

# Ground-Based Wildlife Surveys: Alberta Wildlife Animal Care Committee Class Protocol #011

Research Licences and Permits

Adopted 21 March, 2012

## Class Activity: Ground-Based Wildlife Surveys

This class protocol must be followed for all wildlife surveys conducted from the ground that are designed to elicit a response from an individual, alter the behaviour of an individual, or are being done in close proximity to a den, nest, or house of a wildlife species and which have potential to result in avoidance or abandonment of the site by the individual.

## Specific Activities

The following activities require issuance of a wildlife research permit and must be conducted according to this class protocol:

- Call playback - using conspecific or non-conspecific calls to elicit response from a species; Nest searches/nest drags - all physical searches or monitoring of active nests ; including camera use to record nesting activity;
- Den searches - all physical den searches, including camera probing methods;
- Attractants - drawing wildlife into areas through baiting, scent posts, or other attractants;
- Search animals - surveys that employ dogs or other animals to locate wildlife, signs of wildlife, or wildlife habitat;
- Night lighting - use of artificial lights to attract or detect wildlife, for example in surveys for swift fox and Ord's kangaroo rat.

## Objectives

The primary objective is to minimize disturbance and potential adverse effects on wildlife. Of particular concern are activities that are designed to elicit a response from an individual, alter the behaviour of an individual, or occur in close proximity to an animal's den, nest, or house.

## Primary Contact/Authority

Director of Fish and Wildlife Policy Branch

## Applicable Personnel

Project leaders and project teams must comply with this class protocol; they must have adequate experience and skills as outlined below:

- Project leads must be wildlife biologists or wildlife technicians with appropriate experience in the type of survey being conducted and possess an understanding of legal and regulatory protections for each species included in the survey.
- Project teams must include at least one field person with experience in the survey type and familiarity with species' biology, behaviour, and preferred habitat.

### Species

Multiple species of mammals, birds, amphibians, and reptiles within the province of Alberta, as required through the ESRD survey protocols [ESRD website](#).

### Applicable Geographic Range

Throughout Alberta

### Methods

- Surveys must follow approved Fish and Wildlife Policy Branch survey protocols available on the [ESRD website](#).
- If Fish and Wildlife Policy Branch survey protocols are not available for the proposed survey a detailed survey methodology must be included for review and approval. This may require Animal Care Committee review of the proposed project.
- In all instances every reasonable effort should be made to avoid unnecessarily disturbing wildlife species.
- All survey methods must abide by the statutes and regulations identified in Alberta's *Wildlife Act* and *Wildlife Regulation*.

### Evaluation

If there is any severe disruption to focal wildlife species or other species in the area during the survey the operation must be halted and all activities reviewed. Examples of this would include displacement from the production site, or a negative behavioural response by the individuals at the site. The permittee must contact the local wildlife biologist to develop appropriate corrective actions. If corrective factors cannot be identified the operation must be discontinued.

### Data Submission

Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development – Fish and Wildlife Policy Branch requires submission to the Fish and Wildlife Management Information System (FWMIS) of all data attained through wildlife surveys completed under the authority of a research permit. Information on FWMIS and electronic load forms that are needed for this database can be obtained from biologists at the Fish and Wildlife offices or online at <http://srd.alberta.ca/FishWildlife/FWMIS/Default.aspx>.

## **Euthanasia**

In the event of unforeseen irreversible injury or intolerable pain to a captured individual, euthanasia must be done safely and humanely. The permittee must be properly equipped and prepared to react in these circumstances. Use approved methods for the species/species group as per the Canadian Council on Animal Care [http://www.ccac.ca/en/\\_standards/guidelines](http://www.ccac.ca/en/_standards/guidelines).

All mortalities that result from survey activities, including euthanized animals, must be reported and submitted upon request to the local Fish and Wildlife office for forwarding to an appropriate diagnostic facility for post-mortem evaluation.

## **Communications**

- All members of the team should understand the inherent risks associated with fieldwork.
- Communication may be necessary with the local community and/or landholders regarding general location of call playback activities and other surveys.
- Prior to commencing surveys the project lead must contact the local Fish and Wildlife office(s) regarding general location and timing of survey activities.

## **References**

Alberta Fish and Wildlife Division. 2010. Sensitive Species Inventory Guidelines: August 2010 Update. (online)  
<http://srd.alberta.ca/FishWildlife/WildlifeManagement/documents/SensitiveSpeciesInventoryGuidelines-Apr18-2013.pdf> 128 pages

