LIVING PLANET REPORT CANADA

2025 WILDLIFE AT HOME: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

WWF-Canada's Living Planet Report Canada found persistent wildlife declines over the last half century. Monitored vertebrate populations in Canada have declined by 10 per cent, on average, since 1970.

The Canadian Living Planet Index is an average — some species are doing better while others are faring far worse, with patterns differing across habitats. On average, monitored populations of grassland species declined by 62 per cent, while forest mammals have declined by 42 per cent over the last five decades.

Monitoring the abundance of wildlife populations over time is important for informing conservation actions and tracking our progress.

Nature is an important part of Canada's economy. Canada must balance economic growth with conservation and use an approach that upholds environmental safeguards, respects Indigenous rights and integrates nature in decision-making.

NATURE'S WARNING LIGHT

More than 80,000 species of plants, animals and fungi call Canada's vast forests, grasslands, freshwater and marine areas home. From grizzly bears and black-tailed prairie dogs to skinks and blue whales, wildlife is deeply interconnected with the world around it. Every species, habitat and ecosystem plays a vital role in maintaining ecological balance. But human activity is disrupting these natural relationships, damaging species' habitats — their homes — and setting off ripple effects that threaten the living systems we all rely on. In Canada, hundreds of species are now at risk of extinction, and dozens have been lost forever.

WWF-Canada's Living Planet Report Canada (LPRC) 2025 looks at changes in wildlife population abundance, uncovering trends at the national level, across species groups and within different habitats. The report includes analyses of population trends for more than 910 native vertebrate species in Canada. What it finds is that there have been persistent declines in monitored wildlife populations over the last half century, leading to an average decline of 10 per cent from 1970 to 2022. Digging deeper, we find that more than half of the species studied are in decline, both nationally and among habitats.

The LPRC also offers new analysis of the threats facing wildlife, including where these threats are concentrated and how many affect a single species population, as well as identifying priority areas for protection and restoration. By recognizing how closely nature, wildlife, and the threats they face are connected, we can create more integrated and inclusive solutions that address multiple issues at once, before it's too late. Nature in Canada is declining, but it is not beyond saving.

A MESSAGE FROM MEGAN LESLIE

> "Nature is not a collection of parts, but a living system with each element working together in harmony. When one piece is pushed to the brink, the effects ripple outward: the loss of a keystone species can unravel entire food webs and degraded habitats can no longer support the diverse life they harbour.

Megan Leslie

President and CEO
World Wildlife Fund Canada

Mountain bluebird © WWF-US / Clay Bolt

WHAT IS THE CANADIAN LIVING PLANET INDEX?

Tracking how wildlife is doing over time isn't simple, but the Canadian Living Planet Index (C-LPI) helps by measuring changes in vertebrate population size. It uses 1970 as a baseline, which is given a value of 1.0. Over time, values above 1.0 show an increase, and below 1.0 a decrease in average monitored wildlife population abundance. Changes within ±0.05 of the baseline are considered stable.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

Understanding the state of wildlife in Canada is essential for action at home and internationally. The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), signed in 2022, sets targets meant to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030. Each country must create a National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) to meet these goals. Canada's plan, the 2030 Nature Strategy, includes an indicator synonymous with the C-LPI to track vertebrate species population trends over time.

WILDLIFE TRENDS IN CANADA

-10% **Monitored populations of vertebrate species in Canada declined by 10 per cent, on average, from 1970 - 2022.**

When it comes to the state of wildlife in Canada, the trends are concerning. For the 910 vertebrate species tracked, which account for more than half of the total number of vertebrates in the country, the C-LPI shows an average decline in population abundance of 10 per cent from 1970-2022 (from 1.0 in 1970 to 0.90 in 2022).

The current C-LPI uses the largest dataset yet, giving us the clearest picture of biodiversity trends in Canada since national reporting began in 2007. Since 2020, roughly 1,300 new data records were contributed, including 27 new species, while 2,263 records were updated with new data.

1/2 **Significantly more than half of vertebrate species included in the C-LPI have declined in abundance.**

The overall average accounts for species whose populations are growing as well as those that are declining. However, closer examination of the C-LPI data reveals that during the period in question, significantly more vertebrate species have declined in abundance on average (475 of 910; 52 per cent) compared to those that have grown (398 of 910; 44 per cent). Approximately four per cent of species (37 of 910) had stable trends.

