



## Newly released figures reveal number of wolves killed in B.C. approaches entire wolf population estimate

*Over 10 million B.C. tax dollars now spent on aerial killing in less than a decade*

### **For immediate release**

**Victoria, B.C., (May 9, 2024)** - In the wake of newly released kill figures revealing the alarming death toll of wolves in British Columbia (B.C.) Pacific Wild is strongly urging the Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship to halt the inhumane and scientifically controversial predator reduction program immediately.

The B.C. government's large-scale predator reduction program, purportedly aimed at restoring endangered caribou populations, has raised significant concern among conservationists due to its unsustainable and inhumane methods, including aerial shooting and the deployment of "Judas" wolves. **Pacific Wild has learned that between December 2023 and March 2024, the B.C. government has killed 248 wolves and 6 cougars, bringing the total number of wolves culled by helicopter in the last 9 years to 2,192.** However, the true numbers of wolves killed each year in B.C. remain unknown because in addition to the government-funded cull, countless wolves are legally killed by hunters and trappers with no mandatory reporting in effect and in many cases no bag limits.

*"Since 2015, when the B.C. government ramped up its war on wolves, at least 8,084 wolves have been killed by hunters and government contractors combined," stated Mollie Cameron, Pacific Wild's wildlife specialist. "This is close to the government estimate of 8,500 wolves for the entire province. This is not a management or a control program. This is regional-scale extermination of one of the planet's most intelligent and highly social land mammals."*

A recently released federal and provincial government-funded study has reignited the debate over predator reduction efforts in B.C. amidst mounting opposition to the government's ongoing wolf culling program. The study titled: [Effectiveness of population-based recovery actions for threatened southern mountain caribou](#), points to the widespread and continued killing of wolves as a successful management tool for caribou recovery.

*"Quite simply, B.C., Alberta and the federal government are desperate to justify their ongoing wolf killing agenda in order to increase their oil and gas, clearcut logging and other industrial intrusions into critical caribou habitat, all contributors to climate change in their own right." Said Ian McAllister, co-founder of Pacific Wild. "The other option would be to actually protect critical habitat and begin substantive restoration efforts in compromised habitat, a step that the oil and gas and timber companies simply won't allow."*

The B.C. government has now invested over 10 million taxpayer dollars into the aerial culling of wolves since 2015 ostensibly to save caribou, meanwhile [subsidising the logging](#), oil and gas and other industries with hundreds of millions of tax dollars.

*"Incredibly, at the same time that wolves are being scapegoated for the collapse of caribou herds the B.C. government is still allowing caribou to be hunted in two regions of the province. This past season 110 wolves were culled by the*

*government in regions where up to 255 caribou tags are being issued to hunters," states Mollie Cameron. "Since the wolf cull began in 2015, an estimated 851 caribou have been killed by hunters in the province; this does not include First Nations right to sustenance hunting".*

Pacific Wild is calling on the provincial government to take urgent action and end the wolf cull before wolves too become a species at risk that requires recovery efforts as they are in many states south of the border. The organisation further emphasised that the province needs to implement an immediate halt to industrial activities in critical caribou habitat and conduct meaningful restoration efforts.

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### **About:**

[Pacific Wild](#) is a Canadian charity dedicated to wildlife conservation throughout the Pacific Northwest.

### **Background:**

Between 2015-2022 it's estimated that hunters have killed an additional 5,892 wolves in regions where wolf culling is also taking place, according to the B.C government's [Hunter Sample Survey Estimates](#). The most recent provincial estimates of wolf numbers were done in 1979 and 1991. Here, it was surmised that there are approximately 8,500 grey wolves inhabiting the province. Over the last nine years approximately 8,084 wolves have been recorded as killed in B.C..

Provincial wolf culling takes place between the months of December and March mostly by helicopters with aerial hunters following GPS collared wolves. These wolves are known as "Judas" wolves as they reveal the location of their pack or extended family.

British Columbia does not require the purchase of a species licence for hunting wolves and the existing hunting and trapping regulations only mandate compulsory reporting for wolves harvested in Region 1 (Vancouver Island) and Region 2 (Lower Mainland). The majority of the nine hunting regions in B.C. have no limit for wolves that can be killed, nor do they require data collection by hunters and trappers as a condition of licence. Harvest estimates conducted through random selection surveys are likely an underestimate of how many wolves are killed each year.

In addition to the number of wolves killed in B.C. by the province through the caribou recovery program, the government is still issuing up to 255 Limited Entry Hunt (LEH) tags to hunt caribou in two regions of the province; Region 6 (Skeena) and Region 7A (Omineca). 244 of those tags are tentatively authorised within a management unit (MU) that overlaps the Spatsizi herd, a population of caribou that has not had an estimate completed since 1996. This past season 110 wolves were killed as part of the provincial wolf cull in Regions 6 and 7A. Since the wolf cull began in 2015, an estimated 851 caribou have been killed by hunters throughout multiple regions, this does not include First Nations subsistence harvest.

A recent study titled: [Effectiveness of population-based recovery actions for threatened southern mountain caribou](#), supports that predator reduction is necessary for caribou recovery, though there are concerns with this publication being biased as it is government funded. There is no issue with the analysis of the data, however it was conducted using population estimates that are questionable, since some herds have not been surveyed since the 1990's. Certain caribou herds are studied more intently while others do not receive the same investment, there is a lack of consistency that subsequently results in an unreliability of this information. The publication avoids acknowledging the lack of existing habitat and where this habitat will come from in the future; it's unrealistic to assume we are capable of replicating old growth forests that provide sustenance needed to support self-sustaining caribou herds. This study portrays predator reduction to be a short term measure, however the initiative just concluded its ninth consecutive year and the Caribou Recovery Program has reported that this will remain ongoing for decades to come. In the comparison between different recovery actions analysed in this recent publication, [movement management researched by Jonah Keim](#) was not included, however his research showed that immediate, non-lethal ways to manage predation on caribou exist. Findings showed that by deploying obstacles to disrupt ease of movement on human developments, wolf-caribou encounters were reduced by 85% and black bear-caribou encounters by 60%. Moreover, treating less than 40% of linear developments was enough to achieve this effect for wolves. This approach provides an immediate benefit to vulnerable prey and a cost-effective alternative to predator removals or awaiting long-term habitat restoration..

#### **Resources:**

Hunter Sample Survey Estimates:

<https://catalogue.data.gov.bc.ca/dataset/hunter-sample-survey-estimates-1976-to-current>

Hunting and Trapping Synopsis:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/sports-recreation-arts-and-culture/outdoor-recreation/fishing-and-hunting/hunting/regulations/2022-2024/hunting-trapping-synopsis.pdf>

Caribou Recovery Program:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/wildlife/wildlife-conservation/caribou/management-activities>

Pacific Wild - Caribou Wolves

<https://pacificwild.org/campaign/do-you-caribou-wolves/>

Leaked MOF Old Growth mapping data

[Secret Map Shows BC Playing a Shell Game with Old Growth | The Tyee](#)