

Canadian **WILDERNESS**

A publication of CPAWS
FALL 2020/WINTER 2021



**NEW
NORMAL
NEEDED**
TO PROTECT HALF OF CANADA



CPAWS
CANADIAN PARKS AND WILDERNESS SOCIETY

Display until APRIL 2021

Publication Mail Agreement 40033545



A wild river in the backcountry of Jasper, Alberta.
Photo: Joel Dunn

Pressing the reset button for Canada and nature

LAURA COLELLA

The most difficult circumstances can often present the most transformative opportunities. Canada needed a chance to press the reset button on its economy and restore balance with nature, even before the worldwide pandemic. We have that chance right now to set Canada on the path to a healthier, more sustainable future.

There is well-documented evidence of a downward trend for biodiversity in Canada and around the world. We must respond and we know how.

There is mounting consensus on the actions needed to protect the critical habitat species need and to address other threats to their existence. According to the United

Nation's 5th Global Biodiversity Outlook report released this fall, we need eight transformative changes to slow the decline of biodiversity – including protecting and restoring land, freshwater, and ocean ecosystems and implementing natural infrastructure and nature-based climate solutions.

These are the same changes we advocate for at CPAWS.

Our CPAWS family, including our funders and our supporters, are taking action on tackling the biodiversity and climate crises and fighting for a central role for nature in Canada's priorities and economy as we build back better. Our chapters have made great strides in their work on the ground to establish new protected areas, advocate for stronger management of protected areas on land and in the ocean, and support and collaborate with Indigenous groups in their conservation initiatives. Our CPAWS reports outline specific recommendations for governments to make the necessary changes while returning significant benefits to Canada's economy and the well-being of Canadians.

It is important to keep in sight the federal government's commitments to protecting 25% of Canada's land and ocean by 2025 and 30% by 2030. Having ambitious targets inspires the creativity and hard work needed for success in reaching them. Reaching these protection milestones requires collaboration among all levels of government, of all political stripes, and with Indigenous leaders, across the country – and for many years to come, as we strive to protect at least half of Canada.

Firm targets provide a signal that there is room for conservation in a recovering country – especially one as bountiful in nature as Canada. Conservation is key for a more equitable, healthy, and resilient future. CPAWS staff across the country are charging forward to secure the protection that Canada's ecosystems, species, and people need. Nature has done some heavy lifting for us – it's time to return the favour.

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

Canadian WILDERNESS

FALL 2020/WINTER 2021 VOLUME 16, ISSUE 2



CPAWS 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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ISSN 1717-8894.

Postmaster: send Canadian address changes to CPAWS, 600-100 Gloucester St, Ottawa ON K2P 0A4.

Canadian Wilderness is published twice per year (Spring, Fall) by Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (charity #10686 5272 RR0001).

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*COVER: Young humpback whale breaking water's surface
in the North Atlantic off the coast of Newfoundland. Photo: Adobe Stock*

*ABOVE: Siwash Rock, a famous outcropping in Stanley Park
in Vancouver, British Columbia, is surrounded by a legend according
to the Indigenous Squamish people. Photo: Adobe Stock*

ARE YOU THE HERO WE NEED?

You can join us and be a hero! By becoming a supporter of the CPAWS' Wilderness Protection Club, you put your hand up to help protect Canada's public land, ocean and freshwater every month.

With your gift of \$21 or \$39 or \$100 a month, you will feel like a million dollars. Knowing you are helping to protect and restore nature is good for your heart and great for Canada.

You can be a hero to the caribou. For \$21 a month, you can make a difference in the work CPAWS is doing to save these majestic creatures. Did you know caribou walk 3,000 kilometers every year? It is getting harder for them to navigate the many barriers humans put in place. From new roads, pipes and mines it is nearly impossible for caribou to continue to make the trek they have been making for centuries. You can make a difference.

You will also be a hero to our ocean and parks. Your gift will be used wisely to ensure we are making an impact in our fight against climate change. Do you have \$39 or \$100 a month to become part of the Wilderness Protection Club? You will make a difference today – and tomorrow.

To become a nature hero today, please email wpc@cpaws.org!

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Sheep River, part of the Bow River Watershed, in Kananaskis Country, Alberta. Photo: Pete Nuij

DEFEND ALBERTA PARKS

Challenging the Delisting of Canada's Protected Areas

Canada's federal government has ambitious goals for protecting Canada's land and water and meeting these targets means intensifying conservation measures across the country. Yet, there are discouraging plans being proposed in various regions that are going in the wrong direction. This includes the delisting of protected areas from within Alberta's park system.

