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ENJOY THE OUTDOORS! INTEREST IN NATURE IS TIMELY AND VITAL

Canadian



PRESIDENT'S DESK

Optimism for Nature is in the Air

While Canada is tragically still grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic, this year, more than ever, spring brings us hope. With the change of season, nature is at the forefront of our collective minds. The possibility of spending time in nature is a tool in the box of coping mechanisms that most Canadians are lucky to have. In some ways, the pandemic will have transformed our relationship with wilderness and wildlife. Canadians have retreated to green spaces and connected with nature more in recent months than we have in years, with campgrounds and nature retreats filling more quickly than we've ever seen before. Since the beginning of this pandemic, we've hiked trails and relished parks and we find measurable relief there from some of our stress. For these reasons, and because of the intersection between nature, health and the economy, it is crucial to invest in nature.

We are delighted that the recent federal budget's investment in conservation acknowledges that efforts to rebuild our economy and create jobs will not succeed without simultaneously protecting wilderness and fighting climate change. Your thousands of letters and the work by CPAWS chapters across the country helped make the case for courageous investments. Canada has already promised to protect 25% of its land and marine areas by 2025, and 30% by 2030. At this autumn's conference of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity – from which a Paris Climate Accord-style agreement for biodiversity is expected – Canada is positioned to make the case for similar global targets as well as for more Indigenous protected areas and Indigenous Guardians programs.

This spring, perhaps more than in any other in memory, a new optimism for nature is in the air. Yet, attaining protection goals requires our continued passion and commitment. We need to keep nature's heroic role – as vital to both our wellbeing and our prosperity – top of mind. We need to remind governments of the importance of Canada's conservation pledges. Think of it as payback: nature has been helping us get through one of humanity's worst catastrophes in more than a generation; we need to ensure that saving nature, in turn, remains our priority for generations to come.

Laura Colella is President of the National Board of Trustees for CPAWS.







CPAVVS is Canada's voice for wilderness. Since 1963, we've played a lead role in creating over two-thirds of Canada's protected areas.

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COVER: Intricate roots of a tree burrow on an island at Algonquin Park, Ontario, Canada. Photo: Moe Shirani

ABOVE: A small waterfall flows through the earlyspring forest in Hardy Lake Provincial Park near Gravenhurst in Muskoka, Ontario on a beautiful sunny day. Photo: Adobe Stock

Rejecting New Open-Pit Mining in Canada's Rockies

New coal developments on the Eastern Slopes of Canada's Rockies could threaten much more than just Alberta's people, wildlife, and water. The waters flowing from the Alberta Rockies – which risk being poisoned with toxic levels of selenium if open-pit mines Aerial of mountains and Ivishak River in Brooks Range Arctic National Wildlife Photo: Jaynes Gallery/Danita Delimon

Success in the Arctic Refuge

What a year for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge – sacred land to the Gwich'in, and the birthplace of the Porcupine caribou herd. The previous U.S. Administration was determined to auction it away to oil exploration and drilling companies, and in early January 2021 they held a lease sale. It generated less than 1% of the promised revenues.

How did that happen? It was the result of decades of work and countless visits to Washington D.C. by the Gwich'in and their allies - efforts that made the Arctic Refuge one of the highest profile environmental and human rights issues in the U.S. On our side of the border, several months before the U.S. election, CPAWS Yukon and the Gwich'in convinced Canada's five major banks not to fund oil and gas development in the Arctic Refuge, sending another signal that drilling in the Arctic Refuge is terrible business.

On his first day in office, President Biden signed an Executive Order to suspend leasing activities in the Arctic Refuge. There's still a lot of work to do – like voiding the leases sold in January – but CPAVVS remains optimistic that this sacred land will stay safe for generations to come.



move forward - flow across the entire Canadian prairies. These mines would also

use millions of gallons of water, reducing the water supply for Canadians whose



lives depend on it.

