

**The Northern Lights Wildlife Wolf Centre (NLW) would like to form a coalition for Canadian Wolves.**

**We need your help.**

By improving networking among researchers and activists, and by coming together as one unified group, we will have a powerful voice for wolves. This was accomplished for *Canis rufus* (*C. rufus*) in 2004 when buffer zones were established around Algonquin Park in Ontario, permanently banning the hunting, trapping and chasing of wolves around the Park. We need to do the same to protect wolves living in the National Parks of the Central Rockies, who often die once they step outside of park boundaries (Ellis, 2002).

*Canis lupus* (*C. lupus*) is an endangered species worldwide. In Canada, wolves are not protected outside of National Parks. Studies have shown us that these designated wilderness areas are not big enough to maintain a healthy population of wolves, and are too small to effectively conserve biodiversity (Natural Resources Canada, 2007).

The Central Rockies represents a unique ecological region of Canada, and Grey wolves (*C. lupus*) here have geographically distinct subpopulations, different from B.C.'s coastal wolves and Eastern Canada's red wolves (*C. rufus*). The Central Rocky Mountain Corridor, from Jasper National Park (Alberta) to Glacier National Park (Montana), is essential in maintaining a healthy gene flow in wolf populations between Canada and the United States.

We hope that forming a coalition of wolf advocates will help us to reach the goal of protecting the corridor. We need to pass legislation to perpetuate existing populations where they occur, as recommended by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) guidelines on wolf conservation, (Hummel & Pettigrew, 1991). NLW is appealing to federal Environment Minister John Baird to create Buffer Zones to protect wolves around the 7 National Parks in the Canadian Central Rocky Mountains.

In the past few decades, human use has intensified both within parks and just outside of these protected areas. Pressures from industrial, commercial, and recreational activities are compromising the ecological integrity of these 'wilderness areas', (CPAWS, 2007). Because of this, the IUCN Manifesto on Wolf Conservation states that the importance and status of wolves should be taken into account by legislation and in planning for the future of any region, (Hummel & Pettigrew, 1991).

A broad legislative tool governing buffer zones would enable us to properly manage the land use of areas adjacent to protected land. Incompatible land use has been ranked as the most serious threat to parks and protected areas by most Park jurisdictions across Canada, (Environment Canada, 2006). A World Wolf Congress held in 2003 agreed that 'co-operation between neighbouring jurisdiction is needed to ensure the survival of wolves in the central Rockies', (Alberta Wildlife Enhancement Society, 2003).

The buffer zone requested would be 200km, and would effectively:

1. ban the hunting, trapping, or chasing of wolves year round
2. restrict the use of motorized recreational vehicles (Banff National Park [BNP] has already asked the province of Alberta to limit access to motorized vehicles surrounding the Park, (Syme, 2003))
3. limit land use development to non-commercial and non resource extraction.

Biologists researching wolves on behalf of Parks Canada have recognized *C. lupus* as a keystone species, capable of causing a trophic cascade when populations dip below a critical threshold (Hurd, et al. 2002), (Hebblewhite, et al. 2005). As the number of grey wolves declines in the Central Rockies, a cascade effect is observed in which small mammals, fish, insects, birds, amphibians, ungulates, tree species and vegetation all suffer, (Hebblewhite, et al. 2005). Top predators, such as wolves, are vital in maintaining the balance of a healthy ecosystem.

