



MEMBER OF THE ORDER
OF THE BIG HORN

RECIPIENT OF THE
EMERALD AWARD



Liberty No. 25 2015

NEWSLETTER OF THE INSTITUTE

Cochrane Ecological
Institute & the
Cochrane Research
Institute: together
known as

The Institute

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**FOR THE RESCUE,
CARE FOR, AND
RELEASE WILDLIFE**

**BREEDING OF EN-
DANGERED SPE-
CIES FOR REIN-
TRODUCTION**

EDUCATION

**CONSERVATION
RESEARCH**

**WE CAN'T DO ANY
OF IT WITHOUT
YOU ALL**

THANK YOU

Please DONATE

NEW AND EXCITING DEVELOPMENTS

In 1964, Beryl, Miles and Clio Smeeton decided to 'give something back' for all the enjoyment they had received from exploring the wide wild world. They decided to undertake Ecosystem Restoration by returning indigenous but extirpated (extinct over it's range) fauna back into their historic range in Canada. They bought the present property and founded a Charity, now known as The Institute, to undertake this exciting and completely novel project. At that time Ecosystem Restoration was a completely new concept. So new that there were no government Departments in place to regulate such concepts. The federal Department of the Environment was not established until 1971. In Alberta, in 1964, all that was required for the Smeetons to do what they wanted was a Big Game Farm Licence, issued by the MD of Rocky View in 1967 and still valid today! To obtain that licence the Smeetons had to install a two mile long, eight foot high Game Fence all around the present property! This very expensive fence enclosing 140 acres of pristine native habitat never broken to the plough, makes The Institute unique among Wildlife Rehabilitation Facilities in Alberta.



Miles



Beryl



Clio

Over the past 48 years the Smeeton's Institute has achieved many FIRSTS. The very first of which was to persuade the federal and provincial governments that Ecosystem Restoration through the reintroduction of the extirpated Swift fox, *Vulpes velox*, could be achieved if the provinces, the Federal government, and an NGO could learn to work together. Miles Smeeton: *"Whether it is feasible to reintroduce an animal (swift fox) that has become extinct through the spread of civilization is questionable, but that is what we hoped to discover. Very little is known about swift foxes, and they have a poor record of breeding in captivity: nevertheless, we intended to breed them and one day release them in their natural environment. Had we understood all the problems and work involved...we might have thought twice about the project.."* Completely Foxed, by Miles Smeeton

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THE INSTITUTE

In 2017, the Smeeton's Institute will be 50 years old! The work it has done has been recognized through Awards, Certificate of Merit (federal Government) Member of the Order of the Big Horn (Government of Alberta) Emerald Award (Corporate sector) among others.



Captive-breeding an endangered species, Swift fox, for reintroduction back onto it's historic range in Canada and the USA has a surprising amount in common with rescuing, rearing, and releasing injured or orphaned wildlife back into their native ecosystems.

To do both successfully, it is essential that the animals are fit and healthy, have the life skills to survive post-release, and are released or reintroduced at the time when they would normally disperse and in a manner that will enhance their survival. Another, completely unexpected aspect, is the powerful antipathy towards both ecosystem restoration and wildlife rescue, rehabilitation and release exhibited by individuals within government and in some cases, the scientific community.

This antipathy has resulted in a myriad road blocks placed in the way of both Ecosystem Restoration and Wildlife Rescue Rehabilitation & Release. One of the most commonly repeated objections to both programmes is the belief that captive-bred Swift foxes, or rescued, reared and released orphaned wildlife, will not have the life skills for survival post release, or once released, will come into conflict with humans. This perception is best illustrated by the following 2011 Alberta Government statement, as published by the Edmonton Journal in March 2011 *"The provincial government is forbidding wildlife rehabilitation groups from taking in and treating more than 20 species of animals – including cougars, bears, and moose— out of concern for human safety. The new rules are still a work in progress, but Alberta Sustainable Resource Development hopes to have overall standards finalized this year, said (SRD) spokesman Darcy Whiteside.*

... they don't have an example in Alberta of a rehabilitated animal injuring humans, Whiteside said"

Although the *"work in progress"* has not been completed in 2015, and the species banned from rescue dropped from 20 to 13 there are still no reasons behind the ban. Our governments are at liberty to make decisions on the future of our wilderness and wildlife based upon little or no data. There is no requirement for accountability to support their statements. But there is a demand from government that we support our statements through our research data, and so we have established the Cochrane Research Institute

Rescuing injured or orphaned wildlife and returning those animals, healthy and whole, to the wild is a conservation action. It is a conservation action undertaken at no cost to government by Alberta's 8 Wildlife



Rehabilitation centres. The Conservation work that these centres do in rearing indigenous wildlife for release back into the wild is especially important when there is no knowledge of wild species population numbers.

