



How Governments are Failing Caribou

Janet Sumner: 0:00

Welcome to *The Clear Cut*. Hi, I'm Janet Sumner, Executive Director at Wildlands League.

Kaya Adleman: 0:08

And I'm Kaya Adleman, Carbon Manager at Wildlands League.

Janet Sumner: 0:14

Wildlands League is a Canadian conservation organization working on protecting the natural world.

Kaya Adleman: 0:21

The Clear Cut is bringing to you the much needed conversation on Canadian forest management and how we can better protect one of Canada's most important ecosystems, as our forests are reaching a tipping point.

Janet Sumner: 0:41

So good afternoon to you, Kaya. It's been over a week since we had our interview with Anna and I've had a few travels between now and then, so we're going to introduce the episode and give people a little bit of a connection to the last episode that we did For the last couple of episodes. We were talking to Justine Array, the head of WCS, the Wildlife Conservation Society, Canada, and also an expert in caribou conservation, and she was reminding us of the Federal Species at Risk Act, which requires the protection of critical habitat, and that caribou habitat has been defined as more than 65% needs to be undisturbed and only a maximum of 35% disturbance. And even at that number, the science says that it's a 60% probability of persistence, or, if you flip that around, the more dangerous is, it's a 40% probability of the caribou not surviving or not remaining in



that area and being locally extirpated. So that's kind of a chilling fact that she left us with, and now we're moving into the caribou policy.

Kaya Adleman: 1:57

Right. So we heard the science and if you haven't yet listened to those two episodes, they're a really good precursor to the conversation that we had with Anna, so highly recommend that you check that out and then come back and check back in with us. Yeah, so I think it's important to see how all of that information that we have about caribou as a species on the biological side translates into the policy side and I think, as you'll find out, as a precursor, we have some laws in place that don't do a very good job at reflecting what the science says.

Janet Sumner: 2:37

No, especially when you exempt industries from those laws that are supposed to be an implementation of that federal science. The other thing that I like about this episode is you're going to hear some fun facts about the formative careers of Kaya and Anna, so we get into that a little bit, which is kind of fun. It's nice to know a little bit about the people that are working on these issues and their very real career trajectories and where they are today.

Kaya Adleman: 3:07

Yeah, some Anna and Kaya lore if you will.

Janet Sumner: 3:10

Yes, absolutely, Kaya. You and I have been doing this podcast for I don't know several months now. We started in September and we started thinking about it probably in August. We've been putting this together and the entire concept for this was that it was going to be both you and I talking about these issues, and I said one of the important



things for me was to have you on the podcast with me, because I've got lots of miles underneath me and a long time on these issues.

Janet Sumner: 3:46

But you're new to these issues and you're young and you've got your life and your career ahead of you and I mean, you're another generation from me and are several generations from me and just being able to bring your youth and energy into this, and I'm hoping that this new feature that we have will actually bring all the generations out and engage them to be on our podcast. Can you tell us a little bit about what we're adding to the podcast?

Kaya Adleman: 4:15

Yes, so we're actually discussing ways in which we could make this podcast more accessible and interactive for all of our listeners, whatever generation or age you may fall into. We realized that there might be some things that we talk about on here that you might have questions about, or things that you would like to have answered from an expert on these issues. So we've introduced this feature to our podcast. It's called Speak Pipe. It's up on our website. You can go to our website, www.wildlandsleague.org/theclearcut and there is a button on there that will allow you to access the feature and you can record your voice and ask a question or have a comment or say whatever you want to say, and you can have the chance to be featured on the clear cut podcast, which is very, very exciting. We've had the chance to beta test this feature with some people, so you might hear some of that sprinkled into this episode. So stay tuned and if you like what you hear or if you feel that in the future you have a question that comes up, you know, go to our website, record your question or comment and, you know, have a chance to be on the podcast. Yeah, tell us what you think of some of the topics we've talked about.

Janet Sumner: 5:40

Let us know. If there's something we should be explaining a little bit better or you have a different opinion about, we'd love to hear those. We'd also like to hear if you have an



issue that we think we should feature on the podcast, or perhaps you've got somebody that you'd really like us to interview and we'd like to have that conversation as well. So if you're listening in on the podcast, we'd love to hear from you. Let us know. We think it's going to add a new dynamic. This will have the interviews, as we always do, but we'd love to hear the voices across the country and, in fact, from all the six continents that we are now broadcasting to, because we've got six continents that have now downloaded the podcast and we'd love to hear your questions.

Janet Sumner: 6:22

Maybe you have just even a question about Canada's forests or things like that, and if Kaya and I can't answer it, then we'll try to find an expert that can, and we're going to try and feature answers to the questions on each of the forthcoming podcasts as we roll. So thanks very much for sending those in, and if you do go to the website, www.wildlandsleague.org/theclearcut You'll see on the right hand side there's actually like a little button or kind of something that points out and you get to record your voice. And that's the other great thing is we actually get to hear you ask the question, so this will be terrific. Thanks very much for adding to the quality of the podcast that we're doing.

