

Categories of Protected and Conserved Areas in Canada

There are many different forms of protection in Canada, including the following:

- **National Park:** National Parks is easily the most recognizable of the protected area categories. We often say “park” when we mean a “protected area”, but, in fact, parks are just one type of protected area. There are currently 48 National Parks in Canada, with at least one in each jurisdiction. The Parks Canada Agency is responsible for the management of National Parks, in accordance with the [Canada National Parks Act](#). As stipulated in the Act, “National Parks are dedicated to the people of Canada for their benefit, education and enjoyment ... and the parks shall be maintained and made use of so as to leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations ... Maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity, through the protection of natural resources and natural processes, shall be the first priority of the Minister when considering all aspects of the management of parks.” [Learn more](#).
- **National Park Reserve:** A National Park Reserve applies to an area subject to Aboriginal claim(s) that have been accepted for negotiation by the Government of Canada. Aboriginal People may be involved in the cooperative management of a National Park Reserve with Parks Canada and can continue hunting, fishing, trapping, gathering, and spiritual activities. Once the land claims are settled and agreements are reached, the National Park Reserve designation is then brought under the Canada National Parks Act as a National Park. Until then, a National Park Reserve is managed like a National Park.
- **Provincial Park:** A Provincial Park is similar to a National Park in purpose, but is managed by the province or territory.
- **Migratory Bird Sanctuary (MBS):** There are 92 sanctuaries across Canada on federal, provincial, or private land; all of these sanctuaries protect a total of around 115,000 square kilometres of migratory bird habitat. The Canadian Wildlife Service manages Migratory Bird Sanctuaries. [Learn more](#).
- **National Wildlife Area (NWA):** National Wildlife Areas are created and managed for wildlife conservation, research, and interpretation. There are 55 terrestrial and marine NWAs across Canada that protect over 21,000 square kilometres of habitat. NWAs are managed by Environment and Climate Change Canada. [Learn more](#).
- Other categories of protected areas in Canada include Wildlife Areas, Wilderness Areas, Conservation Areas, Ecological Reserves, and other jurisdiction-specific designations.

All protected and conserved areas, defined and designated under Canadian legislation, are assigned to one or more of the [six IUCN categories](#) (note: a site can consist of parcels that have different IUCN designations).