



### THE SWIFT FOX RETURNS – LET’S SAVE THEIR HABITAT!

#### PETER SOROYE (WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY OF CANADA):

I’m Peter Soroye. I’m a researcher working with Wildlife Conservation Society Canada. And I’m on a mission: to identify and help protect Key Biodiversity Areas (KBAs), like the Saskatchewan grasslands where swift foxes live!

Swift foxes definitely live up to their name – they can run up to 37 miles per hour! They’re one of the smallest of the fox family, and they’re about the size of a housecat. Their fur is yellowish-red, gray, and black. Swift foxes spend a lot of their time underground in dens, where they can hide from predators and raise their young. They appear above ground at night to hunt for rodents, birds, and insects, though they’ll also eat fruits, grasses, and even prey killed by other animals. These little foxes can make a meal out of just about anything!

Swift foxes disappeared from Canada around the 1930s, after so much of the grassland where they lived was turned into farmland. But in the 1980s and 90s they were reintroduced, so Canada now has a more stable population. Talk about making a comeback!

But there’s still a long way to go before swift foxes are no longer at risk. Most of Canada’s grasslands have been lost, and they’re continuing to disappear due to human development and climate change. In fact, the Canadian grasslands are one of the most endangered ecosystems on Earth. We need to do all we can to help. In my work with Wildlife Conservation Society Canada, I’m working with a team that’s making sure we know where swift foxes live, so that we can make sure we’re giving them the best protection possible.





### PROTECT THE CARIBOU AND THEIR SHRINKING HOME

#### YIFENG WANG, (QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY):

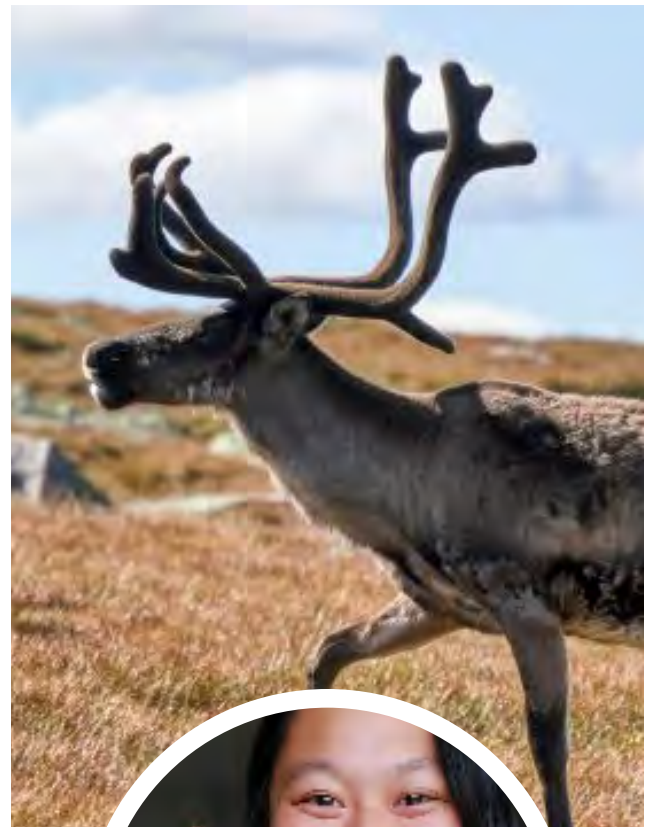
Hi, I'm Yifeng! I'm a researcher at Queen's University, and I'm researching an important caribou habitat in an area of coastal Labrador called the permafrost peatlands. That's where thick layers of decaying plants called peat help the ground stay frozen. And it's where lichen and other plants grow that caribou love to eat.

Caribou have large hooves, huge antlers, and thick, brown fur. They belong to the deer family – you might also know them as reindeer!

These amazing animals live in the arctic tundra and boreal forest in Canada, Alaska, and the western United States, but certain types are also found in Norway, Sweden, and Russia. Their hooves are like big wide shovels that help them dig through the snow for food, and walk on top of the snow instead of sinking in. In the summertime, their footpads grow spongy and springy so they can travel over different types of ground. Plus, caribou hooves can act as paddles to help them swim! Another cool fact? They're the only member of the deer family where both males and females grow antlers.

Caribou are great at moving from place to place to find food and shelter, but these days they're threatened due to climate change in their habitats. We need to do whatever we can to help.

If I can study where and how the permafrost peatlands are changing, it will help us figure out how to help the caribou for years to come.





### RINGED SEALS: MORE THAN ADORABLE

#### KATIE FLORKO (UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA):

Hi, I'm Katie Florko, a University of British Columbia researcher helping to protect the ringed seals in an area of the Arctic called the Hudson Bay.

We can all agree that ringed seals are super cute, with their plump bodies, spotted gray fur, and big brown eyes. But there's a lot more to these animals than their lovable looks.

In their habitat all around the Arctic, ringed seals are the smallest seal species. They live near the ice for most of the year, so they have a thick layer of blubber to keep them warm. They're also great divers and can hold their breath underwater for around 45 minutes! These superpowers come in handy as ringed seals hunt for the fish and other small sea creatures they eat. And it helps them hide from the polar bears and other predators that want to eat them.

Ringed seals are expert diggers, too. Using the claws on their flippers, they create snow caves to stay warm and protect themselves and their young from predators, and they cut holes into the ice so they can quickly dive and hide beneath it.

Ringed seals rely on the Arctic ice for food and protection, but their habitat keeps melting as temperatures rise due to climate change. I'm studying the relationships between these creatures and others in their food chain, so we can better help the ringed seals for years to come.

