



# Time for Nature



## He makes house calls

### Parks Canada's Wildlife Doctor

When do wildlife see a doctor? When Todd Shury arrives on the scene. Dr. Shury is Parks Canada's only wildlife veterinarian. He works all across the country helping Parks Canada fight diseases that threaten wildlife in our national parks.

In Riding Mountain National Park of Canada, Dr. Shury has been working to eradicate bovine tuberculosis (TB), a debilitating disease that threatens the park's elk and surrounding cattle herds.

In Wood Buffalo National Park of Canada, he is helping protect the health of an internationally known herd of wood bison. The park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, contains one of the largest free-roaming bison herds in the world.

The herd has suffered from bovine TB and brucellosis, and anthrax is also a problem. Dr. Shury is helping explore how these introduced diseases affect bison populations.

He helped capture, test and radio-collar over 300 bison between 1997 and 2000, allowing researchers to model how TB and brucellosis affect the population.

### Teaching the gentle touch

Humane handling of animals is important to Dr. Shury. To deal with nuisance wildlife or reduce human-wildlife encounters, park wardens need to tranquilize animals and move them to other locations.



Dr. Shury immobilizes a bull wood bison to help Parks Canada determine how TB and brucellosis are affecting the bison herd at Wood Buffalo National Park.

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Dr. Shury trains park wardens in humane techniques for immobilizing wild animals.

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During capture, animals are vulnerable to injury or a possible drug overdose. "I do lots of training with the wardens on how to immobilize problem animals," says Dr. Shury. He teaches the wardens how to minimize injuries and stress to the animals and how to ensure they get the right doses of drugs.

### Hoping to build a better bear trap

Animal welfare is an ongoing concern. For example, Dr. Shury is searching for a better way to capture nuisance bears. Existing methods, which include catching the bear with a steel cable, can hurt or even kill the animal.

He also wants to improve the way animals are tranquilized. Wardens use a variety of "remote delivery systems" for drugs, such as a dart shot from a rifle.

In Riding Mountain, Dr. Shury is testing various delivery systems as he immobilizes elk to test for the presence of bovine tuberculosis. "We're doing two studies in one," says Dr. Shury – fighting the disease while searching for more humane methods to handle the animals.



Performing transmitter implant surgery on a female Harlequin Duck in Banff National Park.

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### Creatures great and small

Large mammals and their diseases are a focus of attention, but the small ones don't escape Dr. Shury's notice. In Waterton Lakes National Park of Canada, he has been working with students on a disease and tick survey.

They are capturing small mammals and analysing the ticks they carry to see what diseases the animals are exposed to. The results of this study will help determine if serious human diseases such as Lyme disease and Colorado Tick Fever are present in southern Alberta.

"The best part of my job," says Dr. Shury, is "working in a profession with amazing people in Canada's most amazing places".

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