In March 2020, the Government of Alberta announced the removal of protected status for 164 parks and the closure of 20 campsites and day-use areas, impacting a total of 175 parks and provincial recreation areas. Other impacts include closing busy visitor centres, discontinuing the grooming of popular cross-country ski trails, shortening the operating season for many campgrounds, and increasing camping and service fees at all sites. The Alberta government made these changes without public consultation nor evidence to substantiate cost savings from their closure.

This will result in the loss of 37% of all parks in Alberta. The sites selected include 32% of all of provincial campsites – a potential loss of almost 4,500 campsites in the province. Other parks slated to be delisted include several areas expressly meant to provide wilderness education and conservation of the land.

WHAT IS AT STAKE? Protected areas are the cornerstones of conservation. Parks and protected areas safeguard biodiversity; provide clean air, fresh water, food, and traditional medicines; buffer us from floods and droughts; and provide us with amazing outdoor recreational opportunities. Once an area loses its protected area status, it can be used or sold for purposes other than conservation, such as industrial resource extraction, agricultural uses, forest harvest, or coal mining. The closure and removal of parks pose a serious threat to natural heritage, economic recovery and quality of life.

WHAT CAN BE DONE? Visit the websites of the Southern and Northern Alberta CPAWS chapters to learn more about ongoing efforts to defend Alberta's parks.

Transparency Critical in Protected Areas Planning

Owls Head Provincial Park Reserve in Nova Scotia has long been recognized for its conservation significance, as a stunning coastal headland that supports important ecosystems and a globally-rare plant community, but it is currently under threat.

In March 2019, the Nova Scotia government secretly delisted this site in order to sell the public land to a golf course developer. The government made this move without consulting or notifying the public. News of the delisting was discovered following investigative journalism by the CBC.

The federal government owns a 17-hectare property adjacent to Owls Head park, the site of an old lighthouse. The Nova Scotia government attempted to acquire the lighthouse property to sell to the same land developer. Fortunately, following a strong public reaction against the land transfer, the federal government announced in June 2020 that the site of the former lighthouse has instead been transferred to Environment and Climate Change Canada and is slated for conservation.

As for Owls Head Provincial Park Reserve, the land is in legal limbo and CPAWS Nova Scotia continues to advocate for the provincial government to protect it among nearly 200 other promised protected areas.



BLUE RECOVERY

Charting a course to a healthy ocean **BY ALEXANDRA BARRON**

In June 2015, CPAWS published our annual *Dare to be Deep Ocean Report* and it wasn't exactly cheery reading. Just 1% of our ocean territory was protected, most marine protected areas (MPAs) had taken decades to establish, and most had minimal protection due to weak legislation. To address these issues, we flagged the need for strong political will to meet the targets, and recommended improvements to the *Oceans Act*, and stronger protections to prohibit the most harmful activities from all MPAs.

If you had told me back then that by 2019 Canada would have protected more than 10% of its ocean, strengthened the *Oceans Act* and announced minimum standards for MPAs, I would never have believed you.

CANADA IS BECOMING A WORLD LEADER ON OCEAN PROTECTION

Over the past five years there has been a remarkable effort to increase ocean protection and, though it hasn't all been perfect, it has been a significant win for conservation. We have celebrated the establishment of seven MPAs (most of which CPAWS had worked on for years), amendments to the *Oceans Act* and the announcement of minimum protection standards for all federal MPAs. CPAWS is partnering with the Government of Canada and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to host the upcoming 5th International Marine Protected Area Congress (IMPAC5) in Vancouver, which is an opportunity to spotlight Canada's recent achievements. In a few short years, Canada has gone from global laggard to world leader on ocean protection.

This year, Canada joined the Global Ocean Alliance and committed to protecting 25% by 2025 and 30% by 2030. In making these commitments, Canada is charting the right course. Research suggests that ultimately the world needs to protect 30% to 70% of land and ocean to protect biodiversity. A recent study published in *Nature* shows that by protecting 30% of the ocean we can restore ocean ecosystems to a healthy state by 2050. In order for our marine life and coastal communities to thrive for generations to come, CPAWS is committed to ensuring that at least 30% of Canada's coasts and ocean are effectively protected by 2030.

