

# HINTERLAND WHO'S WHO

## ENVIRONMENT CANADA'S PROTECTED AREAS NETWORK



Photo: Garry Trotter (CWS)

### The protected areas network

- covers more than 11.8 million hectares of protected habitat for wildlife, an area over twice the size of Nova Scotia
- includes the Queen Maud Gulf Migratory Bird Sanctuary in Nunavut, where over 90 percent of the world's population of Ross's Geese nest
- includes the wetlands and the agricultural and wooded uplands of the Alaksen National Wildlife Area in British Columbia, an internationally important migration stopover and wintering area for a huge number and variety of birds
- contains many areas that allow some public access

### Why are some areas set aside for wildlife?

Canada is renowned as a land of magnificent natural scenery and a wealth of wildlife. What many people may not know, however, is that some of the country's most important sites for wildlife and coincidentally, some of its most scenic sites, are protected spaces for wildlife.

Environment Canada's Canadian Wildlife Service administers a network of protected areas, which protects an estimated 11.8 million hectares of wildlife habitat, an area more than twice the size of Nova Scotia.

The components of the network are National Wildlife Areas (NWAs), Migratory Bird Sanctuaries (MBSs), and Marine Wildlife Areas (MWAs). These sites contain a wide diversity of habitat of national and international importance.

For example, approximately 75 percent of the world's population of Semipalmated Sandpipers carpets the beaches and mudflats of Shepody National Wildlife Area in the Bay of Fundy over the six-to-eight-week southward migratory period each year. At some sites, single flocks can attain numbers of 250 000 birds or more and move as one body, wheeling in the sky, skimming over the water, and lighting on the shore in such density that the beaches seem alive with moving pebbles.

The Great Plain of the Koukdjuak on Baffin Island (part of which is protected as Dewey Soper Migratory Bird Sanctuary) shelters the largest goose colony in the world.

There are 51 NWAs and 92 MBSs. Some of these NWAs and MBSs extend beyond land, incorporating freshwater and marine areas, thereby helping to safeguard 1.5 million hectares of Canada's aquatic habitat. In addition, sites are being considered as MWAs in offshore and coastal areas where plants, animals, and ecosystems will be protected.

Why have these areas been set aside? Each wild plant and animal species needs habitat—a particular location with specific characteristics, including an appropriate climate and available food and shelter, where wildlife may live. Animals that migrate, such as caribou, monarch butterflies, and many birds, need several habitats. They may breed in one habitat during summer, winter in another, and cross a number of other habitats as they undertake seasonal migrations.

To preserve abundant and diverse wildlife populations in Canada, we need to ensure suitable habitats exist. This is the purpose of Environment Canada's protected areas. The Canadian Wildlife Service identifies wildlife habitat of national ecological

importance whose loss would have a direct impact on the Canadian population of one or more wild species, and it works closely with many groups to ensure that such areas are protected as NWAs, MBSs, or MWAs.

## How are protected areas established?

North America's oldest waterfowl sanctuary at Last Mountain Lake in Saskatchewan was set aside by Parliament in 1887 to protect breeding grounds for "Wild Fowl." In 1916, Canada and the United States signed the Migratory Birds Convention which obliged both countries to preserve migratory birds and protect them from indiscriminate slaughter. Canada implemented the convention through the Migratory Birds Convention Act of 1917 under which Last Mountain Lake became an MBS.

The Migratory Birds Convention Act and the MBSs established under that act protect migratory birds against physical disturbance and hunting, which was the main threat in the early part of the 20th century, but they do not protect habitat or species of wildlife other than migratory birds. By the 1960s and 1970s, significant wildlife habitats, particularly wetlands, were being lost at an alarming rate. The Canada Wildlife Act (1973) was passed to authorize the establishment of sites known as National Wildlife Areas in which migratory birds and other wildlife, particularly species at risk and their habitat, could receive protection. In 1994, the act was amended to include the creation of MWAs.

The Species at Risk Act (SARA), which was proclaimed in 2003, expands the scope for

### Marine Wildlife Area: A first in Canada

The Scott Islands archipelago in British Columbia, a proposed Marine Wildlife Area, will protect more than two million seabirds that nest there each year, including 55 percent of the world population of Cassin's Auklets. The site is already an internationally recognized Important Bird Area.

