

Unusual Bedfellows: Science, Commerce, and Advocacy Working Together to Conserve Mountain Caribou Habitat

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The Mountain Caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*) is listed as threatened by COSEWIC and endangered in the US with population numbers ranging around 1800 animals. Most of the species now occurs in British Columbia in a much reduced and fragmented habitat range. A major factor in the continued decline in the species is the loss of key early and late winter old growth forest habitat due to logging, road building and motorized recreation (such as snowmobiling and heliskiing). The Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society has been developing stewardship agreements and conservation strategies with private landowners in the West Kootenays. One goal of these partnerships is to secure remaining core habitat for the South Selkirk Herd, which has a transboundary range into northern Idaho. CPAWS is also working with private landowners at the International Mountain Caribou Technical Committee and the South Kootenay Mountain Caribou Recovery Implementation Group to identify critical habitat and better inform habitat conservation efforts on private lands. Given the significant amount of private lands in the range of the South Selkirk herd, our work with private landowners is key to reversing the decline in population. We will describe the progress of our work with private landowners and other partners highlighting the challenges, successes and lessons learned.