CANADA NEEDS A GREEN (AND BLUE!) RECOVERY THAT INVESTS IN NATURE

As we currently face simultaneous (and connected) biodiversity and climate crises and an economic crisis resulting from COVID-19, a Green (and Blue!) Recovery that invests in nature to build a better, more sustainable future is urgently needed. MPAs will play an important role in this through investment in coastal communities, creation of good meaningful jobs, and supporting thriving and sustainable local economies. Effective MPAs produce an estimated return of \$10 for every \$1 invested.

With more than 30 years of experience working on MPAs, CPAWS will continue to play a leading role in ensuring that Canada meets these ambitious new targets. We are achieving this by working to identify and protect the most ecologically and culturally significant ecosystems, with strong protection measures, and effective management and monitoring.



Ocean kayaking at sunset.
Photo: Adobe Stock



A mother orca and her calf in the Salish Sea
off the coast of British Columbia. Photo: Adobe Stock



Murchison Lagoon, Gwaii Haanas.
Photo: Sabine Jessen

CPAWS IS CHARTING A COURSE TO 30% OCEAN PROTECTION BY 2030

The CPAWS ocean team has been working with our regional chapter experts to develop a recommended nautical chart for 25% and 30%. This includes completing critically needed and long-overdue MPA networks in northern B.C., the Maritimes and the Gulf of St Lawrence that will provide connectivity between and representivity across ecosystems, and plan for likely climate change related shifts in ecosystems. We continue to advocate for the protection of long-standing priority areas like the Bay of Fundy, Western Hudson Bay and the Southern Strait of Georgia, and are also looking to identify new areas in need of protection, including critical habitat and other areas that are important for Species at Risk.

An important priority for CPAWS is supporting Indigenous-led conservation efforts. Our chapters are working closely with Indigenous partners to support the development of Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas (IPCAs) that will support Indigenous sovereignty and meaningful reconciliation, as well as conservation goals.

WE MUST STRIVE FOR BETTER PROTECTION STANDARDS

Getting to 30% will take a lot of effort, but we also need to make sure that *effective* protection is in place. That is why we are equally focused on ensuring that the Minimum Protection Standards announced in April 2019 (which prohibit bottom trawling, oil and gas activities, mining, and dumping) are effectively and comprehensively implemented across all sites, including Other Effective Area Based Conservation Measures (OECMs).

The minimum standards should be the base level of protections for MPAs and we want Canada to strive for even stronger protection. We are currently evaluating Canada's existing MPAs and OECMs against both the minimum standards and the soon to be published "MPA Guide," an international tool being developed to assess MPA protection standards. We'll be publishing our results and recommendations for Canada to strengthen current MPAs and ensure effective protection moving forward in our upcoming Ocean Report early next year.

MPAS MUST BE EFFECTIVELY MANAGED AND MONITORED

Finally, with the recent leap in the establishment of MPAs, CPAWS has also prioritized the need to ensure these sites are properly managed and monitored so that Canada can demonstrate long-term ecological benefits. This also provides an opportunity for significant investment in coastal communities, especially Indigenous communities and Indigenous Guardian programs. Producing tangible benefits in terms of job creation and demonstrable ecological benefits is important to secure community support for conservation.

There is much to be done in the next 5 and 10 years. The 25% and 30% targets for protecting our ocean are ambitious, but they are fundamentally important to the health of our ocean and of our coastal communities. We need your support in calling for better protection of our ocean through more MPAs, stronger protections, and effective management and monitoring. Tell your MP and MLA/MPP/MNA that protecting nature and the ocean must be at the heart of our economic recovery if we want to build back better.

Alexandra Barron is the National Director of the Ocean Program for CPAWS.

SURVIVAL STRATEGY

Protecting land and freshwater is vital to our future

BY ANNA PIDGORNA

DID YOU KNOW?

In September 2020, Canada joined 29 countries in the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People. The coalition is advocating for the inclusion of a global target of conserving 30% of the world's land and ocean by 2030 in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The framework will be adopted by the global community during the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in 2021 and its targets will guide conservation and biodiversity action around the world over the next 10 years. Learn more: www.campaignfornature.org/high-ambition-coalition

Nature is FUNDAMENTAL to life.

Healthy nature provides everything we need to thrive, including clean air, fresh water, and fertile soil, food and medicines, and healthy resilient ecosystems. Nature gives us inspiration, hope, and a connection to the spiritual. It excites us, fills us with wonder, and gives us a sense of self.

Nature is good for the mind and body. Access to nature encourages people to be more physically active, providing critical space for exercise and relaxation. Nature brings tremendous benefits to our mental health, including improved attention, sleep, and stress recovery. It facilitates development and helps relieve attention deficit disorder in children. People who regularly spend time in nature are, on average, healthier and happier.