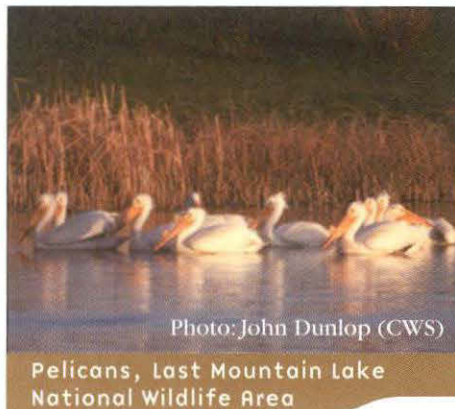


Photo: John Dunlop (CWS)

Pelicans, Last Mountain Lake National Wildlife Area

applying NWA and MWA status to protect wildlife habitat. SARA aims to protect species recognized as being at risk nationally or regionally, as well as their habitat. SARA also amends the Canada Wildlife Act to allow the Minister of the Environment to give other federal ministers the power to name and manage NWAs and MWAs.

Usually, CWS staff nominate a potential protected area, although members of the scientific community, provincial biologists, conservation groups, Aboriginal groups, and private citizens have all made proposals that have been adopted.

To be considered for designation as an NWA or an MWA, a site must contain "nationally significant" habitat for migratory birds, support wildlife or ecosystems at risk, or represent a rare or unusual wildlife habitat or biogeographic region. Both NWAs and MWAs must be comprised of land or waters under federal jurisdiction.

## Migratory Bird Sanctuaries

MBSs cover approximately 11.2 million hectares. The largest federally designated area to protect migratory birds in Canada is the Queen Maud Gulf MBS, which was created in 1961 on the northern mainland tundra of Nunavut. Over 90 percent of the world's population of a small white goose, called Ross's Goose, nest there. The Queen Maud lowlands shelter the largest variety of geese of any nesting area in North America, including Ross's Geese, Lesser Snow Geese, Canada Geese, White-fronted

Geese, Atlantic Brant, and Black Brant, as well as Tundra Swans.

The Migratory Bird Sanctuary Regulations prohibit disturbance of migratory birds, their eggs, and their nests within an MBS. The regulations also prohibit disturbance of migratory birds' habitat when MBSs are established on federal Crown land. In most MBSs, visitors must not carry firearms or allow their pets to run at large. However, in northern Canada Aboriginal people have the right to carry firearms in MBSs for traditional hunting and trapping purposes.