Grey wolf © Shutterstock

Grizzly bear © Doug Kliewer

THREATS
TRANSPORT, OVEREXPLOITATION, ENERGY PRODUCTION & MINING

HABITATS
FORESTS, GRASSLANDS, ROCKY AREAS

GRIZZLY BEAR

(Ursus arctos)

COSEWIC Status: Special Concern

The grizzly bear is a keystone species that plays an important role in maintaining ecosystem health.

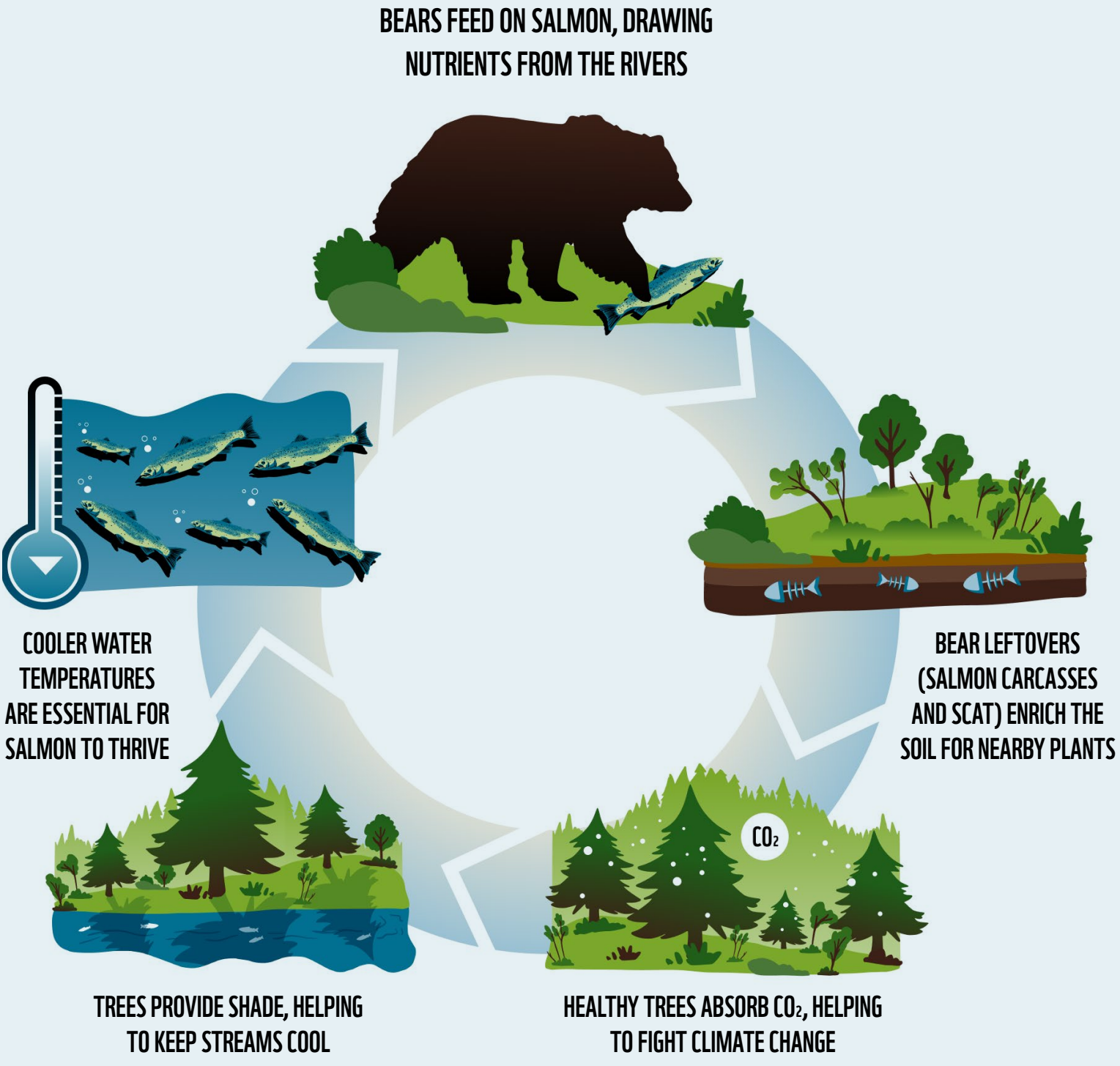
Grizzlies are apex predators at the top of the food web, so they affect the numbers of animals like deer, caribou and salmon and even influence plants and natural processes such as nutrient cycles.

