Environment and Climate Change Canada | Environnement et Changement climatique Canada

# NATURE OVERVIEW

Environment and Climate Change Canada's 50th anniversary
50e anniversaire d'Environnement et Changement climatique Canada
Meteorological Service of Canada's 150th anniversary
150e anniversaire du Service météorologique du Canada

Canada

# PURPOSE

To provide you with an overview of:

1. The State of Nature / Biodiversity in Canada.
2. ECCC's key responsibilities on nature and the tools at the department's disposal.
3. Key challenges and opportunities – short-term and long-term.

# CANADIANS CARE ABOUT NATURE

- 86% of Canadians supported protecting and conserving more natural spaces in Canada in 2019.
- 72% of Canadians considered protecting ecosystems and habitats a priority, with 70% finding it important to include nature-based climate solutions as part of the government's economic recovery measures.
- 97% of Canadians have either maintained or increased their support for nature conservation since COVID-19.
- 87% of Canadians support the federal commitment to protect and conserve 25% of land and freshwater by 2025, and ranked their highest priority issues:
    - Protecting natural habitats for wildlife (91%).
    - Reducing water pollution (90%).
    - Protecting Canada's National Parks and National Wildlife Areas (89%).
    - Protecting endangered species (86%).
- 78% of Canadians prioritize the protection of animal species at risk of extinction over the development of lands where those animals can be found.

*Sources: Polling by Abacus Data, Pollara Strategic Insights and Quorus Consulting Group between 2019 and 2021.*

# BIODIVERSITY IS A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

- Most of Canada is Crown land, the vast majority of which is administered by the provinces and territories.
- Land Claim Agreements with Indigenous groups cover ~ 40% of Canada's land mass.
- Both Protected Areas and working landscapes contribute to conservation.
- Collaboration and partnerships are essential.

| Federal government | Provinces, territories and municipalities | Indigenous governments | Landowners/managers, ENGOs |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Oceans, the North, federal lands, including First Nation lands.<br>• Migratory birds, aquatic species, listed species at risk.<br>• International negotiations.<br>• International and interprovincial trade.<br>• Key ECCC partners are: Parks Canada, DFO, ENRCan, AAFC, IAAC. | • Non-federal lands and some marine areas, most terrestrial species, wildlife management, natural resource development, and land-use planning. | • Opportunities to expand Indigenous leadership in conservation, especially where there are self government agreements in place. | • Stewardship on private lands and provincial crown lands. |

# NATURE IS IMPORTANT

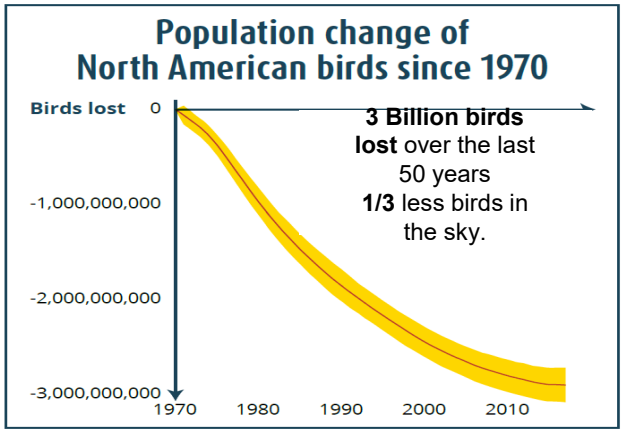
***Biodiversity is the variety of life on earth, including genes, species and ecosystems.***