200 kilometres of roads developed in southern Alberta alone. The prairies need your voice. It is time for all Canadians to speak up and protect one of Canada's most iconic and beloved landscapes! Visit

and protect one of Canada's most iconic and beloved landscapes! Visit ab4coalfreerockies.ca to take action and call on the provincial and federal governments to reject new open-pit mining projects in our Rockies.



CONSERVATION WATCH •

A First in Canada: Magpie River Granted Official Personhood

On February 23, the Muteshekau-shipu Alliance, of which CPAWS Québec is a member, announced the recognition of the Magpie River as a legal person.

Faced with the long-standing refusal by the Québec government and governmentowned Hydro-Québec to protect the Magpie River, local communities decided to take a leadership role in examining other measures available to them to protect the river.

With the help of the International Observatory on Nature's Rights, two mirror resolutions of the Ekuanitshit Innu Council and Minganie Regional County Municipalities, key partners of the project, were adopted based on the legal foundations of international and national laws affecting Indigenous Peoples, along with the province of Québec's municipal laws.

As a result, nine rights were established for the Magpie River; notably, the right to live, exist, and flow; the right to be conserved and protected; and more specifically, the right of access to the courts.

Recognition of the Magpie River as a legal entity is a first such case in Canada but is part of a growing international movement for the recognition of nature's rights.

Below: Pier-Olivier Boudreault at a 2017 flash mob to protect the Magpie River. Photo: Melissa Vincelli Bottom: Paddling the Magpie River Photo: Boreal River Adventures







PEOPLE AND PARKS

Canadian parks keep Canadians healthy. Let's reciprocate. EDITORIAL TEAM

o nature lover Isabel Michealson, paddling in Algonquin Provincial Park seemed an obvious response after COVID-19 upended her university life last year, leaving her uncertain, stressed and isolated from friends. Yet, it wasn't until meeting a moose on a tranquil, mist-shrouded river that the park's relief to her came sharply into focus.

"This may sound strange but, in that moment, I was just realizing that we were both animals in the world," explained Michaelson, a 20-year-old university student who normally spends her summers as an outdoor camp wilderness guide. "It was just completely at peace. I was thinking that the moose probably doesn't know the world is in chaos."

The majesty of the animal was mesmerising, she said, but so too was her sense of connection to it and to the surrounding wilderness. "I wasn't off in my head worrying about the challenges of everyday life or the new normal we're all adjusting to; I just felt really grounded to where I was."

Michaelson's experience is far from unique; more Canadians, rattled by months of pandemic restrictions, tragedy and worry, appear to be turning to nature and parks. In the first three months of this year, for example, the number of visitors trying reserve summer-season campsites in Ontario parks, such as Algonquin, was up 100% over the same period last year.

In 2020, while early season pandemic-related park closures meant visits to most national parks were down overall, those within 100 kilometres of cities saw more people than the previous year even despite the shorter season. Like Michaelson, many likely found solace there.

RESEARCH SUPPORTS THE BENEFITS OF TIME OUTDOORS

"We know there are numerous benefits to spending time in nature," said Rick Stronks, assistant superintendent with Algonquin Provincial Park's Discovery Program. "There are positive effects on mental health and cognitive ability and social and spiritual wellbeing. There's lots of research to support the benefits of spending time outdoors."

That research may finally have people paying attention. A recent Ipsos poll found 94% of Canadians acknowledged that nature was helping them cope with COVID-19 in general, and 86% said spending time in nature improved their mental health during the pandemic. Other studies show outdoor walks – or even seeing nature through a window – can cut the pandemic's rising mental health consequences.

Meanwhile, scientists and global agencies alike, including the World Health Organization, say pandemics such as the corona virus are likely the result of our human mistreatment of nature; without better conservation, the risk of more deadly, wildlife-linked pandemics will only grow.

The warnings have many of us rethinking our often-estranged relationship with the wild. Visiting parks is one expression of that.

