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We Stand for Wildlife

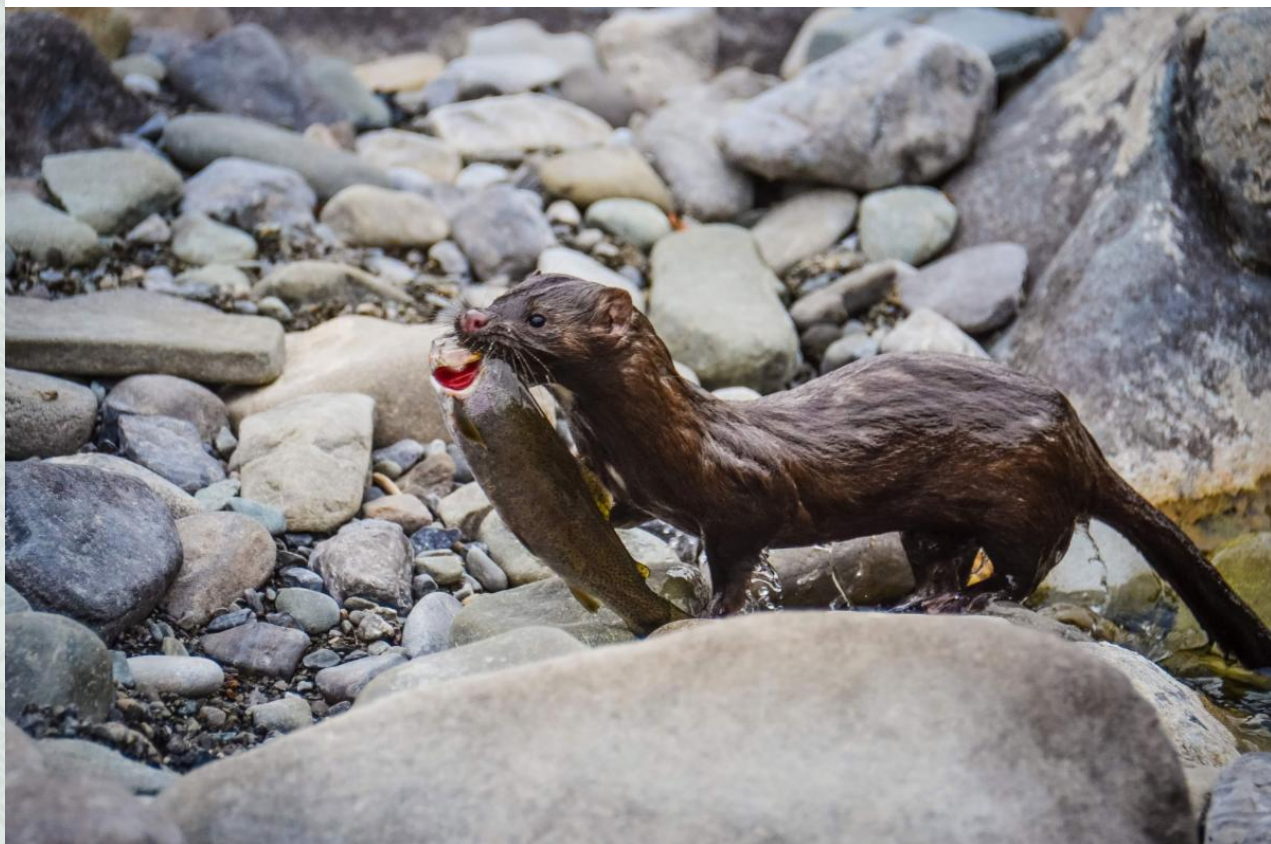


Picturing our wild world

Photo contest winners capture beautiful wild moments

We have winners in our first ever photo contest! We want to thank everyone who submitted great images of Canada's Diverse Wildlife Wonders to help us celebrate World Biodiversity Day. There were so many great entries, but we had to choose, so here are our top choices.

Wildlife in Action



Monica Dahl captured this mink carrying a fresh trout dinner.

Wild fauna



Louise Dawe snapped this screech owl in the hollow of an old tree.

Wild flora



Stephanie A. Rivest pictured the spring blossoming of round-lobed hepatica

Walling off a wetland

Does building a 13-kilometre-long wall that is 100 metres wide and 20 metres deep across a “sloppy” peatland sound like a reasonable plan for saving half a wetland? That’s just one of the questions Energi Talks host Markham Hislop poses to WCS Canada’s peatlands expert Dr. Lorna Harris [in a new episode of his energy issues podcast](#). The podcast dives deep into a [plan to bisect the McClelland Lake Wetland Complex](#), located about 90 kilometres north of Fort McMurray, to allow oil sands mining in one half of a patterned fen, a particularly wet but beautiful and unique type of peatland. Lorna also discusses the unproven idea of restoring the peatland after mining and the challenges that poses. The Alberta Energy Regulator has agreed to take another look at the proposed project thanks to a report submitted by the Alberta Wilderness Association and coauthored by Lorna. But there is no guarantee the regulator, which as the podcast host points out has a mandate to support oil and gas development in Alberta, will not approve yet another peat-destroying oil sands project.

[Listen to the podcast](#)



The McClelland Lake wetland is an unusual patterned fen. Photo: Alberta Wilderness Association.



The plan to cut the wetland in half relies on building a massive wall. Photo: Alberta Wilderness Association.