Nature is good for our economy. The World Economic Forum tells us that half of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is moderately or highly dependent on nature and the services it provides, including up to 40% of the world's jobs. Habitat loss and degradation and climate change are two of the top five global risks threatening our planet, economy, and way of life. The benefits of protecting healthy nature outweigh the costs by a factor of at least 5:1 (Waldron, 2020).

But, nature is in CRISIS.

Nature is being destroyed at an unprecedented scale and rate. By degrading our land and seascapes, we are losing critical ecosystems and habitats, jeopardizing our ability to withstand the effects of climate change and natural catastrophes and putting one million species at risk of extinction.

We can all see the destruction. Engraved in our memories is a baseline image of what nature looked like when we were children. Every day, more of it is lost or altered forever.

We know WHAT to do. We know HOW to do it. We must INTENSIFY our efforts.

The year 2020 has shown us the interdependence between ourselves and the natural world. The continued destruction and unsustainable exploitation of nature clears the path for zoonotic diseases and pandemics like COVID-19. To help ensure our own healthy and sustainable future, we need to completely rethink our relationship with nature. We can no longer rely on our "business as usual" scenario.



The Skyline Trail, Pleasant Bay, Cape Breton
Highlands National Park, Nova Scotia.
Photo : Elyse Turton

The science is clear on what must be done to halt nature's steep decline: at least 30% to 70% of the planet needs to be in a network of well-designed and well-managed protected areas. Canada is well-positioned to achieve this target, as the federal government has already committed to protecting 25% of our landscape by 2025 and 30% by 2030.

With a mission to protect half of Canada's public land and water in the spirit of reconciliation, CPAWS is, in turn, well-positioned to help the government stay on track. However, with just over 12% of Canada's land and freshwater currently protected, there is still a long way to go. We were very fortunate that despite all the difficulties the pandemic brought with it, CPAWS's staff could continue this important work.

Seven months into the pandemic, momentum for conservation is slowly returning. Announcements of new protected areas are coming in from across the country. New Brunswick is doubling the amount of its protected areas. Newfoundland and Labrador finally – after 25 years – has the opportunity to see a proposed protected areas network plan for the island of Newfoundland, which would protect an additional 3% of the province. In Saskatchewan, the 50,000-sq km Seal River watershed will be protected from industrial activity with a \$3.2 M Nature Challenge Fund investment into an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area – an initiative led by the Sayisi Dene First Nation (in partnership with other First Nations, the Inuit in Nunavut, and the CPAWS Manitoba chapter and other NGOs).

Although critically important, existing conservation efforts fall short of the scale and ambition needed from the governments to tackle the current nature emergency.

Anna Pidgorna is the Senior Conservation Coordinator for Terrestrial Conservation and Parks with CPAWS and Sandra Schwartz is the National Executive Director for CPAWS.



Emerald Lake Alberta.
Photo: Bruno Soares

PLANNING AHEAD

Nature conservation is the key to our own survival, and it must be at the heart of our post-COVID-19 recovery efforts.

The European Union, New Zealand, France, and Germany have already announced ambitious plans for green post-COVID-19 investments and recovery efforts. While Canada's federal government has adopted ambitious targets for protection, the next step in our advocacy for nature is for action plans that ensure Canada meets its targets with effective nature protection and restoration while we still have time.

To that end, this year's CPAWS Parks Report – **Healthy Nature Healthy People: A Call to Put Nature Protection at the Heart of Canada's COVID-19 Recovery Strategies** – is among the many policy briefs and communiques we prepared for policy makers to build the case for a green recovery.

We argue that once Canadian governments look beyond immediate COVID-19 crisis support programs to medium and long-term recovery measures, conserving nature — our life support system — must be at their heart.

This includes delivering on the federal government's commitment to protect 25% of our land and ocean by 2025 and 30% by 2030. To help advance nature conservation, CPAWS strongly recommends that federal, provincial, and territorial governments in Canada:

1. Publicly commit to protecting and restoring nature at the heart of COVID-19 recovery plans and investments.
2. Invest in completing effective networks of protected areas.
3. Invest in long-term protected area management.
4. Support Indigenous-led conservation and stewardship, ensuring protected areas are created and managed in ways that contribute to reconciliation among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada, and with the Earth.

The decisions we make today will impact the future of all life on Earth. The role nature plays in our lives and the role protected areas play in conserving it are front of mind. This is our chance to turn the tide on the dual crises of biodiversity loss and climate change. This is our opportunity to embrace the interconnectedness of our world and the fact that health, prosperity, nature, and happiness are all parts of the same equation.