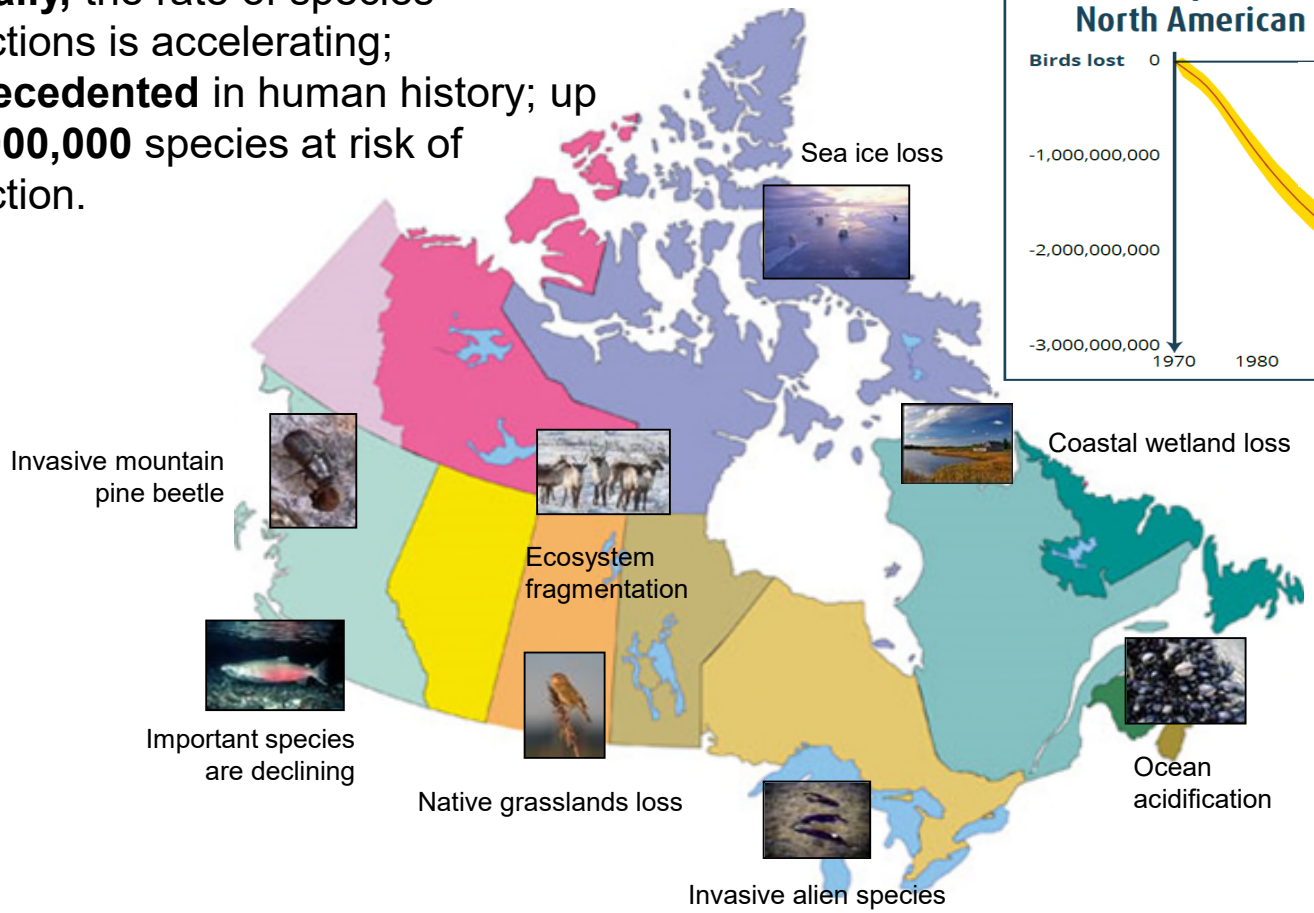
- Nature (also referred to as biodiversity) provides benefits we all **depend on for survival, security, and well-being** and is the foundation for much of Canada's **economic activity.**
- Globally, nature's services are valued at more than **$125 trillion a year.**
  - e.g. clean air and water, fertile soil, pollination, food and medicines, carbon sequestration, flood and drought control. Many ecosystem services cannot be valued in monetary terms.
- Often viewed as free, these services are <u>prohibitively expensive or impossible to replace</u>.

