



## What's Happening in Our Mountain Parks?

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### The Cascade Corridor – An Experiment in Restoring Connectivity

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**See also:** [Your Comments Needed on the Decommissioning of the Banff and Jasper Airstrips](#)

The Cascade corridor lies on the north side of the TransCanada Highway opposite the Town of Banff. It links the Forty Mile, Cascade, and Bow River valleys, and is the best avenue for wildlife movement around the Banff town site.

Although it provides high quality wolf habitat, infrastructure and human activity with the Cascade corridor up to 1997 limited use of this area by wolves. Recognizing that human use of this corridor is relatively less than in other areas surrounding the Banff town site, researchers recommended its rehabilitation to improve habitat connectivity around the town of Banff, a recommendation that was accepted by park administrators.



Prior to 1997, the corridor contained a hotel, a ski area access road, a reservoir with access road, a bison enclosure, horse barns and corrals, an active airfield, and a fenced military cadet camp. Human use within the corridor included hiking, vehicular, airfield and horse traffic, and ice- and rock-climbing on Cascade Mountain. Since the fall of 1997, Parks Canada has removed the bison enclosure, barns and horse corrals, and closed the airstrip to all but emergency traffic. The cadet camp has been closed, and final closure of the airstrip is pending. This resulted in substantial decreases in human activity within the corridor even though hiking, vehicle traffic, and climbing continue.

Wolves responded to the restoration efforts, using the cascade corridor approximately six times more frequently following remedial action, despite an overall shift in the pack's home range away from the corridor to the backcountry. During the three years preceding restoration, researchers documented only two lone wolves crossing the corridor, but in the three years following restoration researchers documented the Cascade wolf pack crossing into regions west of the corridor at least 18 times. The Fairholme wolf pack, which

formed in November of 1999, uses the corridor also.

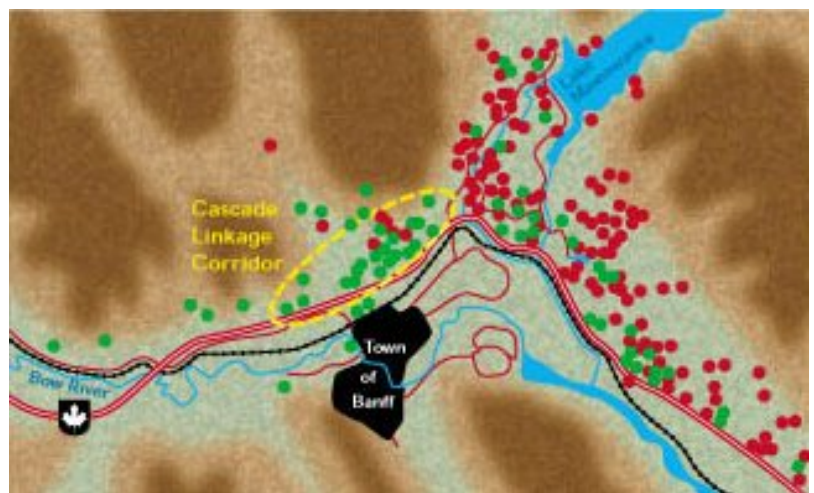
In short, rehabilitation of the corridor has increased the wolves' ability to move among habitats. It appears that in this case, the removal of human structures brought the wolves back to this important piece of land, helping to enhance their role in the larger ecosystem.

Other projects in the vicinity of Banff townsite which have sought a similar benefit have included the closure to humans of the Middle Springs wildlife corridor (on the base of Sulphur Mountain), and the winter closure of the Banff Springs golf course road.

### **Wolf use of the Cascade corridor –**

Tracking data show little use of the Cascade corridor prior to the removal of facilities (red dots). Following removal of human intrusions, wolves began to use the Cascade corridor to bypass the town of Banff and connect with the western Bow Valley (green dots).

Information courtesy of Danah Duke, Parks Canada  
Map adapted from Duke, D., and others, 2000.  
Restoration of a large carnivore corridor in Banff National Park, Alberta.



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