It is difficult to make viable management decisions on a population number which is an estimate only, illustrating the need for the application of the Precautionary Principle.

When applied to Conservation, the Precautionary Principle requires pro-active action rather than reactive action. All individuals of a **estimated** population, whose numbers are unconfirmed, should be conserved.

Black bears are a case in point. There are eight species of bear, seven of which are classed as endangered, and Black bears, *Ursus americanus*, are found ONLY on this continent. Black bears have lost over 1/3rd (conservative estimate) of their historic range. In Alberta there has been no province-wide population survey since 1993, and the 1993 Black bear population survey was an estimate based upon potentially suitable habitat evaluated through aerial photography. Yet, despite an unknown population and widespread habitat transformation, the policy of Alberta Environment & Parks is to persist with the Spring bear hunt, and to kill orphan bear cubs rather than turn them over to suitable wildlife rehabilitation centres with facilities for rearing and releasing bears.

The Government will not spend money on undertaking widespread research into wildlife population numbers even though the Mandate of Alberta Environment and Parks, AEP, is the management of Alberta's wildlife and habitat. Nor will it spend money on collecting data on the success or failures of wildlife rescue, rehabilitation and release, having no up to date data to base decisions on AEP continues to base its management decisions on data collected between the 1970's and 1990's. The only way to address this problem is for an independent agency to undertake the research necessary to demonstrate, one way or another, the benefits or drawbacks to wildlife rescue, rehabilitation and release by monitoring or surveying wild animals that have been either reintroduced or released back into the wild.. The Cochrane Research Institute is such an Agency.

The tumbling numbers of wild species populations resulting in ever-growing lists of endangered or threatened species, are, in a sense the fruit of the old fashioned belief that there are lots of wild animals still "out there" somewhere, even though there was no solid information or survey data to base this belief on. This unsupported conviction by some, even in the 21st Century, has meant that no matter how badly needed our governments continually fail to spend money on essential scientific and wide ranging research on the environment, despite the availability of University graduates

THANK YOU TO

So many people have helped us through the year ! Only a tiny fraction can be thanked in this little space, but we appreciate your help and your donations more than we can say; We could not do what we do without you! You are all **WONDERFUL**. Thank you to our volunteers, overseas and local. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the CEI by sending the CEI a cheque, thank you to: Janet Munro, Big Sky Landscaping-Hands, Paws, and Wings, Lisa Dahlsiede, Calgary Catholic School, Canadian on-line Giving Foundation, L. Penner, Joan McFazen, Deer Run School, Kathy Lea, Henry Smith, C. Lacey, Antoinette Stacey, J Baczuk, C. Cook, Alberta Wildlife rehabilitator's Assoc., Calgary Science School Unitarian Church of Calgary, Gérard Talbot, US Multiservices Ltd , Albert Finlayson, B Isacson, & Sally Sinclair , Amailia and John Brown, and so many, more... **THANKYOU!**



The CEI is a charity in Good Standing in Alberta, Society #50507571, P.O.Box 484, Cochrane Alberta, T4C 1A7
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The Cochrane Research Institute, CRI, is a registered Non-Profit Corporation devoted to developing non-intrusive research methods and experiential education. tel: 403 932 5632 WEB-SITE www.cochraneresearchinstitute.org

VOLUNTEERS & STUDENTS



Every year Students and Volunteers come to live at the CEI from all around the world. Volunteers come to complete sections of their University Degrees (undergraduate, or post-graduate) to get the field experience which will help in their future job prospects, or purely and simply because they want to help out!

We also have wonderful **LOCAL VOLUNTEERS** and, organized by Lisa Dahlsiede (biodiversity4u@gmail.com) they come to the CEI for monthly work parties. Everyone seems to enjoy this and we, at the CEI really, really appreciate their help!

The engine which supports the day to day work and expenses of the Institute is **HAPPY TAILS RETREAT**, our dog and cat (and turtle and rabbit) boarding facility. **HAPPY TAILS RETREAT** has two separate buildings, one for cats and one for dogs! For our **DOG** guests we have individual enclosures with outdoor/indoor access, in-floor heating and, as well, for social dogs, a large, 2 acre, fenced free play area. The CEI live-in Volunteers get to know the dogs and cats, and their owners, very well. We have built a 1Km long woodland trail where they take the dogs for walks on the leash.



For **CATS**, we have 11 runs providing floor to ceiling vertical space and window views for the cats to enjoy. **MIKE CURTIS** is the kennel manager; you can reach him at info@happytailsretreat.com

or by phone: **403 851 2050**.

REMEMBER, HAPPY TAILS IS WHERE BOARDING YOUR PET HELPS WILDLIFE!



THANK YOU ALL!



..public education Programmes Lisa Dahlsiede also does CEI's educational programmes, too, same e-mail