

Mountain Caribou Project- Conserving Caribou Across Borders

by Becky Phillips,
E&CC, NWPS

Unlike humans, wildlife knows no political boundaries. Eight organizations from Canada and the US have joined efforts to help reverse the steep decline of North America's most endangered large mammal, the Mountain Caribou. With fewer than 1700 of these animals remaining, the Mountain Caribou Project aims to raise the visibility of this species and its current threats.

Native to inland temperate rainforests, Mountain Caribou are dependent on the hair lichens growing in the trees present at higher elevations in this ecosystem. As winter progresses, these animals tend to move upslope where they can gain access to this important food source. The annual snowfall in this ecosystem is generally heavy which acts as an aid for the caribou. The deep snow pack allows the caribou to reach higher into the trees, giving them the vital assistance they need to reach the lichen dripping off the branches. This rare, important ecosystem extends south from Prince George into areas of Washington, Idaho and Montana on the west side of the Rocky and Columbia Mountains.

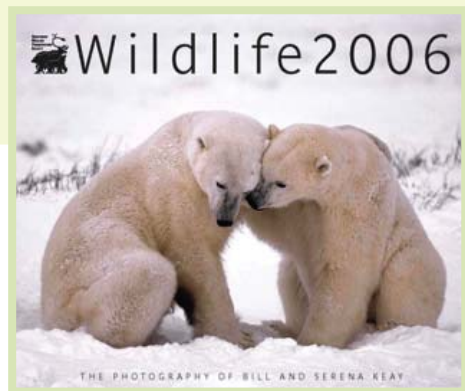
Dave Quinn, a Program Manager for Wildsight (a member organization of the Mountain Caribou Project) has been a voice for this endangered species for the past 10 years. Working as a wildlife biologist on the project for the past decade, Dave has realized the importance of educating the public about this beautiful animal and its threats. Numerous times over the years, Dave has 'hit the road' with lichen in hand, equipped with his essentials, a slide projector and a sleeping bag for couch surfing, to deliver a series of educational presentations on Mountain Caribou. From Canmore to Quesnel, Vancouver, Victoria and all over the Kootenays, these presentations have been instrumental in educating communities about the current threats to this species. Major threats include habitat fragmentation, motorized recreational activities, predation and genetic isolation.

It is important to have passionate folks like Dave in our communities to help increase our awareness about wildlife issues and it is equally important to have organizations working tirelessly to protect habitat for these species.

To find out where and when Dave will be delivering presentations in the future, please email daveq@wildsight.ca or check out the following websites:
www.mountaincaribou.org
www.wildsight.ca



Photo credit: Dave Neads



Our Wildly Popular Calendars & Cards are Available

NWPS is proud to announce our 2006 Wildlife Calendars are now available. Once again NWPS has teamed up with world renowned wildlife photographer's Bill and Serena Keay. Twelve beautiful photographs featuring different wildlife species from around Canada, accompanied by interesting facts, tell a story about Canada's magnificent natural world. To view the calendar layout, please visit www.northwestwildlife.com

If you are interested in supporting NWPS and our environmental education programs through the purchase of our 2006 Wildlife Calendar, please contact us through email info@northwestwildlife.com or call 604-713-6686. If you would like to become a distributor or use these calendars for your schools fundraising efforts, please contact 604-713-6698. Thank you for sharing our passion for wildlife.

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Edited By Becky Phillips

Contributors: Ivanka Cankovic, Sylvia Dobson, Becky Phillips. NWPS is a registered charity and non profit society. Our mandate is to develop and provide educational, research and advisory services that advance the public's awareness and knowledge of wildlife and wildlife habitat in northwest North America. In doing so, NWPS works to ensure that healthy wildlife systems throughout North America are preserved for their own intrinsic worth and for the appreciation of all. News and Views is intended to be a forum for discussion. Opinions of authors of articles contained herein are not necessarily the position of NWPS.



Northwest
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News & Views

Fall 2005

Tree Planting is for Hippies

by Katie Stewart,
Langara Rotaract Club, NWPS Volunteer

I was a bit worried when the idea came up again to do some tree planting in celebration of Earth Day (April 22). All I could think about was getting disgustingly muddy and dirty in the name of a few measly trees. It doesn't really appeal to me, you know? And last year I was really sneaky and was "busy".