A unique approach to conservation



Our just released [annual report](#) looks back on a challenging year in the heart of the COVID pandemic. But it is a great snapshot of how we managed to carry on with important research on wildlife and wild places while keeping our staff and the communities and wildlife we work with safe. This was an important year for setting the stage for our work to highlight the importance of peatlands, to continue to document the risks of growing noise from ship traffic in the Arctic, to prepare for the arrival of bat-killing white-nose syndrome in the west, and to help First Nations community youth stay engaged with life in some of North America’s last great free flowing rivers.

[Have a look at this colourful review of our work.](#)

Endangered bats need action from the wind power industry



Hoary (left) and silver haired bats (right) have both been recommended for listing as Endangered under the federal Species at Risk Act. Hoary photo: Jason Headley; Silver haired photo: Alaska Fish and Game.

Three species of migratory bats – the hoary, silver-haired and eastern red bat – have been recommended for listing as endangered under the federal *Species at Risk Act* [in an assessment of their status by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada \(COSEWIC\)](#). What is most surprising about this recommendation is that none of these species were previously considered at risk before the latest assessment, but the big factor that has changed everything is the increase of wind power development.

These migratory species are particularly prone to being killed by wind turbines through both direct collision and injuries sustained by air pressure changes around moving turbine blades. As our bat team leader Dr. Cori Lausen [told the Globe and Mail](#), because these are very slow reproducing species, usually having only one or two pups a year, the growing number being killed by wind turbines is a real cause for concern.

But Cori notes that there is also a lot that can be done to address the problem, from not operating wind turbines in low wind speeds to using bat detection and deterrent technologies to modify operations when bats are in an area. One of the most effective measures that could be taken is more careful siting of wind power projects away from bat migration routes and known roost sites. The problem, Cori points out, is that the wind power industry has been in no rush to implement these measures. That's why WCS Canada is calling on provincial governments to better regulate the wind energy industry to require it to take steps to reduce its growing impact on bats.

Help Wildlife Win Big this June!

Help us win \$20,000 to protect wildlife and wild places across Canada! For the entire month of June, every dollar you donate to WCS Canada increases our chances of winning a \$20,000 prize in the Great Canadian Giving Challenge. [Stand for Wildlife by](#)



[supporting our conservation work today for a chance to maximize your impact!](#)

Donate today!

World biodiversity day should be every day

We celebrated World Biodiversity Day on May 21st by [taking a look](#) at what the new Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) could mean for the world's efforts to address the biodiversity crisis. The alarming decline in biodiversity around the globe – including in Canada – is finally getting the attention it deserves with the adoption of this framework at the Convention on Biodiversity talks in Montreal last December. It was heartening to see 196 countries come to agreement on a plan to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, but now the hard work begins.

With 23 inter-related targets to address three overarching goals, the GBF is complex and will require significant resources from all signatory countries. For Canada, it represents an opportunity to break out of a siloed approach to addressing this crisis and bring an “whole of government” and “whole of society” focus to tackling a problem that directly affects our health and well being. WCS Canada’s work is strongly aligned with the agreement’s objective of halting and reversing biodiversity with our focus on globally important intact areas, the intertwined nature of the climate and biodiversity crises, and the need to improve protection for [cultural keystone species](#) as a way of conserving the health of broader ecosystems.

Our President and Senior Scientist, Dr. Justina Ray, [discusses the potential of the GBF and Canada’s role in a new Muddy Boots blog](#).

Justina also talked about why Canada's strategy must address all of the targets and not cherry pick among them [in a piece in the Narwhal](#).



In a rapidly changing world, the new Global Biodiversity Framework recognizes the climate and nature crises must be tackled together. Above: Lynx may see changes in the abundance of their key prey species -- snowshoe hares -- due to climate change. Photo: Phil Walker.

Stopping the invasion



Stephen Patterson is investigating whether invasive earthworms are finding their way into Yukon forests.



Claire Singer is looking at whether fires can give invasive plant species a jump start on native species.

If you are digging in your garden this spring and turn up an earthworm, you probably have found an invasive species. The wrigglers only arrived in North America with European settlers and while they can be beneficial in a garden, they can be destructive in a forest environment. That's why our Weston Boreal Research Fellow Stephen Patterson is studying

the spread of the worms in Canada's northern forests and how they affect carbon storage in particular. Last year, he undertook a large-scale survey of earthworms in Yukon and found them mostly restricted to urban areas, but this year he is going to delve further into how they might spread from there to forests. It's ground-breaking work in all sorts of ways!

Across the border in NWT, Fellow Claire Singer is looking at something similar: How invasive or non-native plants may pop up in burnt-over forests. With fires becoming increasingly frequent and more intense thanks to climate change, the role of fire in creating conditions that prompt the spread of invasive species is a concern. Claire is also looking at how the distribution or extent of various berry crops may be changing by documenting local Indigenous knowledge of these shifts. Berries are important both to humans and wildlife, so understanding the effects of climate change on their availability is important information that Claire is will gather from local communities.

What can you do about invasive species?

Invasive species are one of the biggest risks to nature in Canada. There are numerous simple things you can do to prevent the spread of invasive species, from not moving firewood to cleaning boat hulls and motors before moving to another water body not dumping your worms on shore after a fishing trip. Here are a couple of websites with more info:

- canadainvasives.ca/
- invasivespeciescentre.ca/

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