PUBLIC INTEREST IN NATURE IS TIMELY AND VITAL "It's great that so many people are going to parks," said Sarah Elmeligi, author of a recent CPAWS report on ways to manage park visits in Canada's Rocky Mountains. Ahead of a UN meeting by world leaders this fall to draft a new global biodiversity conservation plan, greater public

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interest in nature is both timely and vital. The problem is, explained Elmelgi, embracing wilderness and parks can have consequences, too.

"It does highlight the need for strategic visitor management when people get to parks," she said, "not only to protect ecological resources but to also to ensure the visitor experience is an enjoyable and meaningful one."

VISITORS CAN BE POWERFUL STEWARDS OF OUR PARKS

Just as more park visitors are realizing how nature can help them in this difficult time, these same visitors need to recognise nature needs their help in return. Essential to this quid pro quo, said Elmelgi, is a better understanding by park managers of what visitors expect from their park experience. Also helpful is encouraging visitor knowledge of how to be a good steward of our parks. "One thing visitors can do is to participate in management planning exercises which are always open for public consultation," Elmelgi said. "That's really important. Those are the guiding documents about what's going to happen in the parks and where.

"And when in a park, I recommend treating parks the same way I treat my grandma's house...don't touch things you don't have to touch, don't leave anything behind, don't litter, and be kind and respectful of other users. But most importantly, be kind and respectful of the wildlife, because the park is their home."

Available on the CPAWS website: Managing Human Use in Canada's Rocky Mountain National Parks – Defining a Way Forward.

VISITOR TIPS FOR PARK STEWARDSHIP

The COVID-19 pandemic is changing how we see nature. So much so that more of us are turning to parks and conservation areas—in many cases, for the first time.

"We certainly have seen some new users, which is exciting for us," explained



BE BEAR WISE. Never feed or approach bears, and store all food out of reach of bears. (In car campgrounds, store food inside your vehicle. In the backcountry, hang all food in a pack at least 4 metres above the ground and 2 metres away from tree trunks and never store anything more than your sleeping bag and pillow in your tent.) Keep your campsite clean. Rick Stronks, assistant superintendent with Algonquin Provincial Park's Discovery Program, "but sometimes they are unaware of where they can get information and what they need to do."

When setting out for Algonquin, said Stronks, it's useful to check out tips and

SOAPS ARE NOT SAFE FOR LAKES AND

RIVERS. Do not take a shower or wash your dishes in the lake or river. Despite the name, ecofriendly and biodegradable soap is not safe to use in a lake or river.

BE RESPECTFUL OF WILDLIFE AND

HABITAT. Never feed or attract wildlife, avoid sensitive habitats/ seasons, enjoy wildlife at a safe distance and control your pets. (Pets must always be under control and on a leash no longer than 2 metres.)



information about how to enjoy the park while being an effective park steward. Looking at the official Ontario Parks web site (www.ontarioparks.com) or the site of The Friends of Algonquin Park (www.algonquinpark.on.ca/foap/) is helpful.

Check out these steps for park use:



BE FIRE SMART. Use the established fire pits, and never leave fires unattended. Ensure your fire is completely extinguished.

BE RESPECTFUL OF PARK NEIGHBOURS.

It's important that our park visitors respect private property and adhere to any local by-laws, rules and regulations. Be both responsible and respectful to other park users.

ANOTHER WAY TO GIVE RECYCLE YOUR VEHICLE

Donate A Car Canada accepts vehicle donations for CPAWS. They provide free towing in many areas across Canada, or you can drop off your vehicle to maximize your donation. When you donate your RV, boat, motorcycle or other vehicle to CPAWS through Donate A Car Canada, it will either be recycled or sold at auction depending on its condition, age and location. After your vehicle donation is complete, CPAWS will send you a tax receipt within 45 days!

Visit cpaws.org/ways-to-give to get started.









Québec Sets the Bar for Reaching Conservation Targets

BY ALICE DE SWARTE

ast December, the Québec government announced a further 96,000 km² of land would be protected, making La Belle Province the only one to meet the international protected areas target of 17% by the end of 2020. Quebec, as a federated state under the Convention on Biological Diversity, and home to its Secretariat in Montreal, vowed to meet that goal and successfully delivered.