One of the most iconic relationships is that of the grizzly and salmon on the West Coast. Salmon mostly live in the sea, but they migrate to freshwater to spawn. Their tissues absorb nutrients and minerals from the ocean, which are transported as they migrate. When grizzlies eat salmon, they leave scraps behind, further distributing those nutrients onto land where they act as fertilizer for plants.

In Canada, grizzly bears are facing serious threats — from shrinking and fragmented habitats, to declining salmon populations — that put their future at risk and disrupt the balance of nature that they call home.

INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF NATURE

Inter-species relationships are a cornerstone of all ecosystems. These relationships shape the functioning, stability and dynamics of ecosystems by maintaining biodiversity, energy flow and nutrient cycling. These interactions are vital for ecosystem health and resilience. When an ecosystem is both varied and balanced, it is healthy, and we all benefit.



Sea otter © Shutterstock

WEAVING TOGETHER KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

Just as a range of indicators ensures a deeper understanding of biodiversity trends and their interconnectedness, so does including different knowledge systems. Indigenous knowledge is derived from generations of observation and interaction with local ecosystems, and it encompasses not only species and their behaviours, but also their intricate relationships with their environments — something that's often overlooked by traditional scientific approaches.

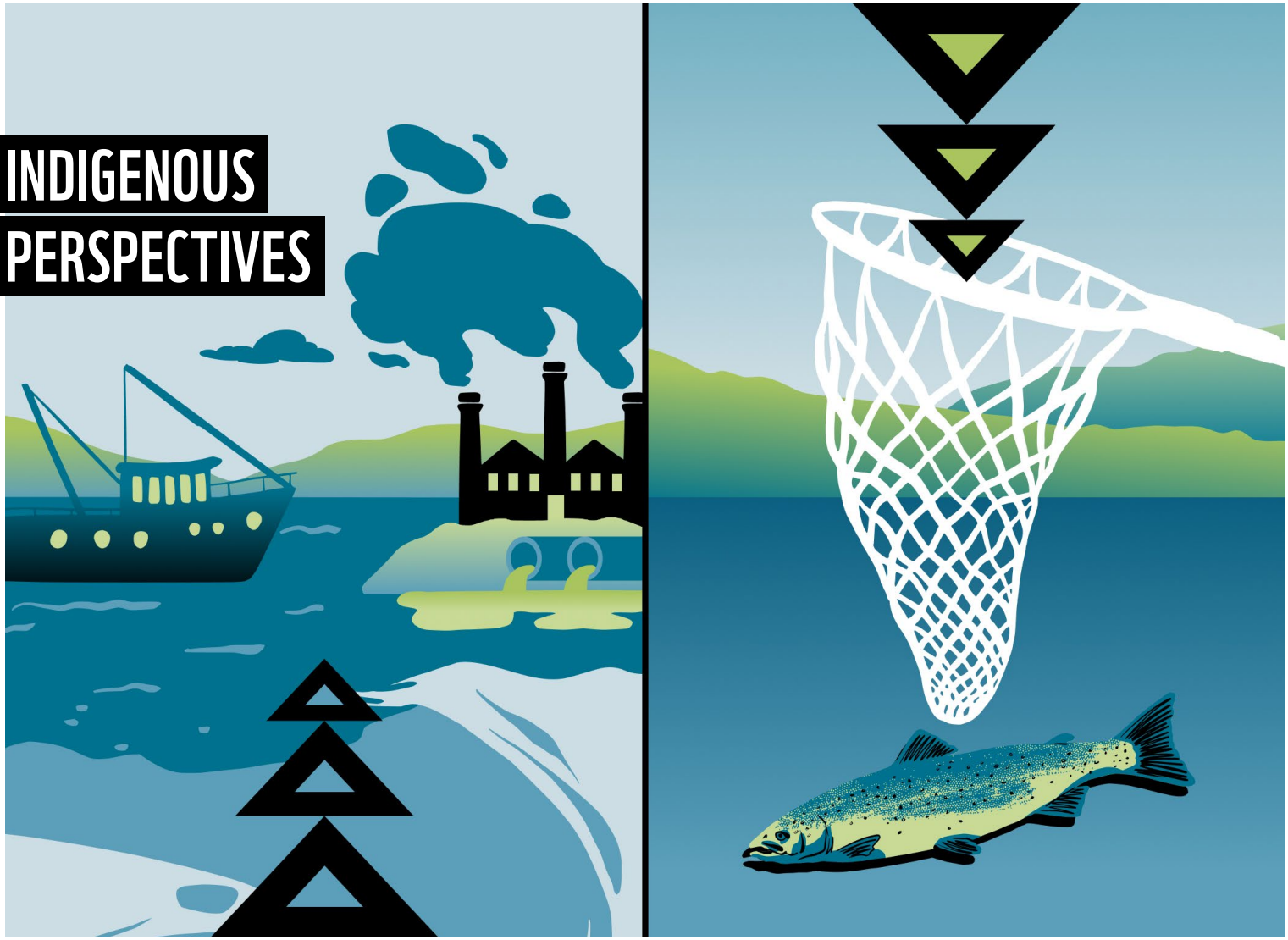
An inclusive, rights-based approach weaves together these different approaches and knowledge systems and contributes to reconciliation through conservation.

