

# CA BC: Valley biologist condemns wolf cull

by Jessica Schwitek – Golden Star

Is it right to kill one species to save another?

The upcoming government-sanctioned wolf cull implies that the answer to that philosophical question is yes. But there are activists around the province and country who say that the government's plan to save herds of caribou (one in the South Selkirks and four in the South Peace area) is not only barbaric and wrong, but will not solve the problem.

"I've been following this issue for a very long time," said Brad Hill, biologist and wildlife photographer who was in Golden for a presentation on the current issue last week. "I'll be upfront. I do have a bias. I am a wolf advocate."

The presentation was organized by the Wolf Awareness Inc. and its director, Golden's Sadie Parr. For the roughly 25 people in attendance, it provided extensive scientific background on the issue, as well as some political and ethical discussion.

The government is trying to protect a certain herd of caribou in the South Selkirks that is unique. The herd has dwindled down to less than 30, and even though wolves are listed as their fourth most significant predator (killing an estimated six per cent of caribou in the area), they are shouldering the blame for the decline.

Ethical issues aside, Hill argues that given the size of the herd it is actually too late to save them.

"With a herd that size, with likely only six or seven reproducing females, their survival is dependant on too many other factors. One avalanche could wipe them out," he said.

Caribou are not an endangered species. But certain subspecies, or ecotypes, are. And if this South Selkirk herd, who has unique behaviours and eating habits, dies out, then that ecotype will be lost.

"What it really comes down to is what species we decide are worth saving," said Hill.

Even though bears and cougars are both more prominent predators for the caribou, it would be socially unacceptable to systematically kill them, the way they plan to do with wolves.

"In my opinion, the government knows that this herd probably can't be saved. But this is a way, a relatively inexpensive way, to make it look like they're trying to do something," said Hill.

Prior to the B.C. Wolf Management Plan being released, the government underwent a three-week public consultation period. During that time it received overwhelming opposition, which Hill and Parr say was completely ignored.

It appears they will move forward with the wolf cull, which will consist of wolves being shot by automatic weapons from a helicopter, and will continue to do so for the next five years.

There is a petition out to stop the cull, which currently has nearly 180,000 signatures on it. To learn more about the plan, go to [wolfawarenessinc.org](http://wolfawarenessinc.org), or visit [www.env.gov.bc.ca/fw/wildlife/management-issues/docs/grey\\_wolf\\_management\\_plan.pdf](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/fw/wildlife/management-issues/docs/grey_wolf_management_plan.pdf).