Kaya Adleman: 7:07

Yeah, and for adding to the conversation, thank you.

Janet Sumner: 7:10

Yeah, looking forward to it.

So today we are very pleased to have Anna Baggio, who is the conservation director for Wildlands League, with us, and we're going to be talking about care of policy. But and this is where I want Anna to tell us all of the great things about Anna, because I know she's a terrific human being and people are going to just love her- I'm very excited that we finally got Anna on the podcast. I know it's good, isn't it?



Kaya Adleman: 7:44

Yeah, yeah, everyone's in for a treat.

Janet Sumner: 7:46

I know, I know, and we've encouraged Anna to speak her mind and prod us and we may be in for a rough ride. I don't know, kai, we might have to use a team to keep this under control.

Janet Sumner: 7:59

But we'll see, we'll see where it goes. And I'll just say for everybody I've known Anna for 20 years, so more than 20 years now. So it's been a very beautiful relationship and at least on my part I may be feeling otherwise, but for me it's been a beautiful relationship of co-creation and making a difference in the world. So, Anna, maybe you can give the audience a little bit about who you are and some background on you.

Anna Baggio: 8:26

Well, thanks Janet, and thanks Kaya, and right back at you, Sumner. It's been a hell of a ride and hopefully you'll have a few more turns. Yeah, so you know it's been a great privilege to work at Wildlands League. I've been here now, for I think this is year 23 for me and, yeah, it's a bit of a yeah, wow, quite a long time, but I love the work and I love the people and I really care about our planet and I care about our environment. And what really gets my juices going is and sometimes people might be like, where does she get this fire from? Or this desire to and I have to give a lot of credit to my mother. I have an Irish mother Her name is Bernadette and you know she's got a really strong sense of justice and she's passed it on to me and what I did is I she's a retired nurse Irish mother really cares about her family, cares about the planet, cares about people and really shaped me as a person, and so I thank her for that and also so what I've done and kind of how I've developed my career, is just take that justice, that strong sense of justice, and



apply it to the environment and apply it to doing right by people and Indigenous peoples too. So you know, I have an undergraduate degree in biology from McMaster University. So I do, I am trained in science. It helps a lot in the work that we do to have that background. Funny enough, I thought I was going to be a doctor. You know, I went into biology and I thought I was going to do, you know, focus on anatomy and physiology and those kinds of courses and they kind of weren't for me and I had.

Anna Baggio: 10:13

One really important experience was I was working at a national park in Georgian Bay, Georgian Bay Islands National Park. It's a beautiful area, small islands, but in a very busy landscape. The bay is very busy and I was tracking turtles and they asked me to track the spotted turtle in the early 90s and back then it was considered special concern in terms of its ranking, of whether or not it's how in trouble it was. But not a lot of other turtles were on the list. There was some, but you know it wasn't as dire as the situation is today and I was asked to track these turtles on another island. So I would spend every day, get into a boat and track the turtles. I became known as turtle girl I had people calling me all over the bays wanting me to go, move, move turtles, see turtles, look at snakes, look at Massa Sagrada snakes. And I also want to give a shout out to the wardens at the national park because they really taught me how to talk to people outside park boundaries and how to be respectful of cottage owners and also, like, really open my eyes to what does it mean? Our parks aren't big enough and so you have to work with neighboring landowners, and so that, for me, was a. They taught me so much. I was, I just and they and they did a wonderful job of speaking to those land, those neighboring landowners, and yeah. So I was the turtle girl for two years in my early university years and just really formed me and and and helped shape me into the, into part of the person I was and got me going and yeah.

Anna Baggio: 11:47

So, after I spent a couple of summers tracking turtles, one time I had this anatomy class and it was at McMaster and you know it was very. There was only about 15 or 16 students could get into this anatomy class and I just finished the summer being, you



know, looking like, holding up turtles and being like look how amazing they are and getting at cottagers and kids to learn about their education. Anyways, I go into this anatomy class and it's all about learning about the functions of the body. And one week we show up and there are anise ties, turtles, on the lab desks for all of us to manipulate. And at that point I don't think I fully appreciated, like, what was going on in this anatomy class. I thought at that, I thought I was going to be a doctor and I thought I was going to, like learn about the body, and but I show up in this class and all of a sudden there are turtles. They're on their backs and they're we've cut out the. Someone's cut out the shells. The plastron is the lower shell of a turtle. They've cut that. We're going to take that off. We're going to splash water on the heart and we're going to learn about the cardiovascular system of these turtles.

Anna Baggio: 12:51

And I was horrified. In that moment my whole world's came crashing down on my heads and I'm like what am I doing and why am I here? And I went green and my TA said to me Anna, do you really? Are you okay? And at that point I'm like I just have to power through this. And I did. But I gave up medicine right from that moment on and I realized that I loved ecology more than I loved anatomy. And that's one of the early experiences for me was just that horrific feeling of manipulating turtles on the on the bench of a McMaster lab. Yeah, I did. I did a masters at environmental studies at York university. Fabulous program gives you a lot of leeway to um, let's, let's just pause there.