This newly added landmass brings Québec's total protected areas to 257,000 km² – an area larger than the entire United Kingdom! From the Grandes battures Tailhandier in the heart of Montreal to Ungava's Eaton Canyon through the Chic-Choc Mountains in the Lower Saint-Lawrence, these protected habitats are part of the effort to safeguard Canada's natural heritage.

Québec's outstanding achievements are the result of relentless years of work led by CPAWS Québec, Indigenous partners, stakeholders, and residents. As early as 2011, the Québec government asked regional stakeholders to identify potential conservation areas. The move to decentralize planning around conservation efforts made it possible to mobilize citizens, elected officials, as well as land users in the areas of focus, which bolstered social acceptance for the projected protected areas.

Meanwhile, several Indigenous Nations and communities conducted their own processes to identify and protect territories of biocultural significance. These initiatives, including jointly managed national parks, "protected areas based on family traplines", and natural sacred sites, clearly exemplified

REPORT CARD ON PROTECTED AREAS

Canada committed to protecting at least 17% of land and inland waters by 2020 under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

How did we do? Only modest increases have been achieved, with the needle moving from 9.7% to 12.5% over the past decade, and mostly in the past five years.

Why is that? Land use is largely the jurisdiction of provinces and territories, only a few of which committed to the target and acted with conviction. However, there is hope for progress in the coming years driven by Indigenous leadership and federal investment.

Are you curious about how your province or territory did? CPAWS has graded provincial, territorial, and federal governments on their performance in delivering on 2020 targets, on the path to Canada's current promise of 30% protection of land and ocean by 2030.

VISIT CPAWS.ORG TO READ OUR REPORT CARD ON LAND AND OCEAN PROTECTION.



the diversity of Indigenous conservation approaches. Québec's success is based on collaboration efforts with the Nations, relying on Indigenous leadership to achieve conservation objectives.

IMPRESSIVE INDIGENOUS CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP

In December 2020, in a joint statement, the Cree Nation and Québec governments announced the creation of 39,000 km² of new protected areas on Eeyou Istchee lands. This was the result of a broad consultation process conducted by the Cree Nation Government across communities, specifically involving Cree hunters and trappers. The process aimed to identify lands considered of biocultural significance by the communities.

Through these efforts, 23% of the Eeyou Istchee landmass has been protected against industrial development. Having been impacted by hydropower, mining and logging activities, the region can now rely on a network of protected areas, ensuring the long-term preservation of the Cree traditional way of life, as the habitats of species that are key to the Crees like the beaver, black bear, and American marten will be better protected. Located in the very heart of the boreal forest, these newly designated areas will also help to protect the woodland caribou's habitat.

In Nunavik, 29,785 km² were safeguarded in collaboration with Inuit communities, the Kawawachikamach Naskapi Nation, Whapmagoostui Cree Nation, and Matimekosh-Lac John Innu Nation.

Of note are the planned expansion of the Tursujuq National Park, the largest protected area in Eastern North America, and the protection of Eaton Canyon, identified as a priority by the Naskapi Nation. Located near Schefferville, the territory's great recreational tourism potential could become a boon for regional economic diversification.

As we look to the future, several expansions for the George River protected area will also help to better protect the migrating caribou herd's calving area, as well as the Mushuau-shipit site, which the Uapashkuss Innu organisation desires to see recognized as a natural sacred site.

ON THE ROAD TO 22% BY 2022

CPAWS Québec also celebrated the creation of a protected area in the famous Chic Choc Mountains, located in the Lower St. Lawrence region, the outcome of a major campaign that spotlighted the unwavering attachment of residents to this emblematic site. Protection of part of this territory will be of great benefit to endangered species like the Gaspésie caribou and Bicknell's thrush.

