



We stand
for wildlife



A warning sign for bats

Discovery of fungus in Saskatchewan a worrying indicator for western bats

Our bat research team has [found evidence of the fungus that causes white-nose syndrome \(WNS\) in bats in Saskatchewan](#) for the first time. An innovative effort developed by our bat team that collects bat droppings under bridges -- where bats roost at night, rest during the day and even raise young -- found Pd fungus, which is not native to North America, in a number of locations in Saskatchewan. This finding was not entirely surprising as it is in line with the steady westward spread of WNS in North America.

Collecting bat guano is not the most glamorous work, but it is a very useful way to monitor bat populations across large areas and it has also proved helpful in providing an early warning of the spread of WNS. In some places, the discovery of the fungus happened about a year before the discovery of WNS-infected bats dying in newly exposed areas.

WNS has already killed millions of bats in eastern North America and our bat team is strongly focused on [trying to reduce the potential impact on western bats](#) by doing everything from identifying key habitats and hibernation sites for protection to [developing a probiotic powder](#) that can boost bats' immunity to the fungus.



A short look at all the ways our bat team is working to save western bats



Welcome Dan Kraus

We are very excited to have tracked down a new Director of National Conservation. After over 18 years at the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Dan Kraus has joined the WCS Canada team and will be helping to build out national programs. Dan is a gifted scientist and communicator with extensive expertise and experience in the challenges of addressing biodiversity loss and advancing conservation.

Dan has made frequent media appearances to talk about why we need to value nature and how we can change practices to ensure the survival of the natural world. He has also written extensively on a variety of topics, including species at risk, endemic species, Key Biodiversity Areas and on valuing the natural capital of forests. Along with his new WCS duties, Dan teaches about wildlife extinction and recovery at the University of Waterloo, while working on his own PhD addressing how to accelerate endangered species recovery.

What is it about woodpeckers?

WCS Yukon-based scientist Hilary Cooke loves birds but has a real soft spot for woodpeckers. She describes why she finds these hammer heads so fascinating and the role they play in creating homes for many other birds and small



One of our field technicians took this video of a black-backed woodpecker foraging in a burn. Black-backed woodpeckers are often seen in pairs and will work together to draw attention away from a nest. Video: Rachel Foster/WCS Canada

Yukon needs to think about a changing climate -- fast

Climate change is reshaping ecosystems and landscapes across Canada, but nowhere faster than in the north. That's why it is critical that as the Yukon embarks on some big land-use planning processes, it [fully considers the potential impacts of climate change on the territory's wild landscapes](#). As our Yukon team explains [in a recent piece in Yukon News](#), if climate change is not taken into account, chances are land-use plans will fail to achieve their goals because they will not be designed in a way that addresses the changes that are already underway, from more frequent and severe fires to higher temperatures and shifting precipitation patterns. Yukon has a unique opportunity to plan for a landscape that has vast undisturbed areas where there is great potential to ensure climate resilience and protect climate refuges. That's why our team has been working on ways to help Yukoners understand what the effects of climate change could be on species and landscapes, including mapping potential range shifts for some key plant species that could, in turn, lead to changes for wildlife that are linked to them.



Wildfires are increasing in frequency in Yukon. Photo: Yukon Fire Service

What it will take

Our friends at [Canadian Geographic](#) have put together [a deep dive into what it will take to address the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss](#). WCS Canada President Justina Ray contributes her thoughts on why more protected areas is just part of the answer and explains why we also need just as much focus on conserving natural systems and wildlife outside of formally protected areas.



KBAs on the world stage

WCS Canada's Chloé Debyser took to the virtual stage at the recent [IUCN World Conservation Congress](#) to describe how our [Key Biodiversity Areas](#) (KBA) team is working to identify KBAs across Canada. Our work was selected as one of four examples of national initiatives to identify areas that are important to the protection

of biodiversity at the conference. [The entire session is available online](#) and Chloe's presentation starts at about the 38 minute mark.



The screenshot shows a video player with a slide titled "Why Identify KBAs in Canada?". The slide content is as follows:

- ❖ Canadian biodiversity is in decline
- ❖ Key drivers: habitat loss and disturbance
- ❖ Protected area placement has historically not paid adequate attention to biodiversity needs
- ❖ Federal government commitment to Aichi 11 (and 30X30): recognizes need for 'quality' and role of KBAs

The slide also features a tree icon, a building icon, and a photograph of a deer with the credit "Photo © Susan Morse". The video player interface at the bottom shows a play button, a progress bar at 39:40 / 1:33:45, and various control icons.



Canada to help save elephants by tightening rules around ivory imports and developing an action plan to stop the illegal wildlife trade. Photo: Julie Larsen Maher/WCS

Canada can help stop the illegal elephant ivory trade

Elephants are fascinating and ecologically important animals. In Africa, however, forest and savanna elephants are experiencing population declines due to habitat loss, conflict with local communities, and poaching for the illegal ivory trade. Canada may seem like it is a long way from the savannas and forests of Africa where elephants are slaughtered for their tusks, but there are things we can do here to help these magnificent animals and stop this devastating trade. WCS Canada has recently sent some recommendations to the Canadian government on potential changes to trade rules that could help elephants. First, while Canada does not have a large trade in elephant ivory – legal or illegal – it is important that we ensure that

trade here doesn't grow as other countries crack down. To that end, we are calling on the federal government to work with the provinces on strategies to end the trade in legal elephant ivory – ivory that was in circulation before the Convention of Trade in Endangered Species was enacted. This legal trade can be used as a cover for illegal trade, with fresh ivory being aged and passed off as "antique." Canada also needs better controls on the import of ivory obtained through trophy hunting, including ensuring that countries that allow trophy hunting have good data to support the sustainability of the hunt. Finally, and critically, it is time for Canada to develop a national strategy for combatting the illegal wildlife trade more broadly, similar to what has been done in the U.S. and the UK.

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 pileated woodpecker: Shutterstock

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