Janet Sumner: 13:32

I just I just want to say that was a life altering experience, right Like that, that, all the course of your life, the thing about the turtles being on the lab, the bench of the of the absolutely like.

Anna Baggio: 13:45

You can't imagine how shocking it is to like have spent your whole summer and for those summers back then were four months right, cause you're in between your university

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years like learning about the turtles, wanting people to care about turtles, cause they were being also run over. So I had a small project about like counting the number of turtles that I could see on the road that were run over on my weight and to and from work. It was just it just kind of like shook me and made me ill and but at the same time I was like I have to finish this course. And it was. And then I was like, yeah, I got to finish this course. I'm like, okay, I'll finish the course, but I'm never doing that again.

Janet Sumner: 14:23

It's not like a you mean between your heart and your head.

Anna Baggio: 14:28

It is definitely a crisis and in the moment, and when you're young, you're, you're kind of thinking you have to plow through on maybe an older and I might have a different response, but a younger and I was like I think I've got to just keep going and then, you know, do the reckoning after.

Janet Sumner: 14:46

I can kind of imagine what the older Anna might do. There might have been a protest or two, or something would have happened at the university. I wanted to look at the endangered species status of those turtles. What are you doing? Yeah, and, and you know I did.

Anna Baggio: 15:04

I did. I did find my home in fourth year. I did some. I did an ecology project and I got to look at how much pesticide use was happening on the grounds at the university. So I made it my point to go talk to the grounds people and interview them and learn and they were all great, they were all forthcoming and that was awesome. Knocked that one out of the park and didn't, didn't feel like I was sacrificing my values and and help just kind of kind of springboarded me to the next, the next stage.



Janet Sumner: 15:36

I'm going to go back to you, but I just want to reflect on that, because one of the reasons that Kaya is working with us is she did a university project that I found interesting. Do you want to mention what that was?

Kaya Adleman: 15:47

Yeah, um, so I did an honors thesis at McGill uh, which is my undergraduate degree in environment and development. Um, and it's actually interesting, I was working at this um health nonprofit uh over COVID. That was kind of like my summer internship and it turned into a longer uh internship that I did throughout that whole COVID year of university where everything was online and it's actually so. My supervisor um at this organization she was actually an animal rights attorney. That was her background and so she was in this evidence-based medicine organization. Um, that was really interested in also looking at the director, was interested in looking at the links between dietary patterns and their environmental footprints, so that was kind of like her interest and that was kind of the project that we were working on with a bunch of other um doctors and uh nutrition researchers. So then kind of the research that I was doing there on the side uh for this kind of overall project.

Kaya Adleman: 17:01

Um, we were looking at subsidies and uh government subsidies in the US that were going towards different uh uh agricultural producers, food producers. How much money is going towards um agricultural production in the US? It was interesting because I would sit in these comment meetings from all these different organizations would come to a government meeting about what should the government nutrition guidelines be, for instance, there would be all of these lobbyists from the food and beverage industry saying we did this side research that says that soda in moderation is actually really good for you. We think soda should be included in the federal government guidelines. That got me interested in agricultural subsidies with an environmental lens, because I've



always been interested in environmental issues. I ended up looking at agricultural consolidation, which is a huge theme in the US, huge economic trend in the US and also in Canada, where farms are getting larger and larger but the number of farms, so the number of businesses, are becoming smaller and smaller. So we have these huge agricultural producers that are being consolidated into these cooperatives. They are receiving huge amounts of government subsidies because the agricultural lobby is huge in the United States.

Kaya Adleman: 18:36

I was looking at the trend between those subsidy patterns and whether larger agricultural producers are more likely to engage in greenwashing behaviors. So that hadn't been actually researched really before. If there was an index for greenwashing, how much greenwashing a company could participate in. So I had to develop a greenwashing index that took into account a variety of factors. Then I had to survey farmers to ask questions about whether or not they were part of an agricultural cooperative which would be associated with a greenwashing score. If they would like more government subsidies to actually implement more sustainable agricultural initiatives. So that was actually very interesting work. A lot of farmers, as it turns out, don't have email or don't like responding to email, so a lot of the surveying was over the phone, so I don't think I ended up getting enough survey responses to make a significant conclusion, but I think it turned out that the more subsidies a farm received, the more likely they were to engage in greenwashing behaviors. Was that the results of my findings were, but it was very interesting.

Anna Baggio: 20:00

How did that shape you?

Kaya Adleman: 20:03

I think it definitely became more interested or more aware, I think, in how governments can influence economic behaviors and economic outcomes and also production



outcomes those are tied to sustainability, have sustainability implications. I think it's important that there's groups out there that are drawing awareness or that are holding governments to account to better allocate taxpayer money.

