far from adequate. VWS desperately needs new funding to continue these campaigns.

Valhalla Wilderness Society

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