15 Steps Canada Can Take to Better Protect Wildlife and the Environment



Every two years, the World Wildlife Fund, in collaboration with the Zoological Society of London, produces the Living Planet Report. According to the most recent report, global wildlife populations face a plunge of more than two-thirds during the 50-year period ending in 2020 as a result of human activities. The Living Plant Report 2016 also notes that global populations of mammals, birds, fish, amphibians and reptiles have already declined by 58% between 1970 and 2012, the most recent year with available data.

So what can Canada do to stop and maybe reverse this trend' WWF-Canada suggests that Canada take the following 15 steps:

1. **Declare the Arctic's Lancaster Sound a National Marine Conservation Area.** Now that Shell has relinquished nearby oil and gas exploration permits, nothing stands in the way of a marine protected area with expanded boundaries requested by Inuit communities for the area teeming with polar bears, belugas, narwhals, thick-billed murres and other wildlife.
2. **Create a large, pristine marine-protected area for the Last Ice Area.** Arctic summer sea ice is projected to remain the longest here, which is critical for narwhals, polar bears, walruses and other ice-dependent wildlife.
3. **Reinstate provisions gutted from the *Fisheries Act* to**

protect the health of rivers and lakes across the country. Once Canada's strongest environmental law, the Act sought to prevent the harmful alteration, disruption and destruction of fish habitat.

4. **Use already identified and mapped ecologically and biologically significant areas as the basis for designating new marine protected areas (MPAs)** when working toward the promise of 5% ocean protection by 2017. Globally, scientific consensus is that at least 30% of the oceans need to be protected by effective MPAs in order to conserve marine biodiversity.
5. **Safeguard cod, seabirds and whales through better monitoring of their food** (forage fish such as herring, mackerel and capelin). WWF-Canada's recent report, Food For All, revealed that three forage fisheries in Atlantic Canada are in critical condition.
6. **Update the Mineral and Energy Resource Assessment policy** so that we no longer unnecessarily delay marine protection with a requirement that mineral, oil and gas potential be explored first. This discretionary policy doesn't reflect current priorities and should no longer stand in the way of timely creation of MPAs.
7. **Set meaningful minimum standards for future marine protected areas**, including no oil and gas exploration, limited commercial fishing (and no bottom trawling). According to a recent survey, 98% of Canadians say protecting oceans and their ecosystems is an important action for government to take, 87% are opposed to bottom trawling, and 80% think oil and gas exploration, drilling and exploitation shouldn't be allowed in MPAs.
8. **Ban the discharge of untreated grey water and sewage in Arctic waters** as in the south. Climate change is opening once inaccessible Arctic waters to shipping and tourism. This fragile environment needs at least the same regulations that protect southern waters.
9. **Revise the *Canada Petroleum Resources Act*** so petroleum is no longer the official priority ahead of environment

and community needs in the Arctic. This 30-year-old Act gives petroleum priority over all other uses in the Arctic and allows for the awarding of exploration rights without environmental assessment.

10. **Support caribou habitat designations in the 2016 draft Nunavut Land Use Plan.** Populations of caribou, an iconic Canadian animal, have suffered shocking declines, some by more than 95%. Both scientific and traditional knowledge are consistent in the conclusion that disturbing caribou during calving can lead to calf abandonment and lower populations.
11. **Require freshwater monitoring to be publicly reported in real time.** Across the country, Canadians of all ages rank freshwater as our most important natural resource. But despite the fundamental role freshwater plays for our well-being and economic success, there isn't widespread, accessible data about this essential public resource.
12. **Adopt national water monitoring standards** that can be used by community groups, watershed organizations, academia and government. Community-based monitoring is emerging as a scientifically sound and affordable approach to improving the health of freshwater ecosystems after the historical dismantling of both long- and short-term monitoring stations and programs and subsequent loss of evidence-based decision making.
13. **Stop granting fossil fuel rights, licences and claims without an environmental assessment first.** Given the impacts of climate change, we need a modernized approach that results in resource allocation and development decisions based on science and evidence, serving the full interest of the public.
14. **Shift subsidies from fossil fuels** to habitat-friendly renewable energy.
15. **Update the environmental assessment laws to take into account cumulative effects of multiple projects** (new and old) on interconnected ecosystems. A regional assessment

approach looks at the interrelated impacts of multiple projects in ways that the current case-by-case approach can’t.