



NEWS RELEASE

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Colville Confederated Tribes and Project Partners Release Canada Lynx in Eastern Washington

(Nespelem, Wash. November 23, 2022) – Canada lynx numbers are on the upswing in eastern Washington due to successful trapping and hauling efforts in the last two years.

The Colville Confederated Tribes' (CCT) wildlife staff and project partners were recently in Canada and captured 10 Canada lynx and relocated them to their new home on the Colville Indian Reservation (CIR). Nine lynx were released last year when the project first began.

“The trapping went well this year and the team was able to catch and relocate 10 adult lynx in about one month,” said Corey Peone, Inchelium District wildlife biologist for CCT. “Our goal was to catch them before the big snowfall arrived and the final lynx was caught the day after the first big snow storm.” He said, “The trapping efforts started in early October and ended in early November, and at one point, I believe there were up to 60 traps between both trap lines.”

In Canada, lynx are not a listed species so it is legal to trap them there. In Washington state, Canada lynx are listed as a federally threatened species so multiple permits were required to transport these animals across the border.

“When I was in Canada we caught three lynx in one day, so I got to work with these three toms from the trap to the release site,” said Elizabeth Odell, Inchelium Assistant district wildlife biologist for CCT. “After surveying the trap line, we moved the lynx into a kennel where they can be safely transported to the house we were staying at. We found it is much less stressful to process the animals at the house, where they can calm down in a dark and quiet space, rather than be filled with adrenaline inside the trap in the field.”

Odell said, “We let the lynx calm down and once they are drugged, we proceed to monitor their vitals; including respiratory rate, temperature, gum color, and heart rate. “We take their weight, secure a GPS collar, place an ear tag, and note the body condition and overall health. A veterinarian would confirm that it was healthy and we monitored them every few minutes until

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the animal is awake and alert. Once the lynx is awake, we offer raw chicken to give them some calories for the upcoming trip.” She said it took about two hours to transport them from Kelowna, B.C. to the border and once through customs, it took another 2.5 to 3 hours to drive them to the release site on the CIR.

“Every lynx that is released is fit with a GPS satellite collar that tracks its movement on a daily basis,” said Rose Piccinini, Sanpoil district wildlife biologist for CCT. “The first year of monitoring showed us so much and it's amazing to document how they are utilizing the landscape. As expected the majority of the lynx dispersed along the backbone of the Kettle Crest with the majority of them staying south of Boulder pass.”

“Over the course of the year, we had two males and two females return to Canada,” said Piccinini. “One of the females traveled south again and has returned to the North Half. During summer monitoring, we were able to confirm that one female reproduced. We have camera sets out to verify the survival of the kittens and we will continue to monitor her this winter.”

The CCT teamed up with Conservation Northwest, Upper Columbia United Tribes (UCUT), Okanagan Nation Alliance (ONA), and others to capture and relocate these large cats to the CIR. The goal of the project is to relocate at least 50 Canada lynx to the reservation in the next five years.

“It was an amazing year,” said Dave Werntz, science and conservation director for Conservation Northwest. “The Tribe’s wildlife staff, trappers, ONA, UCUT, and other partners showed up strong for another successful year supporting lynx recovery. We made some changes based on last years’ experience to improve trap performance, surmount weather and mechanical obstacles, simplify logistics, and ensure efficient and humane lynx care. And it worked!” He said, “It’s inspiring to work together with such a competent and productive team to right a historic wrong and boost biological diversity, ecological resilience, and regional lynx recovery.”

According to Werntz, lynx numbers have been low in the Kettle Range due to historic overharvesting (fur trapping) and the vast majority of lynx documented in Washington between 1964 and 1984 occurred in northeast Washington, mostly in the Kettle Range. He believes moving them in the Kettle Range from a robust lynx population from the north will work.

“We commissioned a scientific analysis that showed a substantial amount of suitable habitat for lynx in the Kettle Range that could support 12-40 lynx depending on their home range size,” said Werntz. “The Kettle Range was also identified by federal biologists a few years ago as one of six “core areas” essential to the continued persistence of lynx due to its extent of suitable habitat, connection to British Columbia, and quality snow and prey conditions.”

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