



We Stand for Wildlife



Canada has work to do

Convention on Biodiversity negotiations an opportunity to address the importance of protecting peatlands and key areas for biodiversity



Fen pattern in the Hudson Bay Lowlands, the world's second largest peatland complex and third largest wetland. Photo: Lorna Harris/WCS Canada

Hot on the heels of once again struggling to come to some agreement on climate change, world leaders will be coming to Montreal for long-delayed talks on the intertwined crisis of biodiversity loss.

And just as the recent climate talks in Cairo were all about the race against the clock, so will be the talks in Montreal given that roughly one million species are headed to extinction and wild spaces continue to shrink around the globe, including here in Canada.

Canada has big responsibilities on both the climate and nature fronts.

For climate, the massive amounts of carbon stored in this country's peatlands — an estimated 150 billion tonnes of carbon, equivalent to 11 years of global greenhouse gas emissions — gives Canada an outsized responsibility for ensuring we protect these [natural carbon storehouses](#) and advance nature-based climate solutions. For biodiversity, as a country stretching across 10 million km² and bordering three oceans, we have a similarly outsized responsibility to safeguard globally important wild areas, from tiny pockets of nature in our cities to the vast boreal region using tools like the identification of [Key Biodiversity Areas](#).

WCS Canada is taking part in the Montreal talks in a few important ways. Our President and Senior Scientist, Dr. Justina Ray, will be part of the official Canadian delegation and will have an inside view of efforts to finalize a new set of goals and targets for 2030. Given that no country managed to achieve the 2020 Aichi Targets of the Convention on Biodiversity, [emerging from COP15 with an ambitious Global Biodiversity Framework](#) (the biodiversity equivalent of the Paris Agreement for Climate) will be important. We will also be highlighting the role of Indigenous-led conservation in Canada as both an important way of acting on biodiversity protection commitments and to advance reconciliation.

At COP15, WCS will host or take part in several side events that profile Canada's leadership on [Key Biodiversity Areas](#), the [essential role of peatlands](#) for addressing climate change, and treatment of biodiversity in impact assessment. Joining international colleagues as part of the WCS Global delegation will be Dr. Ciara Raudsepp-Hearne, Dr. Lorna Harris, and Lynsey Grosfield from WCS Canada.



Woodland caribou are one of the growing number of species at risk in Canada. We need strong targets and plans for conserving and restoring biodiversity in all parts of Canada. Photo: Hartley McMahon.

Canadian Geographic [has a great explainer piece](#) on everything that is at stake in the upcoming Convention on Biodiversity negotiations in Montreal. It covers what is on the table (revising 21 targets) and what the outcomes could be, from protecting global biodiversity to advancing conservation efforts in Canada.

Always will be there

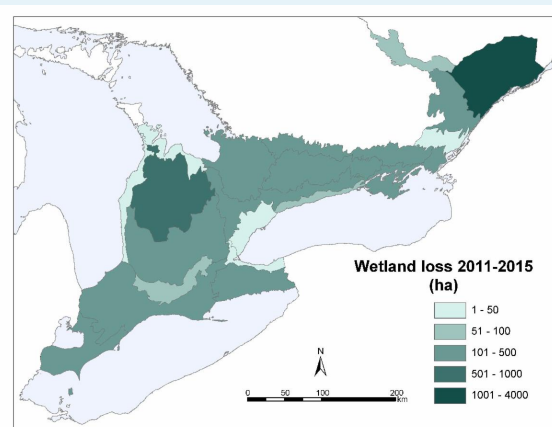
That is the title of a breathtaking and compelling new video produced by the Dena Kayeh Institute. This beautiful film captures the story of the Kaska, their land and culture, the impacts of colonial occupation — including construction of the Alaska highway and the Faro mine — and their gift of Dene K'éh Kusān (Always will be there) to the world to help address the crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. It highlights the Kaska Nation's efforts to create an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area in an area of north-central British Columbia that [WCS scientists have documented](#) as being rich in biodiversity, clean water, and important climate change refugia.



Wetland protection takes a huge blow in Ontario

Province's wetlands need more help, not less

The Ontario government has released a plan that will dramatically weaken protections for wetlands in the province. The government is justifying this move on the need to cut regulatory “red tape” to facilitate the building of new housing. But wetlands are a terrible place to build homes. Plus, as the province’s own [Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force](#) noted last February, “[A] shortage of land isn’t the cause of the problem. Land is available, both inside the existing built-up areas and on undeveloped land outside greenbelts.” Wetlands continue to disappear in Ontario: in southern Ontario, the rate of wetland loss has actually been accelerating rather than decreasing in recent decades.



Wetland loss in hectares, 2011-2015, from [State of Ontario's Biodiversity](#).

Wetland loss has been increasing in the southern part of the province, while vital northern wetlands continue to be unprotected.

By essentially eviscerating the Ontario Wetland Evaluation System (OWES), the government will leave the few remaining wetlands we have in southern Ontario at risk to the direct and indirect impacts of development. What is equally concerning, is that by making this move, the government is signalling that they have no interest in wetland evaluation or protection – including for the vast, intact wetlands of the far north in Ontario, most of which have never been officially evaluated by the provincial government, but have world-class values. With mining interests zeroing in on areas like the [Hudson Bay Lowlands](#) – the world’s third largest wetland complex – we need a clear picture of what is stake ecologically and dismantling the OWES is a step in the wrong direction. WCS has joined 70 other organizations in opposing the government’s proposed changes and [submitted our own comments](#) on what these changes will mean for one of the most endangered ecosystem types in the province.