### Migratory Bird Sanctuaries protect the habitat of thousands of birds

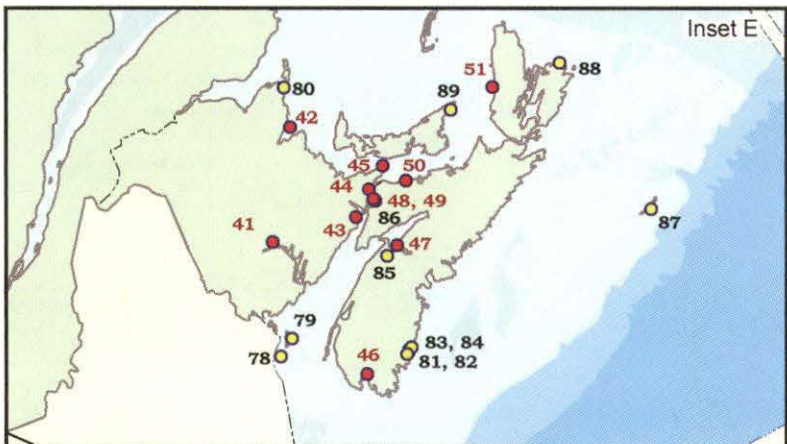
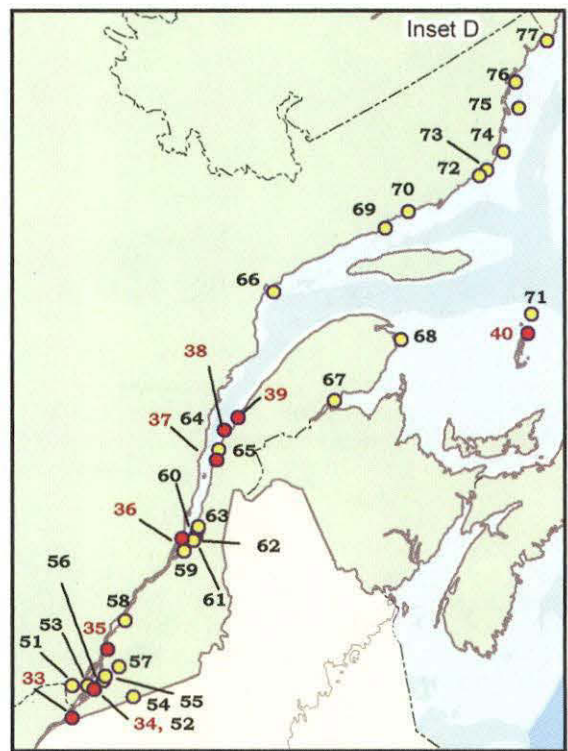
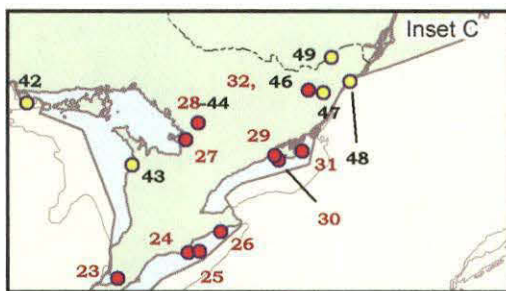
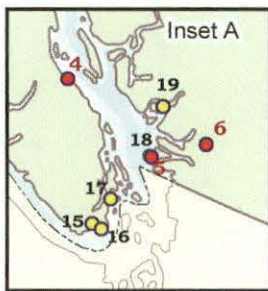
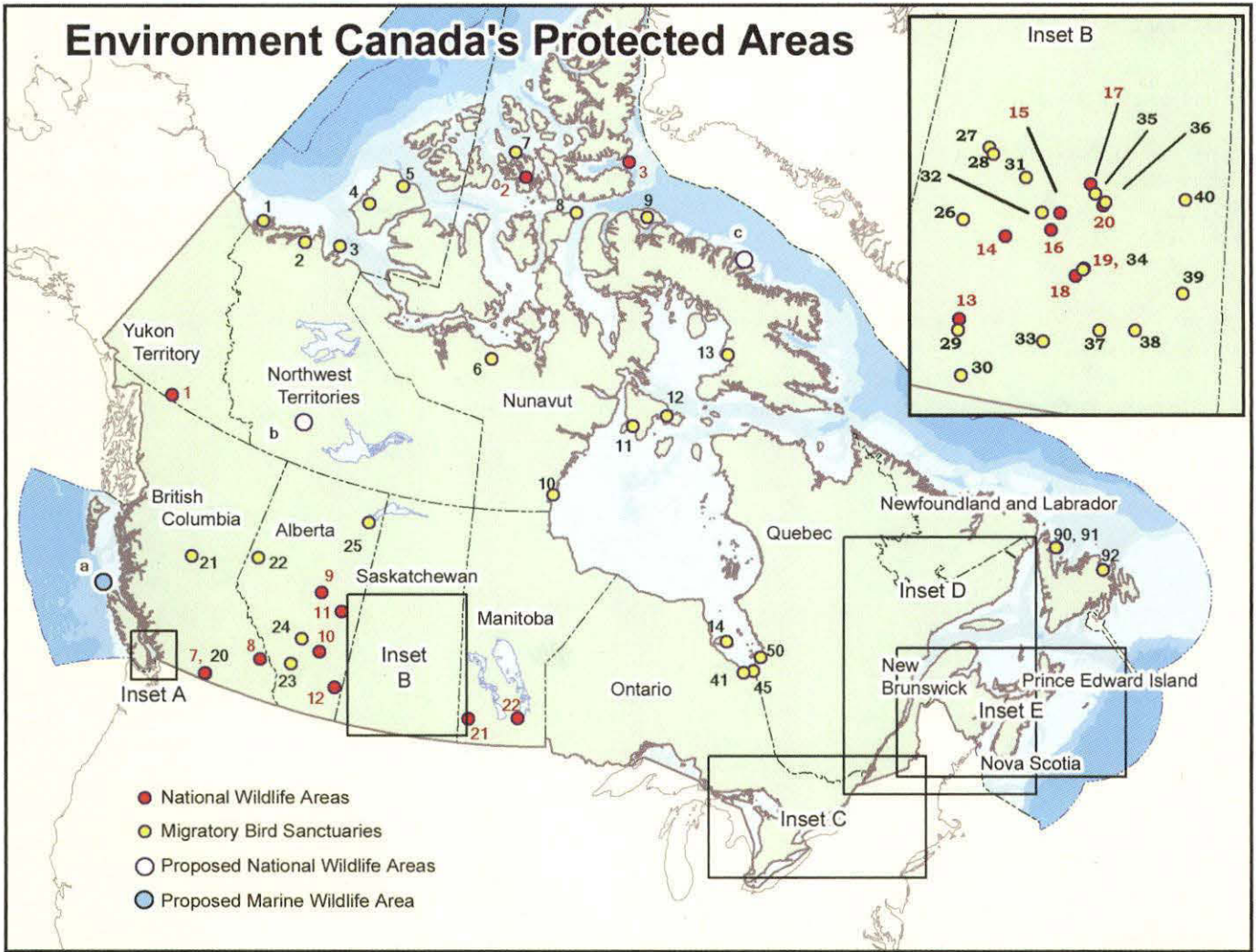
There are several very large MBSs in the Northwest Territories and Nunavut, but the sizes of the other MBSs vary greatly. In British Columbia, the Vaseaux Lake MBS, 282 hectares of lake and shoreline in the Okanagan Valley, was established to protect the endangered Trumpeter Swans that stop there during their autumn migration. The smallest MBS, the 0.08-hectare Christie Islet, is in Howe Sound, north of Vancouver in British Columbia. It is the only location in the Vancouver area where large numbers of seabirds nest. Îles Sainte-Marie MBS (4 100 hectares) on the north shore of the Gulf of St. Lawrence is an important nesting site for thousands of seabirds, among them Common Murres and Razorbills.