—Sandra Schwartz



YOUR LASTING LEGACY

Your commitment to the
Canadian Parks and Wilderness
Society can live on forever.

You may be thinking about our vast country,
our beautiful nature and our future more now
than ever before. You are not alone.

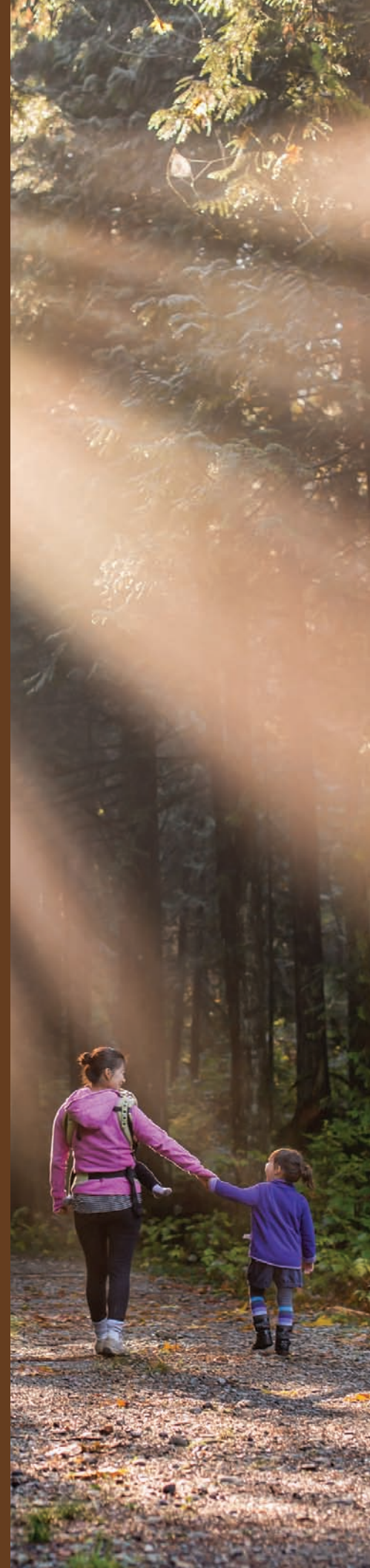
Many generous donors like you have reached
out to CPAWS. People who value a thriving
ocean and healthy lakes, all critters large and
small, and the intact forests of this land,
want to make a difference for future
generations. Those who have left a gift
to CPAWS in their will continue their
commitment to nature beyond their lifetime.

Leaving a lasting legacy can take many forms
including a bequest, life insurance, securities or
a gift of personal property. Aligning your values
and your legacy gift plans is an heroic act of
kindness that helps you protect the wild spaces
you hold dear for generations to come.

Whether you are crafting your legacy for the
first time or updating your current will, please
know your gift will be stewarded with care
in the fulfillment of our mission. Together, with
generous people like you, the Canadian Parks
and Wilderness Society believes in strong
conservation. We need you to ensure our
grandchildren's grandchildren will be able to
enjoy all that Canada's nature has to offer.

For more information on steps
you can take to leave a lasting legacy
please contact Vicki DiMillo
at vdimillo@cpaws.org.

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YUKON

CPAWS Yukon has joined the Gwich'in Steering Committee along with other environmental organizations in the lawsuit against the US Department of the Interior. The Department recently finalized an illegal leasing program that would hand over the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to the oil and gas industry. The lawsuit charges the Department with violating all bedrock laws that protect lands, waters, wildlife, and people. Learn more, cpawsyukon.org/porcupine-caribou.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

CPAWS BC continues to campaign for better funding and management of BC's parks. Demand for outdoor recreation is at an all-time high. Yet, BC's provincial parks are suffering from decades of chronic underfunding. Recently, the BC government announced a funding boost and youth employment boost for BC Parks. This lift will support visitors, nature

and wildlife within BC's provincial parks and protected areas, while the campaign for a significant, long-term funding lift goes on. Learn more, cpawsbc.org.