> **"Indigenous knowledge is place-based knowledge. Like culture, it is shaped by the lands and waters from which it has emerged. It is rarely transferable." — Ken Paul, member of the Wolastoqey Nation at Neqotkuk**

DATA SOVEREIGNTY

Indigenous Peoples have the authority to decide how data about their lands and waters is collected, used and shared. This form of data sovereignty is essential for equitable and effective conservation practices. It aligns closely with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and supports key principles like FPIC (Free, Prior and Informed Consent), reinforcing Indigenous Peoples' inherent rights to their lands, resources and knowledge.

INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES



We should never separate ourselves from our lands and waters

"Wolastoq is not just a waterway but a core part of our Nation's identity. Our people have travelled, hunted and fished throughout its waters for millennia. There's a conservation ban on salmon within the Wolastoq [territory] now, but I have noticed changes over the years. A big part of that has to do with the extensive hydro dams we have on the Wolastoq [river]. And when one of the first dams went up in 1954, it completely stopped the salmon from being able to run, and that's a loss that our people still feel deeply to this day. It's not just about the salmon, though. The eels, trout and other species and medicines have also been affected. To hear an Elder speak of it, it's like these dams are clogging our arteries."

Mecimi-tehc ktahcuwi-pomawsultipon wiciw kihtahkomikumonul naka knossamaqannul.

"Kat tehpu nit Wolastoq sip, kenuk-ote-na nilun nit eli-pomawsuwinuwiyek. Nkisi-yaliyahtipon, nkotunkahtipon, naka natamhotipon Wolastokuk kis kehsamqahkil kehsikotok. Toke nkolahmakepon ntamewanen polamok Wolastokuk, kenuk kis komac kisi-acehtasu yut sip elomikotok. Elinaqahk kpihikonol kisihtasik. Kisihtasik amsqahsewey, 1954 elikotok, polamok ma-te kisi-pithawhomuhtiwiyik, naka mecimi-te toke nkilutomonen psi-te keq kisi-ksihkahtuwek. Kat tehpu polamok, nkisi-ksihkahlannuk-ona katiyik, skuhtomuk, kotokik nomehsok naka weyossisok, naka 'pisunol. Tahalu itom pesq kehcikotonet. "Psi-te yuhtol kpihikonol—tahaluhp toke kpocoqiyik nmoshunapennuk."