Management includes monitoring wildlife, maintaining and improving wildlife habitat, periodic inspections, enforcement of hunting prohibitions and regulations, and the maintenance of signs. Research is also an important function of the protected areas; CWS staff carry out and coordinate research at some sites.

## National Wildlife Areas and Marine Wildlife Areas

The purpose of NWAs and MWAs is to conserve essential habitats for migratory birds and other wildlife species, especially endangered wildlife. The NWAs protect approximately 529 000 hectares of habitat.

# Environment Canada's Protected Areas



**National Wildlife Areas**

No.	Name and area (hectares)
<b>Yukon Territory</b>	
1	Nisutlin River Delta - 5 488
<b>Nunavut</b>	
2	Polar Bear Pass (R) - 267 500
3	Nirjutiqavvik (Coburg Island) - 165 000
<b>British Columbia</b>	
4	Qualicum - 82
5	*Alaksen (R) - 299
6	Widgeon Valley - 125
7	*Vaseux-Bighorn - 812
8	Columbia - 1 001
<b>Alberta</b>	
9	Meanook - 214
10	Spiers Lake - 64.7
11	Blue Quills - 96.8
12	CFB Suffield - 45 807
<b>Saskatchewan</b>	
13	Webb - 427
14	Prairie - 2 938
15	St. Denis - 361
16	Bradwell - 123
17	Tway - 96
18	Stalwart - 1 525
19	*Last Mountain Lake (R) - 16 898
20	*Raven Island - 94
<b>Manitoba</b>	
21	Pope - 31
22	Rockwood - 30
<b>Ontario</b>	
23	St. Clair (R) - 289
24	Big Creek - 802
25	Long Point (R) - 3 250
26	Mohawk Island - 4
27	Wye Marsh - 47
28	*Eleanor Island - 0.6
29	Wellers Bay - 40
30	Scotch Bonnet Island - 0.9
31	Prince Edward Point - 246
32	*Mississippi Lake - 235
<b>Quebec</b>	
33	Lac Saint-François (R) - 1 446
34	*Îles de la Paix - 120
35	Îles de Contrecoeur - 312
36	Cap Tourmente (R) - 2 399
37	*Baie de l'Isle-Verte (R) - 797
38	Îles de l'Estuaire - 409
39	Pointe-au-Père - 23.3
40	Pointe de l'Est - 974
<b>New Brunswick</b>	
41	Portobello Creek - 1 990
42	Portage Island - 451
43	Shepody (R) - 979
44	Tintamarre - 1 990
45	Cape Jourimain - 621
<b>Nova Scotia</b>	
46	Sand Pond - 532.4
47	Boot Island (R) - 144
48	John Lusby (R) - 1 020
49	*Chignecto (R) - 409.6
50	Wallace Bay - 585
51	Sea Wolf Island - 40.5

