

Valhalla Wilderness Society

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PRESS RELEASE

BC Plans An Escalation to its War on Wolves by adding Helicopters to its Arsenal

The BC government, under the cover of the current Olympic fun and games, has quietly presented an agenda for shooting wolves from helicopters. For several years now, BC has been killing wolves by trapping them throughout the Interior Wetbelt, to aid mountain caribou recovery.

“The proposed escalation by employing helicopters is an admission that the current wolf kill programs have been a failure,” says Craig Pettitt, a director of the Valhalla Wilderness Society (VWS). “Many scientific studies have shown that when wolves are killed, the packs disperse, the wolves spread over a larger area, resulting in more packs, more breeding pairs and higher birth rates. This seems to be exactly what is happening. Since the province started its wolf eradication plan in the Revelstoke area, wolf sightings and evidence of packs have increased dramatically in areas to the south of Revelstoke such as the Slocan and Lardeau Valleys. Researchers in Revelstoke have found that there was significant dispersal of the pack due to the hunting pressure.”

More and more wolves to kill means that the government is stooping to more and more inhumane methods of slaughter. “The wolves are subjected to terror, exhaustion from running, and finally they are shot. Shooting from a helicopter cannot be very accurate, so there will be suffering from all kinds of wounds,” says Pettitt.

The BC government has long refused to require any substantial modification of human activities to save the mountain caribou. Logging is the chief reason why the caribou are disappearing, yet in the new caribou recovery plan, the government protected only 0.66% of the Timber Harvesting Land Base, and even that can be logged under certain conditions.

Displacement by snowmobiles and helicopters used for heli-skiing plays a secondary role, driving the caribou from critical winter feeding grounds. “The recently announced snowmobile closure zones are too few and too small,” says Pettitt. “Wolves have no access to mountain caribou in winter unless snowmobiles pack down the snow. The government could create

substantial protection from wolves overnight by closing key areas that are heavily used by snowmobiles. Instead it prefers to slaughter the wolves.”

Last year the South Selkirk herd lost 3 animals or 7% of the herd due to motor vehicle collisions on Highway 3 over the Kootenay Pass. Recently MOT raised the speed limit from 90 k to 100 k and so far is reluctant to institute a reduced speed zone for the 7 k section that they know is frequented regularly by Mountain Caribou. It is paradoxical that something as simple as a speed zone gets minimal attention from the Ministry of Environment and the rest of the government, and yet these agencies will jump on board promoting heli-killing of wolves.

“The message from the government is clear,” says Pettitt. “No substantial reduction to our profits, pleasure or convenience to save mountain caribou — the wolves must die.” In addition, cougars are being killed by tracking them down with dogs and shooting them. The extermination of top predators such as wolves does immeasurable damage to ecosystems. Scientific studies have shown that the absence of top predators causes many small species to disappear. Elk and deer overgraze their habitat and die terrible deaths from starvation.

The government has allowed heli-skiing and heli-hiking in mountain caribou habitat. Now they are going to introduce us to heli-shooting as they continue their war on wolves. Why don't they just save themselves some more money and let the heli-skiers shoot the wolves? The root causes of the decline of mountain caribou will continue almost unabated. Instead we substitute a mass killing of predators to mollify the government and public conscience.

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