Janet Sumner: 20:41

For me, one of the reasons when I heard about this work when we were in the hiring process was, I mean, maybe that influenced Kaya. But what I saw in Kaya was more this well, you know what? I'm just going to go find out, I'm going to make it happen, I'm going to ask questions, construct something and actually create the model from which we can actually start to make a benchmark, this and figure it out. Is there a relationship? And so we were asking her to do some of the same things on forestry and asking her to figure out some of these equations and start this podcast, and so we have needed all of that skill set for Kaya to be able to go out and just go.

Janet Sumner: 21:23

Well, I'm just going to make it. She's a self-starter, she's going to make it happen, she's going to find out and she's going to unearth some of the gems. And I often say on the podcast that I show up and Kaya's done all the work to get everything ready and figure out who everybody is and all the rest of it. So for me, one of the reasons I want to start with this question is because those early days really shape you and really motivate you, and Anna gave a lot of credit to her mother and I would have to say that is absolutely right. Her mother is what? Maybe five foot, maybe five two, and she is a force.

Janet Sumner: 22:01

I mean whenever I met. Mama Baggio. It's been like I get half questions I have to answer, including about my own sustainability, like how come you're traveling so much and maybe you shouldn't do that. And I get questions through Anna Like is Janet taking care of herself? Like Mama Baggio is a force, there's no question.

Anna Baggio: 22:18



She's a force and a delight and I think part of where I get my advocacy from certainly my grandfather on my mother's side is he was a big advocate for a United Ireland and so and he was a politician. So I think some of that is genetic and then also just this sense of you know right and wrong and then that's so. I think maybe I don't fall that far from the tree on that one.

Janet Sumner: 22:42

Yeah, I would say so. It's very accurate.

Janet Sumner: 23:15

Okay, so let's dive into this issue.

Janet Sumner: 23:17

We wanna get to talking about caribou, but I wanna actually maybe unpack a little bit of why we do the work on species at risk or endangered species and I'm actually because you mentioned about turtles being a species of special concern but I actually want you to tell me what those different categories are to start with, because for most people they're go well, is it endangered or not? And that's the only metric we have, right, or that's the only, I guess, understanding of a metric, and you have a much better understanding of that and what it means. And because endangered species or species at risk in Canada will influence a great deal of how we are supposed to operate on the land base and sometimes it's not influencing it enough. I would suggest is maybe a lot of times not influencing it enough, but that is one of the guardrails, if you will species at risk. That's supposed to be there for all of the land uses, including forestry, that we have, and so that's why we work on species at risk. But maybe you could just talk a little bit about that.

Anna Baggio: 24:25

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So historically we have been really poor at taking care of wildlife in Canada and some people get confused and they think well, if deer are doing okay, then doesn't that mean everything's doing okay? Like, people get confused about the different parts of our biodiversity basket and some species just have very specific needs and habitat needs or requirements. And when they start to do poorly, scientists can measure that and you start to go oh, this species is not reproducing enough, this species has lost habitat and we have a bit of a scale. So scientists rely on a [scale of threat](#), threaten-ness or endangered-ness, I guess you wanna call it and the first warning sign is special concerns. So the minute you start to crawl up the ladder and something isn't going right for you like maybe you rely on a lot of water and your habitat is, there's a lot of pollution coming into that water or it's being drained Sometimes that's so you might be a species of special concern. That initial one means we need to start paying attention to you because you're in trouble, but it doesn't necessarily offer habitat protection at that stage. So it's kind of like a warning sign. This is a species that's starting to be in trouble. We need to pay attention as the situation gets more dire.

Anna Baggio: 25:49

Then you then go up the ladder and then threatened is the next stage, and there are metrics associated with what's your threatened level, related to how many are reproducing over how many generations. And part of the threatened level is if we don't act now, this species will soon become endangered. And then endangered is the next level up, and then that's when the red lights should be going off and it should be like holy cow for fire. You know, fire alarm. Here we need to take action because this species is perhaps hanging on, is right on the precipice, and for those species it's absolutely critical that we address what their specific needs are. And if it's habitat, we need to address the habitat. If it's, you know, are they being collected? We need to make sure that stopped. Are they being hunted? Is it pollution? Is it contamination? Whatever it is, that's where these plants come in and you tailor to the needs of the species.

Anna Baggio: 26:43



And then, of course, the last stage and you want no species to get there is extirpation, and that means they no longer exist in the wild in Canada, and we don't want species to get there.

Anna Baggio: 26:56

And so we have this list and it's a warning sign for us, as Canadians to, and certainly we have.

Anna Baggio: 27:03

We have another list in Ontario, that kind of mimics the national one about what species are doing in Ontario, and so the challenge for us is that we need to pay attention and that the law is supposed to be the last line of defense for these species. [The Endangered Species Act](#) is supposed to be the last line of defense because all the other pieces of legislation have failed, and all those other pieces of legislation are called resource statutes, which means we want to log the forest, we want to drain wetland, we want to build a road, we want to dam a river, and then we're going to mitigate our impacts hopefully, maybe, but that's it. It's like a mitigation standard in those pieces of legislation, and what we've learned over many years is that it doesn't work. Species still, especially these species, at risk. They fall through the cracks, and that's why we needed an Endangered Species Act that would be tailored to protecting these species and giving them a chance at survival and thriving.