\* Overlaps with or contains another National Wildlife Area or a Migratory Bird Sanctuary  
 (R) Overlap with or contains a Ramsar site

**Migratory Bird Sanctuaries**

No.	Name and area (hectares)	No.	Name and area (hectares)
<b>Northwest Territories</b>		<b>Quebec</b>	
1	Kendall Island - 60 900	50	†Boatswain Bay - 17 900
2	Anderson River Delta - 102 500	51	Île Carillon - 426
3	Cape Parry - 200	52	*Îles de la Paix - 1 115
4	Banks Island No. 1 - 1 999 700	53	Senneville - 569
5	Banks Island No. 2 - 17 000	54	Philipsburg - 525
<b>Nunavut</b>		55	Île aux Hérons - 622
6	Queen Maud Gulf (R) - 6 176 500	56	Île de la Couvée - 17
7	Seymour Island - 2 800	57	Mont Saint-Hilaire - 955
8	Prince Leopold Island - 31 100	58	Nicolet (R) - 2 835
9	Bylot Island - 1 263 500	59	Saint-Vallier - 405
10	McConnell River (R) - 33 400	60	Trois-Saumons - 222
11	Harry Gibbons - 122 400	61	Montmagny - 80
12	East Bay (R) - 113 800	62	Cap-Saint-Ignace - 133
13	Dewey Soper (R) - 793 000	63	L'Islet - 64
14	Akimiski Island - 336 700	64	*L'Isle-Verte - 303
<b>British Columbia</b>		65	Île aux Basques - 933
15	Esquimalt Lagoon - 129.6	66	Île du Corossol - 413
16	Victoria Harbour - 1 700	67	Saint-Omer - 64.6
17	Shoal Harbour - 150	68	Île Bonaventure et du Rocher Percé - 1 360
18	*George C. Reifel (R) - 648	69	Betchouane - 462
19	Christie Islet - 0.08	70	Watshishou - 11 320
20	*Vaseux Lake - 282	71	Rochers-aux-Oiseaux - 625
21	Nechako River - 180	72	Île à la Brume - 4 320
<b>Alberta</b>		73	Baie des Loups - 3 550
22	Saskatoon Lake - 1 135	74	Îles Sainte-Marie - 4 100
23	Inglewood - 1 600	75	Gros Mécatina - 2 310
24	Red Deer - 130	76	Saint-Augustin - 5 570
25	Richardson Lake - 12 705	77	Baie de Brador - 538
<b>Saskatchewan</b>		<b>New Brunswick</b>	
26	Opuntia Lake - 1 395	78	Machias Seal Island - 622
27	Murray Lake - 1 165	79	Grand Manan - 250
28	Scent Grass Lake - 633	80	Inkerman - 15.1
29	Duncairn Reservoir - 1 546	<b>Nova Scotia</b>	
30	Val Marie Reservoir - 505	81	Haley Lake - 100
31	Redberry Lake - 6 395	82	Sable River - 260
32	Sutherland - 130	83	Port Hebert - 350
33	Old Wives Lake - 26 060	84	Port Joli - 280
34	*Last Mountain Lake (R) - 4 855	85	Kentville - 200
35	Basin and Middle Lakes - 8 720	86	*Amherst Point (R) - 429
36	*Lenore Lake - 8 830	87	Sable Island - 2 350
37	Wascana Lake - 104	88	Big Glace Bay Lake - 240
38	Indian Head - 32	<b>Prince Edward Island</b>	
39	Upper Rousay Lake - 518	89	Black Pond - 130
40	Neely Lake - 809	<b>Newfoundland and Labrador</b>	
<b>Ontario</b>		90	Shepherd Island - 16
41	Moose River (R) - 1 457	91	Île aux Canes - 150
42	St. Joseph's Island - 940	92	Terra Nova - 870
43	Chantry Island - 81	* Overlaps with or contains another Migratory Bird Sanctuary or a National Wildlife Area	
44	*Eleanor Island - 0.6	(R) Overlaps with or contains a Ramsar site	
45	†Hannah Bay (R) - 29 500	† Located partly in Nunavut	
46	*Mississippi Lake - 430	<b>Proposed Marine Wildlife Area</b>	
47	Rideau - 809.4	a	Scott Islands - 144 000 hectares (BC)
48	Upper Canada - 2 663	<b>Proposed National Wildlife Areas</b>	
49	Beckett Creek - 103	b	Edehzhie - 2 500 000 hectares (NT)
		c	Igaliqtuq (Isabella Bay) - 551 500 hectares (NU)