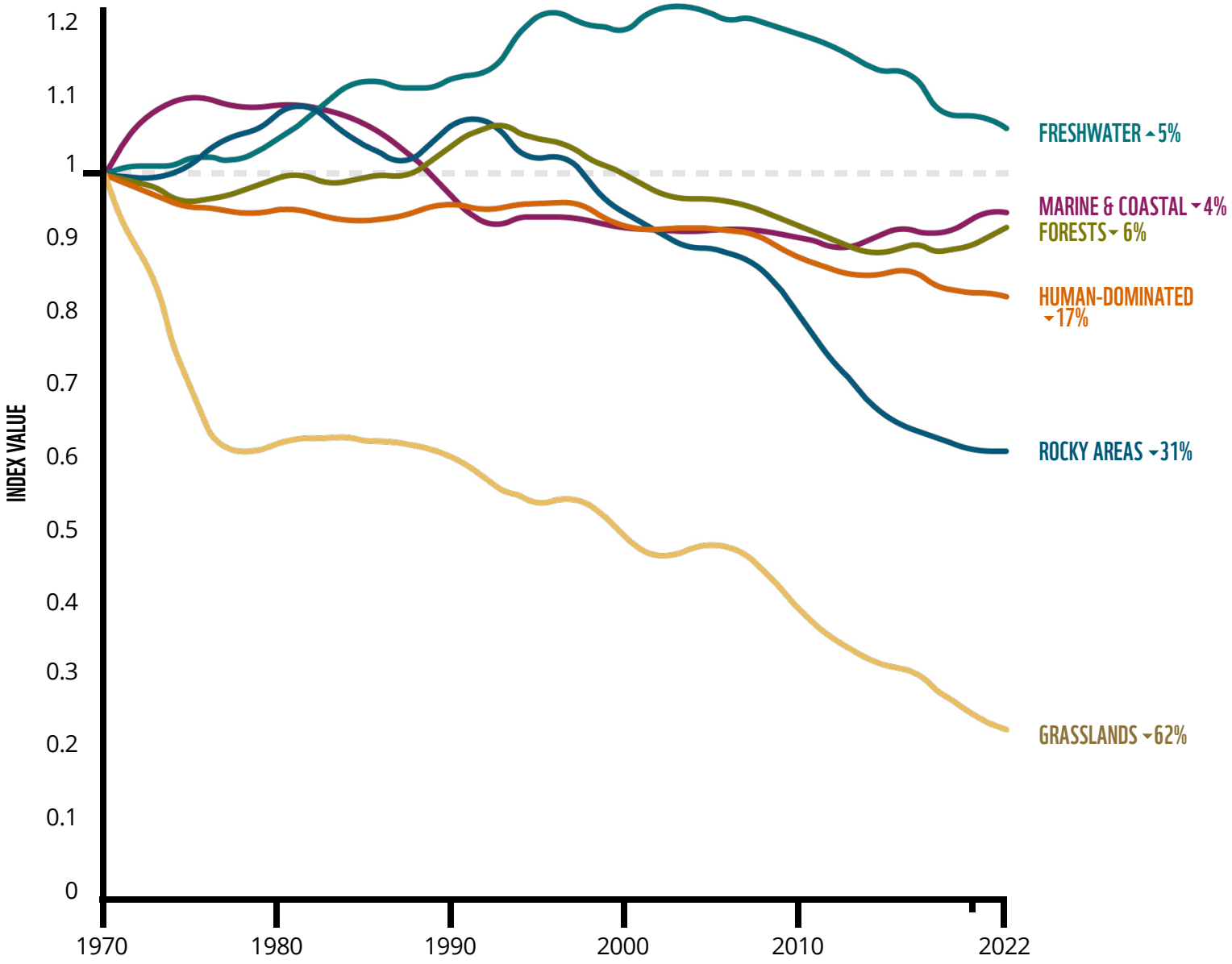
KIANNA BEAR-HETHERINGTON

Water Guardian,
Wolastoqey Nation

Translation provided by Robert Leavitt and Roseanne Clark
Language: Wolastoqey

WILDLIFE TRENDS ACROSS DIVERSE HABITATS

Canada hosts diverse habitats, from grasslands and forests to wetlands and marine areas. Each of these "homes" plays a role in supporting biodiversity and ecological function — natural processes that occur within ecosystems — all of which are deeply interconnected. The wildlife trends shown here indicate how species are faring in the specific habitats where they are most commonly found or on which they rely. Critically, within each habitat, roughly half of species are in decline. While trends may vary, these declines cannot be ignored.



FRESHWATER: ▲ 5%

Populations of species occurring in freshwater habitats, including sturgeon, ducks and turtles, show a stable trend (+5 per cent), on average, since 1970.

Canada's lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands make up 20 per cent of the world's surface freshwater. Freshwater habitats are ecologically and geographically diverse and the threats they face are equally varied, from wetland draining to peatland harvest, to pollution and the spread of invasive species.

MARINE AND COASTAL: ▼ 4%

Populations of species occurring in marine and coastal habitats, including sea turtles, whales and fish, show a stable trend (-4 per cent), on average, since 1970.

Canada's expansive coastline, the longest in the world, supports diverse ecosystems, including salt marshes, eelgrass beds and kelp forests. Canada's marine jurisdiction also extends out beyond the coast up to 200 nautical miles (370 km), equating to roughly 70 per cent of its landmass. Species in these extensive and varied ecosystems experience threats such as unsustainable harvest (i.e., overfishing, bycatch), shipping and pollution.

FORESTS: ▼ 6%

Populations of species occurring in forest habitats, including Canada lynx and boreal caribou, declined by 6 per cent, on average, since 1970.

Within forested habitats, monitored mammals exhibited large population declines (42 per cent on average). Over one-third of Canada is covered by forest, stretching across all provinces and territories. Unsustainable logging and the conversion of forested areas to human uses (e.g., agriculture and roads) lead to habitat loss.

HUMAN-DOMINATED: ▼ 17%

Populations of species occurring in human-dominated landscapes, including bobolink, racoon and red fox, declined by 17 per cent, on average, since 1970.

