



We stand for wildlife



To mine or not to mine?

Yukon needs to ask the question

The Yukon Government collected just 0.03% of the value of minerals mined in the territory on behalf its residents over last 10 years in the form of royalty payments from mining companies. It is figures like this that draw into question the real benefit of allowing free reign for mining exploration and development across one of Canada's wildest landscapes.

Fortunately, the Yukon Government, just prior to calling the current election, had embarked on a review of the rules around mining in the territory. WCS Canada [weighed in with a comprehensive set of recommendations](#) urging the government to create a framework that better acknowledges the significant ecological impacts of mining, the impossibility of completely avoiding such impacts and restoring wild areas after mining, and the contradiction between the Territory's commitment to "free, prior and informed consent" with Indigenous communities and a "free entry" mining system that gives communities no say in where and when mineral claims can be staked.

We have urged the government to carry on with this important review and use it as an opportunity to reconsider the notion that mining should be pursued at almost any cost under the justification of "economic development." Instead, we argue mining projects should only be considered after other ecological and community values are addressed through comprehensive land-use planning processes and that any projects that do proceed should provide real lasting benefits for local communities.



Yukon's mining review is an important opportunity to ensure that mining development aligns with environmental and community values, including Indigenous reconciliation. Photo: Chrystal Mantyka-Pringle/WCS Canada

Kudos for bat work

The Alberta Community Bat Program, part of WCS Canada's efforts to protect western bats, has been awarded the 2021 Outreach Award from the Alberta Chapter of the Wildlife Society. And we must say our Alberta bat team does a terrific job of spreading the word about the wonders of bats and getting people involved in their protection. You can see it for yourself at AlbertaBats.ca.

One wetland saved in southern Ontario, but what about others?

Many of our Ontario readers will be aware of the controversy that has swirled around plans to build a large warehouse in the middle of one of the few remaining coastal wetlands on the north shore of Lake Ontario. The plan to build the warehouse in the Duffins Creek Provincially Significant Wetland in the city of Pickering on the eastern edge of Toronto has been hotly opposed by local citizens and people across the province. Despite this opposition, the provincial government kept the pressure on to move the project forward, stripping away one level of planning controls after another

in a bid to clear the way for the warehouse. WCS Canada President Dr. Justina Ray was asked to provide her expertise [on the issue with a submission to the Toronto Region Conservation Authority](#). She pointed out that the conditions for development the TRCA was ordered by the province to impose would not be enough to offset the destruction of the provincially significant wetland that is important for migratory birds, amphibians, and protecting biodiversity. Fortunately, public and expert opposition resulted in [Amazon walking away from the project](#) and the local municipal council reconsidering the appropriateness of allowing development in such habitat, one that is becoming increasingly rare in southern Ontario. The Duffins wetland would appear to be safe, but [the provincial government's actions](#) to strip authority from Conservation Authorities and undercut planning rules mean more damaging developments could still proceed elsewhere.



Wetlands are hugely important for biodiversity and Southern Ontario now has only a tiny fraction of its natural wetlands left intact. We need to ensure that these special places are protected.

Another piece in the Key Biodiversity Areas puzzle

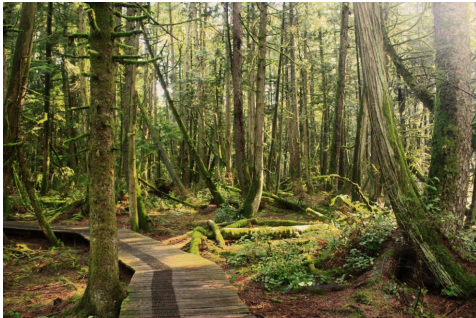
Standards are important, especially when you are trying to develop common approaches to

A National Standard for the Identification
 of Key Biodiversity Areas in Canada

Version 1.0



The new national standard will ensure a consistent approach to identifying KBAs.



