



Blackfeet Swift Fox Reintroduction

The CEI is in the 3rd year of our partnership with the Blackfeet Nation in the re-introduction of the swift fox onto their Tribal lands. There would be no swift fox re-introduction without the Blackfeet Nation, their Tribal Lands, and the protection provided to the swift foxes by the Blackfeet Tribal Fish & Wildlife Department. The swift fox is an integral part of the environmental, spiritual, and cultural life of the Tribe, and was extirpated (extinct) from Blackfeet country by the 1950's. Therefore the return of the swift fox to the Tribal lands is more than a case of ecosystem restoration, it is also the return of a spiritual and cultural icon to the Blackfeet Tribe. Since 1998, using the re-introduction and follow-up methods developed by the CEI, we have re-introduced 76 swift foxes to Blackfeet lands.

Swift fox survival and reproduction after re-introduction to Blackfeet Tribal Lands

- Of the juvenile swift foxes we released in 1998, only 2 were known to have been

killed, we found 3 natal dens in the spring of '99, and Matt Carpenter spent some of his spring survey time traveling with, observing, and photographing one pair and their cubs, a job which he enjoyed enormously!

- In 1999, we were very fortunate in that the State of Montana lent us radio collars and telemetry equipment so we (Blackfeet & CEI) could radio-track 8 of our released foxes. Six of those radio-collared swift foxes are alive to-

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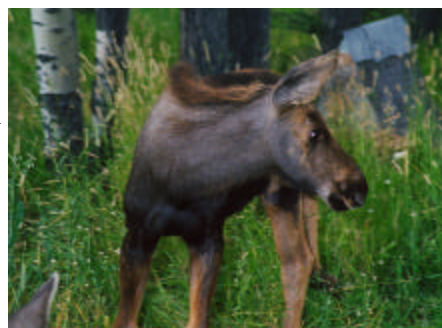
Photo by Clio Smeeton

Wildlife Rescue & Rehabilitation

We have had our usual complement of wildlife coming in to us for rescue, rehabilitation and release.

Although this year we did not receive any Soras or great blue herons, both species which we have been spectacularly successful in raising and releasing!

This year as a result of the newly formed Alberta Wildlife Rehabilitation Association



(NOWRA) we have also received animals for care and release from city based rehabilitation outfits, after they have undertaken the preliminary veterinary or other treatment. This is a great leap forward for the animals, just because we have 28 years of re-introduction experience and

the expanse of land, 160 acres of protected wild habitat, which enhances the

successful survival after release of the rescued animals.

We have a very exciting project under weigh at present, the re-introduction of our orphaned black bears; Juneau and Jemima.

This is a real partnership program, between the Alberta

Fish & Wildlife Department (permits), the University of Alberta (Micheal Magnan, research) the CEI (Sian Waters, M. Phil.) and, hopefully, the corporations with oil/gas leases who have winter access roads and suitable monitored habitat

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Public Education

School visits: We are still building the Interpretive wall around our interpretive center so that our visitors will have the opportunity to view, from a position of safety, the large animals, moose, elk, deer, bears, etc. which we look after, without those animals being aware of their observation.

A group of University of Alberta students, as part of their course work, have contributed designs for interpretive wild flora plantings, living indigenous insect exhibitions, and pond dip information, all of which will eventually be set within our Interpretive wall once it is completed, but as always, although we have the space we need the money to construct the designs or undertake the proposed plantings!

We are experiencing a steadily increasing demand for our services by schools as a result of being in the CALGARY SCIENCE FUN GUIDE and through our membership both of the Society of Educational Resource Groups and the Organization of Biological Field Stations.

The results of the CEI swift fox reintroduction work was presented, by invitation, at the Carnivores 2000 Conference in Denver, USA.

An Australian film company, undertaking a film project for the National Geographic, intends to film the swift fox reintroduction project in 2001, and will start filming at the CEI in March 2001.

Swift Fox Database: Sian Waters, of the CEI, as part of a partnership project with the Canadian government (Canadian Wildlife Service) and in compliance with the directives outlined in the National Recovery Plan for the Swift Fox in Canada (Brechtel et al, 1996) has initiated the preliminary work on a Swift fox database. This Database, once completed, will store all 16 years of data on swift foxes occurring in the wild in Canada in an accessible format and will provide a splendid resource for interested researchers and a management tool for

government.

