

David Suzuki and Ontario Nature Lobbyists Have Blurred the Line Between Opinion and Science

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With eight staff listed on Ontario's Lobbyist Registry, the David Suzuki Foundation has twice the number of lobbyists in Ontario than the Ontario Forest Industries Association (OFIA). Ontario Nature has three registered lobbyists, including the main author and one of the reviewers of the opinion piece entitled, "*From Climate to Caribou: How Manufactured Uncertainty is Affecting Wildlife Management.*" We are asking governments and the public to reject the campaign rhetoric from anti-forestry lobbyists as science.

Opinions, motherhood statements, and value-laden language belong in fundraising campaigns, not scientific literature. Having more in common with a press release, the article referenced in David Suzuki's July 3, 2018 Chronicle Journal article offers no original data or novel research, only a thinly-veiled rant with footnotes. As such, this commentary was published in the "*In My Opinion*" section of the Wildlife Society Bulletin.

The 2008 Environment Canada and Climate Change (ECCC) caribou disturbance model has well-known flaws, particularly when applied to Ontario's Caribou herds, (Sleep and Loehle 2010; Fortin et al. 2017; Rudolph et al. 2017) suggesting that disturbance alone is not sufficient to predict caribou responses to management. However, this is the house of cards caribou policy is being built on across the country and something that the authors believe shouldn't be questioned.

Two of the authors of the opinion piece were former professors of mine, who taught our class that science was about testing hypotheses, collecting data, discussing and questioning the results. Why are they now suggesting that those who actually follow this method are "*caribou science deniers*"? The OFIA agrees with David Suzuki; *science matters*, but we can not support dogma or muzzling debate.

There is no denial from industry that woodland caribou are in trouble, Masood et al. (2017) found that caribou range extent was projected to contract by 57.2-99.8% by 2050, and a complete loss of boreal caribou in Ontario if winter temperatures increase by more than 5.6°C by 2070, regardless of change to human disturbances. This reinforces the need to manage the landscape holistically, for all species, and to acknowledge the multiple factors at play.

The forest industry is committed to managing and protecting woodland caribou (see my February 23rd op-ed in the Toronto Star, [Forest Industry Also Committed to Protecting Caribou](#)). This isn't new or ground-breaking, in Northwestern Ontario forestry companies have been legally required to protect and renew caribou habitat since 1994.

Forestry will continue to play an essential role in caribou management and, as a 75-year-old organization, we remain accountable to our members, the public, and our stakeholders for any public statements we make. The convenient hyperbole and emotionally-charged rhetoric from the Wildlife Society Bulletin editorial might generate fundraising dollars, but it does not belong in active forest management.

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