***Canada's biodiversity in numbers*:**

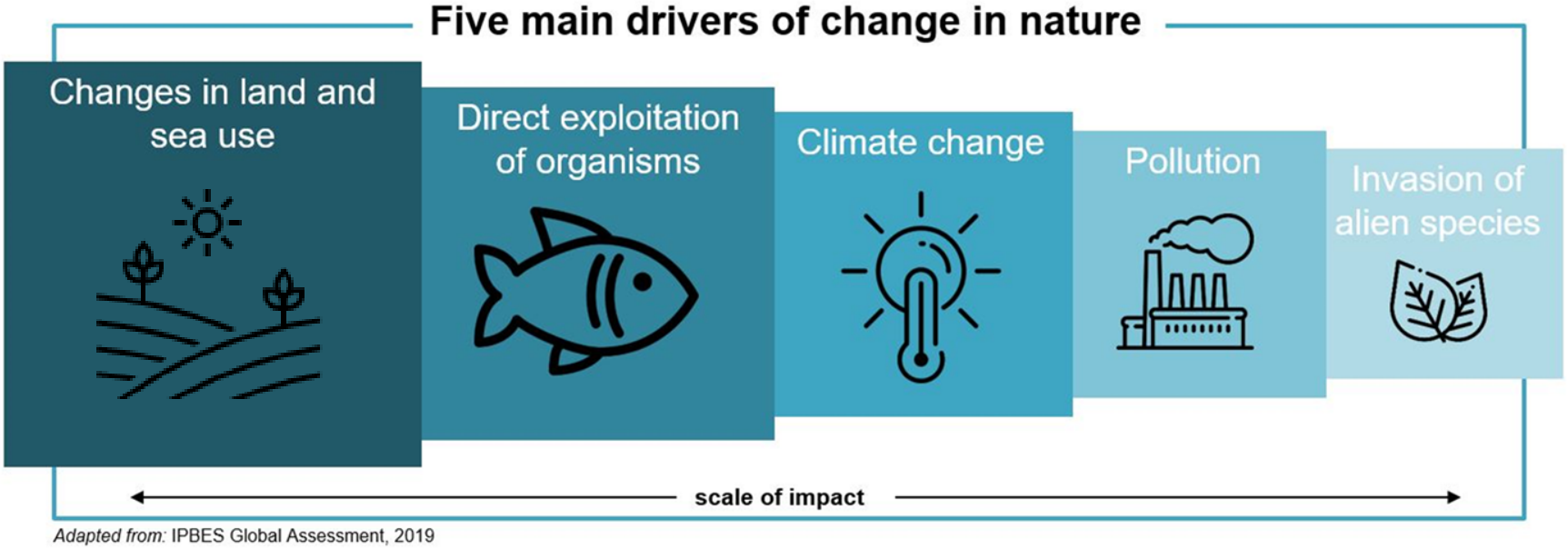
# BUT NATURE IS IN SERIOUS TROUBLE

**Globally,** the rate of species extinctions is accelerating; **unprecedented** in human history; up to **1,000,000** species at risk of extinction.



# WHY ARE WE LOSING NATURE?




*Adapted from:* IPBES Global Assessment, 2019

- Biggest driver is habitat loss, mainly from agricultural and forestry activities, resource sectors and urban and industrial development.
- Cumulative effects of multiple pressures amplify impacts.
- Nature's decline and climate change are connected.

# ECCC MANDATE FOCUSES ON CONSERVING SPECIES AND SPACES

- Leading **domestic and international biodiversity** policy and partnerships to protect nature.
- Leading on national efforts to conserve habitat and expand Canada's network **of protected and conserved areas**.
- Lead for **migratory birds** conservation and management.
- Protecting and recovering **species at risk**, including through the implementation of the *Species at Risk Act* (Parks Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, ECCC).
- Committed to meaningful Indigenous engagement in conservation.

# TOOLS TO CONSERVE NATURE

**Collaboration and Influence**

Partnerships with federal departments, PTs, Indigenous organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private and philanthropic sectors and academia are key.

## Legislative and Regulatory Actions

- Strong suite of legal tools - significant "must do" obligations but also flexible enabling authorities.
- Federal ***Species at Risk Act*** (SARA)***, Migratory Birds Convention Act*** and the ***Canadian Wildlife Act***, etc.

## Direct Conservation

- Establish and manage a network of **federal protected areas,** including ECCC's National Wildlife Areas and Migratory Bird Sanctuaries.
- Currently, federal areas account for 35% of all protected areas in Canada.

## Funding and Incentives

- Grants and Contributions are **critical conservation tools**
- ECCC to administer **$1.5 billion** in nature G&Cs 23-24 to 26-27
- Matching funding leverages considerable financial and in-kind support.
- Using federal funding for **innovative approaches** e.g. Project Finance for Permanence
- **Tax incentives** e.g. Ecogifts.

***Science and Indigenous knowledge underpin all of ECCC's conservation work.***

# BIODIVERSITY POLICY: GLOBAL MOMENTUM, DOMESTIC IMPLICATIONS

**ECCC's Role:** Lead work with Canadian and international partners to conserve nature domestically and abroad, including under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, and the Migratory Bird Convention.

**Considerations / Challenges**:

- Canada seen as a **global nature leader**, hosted the UN Biodiversity Conference in 2022 (COP15), and launched the Nature Champions Network.
- Pace and scale of biodiversity loss is staggering; global response to date insufficient to address it.
- Nature is an important part of Canada's identity and economy, particularly for Indigenous peoples, and Canada is a champion of its sustainable use.
- In 2022, the international community adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework to guide global biodiversity conservation and sustainable use efforts to 2030.
- **Investments in nature have to triple by 2030** if the world is to meet climate change and biodiversity targets; supporting developing countries is key to achieving the GBF objectives.

**Priorities include:**

- Implementation of the Framework including through National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan to 2030.
- Ensuring sustainable wildlife trade.

