

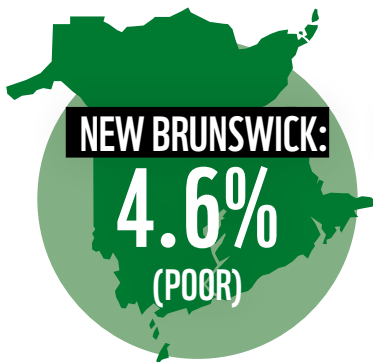


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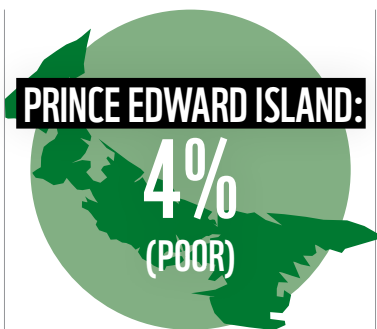
ATLANTIC BRIEFING

Primary threat: Habitat degradation, climate change and overexploitation are notable threats to freshwater and marine species in the Atlantic region.

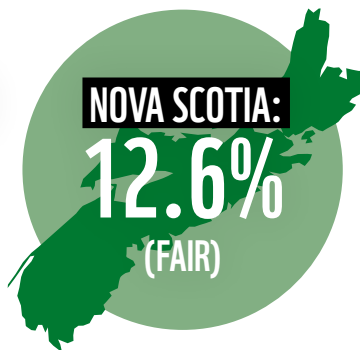
PROTECTED AND CONSERVED AREAS:



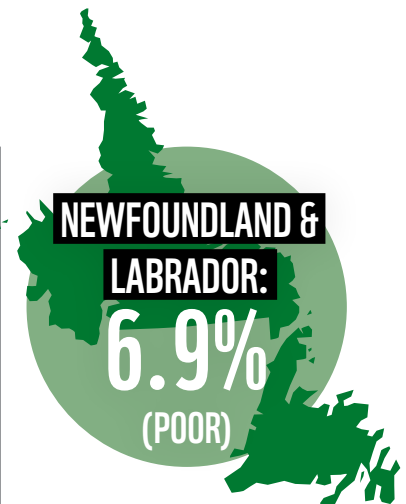
Considering New Brunswick has one of the worst provincial scores on ecological representation and poorly protected physical habitats with high climate refuge and carbon storage value, the province could create incredible benefits for wildlife and climate change with new, strategic protected areas.



Approximately 88 per cent of Prince Edward Island is privately owned – a challenge when trying to create meaningful habitat protections. All of the habitats in PEI are considered inadequately protected.



Although Nova Scotia is close to meeting its provincial protected area targets, 88 per cent of physical habitats are inadequately or not at all protected, and the areas that are protected are not sufficiently large, connected or of strong ecological integrity.



With few protections in place for wildlife, and the highest carbon densities of all the provinces, new protections could help biodiversity and play an important role in sequestering carbon.

SPECIES SPOTLIGHT



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NORTH ATLANTIC RIGHT WHALE

IUCN Status:
Critically Endangered
COSEWIC Status:
Endangered

The North Atlantic right whale is an example of how interacting threats — including the indirect effect of climate change — can negatively affect species abundance. Right whales are extremely dependent on copepods (tiny crustaceans) and follow them wherever they're highly concentrated — in this case, from the Bay of Fundy to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The problem is that oceanographic shifts from climate change have shifted the endangered whales to an area that, prior to 2017, did not have measures in place to reduce threats such as ship strikes and entanglement in fishing gear.

SHORTNOSE STURGEON

IUCN Status: Vulnerable
COSEWIC Status: Special Concern

In Canada, they are only found in the Saint John River system in New Brunswick. The small range of the Canadian shortnose sturgeon population makes it vulnerable to potential threats within the SJR.

LEATHERBACK SEA TURTLE

IUCN Status: Vulnerable
COSEWIC Status: Endangered

The primary threat to leatherbacks in Canadian waters is fishery bycatch. This means they're incidentally captured or entangled in fishing gear through a variety of fisheries — leatherback mortality rates in the Canadian Atlantic are estimated at more than 20 per cent. Unlike other turtles, a leatherback sea turtle cannot retract its head or flippers into its shell, nor can it swim in reverse, which means it cannot extract itself from entangled fishing gear.

WOOD TURTLE

IUCN Status: Endangered
COSEWIC Status: Threatened

Wood turtles are impacted by several threats that have cumulatively led to an overall decline in abundance. In fact, the population faces nine of the eleven threat categories listed in its COSEWIC Status Report. While some of the listed threats are considered to have an overall low impact, together they have resulted in an overall high threat level for the wood turtle within Canada.

ATLANTIC PUFFIN

IUCN Status: Vulnerable
COSEWIC Status:
Not Assessed

While the global population of Atlantic puffins (playfully known as “sea parrots” because of their distinct black-and-white feathers and colourful beaks) has experienced an overall decline, the Canadian population has increased in abundance since 1970. Canada, then, plays an important role in ensuring the persistence of the global population.

HUMPBACK WHALE

IUCN Status: Least Concern
COSEWIC Status: Not at Risk/
Special Concern

Commercial whaling depleted humpback whale populations, which were prized for their blubber, in the early 20th century. To deal with overharvesting while accounting for migratory behaviour and global distribution, the humpback whale became legally protected under two international conventions. Commercial harvesting of humpbacks was banned in 1955 in the North Atlantic and in 1966 in the North Pacific which has helped to reverse the decline of humpback populations.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Help restore habitat. ACAP Saint John, the Kennebecasis Watershed Restoration Committee and the Nashwaak Watershed Association are currently partnering together to help restore aquatic and riparian habitat in the low Saint John River Watershed in New Brunswick. They are implementing priority actions that were identified through a recent Priority Threat Management analysis led by WWF-Canada.

Nature-based climate solutions — like protected areas and restoration — can help to stop wildlife loss by addressing multiple threats to biodiversity while reducing climate change by sequestering carbon in natural ecosystems.



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