Janet Sumner: 28:05

So you said it works as an early warning system. How do Canadians get that early warning? Like if you're, you know you're not following the science like does, like we got daily warnings about the pandemic and you know it was pretty clear where we were. But what happens with the species at risk? Are we this early warning? How is it supposed to happen?

Kaya Adleman: 28:34



Are we warned?

Anna Baggio: 28:37

We are warned and I think we could we could be warned in a better way. For sure, it also depends on does the government really want us to be warned about them? So I think that's a bit of a separate question. But scientists have a process by which they evaluate species and species health and then report on it, and they also are very they're getting much better at also working with indigenous peoples and incorporating indigenous knowledge too. So it's not just the best of Western science. And so there is supposed to be a publication of lists, right? So you're supposed to have these lists published every year. You know updated lists, and then there's supposed to be recovery strategies.

Anna Baggio: 29:16

These things may not necessarily be made public. Like you know, you don't go down to the corner store and be like hey, who's on the list this week? You know you. You have to go and look for it [online](#) and you may. You know your first encounter as a member of the public. You may encounter that a species is in trouble. For example, if you see, if you're in a pond and it supports blanding turtles, you might see a sign that says no fishing because you don't want to impact the blanding's turtle. So that might be one of your first encounters of a endangered species, or if you're at your favorite park and it says, you know, careful, there's some habitat here for snake, or you know fish or a bird, that might be how you start to learn about these endangered species. And certainly if you're a farmer, maybe your farm fields overlap with an endangered species and you're doing everything you can to give them space to survive and then maybe have your farm operate as well. So those are some of the entry points. And then you know groups like ours try and get the word out. So we talk to citizens. You know, if you're, if this is something you're interested in, you can find a lot about it online.

Anna Baggio: 30:20



I think we can do a lot of. We can do a much better job of it, because not that we necessarily care about a single species Like we're not I don't want this to be like we have a fetish about a particular species, but sometimes they mean something.

Anna Baggio: 30:34

Their health means something to us, and so in the case of the boreal caribou, it's an indicator of a healthy boreal forest, and so it tells us that there's something not right in the way that we're managing the boreal forest, and so we have to look for these indicators and our biodiversity. And so this is the phrase that people use, and if you haven't heard it before, it's just short for biological diversity. It's the sum of all life on earth, whether it's, you know, very small or very big, and all the ecosystems that come together. That's our biodiversity, and it's central to who, to us as living, as human beings, and we don't know that, and governments tend to not tell us that, and so those are some of the things, some of the, some of the ways that you know we can learn about it, but certainly there's a lot more we can do better on.

Janet Sumner: 31:22

Yeah, and I'm maybe going to make a distinction here, like the species at risk act is the federal legislation and then in Ontario we have the Endangered Species Act and different provinces have different pieces of legislation and some don't have any endangered species legislation but the Federal Species at Risk Act, as you said, there's a group of scientists that grade. You know where different species are, and many people in Southern Ontario and across Canada will be concerned about the monarch monarch butterfly. It's one of the species that is charismatic. People love it. You know, you see the migrations and you just you're kind of in awe of how far they fly and how beautiful they are and things like that. And we've seen them be disappearing over the last few decades and so people are actually now trying to bring them back, plant milkweeds et cetera, because there's pretty active campaigns on that. But you mentioned the boreal caribou and I know that you're not a boreal woodland caribou scientist but from your perspective, can you just tell us why, for example, Wildlands League cares about boreal woodland caribou?



Anna Baggio: 32:37

Yeah. So boreal caribou this is an iconic animal in Canada stretches right across this country in the boreal forest and it relies on healthy, intact forests, unbroken forests, for as far as the eye can see, on the scale of millions of hectares. That's what it relies on to survive and to live, and we don't do a good job in our country of actually providing it with habitat. Our country is so big that I think other countries must be shaking their head going, but you can't share the land and leave some habitat alone for boreal caribou. And we say yes, it's because we think and I say we, I mean our leaders insist on handing it all over to industry, and so this. So our challenge and so why we focus on it is [A it's an indicator of a healthy boreal forest and B we're failing terribly](#). I'm like we know what the species needs, the scientists have told us. We know what's threatening the species and we know what needs to be done, and so that's why we're standing up and pounding the pavement and talking to communities and elevating indigenous voices and making sure that the best of the science and the best of the policy can be brought to these discussions. It is extremely frustrating and it is one of the longest campaigns that we've worked on and we haven't been successful yet because we are fighting some very strong forces strong forces and well-funded forces that represent the interests of industry and they have shaped policy, including an Endangered Species Act legislation and policy, and so we're struggling to find a champion within our province in Ontario to leave some room to share the land.