Down on the farm

A different way to feed ourselves — and nature



Farms in the Yukon tend to be smaller and more integrated with natural areas. Photo: Maria Leung

Farming is different in Yukon, but it is also growing. Yukon farms tend to be smaller and closer to nature than farms in more southern areas and that creates opportunities to take more sustainable approaches to agriculture as the territory looks to expand local food production.

[A new conservation report](#) from WCS Canada explains what Yukon farmers can do to ensure they retain the benefits of working with nature. It outlines a series of best practices, including retaining strips of natural habitat on or near farms, creating wildlife friendly water bodies and avoiding pesticide use, that can ensure a more sustainable approach to food production in Canada's north.

[The report](#) focuses on a specific set of species at risk, including birds, bats and bumblebees, and outlines the benefits farmers get in return – from pollination of crops to a reduction in insect threats to livestock. Yukon has an opportunity to take farming in a different direction that maintains space for wildlife while providing sustainable local food production by following the practices outlined in the report.

Our Yukon team has also been exploring the story of barn swallows in Yukon and how to help this species at risk at the northern edge of its range. [A recent paper published by Maria Leung and Dr. Don Reid](#) looks at the link between these birds and farm practices and how to make farms swallow friendly by providing access to structures for nesting and reducing threats like cats and mice.

Things are shifting

Climate change is already reshaping landscapes



Patterns of vegetation change in Yukon

Kirsten Reid (Memorial University of Newfoundland) and Don Reid (WCS Canada)
November 24, 2022

Check out the [Story Map](#)

Far from being some future threat, climate change is reshaping landscapes right now and nowhere is that clearer than in Canada's north. [Our new Story Map](#) visualizes some fascinating research by our Yukon team that looks at how the territory's vegetation communities are already shifting in the face of higher temperatures, changing precipitation patterns and increasingly intense and frequent fires. It also asks the question: When and how should we intervene to shape or steer these changes?

WCS scientists Kirsten Reid and Don Reid have also authored [a Canadian Geographic piece](#) on their findings and the implications.

Giving Nature a Boost

**GIVING
TUESDAY**

Nov
29

Today is Giving Tuesday's 10th anniversary. By supporting our Giving Tuesday Campaign today, you can make your donation go even further! For donations received on November 29th, an [extra 1% will be added to your gift](#) – so you can give nature a boost and make an even bigger impact. Your continued support will help us to keep expanding our science and conservation partnerships, while advancing innovative solutions to the combined climate and biodiversity crisis. [Please donate now to mark Giving Tuesday!](#)

**MAKE A GIFT
TODAY**

Become a monthly donor and receive a cozy gift

Becoming a monthly donor is an easy and affordable way to boost our efforts to protect

Canada's most vulnerable ecosystems and wildlife. [Become a monthly donor this holiday season and receive a welcome gift to keep you warm and cozy.](#)

Award winners



“We all do what we do out of love for our communities and for this planet, and it’s that love that will sustain us, and make us successful.”



Dr. Justina Ray
President and Senior Scientist
Wildlife Conservation Society Canada

Winner of the 2022 Wilburforce Conservation Leadership Award

See the announcement on [Twitter](#)

Dr. Justina Ray, WCS Canada President and Senior Scientist, was named one of four winners of the Wilburforce Foundation’s [Conservation Leadership Awards](#) earlier this month in recognition of “her ongoing work on science-based conservation policy and partnerships with First Nations across northern Canada.” Paul Beaudet, Executive Director of the Wilburforce Foundation, noted that “Justina sets a powerful example for bringing science to policymakers in compelling, accessible ways that leads to conservation of critical areas,” and added “Her humble leadership has made a difference in the literal landscape of the northern regions and across Canada.” That’s about as much well-deserved praise as our humble president will allow us to print.



WCS Weston Family Foundation Fellow Adam Kirkwood was recently awarded first place for a research poster he presented at the Sentinel North conference in Quebec City. Adam’s research focuses on how thawing permafrost in the Hudson Bay Lowlands could affect mercury concentrations in the area’s fish-rich lakes and rivers. He does a great job of explaining what is happening to the area due to climate change and what it could mean for mercury – and people – [in this video](#).

2023 Fellowships

The [WCS Weston Family Foundation Fellowship program](#) helps advance the careers of promising young scientists like Adam while also helping us fill important knowledge gaps. Each year, we support a new group of fellows to explore important conservation questions across Canada's vast boreal region. Successful applicants will receive financial support for their projects along with mentorship from WCS Canada scientists and an opportunity to network with other Fellows and Fellowship alumni. We are currently accepting applications for 2023 Fellowships. If you are a graduate student pursuing a Masters or Doctoral degree and have a passion for nature, [apply online by Jan. 13, 2023.](#)

Bats, bats and more bats

Bats are getting their moment in the spotlight



The new Kuskanook Bat Chalet. From left: Derick Todd (Malibu Construction), Dr. Cori Lausen (Wildlife Conservation Society Canada), Geromy Piva (Piva Mechanical Industrial Crane Services). Photo: WCS Canada

WCS Canada's bat work has been grabbing headlines in the last month. The story of how the Alberta Community Bat program team is using guano collected from under bridges to track

the spread of white nose syndrome (WNS) [is featured on PBS Nature](#). Efforts to field test a treatment developed by WCS Canada and others that can increase bat's resistance to WNS in Washington State, where the disease is spreading [made the news there](#) and the idea of [making gardens bat friendly](#) was featured on the CBC on the north side of the border as was the [spooky story of the potential spread of WNS to our westernmost provinces](#). All this coverage is the result of some hard scientific slogging to help highly diverse western bats survive threats ranging from habitat loss to the spread of WNS. Finally, WCS Director of Bat Conservation, Dr. Cori Lausen, [introduces the idea of "bat condos"](#) in the Creston Advance.

**MORE WCS CANADA
NEWSLETTERS**



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