These are natural habitats that have been converted to human use and are prevalent in the south of Canada, where population density, roads, croplands and other infrastructure are highly concentrated. While some species, such as the peregrine falcon, can thrive in human-dominated landscapes, others, such as bobolink, have been negatively impacted by their influence.

ROCKY AREAS: ▼ 31%

Populations of species occurring in rocky habitats, including bats, mountain goats and foxes, declined by 31 per cent, on average, since 1970.

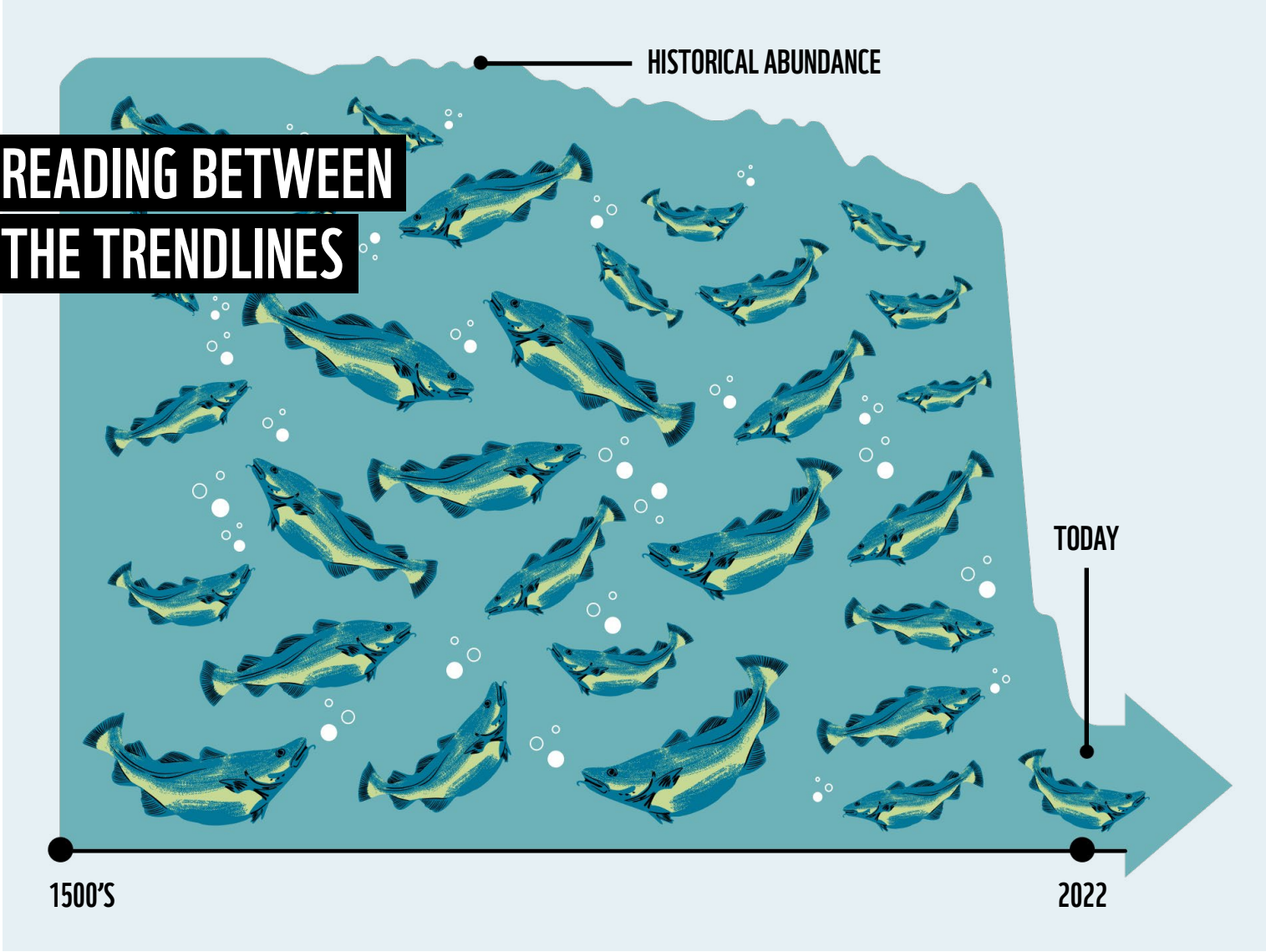
Rocky areas are sandy, stony or rocky and can be found at any elevation, in any geography. Examples include caves, inland cliffs and mountain peaks, which are a relatively small proportion of the Canadian landscape. While they may appear like permanent landscapes, habitat loss is an ongoing issue.