Anna Baggio: 34:26

I mean, the species is on a collision course right now with industry and the resource sector, because the resource sector wants all those trees, the mining sector wants it for critical minerals, people want to build roads, people want to have transmission lines. All that is carving up the habitat, fragmenting the habitat, destroying the habitat, degrading the habitat. And so we keep fighting because we think there's a better way and we're not anti-development, we're not trying to shut down industry all over the place. We're saying we need to leave some space and leave them alone and give them a chance. And we can do that. We just need some political will and that's where we come in pound that



beat, hit that drum and hopefully create some conditions where we can get conservation. Hello.

Caller: 35:08

Phil Goodwin here. I have a question. Well, was Algonquin Park originally created as an area of protection and conservation, or was it an area for logging?

Dave Pearce: 35:26

Hello Wildlands League. It's Dave Pearce, Senior Forest Conservation Manager at Wildlands League, and I'm responding to a question on the clear cut by Phil Goodwin whether Algonquin Park was established for forestry or to protect against forestry. And I'm looking actually at the Friends of Algonquin Park website. And Algonquin was actually established in 1893 as a response to the Royal Commission report and recommendation that oh and now, park should be established to maintain water supply. It's the head.

Dave Pearce: 36:01

Algonquin is the headwaters of many water systems flowing into the Ottawa River on the one side and Georgian Bay on the other, predominantly. And it's the headwaters. And so they were concerned about farming in particular encroaching on these headwaters and they knew the erosion and the impact that farming had on water supply. So they were anxious to conserve the forest, but also for the preservation of a primeval forest. And what they meant by primeval at that time.

Dave Pearce: 36:31

I don't know if it's what we envision now as sort of untouched, but I know that they actually did want to manage the forest for forestry purposes and to continue logging there. One of the other purposes, according to the commissioners, was the protection of birds and animals. Again, what kinds of birds and what kinds of animals and what kind of



protection. We know that the Rangers in Algonquin at the beginning and for the first few decades would shoot wolves. They'd shoot loons because the wolves ate the deer and they actually harvested deer and sent them out during World War I and maybe in World War II as well, but definitely World War I they harvested deer, sent them down to the city for food, supplemental food, and we wouldn't allow that in a park these days.

Dave Pearce: 37:22

So the protection of animals and primeval forests that they envisioned at that time I think is very different than what we consider now and we think about ecological integrity and then need to have a more holistic sense of protection. The commission also envisioned a field for forestry experiments, a place of health resort. We know there are many hotels opened up during that time. People mostly came by train up until the 1930s when the highways was put in, and the beneficial effects on climate. It's interesting they had that vision. I don't know what that meant, whether they envisioned climate changes and the way we do now. I don't think so. I don't think they were experiencing those impacts, but probably thinking about the role that trees had in shading and transpiration and cooling effective trees and, of course, on the water system.

Dave Pearce: 38:16

I think the vision was very different now and the vision for protected areas has evolved so that ecological integrity is the primary purpose of protected areas in Ontario by law no-transcript Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act and in our understanding of that, it shouldn't include commercial forestry, because that is not a purpose that promotes ecological integrity, which is the full flourishing and health of the ecosystem. So those are my two thoughts. So, although Algonquin wasn't founded to keep out forestry of the day of the 1890s, it definitely should function that way now.

Kaya Adleman: 39:04

I'm just curious about do you know, like when the species at risk act, when that came into law, and was there like an optimism about it? Or was the way that it worked when it



was first enacted different than than it is now, or like I don't know? Can you speak to maybe like the history about it a little bit?

Anna Baggio: 39:24

So the federal one, I believe what came into came into force around 2002, 2003, and there was a lot of optimism around that one. The provincial one, we actually had a bird's eye view on because we helped to bring it in, because we had seen the failure up until in, you know, throughout his history, of the its predecessor, and so we support there was an expert group you know we were. We were some of the groups on the outside, you know, calling for changes, supporting these. Really thoughtful, like smart people got around a table and really and gave the government some great advice on how to have a new endangered species act in Ontario and they did it and they had multi-party support in the legislature and it passed in 2007 and it was considered the gold standard in North America. It was. It was the optimism was was like we were like wow, here's a government, they've done the right thing we are going to do. We're finally going to give these species at risk some habitat protection. Because the whole point of this legislation was we are not going to just permit industry everywhere. We were going to have the presumption of protection. We were going to finally give these species protection and that was going to be our default, that we were actually going to protect first.

Anna Baggio: 40:43

And Then implementation happened and and you know, we started off. We started off in the first few years going okay, I think we can do this, I think it's gonna work. And then there was this grace period where a whole bunch of species didn't get habitat protection right away, but then the five-year anniversary kicked in and at that five-year anniversary, the rest of that list was gonna get habitat protection. And what happened on the five-year anniversary, when all those species were supposed to get habitat protection, including boreal caribou, was the government brought in sweeping Exemptions, regulatory exemptions that basically took loopholes and what we're supposed to be like flexibility mechanisms for you know, tiny little things, little projects that were gonna be harmful. But if you did it in a smart way and created an overall benefit, we would have



this more modernized, thoughtful approach. And they just took these exemptions and went nope, we're gonna ram through these, these in these, these industries, and give them these exemptions from actually protecting habitat or not being held to account on harming and harassing species. And it's just gotten worse and worse since then.