Sentiment is mixed in Southern Québec, however, as several projects identified and supported by local communities were pushed aside by the government. Among these were the Kaaikop Laurentian Mountain, as well as the Peribonka River and Kenogami Lake areas of Saguenay – Lac-Saint-Jean.

Nevertheless, this is not entirely bad news, as Québec can count on these "forgotten projects" to achieve its future conservation goals. Indeed, Québec already has what it needs to reach protection of 22% by 2022, a significant step toward the federal government's 25% and 30% targets for 2025 and 2030, respectively.

Furthermore, Québec has recently amended its *Natural Heritage Conservation Act*, adding Indigenous-Led Protected Areas and other effective area-based conservation measures to its conservation toolbox. With these new tools and new approaches, such as nature-based solutions for the climate and ecological networks, the most ambitious of targets can be achieved.

Alice de Swarte is a policy analyst and senior director of conservation at CPAWS Québec.





PUTTING PROTECTION FIRST IN CANADA'S BLUE ECONOMY STRATEGY

In early 2021, CPAWS met with the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to discuss the development of Canada's Blue Economy Strategy. Our message was simple: if Canada's blue economy is to be sustainable – to give biodiversity the chance to recover and perform vital ecosystem services for our well-being – Canada must prioritize conservation and its commitment to 30% protection of our ocean by 2030 as part of any plan to grow ocean industries.

Recent economic studies show that we need to account for the value of our marine assets and invest in strong marine protected areas (MPAs) *now* to sustain our global ocean. If Canada invests in conservation at the scale needed for effective MPAs, we could see a financial return of up to \$46-billion and the creation of up to 80,000 jobs!



CPAWS staff Anna Pidgorna, Alison Ronson, Alison Woodley and former colleague Candace Newman at the Canadian Parks Conference in Quebec City, 2019.

ANOTHER WAY TO GIVE

MAKING YOUR POINTS MATTER

By donating your Aeroplan miles to CPAWS, you help our conservation team participate in important discussions with key decision-makers and environmental organizations about wilderness protection both in Canada and around the world, which can make a huge difference!

Learn more or gift your points to CPAWS, visit cpaws.org/ways-to-give.



TRACKS ACROSS CANADA

Indian River, near Sulphur Creek Photo: Malkolm Boothroyd, CPAWS Yukon Campaigns Coordinator



YUKON

CPAWS Yukon, First Nations, and many Yukoners, have been calling for substantial updates to Yukon's outdated mining laws, which are relics from the early 1900s. The chapter was encouraged to see that new mining legislation was the top recommendation in the recently released draft Yukon Mineral Development Strategy. The next step is to urge the Yukon Government to take action on this recommendation and ensure that mining is sustainable. Learn more, cpawsyukon.org/yukon-mds.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

CPAWS NWT has a long history of supporting Indigenous governments and communities in the conservation of their traditional lands and territories. To elevate the understanding of conservation in the region, CPAWS NWT released an interactive map that enables users to click on proposed and established protected, conserved and candidate areas to learn more about them. Learn more cpawsnwt.org/protected-areas.



BRITISH COLUMBIA

CPAWS BC continues to defend the rare and ancient glass sponge reefs that dot the coast of British Columbia. These fragile reefs take thousands of years to develop, creating prime habitat for rockfish and shrimp, filtering water, storing carbon and fertilizing the ocean. Glass sponge reefs like those in Atl'ka7tsem/Howe Sound risk being crushed by bottom contact fishing like prawn traps and choking on the disturbed sediment they kick up. Learn more and take action, glassspongereefs.com.

ALBERTA

CPAWS Northern and **Southern AB** and the Alberta Environmental Network celebrated a great success for their Defend Alberta Parks campaign last year. Thanks to massive pressure from over



23,000 Albertans who wrote their MLAs, none of Alberta's parks were closed or delisted! However, Alberta's parks remain at risk. Learn more and take action, defendabparks.ca.