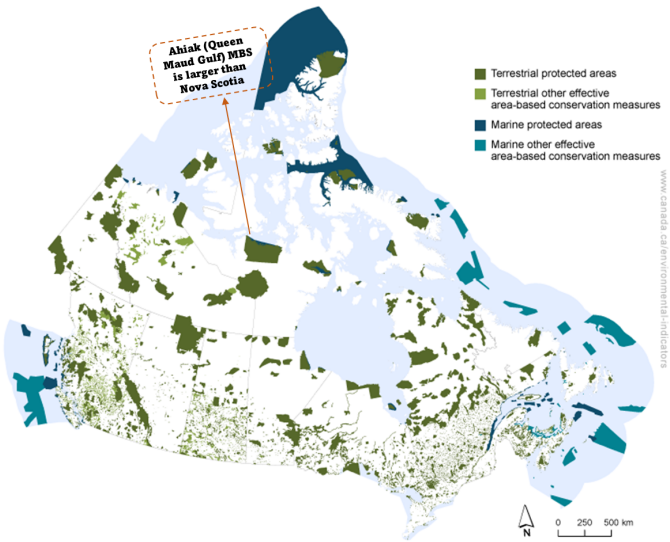
# BIODIVERSITY POLICY: GLOBAL MOMENTUM, DOMESTIC IMPLICATIONS

**Current Focus:**

- Development of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan to 2030 is underway:
  - implicates many federal departments;
  - requires close collaboration with provinces, territories, Indigenous peoples, youth, and stakeholders.
- Formal public engagement phase began in May 2023 with kick-off symposium, online survey and targeted engagement sessions in summer 2023.
- Key fora for engagement - new national Nature Advisory Council and distinction-based Indigenous Nature Tables.
- Follow-up and advance the Nature Champions Network and continued momentum in international fora (e.g. CBD, CITES).

# PROTECTED AND CONSERVED AREAS

**Issue:** Canada has committed to conserving 25 per cent of our lands and waters by 2025 and 30 per cent of each by 2030. This amounts to more than doubling the size of Canada's protected areas by 2030.




**ECCC's Role :**

- Establishing and managing network of federal protected areas.
- Working with partners to expand protected areas networks across Canada.

**Considerations / Challenges:**

- Economic interests and nature conservation: Many provinces and territories grappling with prioritizing land and resource development over protected area expansion and including working landscapes in contributions to protecting biodiversity; consider current protected areas targets as federal only.
- Indigenous-managed and/or co-managed lands growing, high interest / support for establishing Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas. Strong support from philanthropic sector, too.
- Need to work with / fund willing partners e.g. bilateral nature agreements. No ongoing funding can be a barrier to action.

# PROTECTED AND CONSERVED AREAS

**Recent focus**:

- Targeting program funding to Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas.
- Supporting Indigenous leadership and stewardship through Indigenous Guardians program, advancing Indigenous rights and responsibilities in conservation.
- Exploring innovative financing and partnerships, including with the private sector.
    - **Project Finance for Permanence initiatives** are ongoing partnerships bringing together Indigenous organizations, governments, and the philanthropic community to identify shared goals for protecting nature. Partners draft an agreement that includes all the actions, milestones and funding required to realize conservation outcomes and co-benefits for the long term. Initiatives are supported through an innovative funding model.
- Recognizing and counting working landscapes that also deliver conservation outcomes.

**Priorities include:**

- Advancing 4 Project Finance for Permanence initiatives: Northern shelf Bioregion in BC; Qikiqtani Region in NU; ON's Hudson Bay Lowlands; coastline of Western Hudson Bay and southwestern James Bay
- Securing Nunavut Land Use Plan Agreement
- Pursuing Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs), especially in the forestry and agriculture sectors

# MIGRATORY BIRDS

**Issue:** One-third of all migratory birds (~3 billion) have been lost over the past 50 years. 78% of migratory bird species spend at least half of the year outside of Canada.

**ECCC's Role :** Federal government has sole responsibility for migratory birds in Canada, with ECCC being the lead department. *The Migratory Birds Convention Act,* enacted in 1917 is more than 50 years older than ECCC itself.

**Considerations / Challenges:**

- International coordination is a key challenge, but also essential.
- Federal legislation makes it illegal to kill any migratory bird or destroy nests across Canada during the breeding season, with a few species being identified as protected year-round.
- The greatest threats to migratory birds include habitat changes in breeding, migration, and wintering areas, direct human-induced mortality (e.g., cat predation, window collisions), pesticides and climate change.
- Economic interests and nature conservation: Sectors (e.g., forestry, mining) grappling with regulatory compliance and resource operations.