Janet Sumner: 41:51

So you know language now is pay to slay right.

Anna Baggio: 41:56

It's like pay to slay.

Janet Sumner: 41:58

I mean you can pay to get a permit to go ahead with an activity. So if, even if you know that it's going to destroy habitat, you can get a permit or an exemption basically to go ahead and destroy that habitat and that says a you pay a fee to basically be allowed to go and destroy the habitat.

Kaya Adleman: 42:17

Yeah, that's a horrifying scenario and sorry when you got it. When you initially said pay to slay like, my mind was like pay to slay like.

Anna Baggio: 42:30

And that's just one of the things that this most recent provincial government has brought in. Like you know, so many of us, when our endangered species legislation came in and we said it was the gold standard of North America, we had these thoughtful mechanisms, these flexibility mechanisms that we thought were going to be used sparingly. And this government, this most recent government, basically threw that right out the window and said no, we're gonna drive whole industries through these exemptions. So [now we have the entire forest industry Exempted from protecting and](#)



[recovering species at risk](#), the entire forest industry. Like how, how can you even have a myth of sustainability if your entire industry isn't even being asked to protect and recover species at risk? And then you [add in the other industries](#). You've got the early exploration industry. Again, they've got a permanent exemption. You've got, I mean, almost all the industries have been exempted. There's only a handful that aren't.

Anna Baggio: 43:28

And the presumption of protection has been flipped entirely on its head. And now it's the presumption of. Everything goes ahead and we just pretend and we just mitigate and we just kill them less. And so for me, this act is like been completely gutted and it's not the endangered species act. I'm like it's the we kill them less act. Really. That's what this is, and so I'm a bit at a loss at where we go now, and so we can talk a little bit more about some of our options. But yeah, it's like completely disheartening.

Janet Sumner: 44:02

Yeah.

Kaya Adleman: 44:03

We're slaying, but we're not slaying.

Janet Sumner: 44:06

Yeah, yeah, we're not slaying the issue, we're slaying the species totally under the name of saving the species.

Anna Baggio: 44:15

That's the best part.

Janet Sumner: 44:16



Yeah, I know so.

Kaya Adleman: 44:22

Janet, has there been any exciting updates in the podcast that we should tell our listeners about?

Janet Sumner: 44:29

Well, what's really fun is that I was checking the numbers today and this is actually before the publication of our latest episode. So between last week and this week We've hit 3,000 downloads. That's a nice little, you know, bump in the numbers for us, and thank you to everybody around the world who's listening in on the podcast, downloading the episodes and Making us very happy that these are getting listened to 3000 so far and we're still going it makes me feel so much better that we're not just speaking into the void.

Kaya Adleman: 45:06

So thank you, thank you for downloading and listening to the podcast. And if you have downloaded the podcast and listen to the podcast and you want to Show your love a little bit more, you can buy our merch. You know we have. If you go on to our website, www.wildlandsleague.org we have a shop and we have some really, really cool Schwag, as Janet says, to buy. There's we both have the sweatshirts and there's a mug. You know there's lots of cool, Clear Cut things to choose from.

Janet Sumner: 45:43

So yeah, what happened to that picture? We took a picture of the two of us. Is it? Have we loaded it up? Is it somewhere?

Kaya Adleman: 45:50



I've heard that it's somewhere in the social media post churning machine, so maybe, maybe people will get to see that one to one day.

Janet Sumner: 45:59

I'm not sure it'll make people buy the sweatshirts, but we certainly like our sweatshirts.

Kaya Adleman: 46:04

Yeah, very very comfy. Yeah, so comfy, they're very soft.

Janet Sumner: 46:12

It's. It's deeply disappointing and ruinous in terms of on an environmental level, like you talked about. I think it's really important to understand that Wildlands League is not an individual. We're not, we're not like a species-driven organization. We're not out there to, I don't know, save the whales or whatever, and not that that's. Those aren't good causes. But the reason that we work on species is because they actually give you information and help you design and decide how you're managing the land, the, the ecosystems. And so when you see a species like caribou that's not doing well, you know that that means the forest isn't doing well, or the boreal forest is not doing well. So then, what do you do? You actually have to take action.

Janet Sumner: 47:00

And the Endangered Species Act was designed and because I sat on those committees and and I negotiated many agreements and and and I would draw this other distinction is there were progressive industries, including some forestry folks, who were very willing to come up with solutions and ways that it could work. And that, I think, is what is, personally, the most disheartening. Because you think it might just be. Oh, it's because industries in opposition. Oh, you know, that's an easy way to frame an issue, but the reality was we had progressive companies who wanted to do some of the right things. They tried to work with us, come up with solutions.



