



We Stand for Wildlife

What's really at stake in Canada's peatlands

There are many more riches in peatlands than minerals

Global News takes a [wide-ranging look](#) at the importance – and future – of one of the world's largest peatland complexes, the Hudson Bay Lowlands in the far north of Ontario, in a piece that features WCS Canada peatlands scientist Dr. Lorna Harris. Lorna explains the vital importance of this remote, wet, and carbon-rich region for global climate, freshwater, and wildlife, while Sam Hunter from Weenusk First Nation highlights the cultural importance of these homelands that are a vital source of wild foods and clean water. This [18-minute video](#) is a great overview of the issues surrounding the rush to develop mineral resources in the region and why those minerals are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the true value of this remarkable region, which is just as much water as land.

The New Reality

The power of peat: Canada's secret weapon against climate change



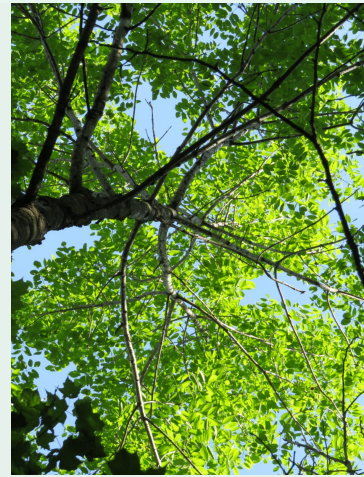
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Canada's trees in trouble

Almost one in four tree species in Canada are in trouble. That's the conclusion of an alarming evaluation conducted by WCS Canada using data from NatureServe Canada and the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species. Whether it is the impacts of introduced pests and diseases, habitat loss in some of our most tree diverse southern regions, or climate change squeezing habitat for high alpine species in Yukon, the threats to trees are multiplying.



And that's not good news, because trees are the backbone of forests and are relied on by many other species for food and shelter. They are also important to humans, cooling our cities, cleaning our water and air and improving our health.

WCS Canada's Director of National Conservation, Dan Kraus, points out that there is a lot we can still do to help trees, from designating [Key Biodiversity Areas](#) based on the presence of rare species to ensuring tree planting programs use a wide variety of native species. Dan was on CBC radio stations across Canada talking about the results of the evaluation and how we can help trees and also [gets to the root of the problem in a new Shape of Nature blog](#).

Read more about the report in [Guelph Today](#).

Photo: White ash trees are being devastated by the emerald ash borer. Credit: Owen Clarkin (iNaturalist)

Budget holds promise

The federal budget combines measures to address biodiversity loss, strengthen Indigenous government and to address social equity issues in one chapter, which may signal some recognition of the strong linkages between the state of our natural world and human wellbeing. The budget also acknowledges that protecting nature is going to be essential for reaching climate targets, which is also a good sign for growing recognition of the way these two issues are entwined.



Of course, these were the more “below the radar” elements in a budget that [focused heavily on incentives for new clean energy technologies](#) and how to exploit Canada's critical minerals in particular. That included not just new tax credits and other financial incentives, but a

promise to speed up project assessments. That sounds good on paper but there is a lot more at stake in areas like Canada's vast peatlands than minerals, [as the news piece that leads this edition makes clear](#). Figuring out how to access resources needed for a green transition without releasing more carbon than will be saved by shifting to things like renewables and EVs is going to take some deeper thinking and WCS Canada will continue to make sure decision makers understand the broader scientific context for development in sensitive natural areas.

Donor profile:

Inspired by wildlife

Sonia has been a loyal monthly donor to WCS Canada for three years. She is an avid animal lover who believes in the importance of preserving our planet's wildlife and wild places for future generations. Sonia knows the great impact of monthly giving, "I understand that protecting vulnerable species requires sustained efforts and resources, which is why I decided to become a monthly donor."

Sonia immigrated to Canada four years ago and was inspired to support wildlife after visiting a national park and witnessing the beauty and majesty of Canada's wild places.

"I was in awe. I saw this bighorn sheep running up a mountain. It was such an unforgettable and incredible moment. I had tears in my eyes, and I thought how sad it would be if people in the future don't get to experience this!" she says. After learning how much wildlife and their natural habitats are threatened in Canada, Sonia knew she had to take action to help.

[Read more about Sonia on our website.](#)

[Join Sonia today by becoming a monthly donor](#) to take part in our mission to protect wildlife and build a bright future for everyone.



Bighorn sheep by Jody Confer on Unsplash

[Become a Monthly Donor Today!](#)

Walking the talk

For Monte Hummel, it's all about the connections

Long-time conservation champion and WCS Canada board member Monte Hummel is

helping to make conservation happen in his own backyard, which happens to be in the beautiful Frontenac Axis region north of Kingston, Ontario. [Monte has worked with the Nature Conservancy of Canada over the last 25 years](#) to attach 999-year conservation easements to his three parcels of private land totaling 270 acres