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES

CPAWS NWT is working with Indigenous partners to encourage federal

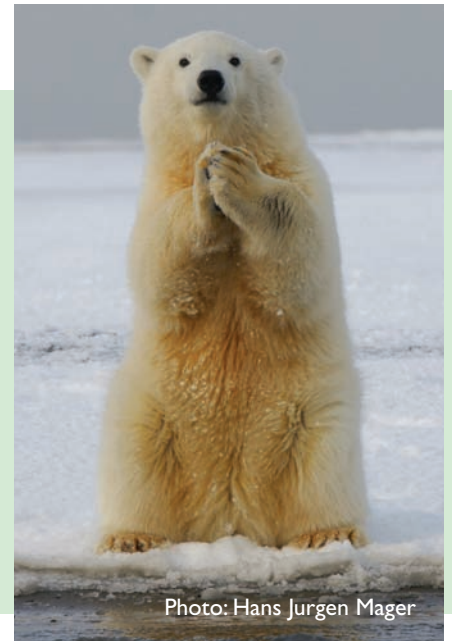


Photo: Hans Jurgen Mager

and territorial governments to invest in a long-term Northwest Territories fund for managing protected and conserved areas alongside long-term investment in Indigenous Guardian programs as Indigenous Governments in NWT lead the way to establishing and stewarding Indigenous protected and conserved areas. Learn more, cpawsnwt.org.

ALBERTA

CPAWS Northern and **Southern AB** are working together to encourage the Alberta government to reverse its decision to rescind the 1976 Coal Policy which saw the removal of land zoning that restricted open pit coal mining and coal exploration in some of Alberta's most environmentally-sensitive areas. Learn more, cpawsnab.org/coal_campaign and cpaws-southernalberta.org/coal-campaign.



SASKATCHEWAN

CPAWS SK continues to work with Cumberland House Cree Nation to establish protection and Indigenous Stewardship of the Saskatchewan River Delta: an almost 4,000 km² area with a cultural and ecological value that has a centuries-old internationally-recognized legacy, the conservation of which would be a significant victory for wilderness in Canada. You can learn more about the campaign to protect the Delta at cpaws-sask.org/saskatchewan-river-delta.

ONTARIO

CPAWS Wildlands League continues its work on Ontario's logging scars, releasing shocking new evidence showing widespread and systemic deforestation from clearcutting practices in the boreal forest. They identified over 291 sites which remain barren decades after

the logging has ended, refuting claims that deforestation is 'limited' or the 'exception' in Ontario. Learn more, wildlandsleague.org.

CPAWS Ottawa Valley's efforts to protect western Québec's Noire and Coulonge River watersheds received a significant boost in the spring of 2020 with the announcement of a grant of \$300,000 from the Federal Government's Canada Nature Fund – Challenge Stream to support the establishment of a new protected area of approximately 1,200 km². Learn more, cpaws-ov-vo.org.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

CPAWS NL has faced great opposition on the proposed protected areas plan prepared by the government of Newfoundland and Labrador's Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council, yet they remain steadfast champions for the preservation of the region's unique landscape, ecology and species. Again this summer they hosted a successful series of expeditions of their internationally renowned Puffin and Petrel Patrol. Learn more, cpawsnl.org.



Field trip with the youth of the Innu community of Pessamit in the Pimpuacan Reservoir region. Photo: CPAWS Quebec

QUEBEC

CPAWS QC is working with the Pessamiulnut to protect Pimpuacan which is situated on the Nitassinan of the Innu First Nation of Pessamit, in the heart of the boreal forest. The ongoing expansion of logging threatens the Pimpuacan region, including in the priority sectors identified for the restoration of the caribou and on the borders of several sites of interest for the creation of protected areas – a recurring problem in Quebec. Learn more, cpawsquebec.org.

NEW BRUNSWICK

CPAWS NB remains eager to help the government deliver on its commitment to protect 10% of the province by the end of 2020, which will more than double the province's protected

area coverage. As threats to nature persist in the province, CPAWS NB is recommending immediate temporary protections to safeguard New Brunswick's wild spaces as stakeholders collectively strive to meet the 10% target. Learn more, cpawsnb.org.



Seagrass survey. Photo: Simon Ryder-Burbidge

NOVA SCOTIA

CPAWS NS continues to fight for the protection of Owls Head Provincial Park Reserve. The Nova Scotia government secretly delisted this park last year, and has been attempting to sell-off these coastal public lands for a golf course development. CPAWS-NS continues to raise the alarm, and this summer, conservation staff completed numerous scientific surveys at Owls Head to document species and ecosystems in the reserve. Learn more, cpawsns.org/owls-head-provincial-park-reserve-2.



NATURE IS ESSENTIAL TO OUR WELL-BEING.

Help us ensure Canada's decision makers
keep nature on the agenda as part
of the COVID-19 recovery plans.


TAKE ACTION TODAY!

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Photo: David Nunuk


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