

NEWS RELEASE

Canadian wildlife need big connected parks or species will disappear

Ottawa –The health of wildlife and biodiversity is uneven in Canada’s national and provincial parks, says a new report prepared by the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS).

In some cases species are at risk of dying out and biodiversity is faltering because habitat has not been adequately protected. In others, good progress has been made to protect wildlife.

The review “How is Wildlife faring in Canada’s Parks?” makes the case that parks are a cornerstone of Canada’s efforts to protect biodiversity – the variety of flora and fauna that make up an ecosystem. However, it notes that bigger, better managed parks, and more of them, are needed if parks are to fulfill their critical role in protecting Canada’s wildlife.

CPAWS prepared its third annual review of parks to mark Canada Parks Day, July 17. The organization focused on biodiversity this year because the United Nations has declared 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity.

“This report underscores that one of the best ways to protect biodiversity and wildlife is to strengthen our parks system,” says Éric Hébert-Daly, Executive Director of CPAWS.

Encouraging moves to protect biodiversity

The report praises government efforts over the past year to create new parks. Particularly noteworthy is the establishment of Gwaii Haanas National Marine Conservation Area off the coast of British Columbia

CPAWS also welcomes government decisions to create parks on Sable Island, Nova Scotia, and in the Mealy Mountains of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Mealy Mountains is exceptional because the park will protect most of the range of a threatened herd of woodland caribou.

Large parks protect species

There are 500 species in Canada at risk of extinction and more at-risk species are identified every year.

“In Canada we have one of the best opportunities left in the world to create big parks that can protect species that need large areas of wilderness to survive. --before those species get in trouble,” Mr. Hébert-Daly points out.

CPAWS prescribes a range of measures, including:

- Creating new parks and expanding existing park boundaries;
- Maintaining and restoring wildlife movement corridors (so that wildlife have the large ranges they often need);
- Restricting roads and other damaging developments;
- Limiting recreational activities; and
- Practicing good park management focused on healthy ecosystems as a first priority.

Species struggle without adequate parks, good management

Among the good news stories highlighted in the report, where parks help protect vulnerable species, are the Ipswich savannah sparrow of Sable Island, the black dogfish of the Laurentian Channel of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and the eastern wolf of Algonquin Park.

Sadly, some other species face an uncertain future. They include the little brown bat in the Fisher Bay area of Lake Winnipeg, Manitoba, the northern gannet, of Atlantic Canada, and New Brunswick’s American marten.

“In this International Year of Biodiversity, it is especially important that we focus on the role of Canada’s parks in keeping our wildlife healthy,” Mr. Hébert-Daly says.

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Download the report :

www.cpaws.org/files/report_parksday2010.pdf