But as soon as everyone came back, I knew I had missed out. In partnership with the Northwest Wildlife Preservation Society, the Langara Rotaract Club gathered 15 of their bravest friends and proved that tree planting isn't just for hippies after all. They worked hard and planted over 300 seedlings on an overused trail that was suffering from compaction and erosion.

So this year, I decided it was my turn to roll up my sleeves. Armed with shovels, hammers, wood, rebar and most importantly trees, we got to work. In only a few hours we added an elegant, 11-step spiral staircase to the trail. Others, afraid of the power of the hammer, broke into teams and planted seedlings in the trampled areas around the trail. We then lined the trail sides with large sticks to encourage hikers and their 4-legged friends to use the fabulous trail, preventing further erosion of the hillside.



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The whole event was so rewarding. You have to sweat sometimes to make this world a better place to live in. The best part about our project is that we can return to this trail, climb up the stairs that we, as a team, built and watch as our trees grow.

If you are interested in getting involved with NWPS, please contact info@northwestwildlife.com or phone (604) 713-6686. We have a wide variety of volunteer activities available which range from stewardship activities to environmental education to fundraising to office administration. Please come join us and help protect BC's wildlife and the environment.



This newsletter has been printed on recycled paper.

newsletter designed by Nicole Davies

Are you Bear Smart?

by Sylvia Dolson,
Executive Director, Get Bear Smart Society

Every year in British Columbia, an average of 950 black bear and 50 grizzly bear are killed as 'nuisance' or 'problem' bears. During bear season, that's an average of six bears destroyed each day. Most often, it's a case of a bear being in the wrong place at the wrong time. Bears are usually killed, not so much for what they do, as for what they might be capable of doing.

So, is there something we can do to reduce the numbers of bears destroyed in the province?

First of all, it is important to recognize the role that humans play in creating conflicts. For a long time, we viewed bears as the problem. People believed that some bears became problem bears. And since we had that belief, the answer appeared simple – remove those bears from the population and the 'problem' was solved.

Today, there is a much greater awareness of the fact that, in urban areas, people play a large role in creating human-bear conflicts by leaving attractants available. Bears are highly motivated to find food. They need to eat many calories in order to put on the weight needed to survive. So, more often than not, if they wander near an urban area and smell food, they're going to take advantage of the free meal. In fact, human food is very attractive to bears because it tends to be high in calories and because bears don't have to expend a lot of energy to get it. Can you imagine being a bear and coming across garbage day in the neighbourhood? It would be like an all-you-can-eat buffet at your favourite restaurant! Of course, you'd be back next week. At that price, who wouldn't be?

It's obvious that we can't change the motivation of bears. But we can change our own behaviour. By not leaving attractants available, if a bear wanders into the area, it will just keep on moving.

Besides controlling bear attractants, we need to recognize the real risk of bears. People have a tendency to get very excited about bears. There are many people who are afraid of having bears around



Photo credit: Get Bear Smart Society

– afraid for themselves, afraid for their children. And while there is some risk – after all, bears are large and powerful animals – it helps to keep it in perspective. Something unknown like bears tends to arouse much more fear and anxiety than many of the things that are actually risks in our lives. For example, car accidents kill 1,500 people a year in Canada. And stairs are dangerous: more than a million people a year in North America visit the hospital as a result of an accident on stairs. Compare that to something like lightning which only kills three people a year in Canada. Now recognize that you are much more likely to be killed by lightning than by a bear and you're starting to get perspective. Since they started keeping records, no bear has ever killed a person in the Lower Mainland.

Lastly, if a bear does come into your yard, you can let it know it's not welcome in human areas. While that may seem an unkind thing to do to a bear who isn't hurting anything, you might just save its life. So, if you see a bear, walk into the house, but then lean out a window and yell at the bear as though it's a bad dog or make noise such as banging pots – or even turn the garden hose on it. A bear that understands that it's not welcome in human territory is likely to head back to the woods much more quickly.

