

THE TROPHIC CASCADE: **WHY WOLVES MATTER**



THE APEX PREDATOR

WHEN WOLVES ARE REMOVED, THE "MANAGER" OF THE FOREST IS GONE.



THE OVERGRAZING CRISIS

WITHOUT PREDATORS TO KEEP THEM MOVING, MOOSE AND DEER STAY IN ONE PLACE TOO LONG. THEY STRIP AWAY THE YOUNG WILLOW AND ASPEN TREES.



THE HABITAT COLLAPSE

**SONGBIRDS: LOSE THEIR NESTING SITES IN THE YOUNG SHRUBS.
BEAVERS: LOSE THE WOOD THEY NEED FOR DAMS, LEADING TO DRIED-UP WETLANDS.
GRIZZLY BEARS: LOSE THE BERRY BUSHES THAT ARE OVER-EATEN BY ELK AND DEER.**

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KEY TERMS

- **Trophic Cascade:** ecological change that happens when a predator is removed from the food pyramid. The removal of a carnivore at the top of the pyramid affects prey animals and vegetation at the bottom.
- **Top-Down Regulation:** How apex predators like wolves keep the rest of the ecosystem healthy and moving.
- **Biodiversity Loss:** The disappearance of plants and animals when the natural balance is destroyed.

TALKING POINTS: CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

If you find yourself in a conversation about the wolf cull, use these three points to pivot the focus back to the land.



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1. The "Superhighway" Problem

We often blame wolves for reaching caribou herds in deep forests. However, wolves are using the 136,000 km of industrial roads and seismic lines we built. These clearings act as hunting superhighways. We should focus on linear restoration, which means replanting these roads to slow down predators naturally.

2. Modernizing Forestry Practices

The current crisis is a result of high-volume clear-cutting. This practice creates young, shrubby forests that attract moose and deer. When these populations grow, wolf numbers follow. To save the caribou, we must transition to ecosystem-based forestry and selective harvesting. These methods keep the forest canopy intact and preserve the old-growth lichen that caribou need to survive.

3. Stewardship Over Management

Culling is a temporary band-aid for a permanent problem. Lethal management allows industrial logging to continue in critical habitat while wildlife pays the price. True conservation requires us to protect the remaining 40 percent of undisturbed caribou range. We should invest in maternal penning and habitat restoration rather than aerial gunning.

Helpful Terms to Know

- **Ecosystem-Based Management:** A way of logging that mimics natural forest patterns to keep the ecosystem healthy.
- **Linear Restoration:** The act of reclaiming old industrial roads so they are no longer usable by predators.
- **Selective Harvesting:** Cutting only specific, high-value trees instead of clearing an entire section of the forest.