



We Stand for Wildlife



Weighing what's at stake in Ontario's Ring of Fire

WCS scientist explains why we need to be thinking about carbon and not just critical minerals in a new CBC podcast

Recently, the Ontario government announced a “Critical Minerals Strategy.” But what they forgot to mention in that strategy is that many of these minerals are buried under peat that is thousands of years old and that stores vast amounts of carbon.

Our peatlands expert, Dr. Lorna Harris, [recently discussed the trade-offs](#) involved in extracting minerals in places like the Ring of Fire in the Hudson Bay Lowlands of Ontario with host Laura Lynch [on CBC's What on Earth?](#) Lorna noted that if these peatlands are destroyed by mining or roads, it would take thousands of years to get the carbon released back into the ground. She also talked about how systems are intricately connected in this unique watery landscape, and how actions in one area can affect places even hundreds of kilometres away.

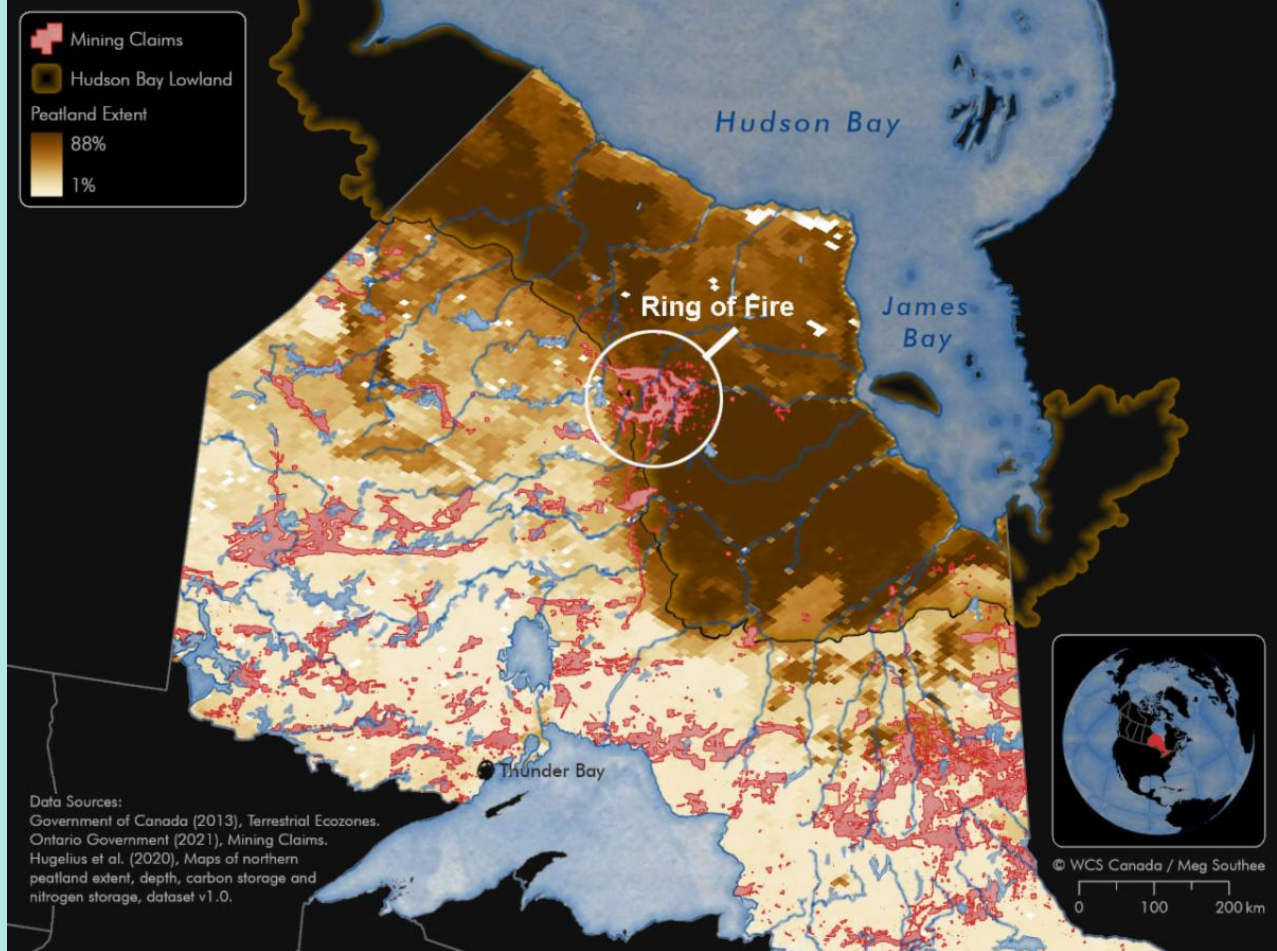
Despite the federal government agreeing that a regional impact assessment was needed to better understand what is stake in this carbon-rich muskeg, their proposed assessment agreement with Ontario ignores the impact of mining and roads on climate. WCS Canada is far from alone in seeing this as a huge problem for this huge landscape. A number of Indigenous communities that call these peatlands home point out that their traditional and on-the-ground knowledge was not sought out when the Canadian government developed its assessment plans. These communities, which are already seeing significant climate impacts, recognize the need to consider climate impacts, the interconnected nature of the lowlands, and how this intact landscape underlies healthy communities and cultures.



