

## eNewsletter September-October 2020

### Rewilding unites city folk and destroys the countryside

Last month, 51.9 percent of Swiss voters backed a call by WWF, Pro Natura and Fondation Franz Weber to reject the “Swiss Federal Law on Hunting and the Protection of Indigenous Mammals and Birds” (JSG). This narrow ‘no vote’, which focused on the right to kill wild wolves that have returned to the mountains, leaves farmers with little choice but to deal with predators the way their forefathers did.

Rewilding has been a disaster in Europe. In Holland it created [\*“a barren wasteland of starving animals.”\*](#) But such catastrophes did not deter the UK prime minister Boris Johnson from committing recently to [‘restoring to nature’ 30 per cent of Britain by 2030](#). He might change his mind if he studied the Swiss experience. Rewilding in Switzerland ignited human wildlife conflicts for the first time since the 19th Century. Switzerland’s thirty-year experiment with rewilding brought back to life the dormant hostility between the cities and the countryside. The nation is now split into two hostile camps, fighting a culture war.

In 1995 the first wolf appeared in the mountains. Now there are approximately 100 in eight packs. Hungry wild wolves do what comes naturally in Switzerland. For want of other prey or in search of fun, they hunt sheep and goats. They leave behind bloodied corpses for Swiss children to stumble over. And these same wolves are getting ever closer to villages. One nearly made it into the city of Zurich. But it was pulverized by a train before it had a chance to send the city’s animal lovers rushing to their bunkers.

Mountain folk feel betrayed by the cities. Commenting on the rejection of the JSG, Stefan Engler, a member of parliament for a mountainous region, said: *“One has to ask now if we want in the mountains a pure wilderness. Or also human beings, which are living and working there.”* While Jacques Bourgeois, Member of the National Council of Switzerland, accused the alliance of animal protection organizations in Switzerland of running a *‘lying campaign’* that played on fear and which resonated in cities. And he’s right.

Campaigners launched a fake news campaign. They told the public that the JSG was a *‘shooting law’*. I wish it had been. But it was nothing of the sort. Under the existing act, which the JSG sought to replace, somebody has to demonstrate that an animal caused significant damage in order to obtain a hunting permit. A permit to kill a wolf can only be granted after proving that the individual in question killed more than 25 sheep in one month or 35 in four months.

Had the JSG been accepted, obtaining a hunting permit would have been slightly easier; proving that an animal displayed conspicuous behaviour, which damages or endangers people and/or livestock. Yet, significantly, the wolf would still have been a protected species in Switzerland. Farmers would still have had to build fences and protect wolves.

The JSG infuriated the animal rights mob because under the existing legislation, the Federal Office for the Environment (BAFU), based in Bern, issues hunting permits. Conveniently, the

capital city of Bern and BAFU are controlled by militant Greens. Whenever the requested proof to justify killing a wolf is manifest, vegan-anemics manipulate public emotions and lobby their soul-mates at BAFU.

The fact is, the likes of WWF fought hard to defend the status quo because the JSG switched decision-making from BAFU to the cantons; of which there are 26. And the alliance of animal protection organizations in Switzerland knew that in the cantons with the most wolves, voters are mostly immune to animal rights propaganda. Here's two examples. In the hunt- and gun-loving canton of Graubünden, 67.29 percent of voters backed the new law. In Valais, the canton with the Matterhorn, 68.60 percent voted yes. That is what was really behind their objection to the new law.

The JSG was, of course, a better law than the one that now stands. But a more enlightened and progressive approach would have sought to persuade the Swiss electorate to abandon rewilding. It would have been a shoot to kill – wolf, bear, beaver and mute swan etc. – law; one that defended threatened communities, agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

Even in the relatively sparsely populated Alps, neither wild bears nor wolves should be given legal protection. These dangerous animals should be confined to circuses (unfortunately that is not possible in Switzerland because of the animal rights lobby) and zoos (thankfully still allowed), along with tigers, lions and elephants. In an ideal world, the modern Swiss would have legislated to exterminate on sight *all* wild wolves and bears that the rewilders welcomed back.

### **Rewilding is a global problem**

Useful support for my opposition to rewilding comes from IWMC Board Member Jim Beers, a retired US Fish & Wildlife Service Wildlife Biologist, Special Agent, Refuge Manager, Wetlands Biologist, and Congressional Fellow.

Jim writes, “the wolves in the Lower 48 States and Europe have been encouraged in settled landscapes where the game animals are but part of a buffet of livestock, dogs and humans complete with their garbage.” He adds that predators supplement declining game animals with dogs and kids (and adults as available). This has to be stopped.

I love how Jim rails against unjust laws, which misappropriate the enforcement of “science” (read voodoo conservation: oops, biodiversity protection) to put in prison farmers for merely defending their communities and livelihoods against predators. More of Jim Beers’ wonderful defense of commonsense can be read here: <https://bcinteriorsci.ca/in-the-news/dear-colorado-why-you-should-reject-re-introducing-and-protecting-wolves>