GRASSLANDS: ▼ 62%

Populations of species occurring in grassland habitats, including Sprague's pipit, swift fox and prairie rattlesnake, declined by 62 per cent, on average, since 1970.

Grasslands are expansive open spaces dominated by a diversity of grasses and wildflowers. They are predominantly found in the Prairie provinces, where they support a variety of wildlife, including pronghorns and burrowing owls. Temperate native grasslands are among the world's most imperiled and least protected terrestrial ecosystems.

READING BETWEEN THE TRENDLINES



SHIFTING BASELINE SYNDROME

Shifting baseline syndrome (SBS) is a phenomenon where the current environmental conditions are accepted as "normal," even when they are much worse (or better) than the past. For our purposes, we may believe that wildlife population trends aren't declining at high rates, depending on what we perceive as the starting point. That's why it's important to preserve, revitalize and showcase Indigenous knowledge systems, which go back millennia, alongside biodiversity indicators, to create a clearer picture of historical trends.

LAGGING BEHIND: WHY RECOVERY — AND ITS INFLUENCE ON BIODIVERSITY INDICATORS — TAKES TIME

Lags between threats to species and their recovery are common because nature takes time to respond to both harm and beneficial conservation efforts. A threat such as pollution or climate change may not immediately impact population size but could lead to eventual declines. Similarly, conservation actions may not immediately enhance population size, but over time may lead to recovery. It's important to understand these lag effects when interpreting the C-LPI, where, for instance, recent conservation actions might not yet be reflected in population trends.