SASKATCHEWAN

In Saskatchewan, Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas are the name of the game. The road to protect the Athabasca Basin and the Saskatchewan River Delta may be long, but **CPAWS Saskatchewan** is working with local First Nations in both regions to protect their unique ecosystems. Protection of the land and water in these communities also means preservation of Indigenous cultures. Visit www.cpaws-sask.org to learn more about the Chapter's efforts and to get involved.

CPAWS Southern AB is working with the Niitsitapi Water Protectors to ensure Benga's Grassy Mountain project does not move forward. With the hearing complete, a decision will be made this summer. Over 18,000 Canadians signed a federal petition urging the government to delay a decision on Grassy Mountain until all cumulative impacts from projects in the Eastern Slopes are considered. This decision will impact water security for millions of Canadians. Learn more and take action, ab4coalfreerockies.ca.

MANITOBA

CPAWS MB continues to support the Sayisi Dene First Nation on an initiative to protect the entire 50,000 sq. km of the Seal River Watershed in partnership with its Cree, Dene and Inuit neighbours. The Seal River Watershed Alliance is calling on the government of Manitoba to support its efforts to establish an Indigenous Protected Area and protect a pristine expanse of tundra, wetlands and forests as vast as Nova Scotia. Learn more, cpawsmb.org.

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ONTARIO

This past winter **CPAWS Wildlands** League went back to its roots and called on Ontario's Premier to end logging in Algonquin Provincial Park. Approximately 10,000 took action. The chapter also supported a call by the Mushkegowuk Council for a moratorium on Ring of Fire development activities in the globally significant carbon-rich Hudson Bay Lowland and launched a new website to support marine conservation in southern Hudson Bay and James Bay.

CPAWS Ottawa Valley continues to advocate for the protection of Gatineau Park.The new master plan released in January by the National Capital Commission included many



NEW BRUNSWICK

CPAWS NB continues to work with the New Brunswick government, now acting on their commitment to protect at least 10% of the province by the end of 2023. The Chapter assisted individuals and community groups with nominations of natural areas for protection and made their own submissions as part of the public nomination process that ended in January. CPAWS NB remains active in pushing for the protection of the Wilderness Corridors of the Restigouche. Learn more, cpawsnb.org.

improvements from the 2005 plan, including stronger emphasis on the importance of ecological connectivity and recognition of the park's cultural heritage. Despite the improvements, there are still six areas of concern. Learn more about the campaign to protect Gatineau Park and how you can help at cpaws-ov-vo.org.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

CPAWS NL successfully conducted a series of workshops engaging stakeholders in order to collect data for the creation of an online interactive mapping tool which will aid in marine conservation and planning

efforts in the province's coastal and marine environment. Until the release of the mapping platform in 2022, CPAVVS NL will be busy collecting and processing data and continuing to collaborate with scientists, marine planners, traditional knowledge holders, and industry. To contribute data, email mbickford@cpaws.org.



NOVA SCOTIA

On Earth Day, April 22, the Nova Scotia Government announced 61 new protected areas througout the province. This includes 49 provincial parks, 6 nature reserves, and 6 wilderness areas spread across 15 of the 18 counties in Nova Scotia. Many of these new protected areas are priority sites for CPAWS Nova Scotia, including Sackville River Wilderness Area. CPAWS NS continues work to ensure the remaining sites in the Nova Scotia Parks and Protected Areas Plan. Learn more, cpawsns.org/media-centre.

Springtime at Lewis Lake in the Sackville River Wilderness Area. Photo: Irwin Barrett

CANADIAN PARKS AND WILDERNESS SOCIETY

2021 AGM NOTICE

The CPAWS Annual General Meeting will be held via conference call at 8:00 p.m. (ET) on Monday, September 27, 2021. For more information, please contact us at info@cpaws.org or 1-800-333-9453.

CONNECT WITH US ONLINE



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Virtual bake sale, portion of Etsy sales, online fundraising challenge...there are lots of ways that you can fundraise for CPAVVS!





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Want to help fundraise for CPAWS with your event, product, or activity? Contact Vicki Dimillo at vdimillo@cpaws.org



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