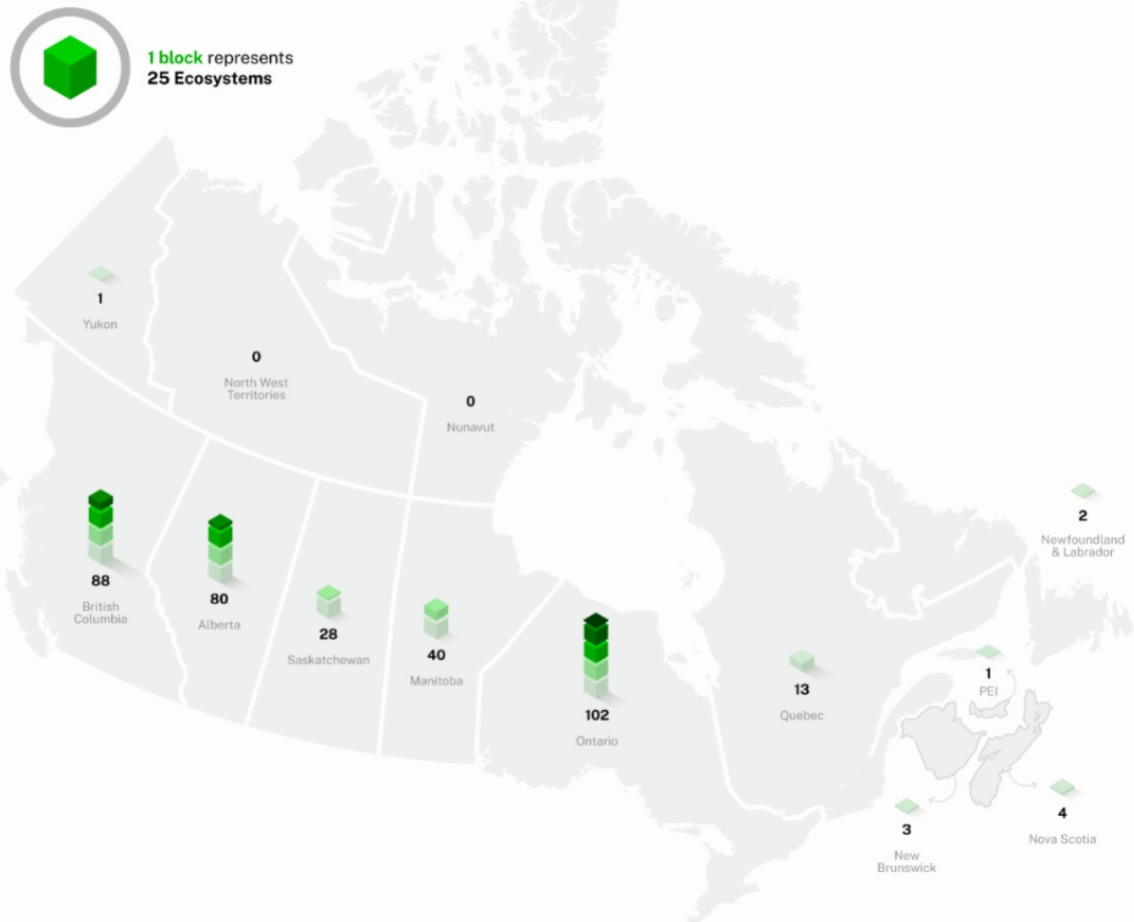
Monte's properties, in turn, link another 5,000 acres of adjacent public wildlands, which extend over to the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve. That reserve is part of the Algonquin to Adirondacks corridor where WCS has been active in helping with mapping and other scientific supports. As is so often the case, the key to helping nature is all in the connections!



Monte Hummel

A bigger picture approach to saving species

The [evaluation of endangered ecosystems](#) developed as part of our [Shape of Nature](#) program to better document the real state of wildlife and wild places in Canada has also been making news. The Vancouver Sun [featured the evaluation in a story](#) that noted that BC has the second most endangered ecosystems in Canada after Ontario. As our Director of National Conservation, Dan Kraus, told the paper: “If you ask the average person about threatened ecosystems they think of the Amazon or the Great Barrier Reef in Australia — and that’s great. But I think it’s important for people to realize we have globally threatened ecosystems here in Canada too.”



Consideration of endangered ecosystems is part of what is missing from Canada's approach to protecting and recovering endangered species and that is one of the issues Dan and WCS Canada President and Senior Scientist Dr. Justina Ray [explored in an opinion piece for the Hill Times](#) (paywalled). The piece examines our current fragmented and often ineffective policy approaches to helping species at risk and points to the need for more robust and coordinated efforts to meet the commitments Canada has made through the recently [renewed Convention on Biodiversity](#).

There also been continuing media coverage of our study of how endemic (locally unique) plant species in Yukon will fare under climate change, [with the CBC reporting on our study](#) that found that 60% of these species are going to experience habitat shrinkage as the planet warms. These sorts of quickly accelerating impacts on species are one of the reasons we need a much more proactive approach to conserving rare and at-risk species in particular.

Attention all nature lovers and photography enthusiasts!

In celebration of the International Day of Biodiversity, May 22, we are excited to

announce our Biodiversity Photography Contest. We are looking for photographs that showcase the incredible variety of life in Canada, from tiny seedlings to giant whales and everything in between!



Photo: Jamie Street on Unsplash

Stay tuned for announcements on our social media and our next newsletter for instructions on how to participate in the contest and for details about our exciting prizes. In the meantime, whether you are a professional photographer or simply enjoy taking pictures of nature in your spare time, get your cameras out and enjoy capturing the beauties of nature around you as spring arrives!

News round up

- Restoring bison to the grasslands and plains is the goal of Buffalo Treaty of Cooperation Revival and Restoration. The University of Lethbridge is [the first post-secondary institution to sign the treaty](#).
- WCS Canada's work to monitor bat roosts in the Kootenay region of B.C. [was given a boost by the Kootenay Lake Local Conservation Fund](#). With deadly white nose syndrome [spreading west](#), keeping tabs on western bat health has never been more important.

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