Mining in the Hudson Bay Lowlands could release as much carbon as all other sources in Canada each year. Photo: Mike Oldham.

[As Lorna tells CBC](#), if there is one place where we need to get away from “business as usual” approaches, it is in this ancient undisturbed carbon-rich landscape. An estimated 450 million tonnes of carbon may be stored in peatlands in the Ring of Fire region, equivalent to around 1.6 billion tonnes of CO₂ – half of which is equivalent to a year of Canada’s total greenhouse gas emissions. The release of this carbon into the atmosphere by mining projects would put achieving our national and international climate targets at significant risk. It’s therefore critical that we recognize how important this area is to our global climate and act accordingly.

[Our new Ring of Fire website](#) will take you deeper into this often overlooked but globally important landscape, introduce you to its rich wildlife and explain its importance to addressing climate change while introducing you to the people who live in this remote region.



The Ring of Fire proposed mining area overlies an area of ancient peatlands and the headwaters of major rivers. We need to carefully consider the climate and clean water implications of mining in this area. Map: Meg Southee/WCS Canada

We're hiring!

Apply by April 14th.

Key Biodiversity Areas (KBA) Quality Control
Coordinator

Arctic Wildlife
Technician

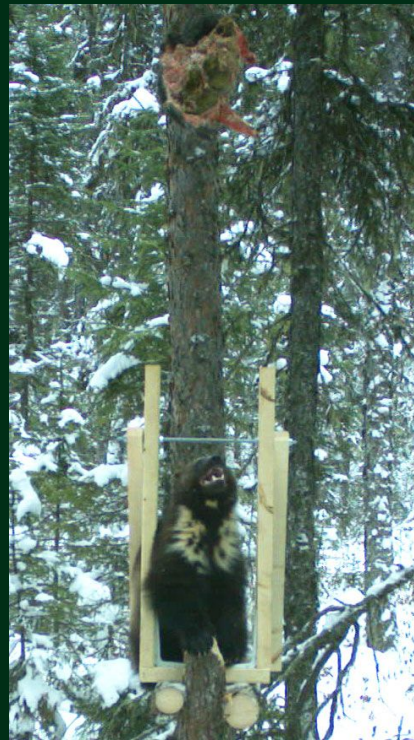
Racing to find wolverines



A wolverine den discovered by the WCS Canada team this winter. Photo: Matt Scrafford/WCS Canada

Our wolverine team leader, Dr. Matt Scrafford [talks all things wolverine with the Hunter Conservationist Podcast](#). He covers everything from his team's innovative use of GPS collars to track wolverines to the phenomenal speed and agility of these members of the weasel family. This [in-depth interview](#) takes us from wolverine evolution to the work WCS Canada is leading to understand how these elusive animals are faring in a part of Ontario where there is also extensive industrial logging.

Matt and his three-person team (Jacob Seguin, Laura McCaw, Liam Cowan) are back in the field right now and so far this winter have live trapped, collared and released nine wolverines (four females and five males). Two of the females show signs of having kits and the team has found one den and is continuing to search for others. Understanding denning success is a key objective of a project that keeps the team busy from February to April constructing and monitoring live traps, investigating signs of wolverine activity, and catching the occasional nap before the phone buzzes with an alert about trap activity at 3 a.m.



A wolverine pauses as it reaches for bait in one of our camera traps. Photo: WCS Canada

Proposed caribou agreement papers over huge conservation cracks



Conservation Agreements under the federal *Species at Risk Act* are a useful way for the federal government to work with provinces that have jurisdiction over land uses to address the needs of threatened and endangered species and protect their “critical habitat.” So it is good news that the federal and the Ontario provincial government are working on such an agreement for boreal caribou, particularly because Ontario has in recent years [severely weakened its own laws and policies](#) that would protect this species at risk.

Unfortunately, the [proposed agreement](#) recently released by the two partners suggests carrying on with the false premise that regulations governing forestry activities are enough to protect caribou, even though we know that the disturbance to caribou habitat caused by logging in the province is increasing, not decreasing. We also know from research across Canada that habitat disturbance is the key factor behind declining caribou populations. The proposal gives no indication that the governments are ready to limit cumulative disturbance — the combined impact of roads, forestry, mining and other forest uses on caribou. So we have serious concerns about where it is headed, particularly given that population trends were already worrisome the last time caribou were surveyed 10 years ago.

WCS Canada has [deep expertise in caribou conservation](#) and we have put forward a number of [recommendations](#) for improving this agreement, including getting a strong commitment to proper caribou population monitoring and developing ways to address cumulative effects.

