

Habitat destruction by tar sands leads to wolf cull

Birds I View

Bill Montevecchi



Timber wolf - top predator of the Canadian wilderness.
(photo: Fred Harrington)

The magnificent caribou populations that roamed the wild areas of northern Alberta and British Columbia are on an extinction course. The large, crushing and unforgiving footprint of the tar sands has decimated their habitat.

Government and university biologists are now focusing on the “recovery” strategy of the caribou. This “recovery” is an ecological fallacy, because nonhuman animals like humans cannot exist without the life support systems of their natural habitat and environment.

The tar sands destruction of habitat has driven populations of woodland caribou to dangerously low levels. So low in fact that that wolves may be preventing their “recovery”. So what is “solution”?

Cull the wolves. Kill the innocent predatory canids that still roam the northern Canadian wildlands. Destroy the wolves to allow some caribou to survive in the limited bits of habitat that we have not obliterated. We have to placate our hydrocarbon excesses and destruction of the earth.

Here closer to home, this approach is reminiscent of killing seals to save the cod which we decimated. We witnessed FPI and Nat Sea with government sanction and support annihilate the northern cod. The corporate barons “Rolls Royced” their ways through the tragedy. They were our heroes.

Economic myths

Focusing solely on the symptoms of a problem will not necessarily improve the prognosis or lead to a solution. Yet illusions driven by accelerating economic growth regimes support the myth that we can continue full speed ahead with development that destroys the environment by acting on the symptoms. In reality, we cannot have it both ways, we just think we can.

We are immersed in a world of economic delusion, distraction and blood-letting. The occupiers of Wall Street and elsewhere know this. And in the wilds of northern Alberta the sins of society fall on the wolves. The wolves are being poisoned, while corporate destruction and its government appeasement continue to denude the land and imperil its inhabitants.

Intact forests, pristine rivers and lakes, clean oceans are natural environmental support systems that sustain life and ecological integrity. Many aboriginal peoples understand this fundamentally. We just don't seem to get it, and at some point in time, we have to stop making excuses. We have to stop obscuring the obvious. We are the problem.

Things fall apart

First they came for the trees, and we prospered. Then they came for the land, and we lived well. Next they took the fishes and incorporated the forests and seas, but we enjoyed the good life, lived excessively and wasted and took more than we needed. Then they came for the clean pure water, the sustenance of life. We ignored it and imbibed chemically treated and bottled alternatives.

There is a better way. We need not to be a part of destructive processes. We do not have to support the progression. It will not be easy, but rather the best kind of extraordinary challenge. A truly Nelson Mandela type of effort will be required to move the processes that threaten and are overwhelming the web of life. Ecological life support systems are more valuable than excessive corporate profits.

Starting here

The toxic poisoning of Sandy Pond associated with the Vale smelter in Long Harbour is not a prerequisite for the development. Acceptance of this presumptuous and cavalier approach will impose long term social, economic and moral costs.

The Sandy Pond Alliance is working to save this pristine water body. The alliance does not oppose the development - just the preventable ruination of Sandy Pond and its ancient trout populations.

The work of the Sandy Pond Alliance is making a difference here in our province and throughout Canada. We are working for effective legislation that will make mining corporations responsible for the pollution that they produce.

Contrary to the rhetoric, Danny Williams' "no more give aways" government, approved the handover of Sandy Pond to the Brazilian mining corporation. It is not necessary to use Third World developmental strategies involving natural environmental giveaways to attract and support development or to fuel unfettered profit. There can be development without destruction. If not, we lock into a progression of unsustainable destruction that will be its own undoing. The gluttonous snake will devour itself from the tail up.

The first step is the most important one. Consider the real value of clean water, unique animal populations. Mother Nature created Sandy Pond – a 10,000 year old ancient aquatic ecosystem. The government gave it away. We're taking it back.

Join us – the Sandy Pond Alliance (sandypondalliance.org). You'll feel good. Mother Nature will smile on you, and you can be part of the solution. Resolve.

Birds in the area and around the province

Janet McNaughton was struck while watching the strong and sustained diving by black ducks near the bridge where the Rennies River flows into Quidi Vidi Lake. Like Janet, I too am often taken aback to see these dabbling ducks using a diving duck tactic.

Off the Battery, Chantelle Burke watched a bald eagle harassing a beleaguered double-crested. Each time the cormorant attempted to surface, the eagle swooped down preventing the cormorant from surfacing. After a while the eagle turned its attention elsewhere, a fortunate twist of fate for the hyper-ventilating, hyper-vigilant and terrified cormorant,.

On Saturday March 3, Gene Herzberg photographed a juvenile bald eagle at Quidi Vidi with a piece of monofilament gillnet in its beak and wrapped about its head. Unless the young eagle can somehow sever or remove this line, it will likely die a long slow death. We should keep a lookout for the young imperiled eagle at the lake.

Large flocks of robins have been in the Bonavista area and elsewhere (Jon Joy). Flocks of eiders, mergansers and long-tailed ducks are being pushed near shore by the massive fields of Arctic pack ice is rapidly closing around the northeast coast.

The first and so far only pine siskins of the year appeared at our feeder in mid-February. Large noisy flocks of purple finches and American goldfinches were feasting on shriveled fermented dogberries on the MUN campus in early March.

Keep looking.

Contacts – mont@mun.ca, 864-7673 (w), 895-2901 (h)