Janet Sumner: 47:40

We tabled those and those were basically wiped aside for the lowest common denominator of industries who basically said no, we just want an exemption. We need an industry associations, we just need an exemption. We don't want to be governed by this and the way they got around that was well. We're already required to manage for them and, as Anna rightly pointed out, those were mitigation strategies, so they're required to manage or mitigate their impacts. But there's no legal problem with it. There's no. It was going to lose their license because they didn't do the right thing. Nobody's going to be required to do protection and that's the and in the case of boreal woodland caribou, that's what's proven to work is you actually need to protect the habitat. You can't just mitigate your way out of the problem.

Anna Baggio: 48:28

You can still go extinct under a mitigation model. This is the problem. Extinction is still the trajectory.

Janet Sumner: 48:36

We're watching extinction happen. That's what we're doing.

Kaya Adleman: 48:40

Well, I was just going to say, coming off the heels of our episode with Amy Westland where we were talking about joint resource management planning, it sounds like or it seems like mitigation strategies are very much they fit into the same bill as the as the permitting model, just taking a very individualistic, like piece by piece approach to lands and resource extraction. We're just going to look at this one specific permit for this and not look at the whole picture and how there's kind of like accumulative effects on the landscape 100%.



Anna Baggio: 49:23

I mean, they talk a good game and you know Ontario can talk a really good game. Oh, we're managing cumulative disturbance for caribou. We have a range management policy. I'm like, give me a break. I've sat in all those meetings. I have looked people in the eye, I have poured over materials. Trevor Hesselink in our office and I, we have gone up and down and reviewed so many of these projects, whether they're transmission line, forestry, mining projects, and at the end of the day, none of those things hold water. They just don't. They're not being implemented and they don't make a lick of difference. And so if you're looking to ask yourself and say, is it effective, they can point to all the paper they want, but that paper is not actually protecting habitat. And so you know, for Canadians I would say yes, be extremely disappointed and be frustrated because your government is not doing what it needs to do for something as important and as serious as biodiversity.

Janet Sumner: 50:28

That was quite incredible. That last thing that Anna said. I think it's a great place to leave this conversation and take us to the next conversation. Can you just restate it, just so everybody hears it again, because it was kind of like a mic drop moment for me?

Kaya Adleman: 50:47

Yeah, I mean Anna was saying that Ontario can talk a really good game about how they are managing for the cumulative disturbance for caribou, but she was saying that she sat in those stakeholder meetings and you know, these plans that they're doing don't hold water and they're continuously allowing industry to steamroll over the expectation of critical habitat protection for caribou. And Canadians should be disappointed about that and frustrated because our government is not doing what it needs to do for something as important, to quote, and as serious as biodiversity. Yeah, bone-chilling.

Janet Sumner: 51:29



Yeah, it is because under the Species at Risk Act it's required to protect critical habitat. And what Ontario is doing is managing and moving around the forestry and where it operates, but it's not doing protection. It's doing studies, it's going to do more measuring of disturbance and of monitoring of caribou, but we still don't have protection. And it's more than a decade, more than a decade. So it's not just this government, it's been more than a decade and we still haven't stepped up.

Janet Sumner: 52:11

And again, for Wildlands League, this isn't. I mean, yes, we care about caribou, but the bigger reason that we work on this is because it's about the very health of the forest that belong to all Canadians, and so doing right by caribou is doing right by all Canadians and our forests and having a healthy forest. And we need that healthy forest for climate change as well as for species. All the climate models are built on a presumption that we will continue to absorb carbon, and if we are degrading these systems and not protecting species and not having healthy forests, then those forests cannot absorb carbon at the rate that the planet needs.

Kaya Adleman: 52:56

Yeah, well said, Janet, and I will just add to that not that I can add that much more to that, but I will say that this final quote from Anna about the frustration of being in these government stakeholder meetings we'll hear a lot more of that, and I think that's what we should all be looking forward to in the next conversation is we get kind of some insight into what the process looks like and how frustrating it can be. So stay tuned. Stay tuned for more.

Janet Sumner: 53:32

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Kaya Adleman: 53:43

You can also become a supporter by going to our website at www.wildlandsleague.org/theclearcut and also make sure to leave us a review on your favorite podcast streaming platform. It would really help the podcast and stay tuned for new episodes by following us on social media.

Janet Sumner: 54:05

That's @wildlandsleague on [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) or [LinkedIn](#), of course.

Kaya Adleman: 54:10

See you next time.

Dave Pearce: 54:14

Hi, this is a question for Wildlands League. How much does Dave Pearce make as your senior forest conservation analyst? Because it's probably too much. I've heard him on the radio and he doesn't seem like he knows what he's talking about. I mean not radio, but your podcast. Okay, yeah, if you can answer that, that would be great.

Janet Sumner: 54:37

That was Dave calling him with a sample question. I'm not sure that that's really what Dave intended, but thanks, Dave. That was pretty funny. Kaya, what do you think? Should we broadcast his salary and then give him a pay reduction?

Kaya Adleman: 54:51

Yeah, I think we should actually ask our listeners. We should give them a poll and let them vote on what he should be paid.

Janet Sumner: 54:59

THE CLEAR CUT

Yeah, no, that's great. Thanks, Dave, for the chuckle.