Two-Eyed Seeing

For WCS Yukon scientist Dr. Chrystal Mantyka-Pringle, being invited to participate in a panel on [Two-Eyed Seeing](#) was both an honour – and a responsibility. As Chrystal notes in her remarks, she wasn’t sure at first what a non-Indigenous scientist could contribute to the discussion, but then realized that she could help other scientists by sharing some thoughts on her own experiences and approach in working with Indigenous communities toward conservation goals. [In her presentation](#), Chrystal looks at the various models for combining Indigenous knowledge and western scientific understandings, but boils the work down to “building meaningful relationships” — relationships that are based on “helping” and “sharing a love of the natural world and being connected to all beings.” [The webinar put on by Conservation through Reconciliation Partnership and the Centre for Indigenous Knowledges and Languages](#) is a great multi-faceted examination of what it means to advance conservation through partnership and how we can use conservation to advance reconciliation.

Virtual Campfire Series

Two-Eyed Seeing in Conservation Practice

Elder Albert Marshall
CRP Elder, Sage

Lisa Young
Umanaki Institute of Cultural Resources

Elliot Fox
The Resilience Institute

Chrystal Mantyka-Pringle
Wildlife Conservation Society Canada

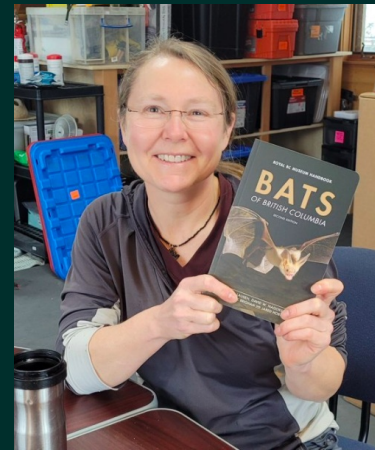
Norma Kassi
Canadian Woodlands Network

Gary Pritchard
a Director at Conservation Consulting

March 23, 2022: 10 am-12 pm PST/1-3 pm EST/2-4pm AST
<https://conservation-reconciliation.ca/virtual-campfire>

Getting the book on bats

Ever wanted to know more about our only flying mammal? Ever wonder where those bats go during daylight hours? How different bats use different types of ultrasound? You can find answers in the just released new edition of *Bats of British Columbia*. WCS Canada bat expert Dr. Cori Lausen and her co-authors have extensively updated this guide to the night fliers of our most bat-diverse province, including profiling the acoustics of 18 different species. Order your copy today through [Chapters-Indigo](#) or [Amazon](#) and go deep into the fascinating world of bats.



Cori displays the new book

You can also learn more about how our bat team is fighting to protect western bats from deadly white-nose syndrome (WNS) [in this Canadian Press story](#) about the innovative probiotic preventative treatment developed by WCS Canada and partners.

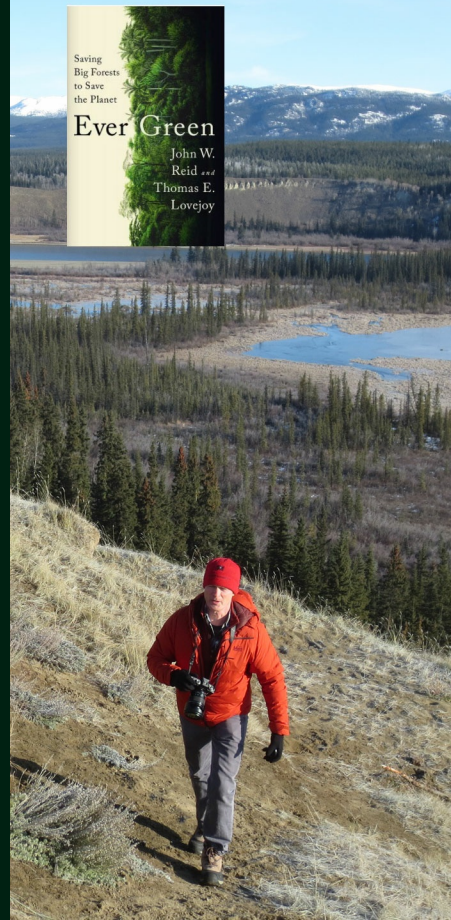
Why big matters

EverGreen: Saving Big Forests to Save the Planet is [a new coffee table book](#) with a simple theme – bigger is better, at least when it comes to intact wild forests. WCS scientists Dr.

Don Reid and Dr. Hilary Cooke both contributed thoughts on why bigger is better when it comes to intact forests in interviews for the book, which highlights the importance of five major forests – what it calls “megaforests” – including the North American boreal biome. The boreal forest is a key focus for WCS Canada’s work, particularly in the [far north in Ontario](#) and [the Yukon](#).

[In a book excerpt published by the Atlantic](#), the authors explain how roads, logging, farming and other impacts fragment and often destroy the ecological value of forests, including their all-important carbon storage function. We’re happy to see these ideas captured in such a beautiful book and hope they will be shared widely.

The book is available through [Amazon](#) and [Chapters-Indigo](#). Not to be missed!



*Author John Reid in Yukon.
Photo: Don Reid/WCS Canada*

Support our work to save wildlife!

At WCS Canada, we stand for wildlife and are in the field every day working to save wildlife and wild places. You can support our work by [making a secure donation](#) right now!

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Top banner image of Dall sheep (Ovis dalli) in the Northwest Territories by JupiterImages