**Recent focus:** Close, treaty-based cooperation with the U.S.A. International collaboration to address shared threats. A regulatory modernization effort is underway and there are compliance challenges for industry. Supporting conservation, management and decision making by ensuring key knowledge is updated and available and by continuing key partnerships.

**Priorities include:**

- Exploring proposed regulatory changes for incidental take (inadvertent harm to birds or nests).

# SPECIES AT RISK

**Issue**: Indigenous groups and ENGOs petitioning for federal intervention through SARA's regulatory tools due to perceived provincial inaction or weak provincial legislation (e.g. boreal caribou). Increasing legal risk for the federal government.

**ECCC's Role:** Overall implementation of the Act; exercising regulatory authorities and implementing conservation measures, including conservation agreements, for the recovery and protection of species at risk (SAR) and their habitat.

**Considerations / Challenges**:

Economic interests and nature conservation: Involves complex trade-offs where conservation and protection actions often require tough, polarizing decisions affecting industries, livelihoods and traditional use.

- SARA designed as a 'safety net' at the federal level which relies on local action by provinces and territories.
- Stewardship action on-the-ground requires strong partnerships.

**Recent focus:** Implementing Pan-Canadian Approach to Transforming SAR Conservation in Canada providing focused efforts for priority species, places and sectors using a stewardship approach to achieve biodiversity outcomes. Successful court decisions reaffirming the Minister's authority to take action on non-federal lands.

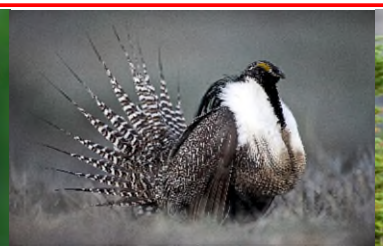
**Priorities include:**

- Securing the protection of several species on provincial lands.
- Approaches to compensation related to protecting critical habitat in Quebec and Alberta.

*Wood Bison*

*Western Chorus Frog*

*Monarch Butterfly*



*Sage Grouse*

*Woodland Caribou*

# NATURE AGREEMENTS

**Context**

Nature Agreements intended to support and seek commitments from provinces and territories to help achieve key federal conservation goals, notably:

- Conserving 30% of Canada by 2030;
- Protecting and recovering species at risk and migratory birds, and their habitat;
- Supporting Indigenous leadership in conservation;
- Advancing knowledge and data-sharing;
- Seeking gains for nature smart climate solutions and habitat restoration.

Supported by $200M in G&Cs, but seeking to enable improved results and FPT alignment across CWS funding programs.
Canada-Yukon Nature Agreement signed (Dec 2022).

**Priorities include:**

- Active negotiations underway with British Columbia, Nova Scotia and Northwest Territories.
- Seeking to enter or resume discussions / negotiations with several other jurisdictions in the coming months.

# FIGHTING BIODIVERSITY LOSS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

**Issue:** The dual crises of climate change and biodiversity loss need to be tackled together.

**ECCC's Role:** Working with other federal departments (AAFC, ENRCan) to advance actions on natural climate solutions that seek to mitigate climate change through greenhouse gas emission reductions and provide benefits for biodiversity and human well-being.

**Considerations / Challenges:**

- Important to maximize Nature's innate ability to support climate change mitigation and adaptation, while taking care to avoid negative impacts to biodiversity from climate change interventions.
- The Global Biodiversity Framework recognizes the important role of nature-based solutions.
- Provinces and Territories have varying degrees of interest in natural climate solutions. Strong support from ENGOs. Private sector interested in linking biodiversity and carbon offsets.

**Recent focus:** Implementation of 10 year ($1.411B) Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund and supporting 2 billion trees initiative (habitat restoration).

**Priorities include:**

- Delivering on the natural climate solutions initiatives.

# OPPORTUNITIES MOVING FORWARD

Leveraging international momentum on nature to highlight Canadian **leadership** and drive domestic action and ambition.

Strengthen **links** between the economy and nature and climate change, and factor in the many **values of nature,** including in federal decisions.

Collaborating with willing partners among **PTs and municipalities** in advancing an integrated **nature agenda.**

Further **advancing implementation** of natural climate solutions, including emphasis on **climate change adaptation.**

Continue building relationship for more **third party investment**. Foundations are keen to contribute and bigger foundations are keen to invest.

Seeking **win-win outcomes and solutions for communities** – simultaneously growing our natural spaces, working landscapes, and economies.

Moving forward, potential areas of **progress and collaboration** in nature protection are multiple.