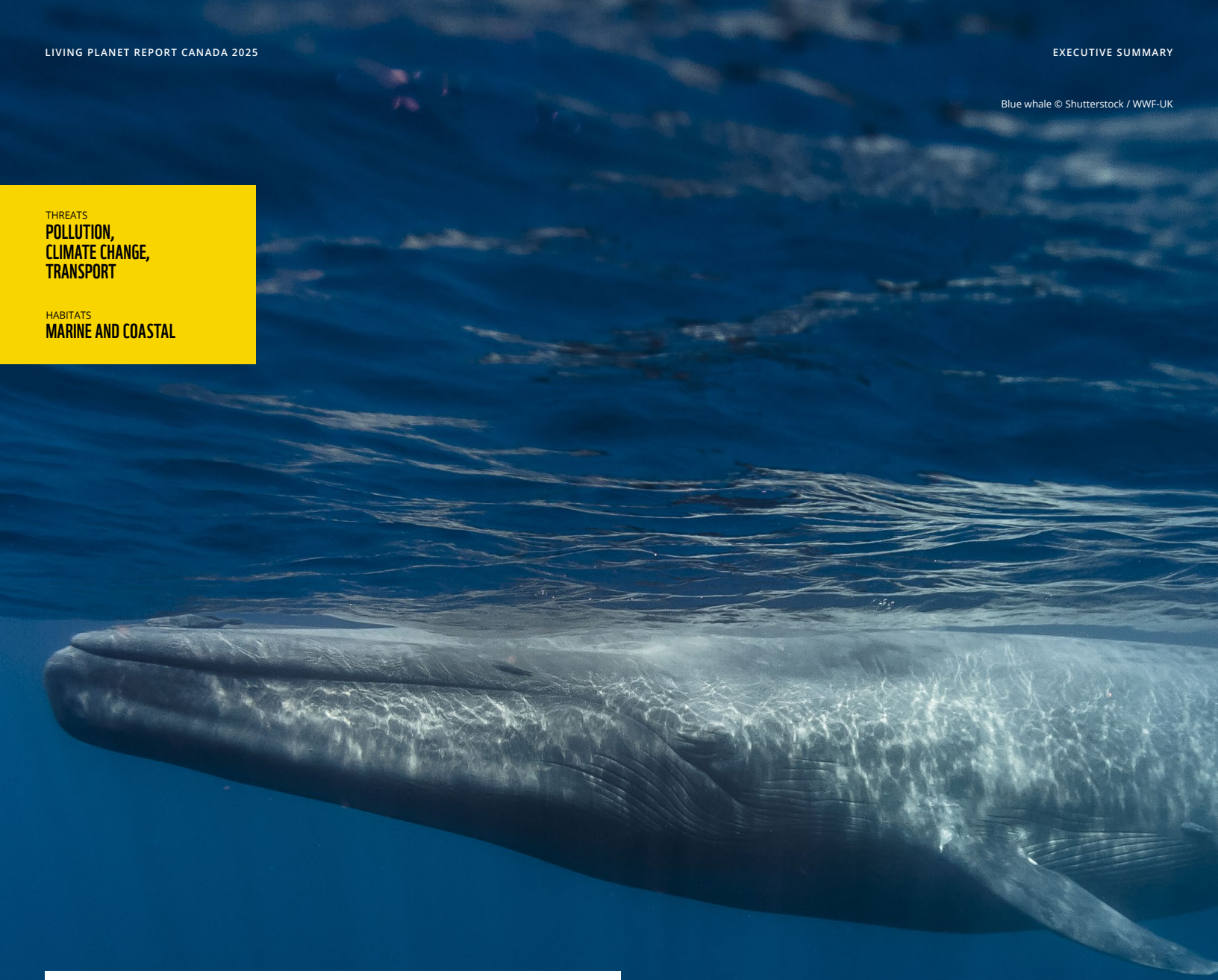
THREATS TO WILDLIFE IN CANADA

To bring back biodiversity, we need to reduce the threats that are causing wildlife populations to decline and put proven conservation solutions into action. Even though we know a lot about what's driving these declines, many of the biggest threats are still common today — and some, such as climate change, have even accelerated since 1970. On land, the most common pressures on wildlife populations assessed in the C-LPI include urban development, agricultural activity, transport (i.e., roads) and invasive species and disease. Marine populations are primarily affected by transport (i.e., shipping), overexploitation (i.e., commercial fishing) and pollution.

Although threats to biodiversity exist across most habitats in Canada, areas under direct human pressures — particularly in the more densely populated south — experience the highest intensity. In these regions, multiple threats often overlap, increasing their cumulative impact. In marine ecosystems, the intensity of cumulative threats tends to decrease with distance from the coast, suggesting that terrestrial human activity can have significant downstream effects on ocean ecosystems.

When threats are introduced and allowed to intensify, the inherent interconnectedness of nature means that there can be a variety of compounding and cascading effects.

Athabasca River, Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada © Shutterstock



Blue whale © Shutterstock / WWF-UK

THREATS
POLLUTION, CLIMATE CHANGE, TRANSPORT

HABITATS
MARINE AND COASTAL

BLUE WHALE

(Balaenoptera musculus)

COSEWIC Status: Endangered

Prior to 1972, the blue whale — the largest animal on Earth — had all but disappeared from Canadian waters because of high levels of overhunting for profit. In the Atlantic Ocean, the population had been reduced by approximately 70 per cent. That year, a commercial whaling ban was enacted. Since then, other whale species have shown evidence of recovery but the limited recovery of blue whales in Canadian waters shows how overexploitation can leave a legacy of decline.

To allow blue whales an opportunity to recover, a commercial whaling ban is not enough. Today's whales are at risk due to noise from ships and other industrial activities, which hinders their ability to use songs, clicks and whistles to search for food, care for their young, socialize and mate.

SOLUTIONS FOR RECOVERY

To stop and reverse wildlife loss in Canada and around the world, we need to find ways to meet human needs without further harming species or degrading and destroying their habitats. There is no one-size-fits-all solution — it will take coordinated action from communities, industry, government and others. But we know we have to:

- Support Indigenous leadership and advance reconciliation in conservation.
- Restore ecosystems to increase the amount and quality of wildlife habitats.
- Meaningfully expand and strengthen Canada's network of protected and conserved areas.
- Collect and share (where appropriate) knowledge and better data on wildlife populations and ecosystem health.
- Improve the sustainability of renewable resource use and ensure any non-renewable resource development is done responsibly where no alternatives exist.
- Build sustainable conservation-based economies that benefit people and nature.
- Create and enforce policies and regulations that measurably improve the health of ecosystems and the species that depend on them.

The latest results from the Living Planet Report Canada 2025 make it clear: even in a nature-rich country like Canada, wildlife populations are declining. Habitat loss and the increasing effects of climate change, from heat waves and wildfires to floods and storms, are accelerating biodiversity loss.

But there is hope. We already know what works. Protecting and restoring habitats, supporting Indigenous-led conservation and promoting sustainable and responsible industry practices are all proven strategies. What we need now are bold, inclusive and integrated conservation efforts that effectively tackle multiple threats at once — backed by strong laws and policies that protect biodiversity while supporting a resilient economy.

Point Pelee National Park in Ontario, Canada © John Ruberry

A Canada with abundant wildlife, where nature and people thrive.

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