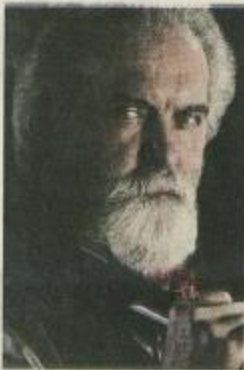


## NEWS

# Mahoney optimistic about future of wildlife

BY MARY-ANN BARR  
ADVOCATE STAFF

At the same time a conservationist says humans need to do a much better job of protecting Earth's biodiversity, he is optimistic about the future of wildlife.



SHANE MAHONEY

Shane Mahoney, who is in Red Deer speaking to the Wild Sheep Foundation Alberta's annual gathering today, is a retired wildlife research scientist with the Newfoundland government and founder of Conservation Visions Inc.

"My primary and fundamental interest is in keeping the wild others in this planet with us ... I try to instill that and impart that and help ignite or support that view within all communities, including the hunting community."

A few years ago Mahoney helped bring to fruition the first national congress about the challenges facing fish and wildlife populations in North America. He says the fact that it had to take an individual to get the idea rolling says something about the priorities being given to conservation and the issues of wildlife sustainability.

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"We have a lot of people who are interested in it if a specific issue arises, but we have too few citizens who deeply care about it and as a result of that, most of our political elite weigh in and out of conservation debates based on their personal backgrounds."

"Globally we know we are facing a biodiversity crisis. There is no doubt about this. We have massive problems of habitat loss the world over."

"My own view is we ought to, internationally ... do a much better job."

"If we cannot maintain the wildlife abundance, and the wildlife environment that wildlife depend upon in our midst, then obviously we are moving in a direction that is unhealthy for human beings," Mahoney said.

He is convinced the only way for conservation to achieve a higher status is with a grassroots movement.

He remains optimistic because he has seen examples around the world of rescues of wildlife, and where systems have been put in place, wildlife abundance has been maintained.

It wasn't that long ago, at the turn of the 20th Century in Canada and the United States, where wildlife populations were at their "absolute lowest levels."

"We did turn that around."

Many species populations have recovered, and in many ways that was because the hunting fraternity got involved with policies, laws and research. They have also devoted significant amounts of money to wildlife conservation, and not just to game species, Mahoney said.

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