Interpretive art gallery & village

As result of a kind donation from the Shell Environmental Fund we will be constructing a children-sized swift fox den, so that visiting school groups can experience first hand what it is like to live underground like a swift fox.

Architectural students of the University of Calgary have used the CEI's straw-bale construction interpretive center as part of their course work.

The CEI has formed a link with Vanishing Artifacts of the North, an organization devoted to encouraging the preservation of the skills of the northern First Nations communities through the continued production of the myriad unique artifacts found in the North such as, caribou hide and willow drums, ivory or bone fishing lures, fish hooks and willow rods, babiche nets and game bags and braided dog ropes, spruce root woven baskets, birch bark boxes and embroidered porcupine quill or bead moccasins, etc. These skills will continue to be passed down amongst the tribal elders to their young people provided there is a demand for them, and the demand to buy them will bring money into isolated communities and keep those communities alive. Once we have got this section of our web-site up and running there will be a link to the Vanishing Artifacts site, until then requests for these rare Museum quality objects can be sent to the CEI. The CEI Interpretive Centre has provided a very suitable, interesting and successful venue for local artists and artisans to sell their goods at our craft fairs. We are limited, at the moment, in the times we can be open to the public: one, by the moose coming in rut and two, by the swift fox breeding season! However, once our interpretive wall is up (\$5,000) and

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Wildlife rescue & Rehabilitation (con't)

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for the bears who will allow us to release them there. Research has shown that releasing the bears in a suitable area, while they are hibernating in a specially built insulated box, is the most successful way of re-introducing orphaned black bears. The existence of winter access roads means that we can take them to an isolated spot using the winter roads, and when they wake up in the spring, the road access will no longer be there so the chances of human/bear interaction will be sharply reduced. Ideally we would like to be able to afford radio collars or radio ear-tags so we can follow the bears up after release (money, again). Our aim is to produce a workable blueprint for the successful rehabilitation and release of other orphaned black bears. In



times past black bears have been put down simply because no one knew what to do with them, for example, 800 black bears were killed by the authorities in 1999, so producing a blueprint for successful re-introduction of orphaned black bears might solve some problems and save some lives.

The CEI's orphaned wild animal facility is up and built, but is

still short of the requisite \$5,000 required to complete the interior. Once completed, the work undertaken in this facility will be able to be viewed from our barrier free, universal access viewing deck without interfering at all with the orphaned little animals the facility will house. The wildlife viewing deck is completed. We just need to finish the interior of the orphaned animal's house.

Publications from CEI Research

Bremner, S. 1997. Diet and hunting behaviour of captive-bred swift fox, *Vulpes velox/V.v.hebes* intended for release. M.Sc.Thesis, Applied Animal Welfare and Behaviour, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland.

McCormick, K. 1999. (in press) Swift fox vocalizations
Dept of Medical Statistics, Faculty of Computing Science & Engineering, De Monfort University, Leicester, U.K.

Smeeton, C. 1993. Mee Yah Chah, the swift fox. Canid News, Vol. 1, IUCN 7-9 Oxford University.

Smeeton, C. 1994. Reintroducing the swift fox. Canid News vol 2, IUCN 2 13-16 Oxford University.

Smeeton, C. 1998. The reintroduction of the swift fox in Canada 1983-1997. Reintroduction News No.16, IUCN ISSN 1560-3709 Nairobi, Kenya.

Smeeton, C. 1999. Social and cultural aspects of swift fox reintroduction to Blackfeet Tribal Lands, Montana, USA. Reintroduction News

No.18, IUCN ISSN 1560-3709 Nairobi, Kenya.

Smeeton, C. 2000. Blackfeet Swift fox Reintroduction, results of the first years. Carnivor 2000, Denver, Co. USA November 12—15, 2000

Smeeton C and Weagle K, 1999, Reintroduction of swift fox (*Vulpes velox*) to Grasslands National Park, Saskatchewan Canada. ORYX 34 (3): 171-179

Smeeton, C, K. Weagle and S. Waters. Captive breeding of the swift fox at the Cochrane Ecological Institute. (In Press)

Teeling, E. 1996. Born to be Free: Captive Breeding as a Conservation Technique. M.Sc.Thesis, Applied Animal Welfare and Behaviour, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland.