**Proposed Marine Wildlife Area**

a Scott Islands - 144 000 hectares (BC)

**Proposed National Wildlife Areas**

b Edehzhie - 2 500 000 hectares (NT)  
 c Igaliqtuq (Isabella Bay) - 551 500 hectares (NU)

CWS prepares a management plan for each NWA with the involvement of the local communities. The plan specifies activities that are generally allowed and identifies additional activities to be allowed under permit. For example, traditional uses such as berry picking, canoeing, hunting, fishing, and trapping may be generally allowed, while oil drilling, livestock grazing, or haying could be allowed with strict limitations under a yearly permit. Management plans may also specify how and where to make habitat improvements. Examples include planting native vegetation to provide food and cover and make the landscape more attractive to birds and other wildlife. Management plans must respect Aboriginal rights and practices specified under land claims agreements.

Under the Canada Wildlife Act, public education and research are also goals of NWAs. In most NWAs there are some opportunities for public use. In others, research and protection of sensitive natural resources take precedence. For example, access to Scotch Bonnet Island NWA in Lake Ontario is restricted because the island is used for long-term studies of the effects that environmental contamination of the Great Lakes is having on wild birds. All these education and research activities are regulated to prevent declines in wildlife populations and deterioration of habitats.

#### **National Wildlife Areas: Wildlands for Wildlife**

NWAs protect a variety of important habitat areas across Canada. The wetlands and agricultural and wooded uplands of the Alaksen NWA in the Fraser River estuary in British Columbia are an internationally important migration stopover and wintering area for a huge number and variety of migrating birds, such as Lesser Snow Geese, ducks, and shorebirds. Pointe de l'Est NWA in the Gulf of St. Lawrence is one of the few remaining nesting sites in Quebec for the Piping Plover, which is an endangered species in Canada. The bowhead whales in the proposed MWA site of Iqaliquuuq on the east coast of Baffin Island are part of the endangered arctic population of bowheads.

#### **Canadian Forces Base Suffield National Wildlife Area**

The Minister of Defence manages as an NWA a section of the Canadian Forces Base Suffield training area in southern Alberta. This area, which contains sand dune and mixed prairie habitat, is home to 14 species at risk in Canada, including the Burrowing Owl and the Ferruginous Hawk.

The Canada Wildlife Act can also be used to designate protected areas that would highlight the long-standing interaction of Aboriginal peoples with Canada's natural spaces. The primary reason for establishing these areas would be the maintenance of their ecological value and biodiversity. The history of use and cultural value of these areas to Aboriginal peoples and the role that Aboriginal people would play in managing the areas would also be considerations.

## **International recognition**

Many NWAs and MBSSs have also been accorded international recognition. The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, more commonly known as the Ramsar Convention, identifies and recognizes wetlands of international importance. Canada has 36 such sites, of which 17 are NWAs and MBSSs.

The Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network links sites in different countries of North, Central, and South America that are essential to large numbers of shorebirds as they complete their yearly migrations of thousands of kilometres. Of the five sites in Canada, three include NWAs and MBSSs.

The Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program is a global effort of BirdLife International to identify and protect the most critical habitats for the world's birds. Of the 597 IBAs that have been identified in Canada as being of worldwide, continental, or national significance, 80 are located partially or wholly in NWAs or MBSSs.

The international UNESCO biosphere reserve program aims to conserve

biodiversity while taking human development into account. Four of the 12 biosphere reserves in Canada are part of CWS's protected areas network.

## **Can the public use Environment Canada's protected areas?**

Wildlife conservation is the primary purpose of Environment Canada's protected areas, but most sites permit public access and some offer visitor facilities, and limited activities and services: Alaksen NWA in British Columbia; Cap Tourmente NWA in Quebec; St. Clair NWA in southwestern Ontario; Mary's Point Unit of Shepody NWA, Cape Jourimain NWA, and Machias Seal Island MBS in New Brunswick; Chignecto NWA in Nova Scotia; and Last Mountain Lake NWA and MBS in Saskatchewan provide special facilities to view wildlife. In these protected areas, there may be exhibits, trails, brochures, and viewing stands to help visitors understand their surroundings. Locally published notices inform people about the activities that are generally permitted in protected areas. In some cases, special permits are required to engage in certain activities.

However, most NWAs and almost all MBSSs are unstaffed and do not have on-site visitor services. In some cases, CWS may prohibit visitation during critical periods, such as nesting and moulting. Acts and regulations related to protected areas are available on the CWS Web site.

To find out more about Environment Canada's protected areas consult the following:

Canadian Wildlife Service  
Environment Canada  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H3  
Phone: (819) 997-1095  
E-mail: [cws-scf@ec.gc.ca](mailto:cws-scf@ec.gc.ca)  
Web site: [www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca](http://www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca)

Environment Canada's Protected Areas Network online on the Hinterland Who's Who Web site at [www.hww.ca/hww2.asp?pid=0&cid=4&id=231](http://www.hww.ca/hww2.asp?pid=0&cid=4&id=231)

## Resources

### Online resources

Birdlife International: [www.birdlife.net](http://www.birdlife.net)

Canadian Wildlife Service: [www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca](http://www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca)

Environment Canada—Species at Risk: [www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca](http://www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca)

Fisheries and Oceans Canada: [www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/canwaters-eauxcan](http://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/canwaters-eauxcan)

Parks Canada: [www.parkscanada.gc.ca](http://www.parkscanada.gc.ca)

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands: [www.ramsar.org](http://www.ramsar.org)

UNESCO Biosphere Reserves: [www.unesco.org/mab](http://www.unesco.org/mab)

Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network: [www.manomet.org/WHSRN/](http://www.manomet.org/WHSRN/)

### Print resources

Canadian Nature Federation. 2002. Conserving wildlife on a shoestring budget: Opportunities and challenges for Canada's National Wildlife Areas, Migratory Bird Sanctuaries and Marine Wildlife Areas, Ottawa. (Also available at [www.cnf.ca](http://www.cnf.ca))

Canadian Wildlife Service. 2002. Habitat Stewardship Program for species at risk. Ottawa. (Also available at [www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/hsp-pih](http://www.cws-scf.ec.gc.ca/hsp-pih))

Wildlife Habitat Canada. 2001. The status of wildlife habitats in Canada 2001. Ottawa.

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## The Canadian Wildlife Service

The Canadian Wildlife Service of Environment Canada handles wildlife matters that are the responsibility of the Canadian government. These include protection and management of migratory birds as well as nationally significant wildlife habitat. Other responsibilities

For more information about the Canadian Wildlife Service or its other publications, please contact:

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are species at risk, control of international trade in endangered species, and research on wildlife issues of national importance. The service cooperates with the provinces, territories, Parks Canada, and other federal agencies in wildlife research and management.

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Hinterland Who's Who is a collaboration between the Canadian Wildlife Service and the Canadian Wildlife Federation.



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