- Biologists researching wolves in these National Parks recognize that the mostly alpine and sub alpine habitats within the park provide less than optimal conditions for wolves to establish territories, (Regional Perspectives on Ecosystem Indicators and Issues, 2002), (Kootenay National Park of Canada, 2008), (Parks Canada, 2006), and (Defenders of Wildlife, 2006).
- The wolf pack in Kootenay National Park (KNP) requires a territory of almost 3,000 km<sup>2</sup>, as only ¼ of the valley bottom is suitable for prey, (Kootenay National Park of Canada, 2008). Wolves collared in KNP travel as far as 250 km outside of Park boundaries, (Kootenay National Park of Canada, 2008).
- Yoho National Park (YNP) has identified that in order for wolves to be present in the area, the park must work with private landowners, local citizens and recreationists, (Parks Canada, 2006), quintessentially this will require the formation of buffer zones.
- Most packs that summer in protected areas winter at lower elevations in non-protected areas where the elk are, (Co-operation Called For To Save Wolves, 2003)
- Although wolves require an adequate prey base, the defining factor in wolf persistence is protection from humans, (*Regional Perspectives on Ecosystem Indicators and Issues*. 2002). Human use and access can be directly linked to wolf mortality rates and locations around the Parks, (Regional Perspectives on Ecosystem Indicators and Issues, 2002). Where prey abundance is low, human use becomes even more significant to adversely affect wolves. BNP has also recognized that wolf numbers reflect the level of human-caused mortality, (Parks Canada, 2004).
- In 2002 the Central Rockies Wolf Project indicated that out of 12 packs, 9 needed protection beyond the National Parks if ecological integrity were to be maintained without wolves being introduced from other regions, (Regional Perspectives on Ecosystem Indicators and Issues, 2002).
- Over a period of 4 years (winter 1999 – spring 2004), 13 adult wolves died within the boundaries of BNP, which greatly exceeds a sustainable rate of loss (Banff National Park of Canada, 2004).

- Biologists have recommended that human-caused mortality of wolves must be minimized to manage the decline of wolves in the area, (Dalman, 2002).
- The National Parks have stated “to have wolves inside the park, we need healthy wolf populations and accessible habitat outside the park”, (Parks Canada, 2004). This will not be possible in the future unless we take steps now.
- It has even been suggested that population restoration may be required (Dalman, 2002). We can prevent this from being necessary.

We wish to **prevent a trophic cascade within our Parks** by increasing the protected areas of *C. lupus*, (Hurd, et al. 2002), and (Ellis, 2002).

Seven National Parks (Banff, Yoho, Jasper, Kootenay, Mount Revelstoke, Glacier, Waterton) are **currently reviewing their Park Management Strategies**, and accepting input to help shape plan revisions (Parks Canada Newsletter, 2008). This provides an excellent opportunity to enlarge protected areas for wolves whose territories extend beyond the boundaries of these parks. Let’s work together!

Canada still has one of the healthiest wolf populations in the world. On a global basis, this provides us with a unique and vital conservation opportunity. “Canada has a chance to do something no other country has done: deliberately to conserve healthy wild populations of different types of wolves on one of the last landscapes still capable of supporting such a conservation goal”, (Hummel & Pettigrew, 1991). If we wait too long we will continue to lose biodiversity.

**Wilderness tourism can mean long-term financial benefits for our country.** For example, wolves’ reintroduced to the Greater Yellowstone area benefits the U.S. Northern Rockies’ economy to the tune of \$35-million tourist dollars annually (Defenders of Wildlife, 2006). By protecting large carnivores and intact ecosystems, we can attract millions of tourism dollars. “If we’re not saving top predators, we’re not saving true wilderness. And if we are not saving true wilderness, we will not save top predators” (Hummel & Pettigrew, 1991)

The World Wildlife Fund tells us ‘history has shown that, if deliberate efforts are not made to conserve large carnivores, they are doomed’, (Hummel & Pettigrew, 1991).

Ask yourselves as Canadians; “What has the rest of the world taught us about the fate of wolves? Are we taking steps to ensure the same thing does not happen to our top predators?”

We urge you to make this a priority in Canadian conservation. We are seeking organizations to join us in a Nation-wide wolf coalition to ensure a future for wolves in Canada. You can help by:

1. **Passing along our petitions and sample letters directed to political representatives, or creating your own.**
2. **Joining the Coalition for Canadian Wolves to combine ideas, resources, databases, research, knowledge, and contacts. From our website: [www.northernlightswildlife.com](http://www.northernlightswildlife.com) or directly: [www.canadianwolfcoalition.com](http://www.canadianwolfcoalition.com)**

#### KEY POINTS:

- The wolf population in many areas of Canada, like the Central Rocky Mountains, is one of the lowest densities of wolves in the world, and yet Canada supposedly has one of the highest populations left in the world
- Our protected areas are not big enough to maintain a healthy population of wolves
- The territory of wolf packs living in National Parks often extends OUTSIDE protected areas
- Human-caused mortality is the biggest threat to long-term health of wolf populations

Martin Luther King points out that by remaining silent, we allow others to prevail. Let us howl until the moon comes down, until we are heard!

Background information can be found at: <http://www.northernlightswildlife.com/bufferzones.html>

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