

06 Mar 2008 - Edmonton Journal - page 1

U of A study will kill, sterilize wolves

Move to benefit elk hunters 'reprehensible,' zoologist charges

CATHY ELLIS
Special to *Calgary Herald*
BANFF

A controversial University of Alberta experiment to shoot wolf pups and sterilize their parents — so more elk are left for hunters — is being met with howls of protest from conservationists, scientists and Parks Canada.

The experiment in the area near Rocky Mountain House, about 200 kilometres

southwest of Edmonton, is intended to cut wolf packs down to two or three individuals each.

The U of A project, which is endorsed by the Alberta government, involves sterilizing the alpha male and female and destroying other wolves in the pack.

The researchers have issued an academic pamphlet saying that the goal of the wolf management experiment is to balance the continued survival and persistence of wolves with ungu-

late hunting.

"That's one of the objectives, it's not the only objective," said Evelyn Merrill, a professor in the U of A's department of biological sciences.

Merrill said the wolf management technique could be used to bolster elk numbers for hunters or to boost the numbers of other prey animals such as caribou in order to restore endangered populations to healthy levels.

See WOLVES / A2



IN LIGHTS WILDLIFE WOLF CENTRE, FILE
ta government endorses
on curbing wolf numbers.



Mainly sunny.
High 2, Low -3
Details / D8

- A/News, Body
- & Health, Opinion
- B/CityPlus
- C/Sports
- D/Culture
- E/At Home, Classified
- F/Business
- G/RV Showcase
- Births B6
- Bridge E2
- Classified E4
- Cornets B4
- Crossword E2
- Horoscope E6
- Lotteries A2
- Obituaries
- Opinion
- Puzzles
- Television
- Venting
- Wonderword
- THE JOURNAL
- Telephones

edmontonjournal.com
canada



3				
		8	1	
				9

© 2008 Knight Features

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★☆

Block solution E4 / Mind Games E2

Series for March 5

9: 17, 20, 33, 35, 37, 40 Bonus: 25
 1/49: 14, 22, 27, 28, 37, 48 Bonus: 10
 Pick 3: 691 Extra: 3359931
 In the event of a discrepancy, however, this is the official numbers list. The latest shall prevail.

HOW TO CALL US

access to our digital newspaper. If you have a delivery problem with your newspaper this provides you with access to the newspaper in an electronic format. Register at www.edmontonjournal.com/digital

- ▶ If you have a comment about today's paper, call the Reader Response Line 429-5225
- ▶ Call the city desk with your news tip 429-5200
- ▶ Contact the photo desk 429-5390
- ▶ To order a reprint of a photo, story or page, call JournalSearch 429-5580
- ▶ Main switchboard 429-5100
- ▶ Advertising 429-5400

seven-day print so have free

renewal accomplished by re- merger.
 Lancelotti and is during his party's aspirations in the province, but dheaton@thejournal.canwest.com changes would be now."

Researchers feel wolves will remain, but without shrinking elk numbers

WOLVES

Continued from A1

"What we expect to happen is that territorial behaviour will be maintained, but when you only have a few animals in the pack, the predation pressure on the food source is reduced," Merrill said.

"We feel our approach is one which maintains wolves in the landscape without hurting the population."

The idea is that keeping wolf packs small allows the sterilized alpha pair to defend its territories, while letting more elk live. If it works, the Alberta government would consider using this method to control wolf numbers.

But author and zoologist Paul Paquet, an expert on wolf research, called the experiment "destructive and morally reprehensible."

Paquet said it's difficult to label this as legitimate research, particularly because these are already disturbed wolf packs subject to hunting and trapping.

"I think we are long past killing animals to benefit small groups of people who want to take pleasure in hunting and trapping," Paquet said. "This type of research does not belong in a university ecology and biology department. This is 1950s wolf management that has been updated to include sterilization."

The university says the goal is to balance the continued survival of wolves with ungulate

● This type of research does not belong in a university ecology and biology department. This is 1950s wolf management that has been updated to include sterilization. ●

Author and zoologist Paul Paquet, an expert on wolf research

hunting by humans.

Early research in the Clearwater forest region shows wolf pack densities are high, ranging from 19.7 wolves per 1,000 square kilometres in the foothills to five wolves over the same distance in the mountains.

"Populations are always in fluctuation, and we're always looking at different opportunities and ways to manage all wildlife on the landscape," said Darcy Whiteside, a spokesman for Alberta Sustainable Resource Development.

Parks Canada has voiced its opposition to any wolf control to increase elk densities, saying predator control in the 1960s created unnaturally high prey densities and problems that are still prevalent.

In particular, they have concerns about two wolf packs whose territories straddle both provincial and federal lands, including a pack near Saskatchewan River Crossing between

Banff and Jasper.

Jim Pissot, executive director of Cammore-based Defenders of Wildlife Canada, said this appears to be another "bone-headed wolf cull poorly disguised as research."

He said wolves typically take down weaker cows and calves, while humans take out the strongest and best-adapted animals in the elk herd: bulls.

"There's certainly an ethical and moral dimension of murdering all pups and sub-adults in a pack, sterilizing the alpha pair and sitting back to see what happens," Pissot said.

"Elk-wolf interaction is a natural ecological process, and except for extraordinary circumstances, nature should be left alone. This appears to be agricultural management of wildlife under the guise of a research project."

The Alberta Fish and Game Association supports the experiment.

"Our ungulate herds have really been taking a beating from the size and number of wolf packs we have," said Maurice Nadeau, the group's president.

"The balance between wolves and ungulates at the moment is obviously upset."

The five-year wolf experiment involves sterilizing the alpha wolves and killing the pups and other individuals next year.

Cathy Ellis is a reporter for the Rocky Mountain Outlook. [Canwest News Service](http://CanwestNewsService)

Exclusive offer only available at

DIGITAL
 COMMUNICATIONS

WEST EDM MALL
 5211 Westpark Drive, 117-2250
 Phone 1-866-1-758
 Phone 2-462-8859
 Phone 3-462-2040

ST ALBERT
 470 St. Albert Road, 100-1060
 SHERWOOD PARK
 415-2021 H. Stove
 117-2250

GATEWAY
 6631 Gateway Blvd
 415-2250

WESTGROVE

UNLIMITED INCOMING CALLS