Burns Bog in the heart of Vancouver is one of more than 200 KBAs identified across Canada. Photo: Vancouver Trails.

identifying Key Biodiversity Areas across Canada's vast wild landscape. That's why we are pleased to announce the release of the [KBA Canada National Standard](#), which will complement the KBA Global Standard and ensure we have a means to identify KBAs in ways that are objective, transparent and rigorous. The Canadian standard is actually the first national standard released under the KBA program globally and contains some unique aspects that speak to Canada's biodiversity context.

Meanwhile, the work of identifying KBAs across Canada moves steadily ahead with more than 200 already identified across the country. [Check out our dashboard](#) for details on where they are and what species led to their identification (the dashboard is a work in progress and does not include all KBAs or the IBAs that are now being reassessed under the KBA Standard). One of the areas where the KBA process is most advanced is Yukon, where a number of sites have undergone review. Ontario will be catching up soon now that we have hired a new KBA Coordinator for the province, with a focus starting on the Greenbelt in Southern Ontario. To stay in touch with our growing KBA program in Ontario and beyond, please visit kbacanada.org and sign up for monthly updates.



Development in the far north of Ontario should be paused until proper planning to protect globally important ecosystems and to ensure the health of communities is completed. Photo: Susan Morse.

Time to rethink Ring development

WCS Canada has joined with a number of Indigenous communities and non-governmental organizations [to call for a moratorium on development in Ontario's Ring of Fire mining region](#). We believe the moratorium should remain in place until two major concerns are addressed:

1. Protection plans for the region's sensitive wetlands and watersheds are in place, and
2. Access to clean water, housing, and health services have been secured for all upstream and downstream communities from the proposed Ring of Fire.

Any protection plan for this region must be comprehensive, based on best available science and Indigenous Knowledge, and reflect the global significance of the carbon rich Hudson Bay-James Bay Lowland, including the Attawapiskat, Kapiskau, Albany, Ekwan, Opinnagau and Winisk Rivers and the thousands of streams that flow into Hudson Bay and James Bay.

Currently, the province is undertaking environmental assessments for two road projects that will [eventually be linked to form one access road, with a third link in preparation](#). This will be the first step toward development of the Ring of Fire. This kind of fragmented approach to planning without looking at the broader impacts of opening the region to new uses is exactly what has led to wild species being threatened in areas further south, and ecosystems being compromised or destroyed. It is time for a new approach and we are hopeful that a promised federal [Regional Environmental Assessment](#) can create an opportunity for bigger picture planning, but it will only be effective if done in meaningful partnerships with Indigenous communities, and all development activities are paused until comprehensive protection plans can be developed.

Origins of COVID-19 no mystery

The World Health Organization's just released report on the origins of COVID-19 make one thing clear: The virus originated in the wild and was likely passed through to humans by a chain of wildlife. The actual spillover of the virus from animals to humans may also have happened at multiple sites, not just one seafood market as previously thought. Fur farms, wildlife markets and other places where wild animals are under stress all may have contributed.

Dr. Christian Walzer, chief global veterinarian for WCS, noted in response to the report that "we understand enough to take action to prevent future zoonotic outbreaks."

"There is no time to hesitate on how governments must respond to prevent the next pandemic." Dr. Walzer added that "We must acknowledge the basic tenet that the more we destroy and intrude on nature, the more likely zoonotic spillovers will occur. Zoonotic spillover events and subsequent outbreaks are inevitable, as the interfaces between wildlife and humans increase, primarily due to deforestation and agricultural expansion." He urged government leaders to adopt a [One Health](#) approach and take action on the [The Berlin Principles](#) that make clear how protecting wildlife and wild areas is also about protecting ourselves.



Disturbance of natural areas can cause viral spillover events. Above logging in a tropical forest in Malaysia.

Support our work to save wildlife!

At WCS Canada, we stand for wildlife and are in the field every day working to save wildlife and wild places. You can support our work by [making a secure donation](#) right now!

Top banner image of blackpoll warbler: Jukka Jantunen

DONATE
NOW