For more information on living with bears in your backyard or recreating in bear country, visit www.bearsmart.com.

Celebrate Earth Day - Wear a Green Ribbon



Each year the Green Ribbon Campaign continues to grow. In May, we wrapped up our 4th annual campaign with huge smiles on our faces. These smiles were an indication that we were very pleased with our accomplishments this year. The Green Ribbon Campaign aims to raise the visibility and profile of environmental issues in our community, as well as provide a means to support environmental education and stewardship programs and celebrate Earth Day! Each year we ask individuals to show their support of the environment by proudly wearing a green ribbon. During April, Earth month, Green Ribbons were distributed to over 200 locations with the help of NWPS staff and volunteers. We would like to thank the BC Liquor Distribution Board, Chevron Canada Ltd., IGA & IGA Marketplace, North Shore Credit Union as well as all of the locations that generously helped distribute our Green Ribbons in 2005. Thank you for your commitment to supporting the environment. If you would like to get involved in the Green Ribbon Campaign in 2006 as a sponsor, distributor or volunteer, please contact us at (604) 713-6686 or email info@greenribbon.ca for more information.



Photo credit: Get Bear Smart Society

Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?

by Ivanka Cankovic
Northern Lights Wolf Centre, NWPS partner

“Why Grandma, what big teeth you have!” – Little Red

“What one fears, one destroys” – Chief Dan George

Fairy Tales and Hollywood movies portray the wolf as a bloodthirsty, evil beast that indiscriminately preys on humans and livestock alike. This undeserved reputation has led to the extirpation of wolves from the majority of their former range – they are now endangered worldwide and survive in mostly northern locations where there are fewer people.

In reality, wolves are gentle, timid, and intelligent animals that instinctively fear humans. Wolves live in devoted family packs that work cooperatively to survive. They hunt for food (not sport), they cull prey herds in a healthy way, and they maintain the balance of the food chain. We should not fear wolves; rather, we should respect them as vital elements of their native ecosystems.

Have you ever wondered whether wolves really howl at the full moon? Or where the expressions “hungry like a wolf” and “wolfing down food” come from?

Northern Lights Wildlife Wolf Centre (NLW) is home to five captive-bred wolves who act as ambassadors for their wild cousins. Their 1.25-acre enclosure encompasses a dense forest, simulating a natural environment. A visit to the facility includes a 20-minute interpretive program that allows people to see wolves up close and, more importantly, to learn all about them. Watching a black wolf move like a ghost through the trees, seeing how wolves hollow out beds amongst the roots, learning where they have chosen to dig a den and why... By allowing the public to view wolves in a more natural environment, NLW promotes a greater understanding of the species.

The goal of an educational facility like NLW is similar to the Northwest Wildlife Preservation Society's mandate of “Preservation through Education”. Through public education, we can start changing people's attitudes about the Big Bad Wolf by addressing the myths, telling the truth, and encouraging people to put pressure on the Canadian government for conservation of this very valuable predator.

CONTACT INFO:
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Golden, BC
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1-877-377-WOLF



Photot credit: Northern Lights Wildlife Centre



Program Profile: Nature Walk & Workshop

Northwest Wildlife Preservation Society is excited to announce their new Nature Walk & Workshop Program, which provides children the opportunity to learn about the natural world while being surrounded by it! We are taking five of our Wildlife in the Schools programs to the outdoors where we feel students will gain a greater understanding and appreciation of the delicate balance of nature.

While participating in one of NWPS' Nature Walk & Workshop Programs, students will be exposed to a wealth of information about wildlife. During the walk, they will learn about the animals' habitat, food sources, predators and lifecycle. The workshop portion of the program allows students to explore the human impacts and threats to the species through games and activities.

A sense of ownership will also be obtained from this experience, as each of the five programs allows the students to work toward improving the local environment through stewardship activities such as cleanups, water-quality testing and owl and bat box building.

With the generous support from **BC Hydro, Business Objects, Nature Canada – Parks & People Program, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation and Vancouver Foundation**, NWPS continues to raise awareness of wildlife issues and how each of us can help to protect the spaces wildlife require for survival.

