

[View online](#)



# We Stand for Wildlife



## The door to a better biodiversity future is now open

*Convention on Biological Diversity negotiations produce a solid deal that lays the groundwork for more ambitious efforts to address the biodiversity crisis in Canada and around the world.*



*WCS Canada's conservation science work has laid the groundwork for smart implementation of many of the measures agreed to in Montreal. Photo: Susan Morse*

*By Justina Ray, WCS Canada  
President and Senior Scientist*

Negotiations on a new global deal to save nature reached their [tipping point](#) at just about the same time that Lionel Messi was racing past defenders

in the World Cup final. But while Argentina's victory caught the world's attention, the win for nature that resulted in Montreal was really the much bigger deal.

[The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) adopted at the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties ("CoP15") for Biodiversity held in Montreal earlier this month [started out](#) with very much the same kind of coin flip odds as the soccer shootout between France and Argentina.



*WCS Canada President and Senior Scientist Dr. Justina Ray was a member of the Canadian delegation to the biodiversity talks and carefully tracked the difficult work of bringing 188 parties to consensus on a plan to protect nature.*

[No one could predict how things were going to end](#) coming into these long-delayed negotiations with a text full of provisional language that had to be agreed on by every country in attendance. But remarkably, 188 Parties reached consensus on the new framework that moves the goalposts significantly on addressing the growing global wave of wildlife extinctions and ecosystem losses – including right here in Canada.

Having witnessed the often-tense negotiations that led up to the agreement, there are many aspects of the [final document](#) that I find relatively awe-inspiring. It acknowledges the plight of global biodiversity, the dependence of humans on the biosphere as well as the need for transformative change and a “whole of government” approach to truly protect nature. It includes strong language about the right to a healthy environment, respect for the rights of Indigenous Peoples, the “full and effective contributions” of women, youth, and Indigenous peoples, inter-generational equity and [a welcome emphasis on ecosystems](#) as a key element of biodiversity embedded within several targets.

That is no small piece of work when you consider the vastly different conditions and worldviews of the countries involved – from powerful Western states to tiny island nations and everything in between. The 23 targets of the framework that support the overall mission “to take urgent action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss” by 2030 collectively provide a strong directive for immediate action. These actions include protection of 30% of land and inland waters and 30% of marine and coastal areas; restoring and halting the loss of areas important to biodiversity and of high ecological integrity; and addressing key drivers of biodiversity loss (land- and sea-use change, pollution, invasive alien species, climate change and ocean acidification).

Another set of targets deals with many aspects of implementation, including finance and resource mobilization, full integration of biodiversity into policies and regulations, addressing destructive financial subsidies and the need for business disclosure of “risks, dependencies and impacts” on biodiversity. And it all comes with a monitoring framework with “headline” indicators to track progress of goals and targets.

Compared to the previous global agreement to protect nature, the hope is that measurable targets, an accompanying monitoring framework, and [enhanced attention to implementation](#) – along with increasingly [strong scientific understanding of the urgency of the biodiversity crisis](#), will propel individual nations to [turn their promises into action](#).

Arriving at this solid, if imperfect, outcome involved much more than the work of government negotiators. WCS Canada, for example, played important roles [both inside and outside the official negotiations](#). As an official member of the Canadian delegation, I sat in on negotiating sessions and provided support to Canada’s leadership role as host of CoP15. As part of the large contingent of Canadian civil society organizations at the meeting, we shared our understanding of the implications of each of the many, many drafts of the main agreement and side agreements through a conservation science lens.



*Peter Soroye, WCS Canada’s Key Biodiversity Areas Assessment and Outreach Coordinator, addresses the need for Indigenous collaboration in identifying Key Biodiversity Areas at the CoP. Photo: Lynsey Grosfield/WCS Canada*

Help us make the most of this opportunity to save nature!

WCS Canada also made a significant splash with presentations on [peatlands](#) and [Key Biodiversity Areas \(KBAs\)](#). These were a golden opportunity to build understanding of new conservation opportunities and, in the case of peatlands, to re-emphasize the link between biodiversity protection and climate action. Having representatives from the [global WCS team](#) – from Colombia to Congo – at the negotiations also helped to bring a broad perspective to the work of explaining what needs to be done to protect biodiversity.



*Lorna Harris, Forests, Peatlands and Climate Lead*



*Ciara Raudsepp-Hearne, Key Biodiversity Areas Director*



*Peter Soroye, Key Biodiversity Areas Assessment and Outreach Coordinator*



*Chloé Debyser, Key Biodiversity Areas Project Technical Coordinator*

Was what was achieved in Montreal enough? In many ways, it has left us in the same position as Argentina at the end of extra time. We have clawed our way back into the game, [but we need to do more to win](#). Not enough accountability is built into the framework and we need more clearly-defined milestones to measure and ensure progress in the next decade. Importantly, even with this being a key focus in Montreal, there is still insufficient funding from developed nations for the rest of the world to support implementation. We need to remind ourselves that the “cost” of helping to protect biodiversity in other parts of the world is a small price to pay for keeping our world liveable and a sliver of [what we spend on things like armaments](#) that often find their way into conflicts driven by ecosystem breakdown. Our recent pandemic experience is, of course, another stark reminder about the [huge costs of compromised ecosystems](#).

For all of us at WCS Canada, this agreement feeds directly into the work we have been doing across Canada to change the conservation paradigm. Our work as scientists on ensuring globally important ecosystems, like boreal forests and [peatlands](#), maintain their high ecological integrity is now a perfect launching point for efforts to formally protect areas rich in biodiversity and carbon – particularly through support of Indigenous-led conservation and policy reform. Our efforts to better understand how the Arctic environment is being transformed by climate change will set the stage for strong and proactive protection

measures. Our efforts to better understand the needs of key species like bats, caribou, wolverine and lake sturgeon will help change the current negative course for these and other ecosystem- and cultural “keystone” animals. Our [KBA program](#) is identifying important places for conservation action and our new [SHAPE of Nature website](#) is providing information on conservation indicators for the public and decision-makers.

There is a lot of work ahead of us at WCS Canada. We hope [you can continue to support us](#) to turn this opportunity into action for nature. [The door to a better future is now open.](#)

## MORE WCS CANADA NEWSLETTERS



*Top banner image: Bison (Canva Images)*