Weagle K and C. Smeeton. 1995. Behavioural aspects of the swift fox (*Vulpes velox*) reintroduction programme. Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Environmental Enrichment, Copenhagen, Denmark

Blackfeet (con't)

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day, giving us a known survival ratio of 75%!

- While tracking the radio-collared animals we came across 5 natal dens belonging to un-collared swift foxes and containing 20+ cubs. We didn't

have the funding to mount a full radio-tracking survey so we never found the den-sites belonging to the radio-collared swift foxes and don't know if they had cubs or not....if any kind organization or person would like to contribute towards our tracking survey please let me know.

- Thanks to Defenders of Wildlife and the Shared Earth Foundation, who provided the equipment, we have radio-collared a further 16 swift foxes of the 31 animals released in 2000. Defenders of Wildlife are contributing towards the monitoring costs through paying for Brian Crauford, a member of the Blackfeet Tribe, to radio-track them. But one man, alone, cannot monitor 22 swift foxes and we do need further financial support for this essential project.

While tracking the radio-collared animals we came across 5 natal dens belonging to un-collared swift foxes and containing 20+ cubs.

Education (con't)

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our new parking lot and road in (\$15,000) and the fence (\$3,000) around the 30 acres which will eventually comprise the CEI's Interpretive Village is in place we will be open year round, because it will not interfere with either the moose or the foxes!. Even so, we have had two very successful craft fairs organized by Christine Simoens and a musical event, headlining the internationally known singer, Candace Carnie, and organized by Emil Roessingh and Marcia Johnson. Eventually we intend to illustrate the communality of prehistoric art world wide, by having representative paintings of pre-historic art from Europe, North America, Asia, Africa,



and Australia on the CEI's 400m Interpretive Wall...so visitors can see the living wild animals through the Wall's windows, and also pre-

historic representations of them painted on the wall itself (funding required \$4,000).

The intention of the CEI is also to construct full size representations of the vernacular architecture of the tribes occupying the old growth forests of the west coast, northern great plains, boreal forest, and tundra (Haida long-houses, great plains pit houses and Boreal forest tipis, western arctic houses, the present day's indigenous peoples use of the canvas wall tent and painted tipi). This very educational project has never been done before in North America. Each building will be separately funded and sponsored ...if we are successful in finding sponsors!

Research Initiatives at CEI

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DNA and Ecological Genetics – Ph.D. Thesis Sam Bremner, University of Queens Belfast



Vocal Ontology – M.Sc. Thesis Safi Dradem, University of Copenhagen



Vocalization as a Survey Tool – Weagle and Jorgensen



Hair Trap Survey Method – Liz Baillie, University of Glasgow

Status of swift fox in the release sites in Canada

The Canadian swift fox re-introduction program in Alberta and Saskatchewan ceased in 1997, without attaining the Canadian Swift Fox Recovery Team's reintroduction goal of 400 individuals in the wild (Brechtel et al, 1996). A live-trapping swift fox census undertaken in the winter of 1996/97 (Cottrill) estimated the total Canadian swift fox population at 289. A further census, undertaken in the winter of 1997/98 (Moehrensclager & Moehrensclager), es-

timated the population as unchanged despite the last re-introduction of swift fox into those areas having taken place in the Fall of 1997. At present, winter 2000/01, another live-trapping swift fox survey is being undertaken. There is no policy currently in place to delineate what should be done if the results of the winter 2000/01 live-trapping survey should show the total Canadian swift fox population to be the same (289) or less than the population estimates of 1997 and 1998.

WHALEFORCE



From our Whale Identification Guide by Clio Smeeton

At present, 70 boats, world-wide, are participating in this long running (est. 1986) international cetacean survey. At the moment they send their information in to us by snail-mail, but we hope soon that we will be organization can

start us off with the money (\$1,500) for production of a *WHALEFORCE* Burgee. All sailing participants will be able to identify each other and connect, which might make the Survey more fun receiving the survey information more directly through the Internet. Situation and sighting slips can be obtained from the CEI website. We are hoping that we will obtain funding for the production of a *WHALEFORCE* Burgee to be flown at the cross-trees by all *WHALEFORCE* participants.

