

September 2025

nawmp.wetlandnetwork.ca

# HabitatMatters

## 2025 Canadian NAWMP Report



“Northward Bound – Greater Scaup”  
from the 2025 Canadian Wildlife  
Habitat Conservation Stamp series.

Artist: Ken Ferris



North American Waterfowl  
Management Plan

Plan nord-américain de  
gestion de la sauvagine

Plan de Manejo de Aves  
Acuáticas Norteamérica

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We acknowledge that the lands on which the North American Waterfowl Management Plan is implemented in Canada are the traditional, treaty and unceded territories of First Nations, Inuit and the Métis Nation. It is with respect and gratitude that we acknowledge these peoples, their stewardship and their deep connections to where we live, work and gather.



# About the NAWMP

The North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP) is an international partnership to restore, conserve and protect waterfowl populations and associated habitats through management decisions based on strong biological foundations. The ultimate goal is to achieve abundant and resilient waterfowl populations and sustainable landscapes. The NAWMP engages the community of users and supporters committed to conserving and valuing waterfowl and wetlands.

In 1986, the Canadian and U.S. governments signed this partnership agreement, laying the foundation for international co-operation in the recovery of declining waterfowl populations. Mexico became a signatory to the NAWMP with its update in 1994. As a result, the NAWMP partnership extends across North America, working at international, national and regional levels on a variety of waterfowl, habitat management and people issues.

Since the NAWMP's creation, its partners have worked to conserve and restore wetlands, associated uplands and other key habitats for waterfowl across Canada, the United States and Mexico. The partners have had wide-ranging influence: shaping land-use and public policies, integrating science and monitoring systems into planning, and delivering habitat programs. The results of these efforts are notable. Many waterfowl populations have increased substantially since 1986, and NAWMP partners continue to collaborate with other bird conservation initiatives.

Canada Geese.  
*Jaden Barney*

In Canada, NAWMP partner activities are directed by public-private Joint Venture partnerships, which focus on areas or species of concern identified in the NAWMP. Each Joint Venture includes a range of partners, from federal, provincial/territorial and local governments to conservation organizations. Strategic and Implementation Plans, developed based on the NAWMP's goals as well as on pressures specific to the Joint Ventures, form the basis of each Joint Venture's programs and individual projects.

## Terminology used in this report

### Securement

The protection of wetland and/or upland habitat through land title transfer or binding long-term (minimum 10-year) legal agreements with a landowner.

### Influence

Direct actions taken by landowners, land managers or conservation agencies that protect or enhance wetland or associated upland habitats without legal or binding agreements. These direct actions result in land-use changes.

### Enhancement

Actions carried out on wetland and/or upland habitats to increase their carrying capacity for wetland-associated migratory birds and other wildlife.

### Management

Activities conducted on secured wetland and/or upland habitats to maintain their carrying capacity for wetland-associated migratory birds and other wildlife.



# National Overview

Northern Shoveler.

*Jaden Barney*

## Accomplishments (1986–2025)

**24.2 million**

acres of habitat secured  
(9.8 million hectares)

.....  
Involves the protection of habitat through land title transfer or binding legal agreements with landowners (10-year minimum).

**248.3 million**

acres of habitat influenced  
(100.5 million hectares)

.....  
Involves direct actions that protect or enhance habitat without legal or binding agreements. These actions result in land-use change.

**4.3 million**

acres of habitat enhanced  
(1.7 million hectares)

.....  
Involves actions that increase habitat carrying capacity for waterfowl and other wildlife.

## Accomplishments (2024–2025)

**104.3 thousand**

acres of habitat secured  
(42.2 thousand hectares)

**11.9 million**

acres of habitat influenced  
(4.8 million hectares)

**351.7 thousand**

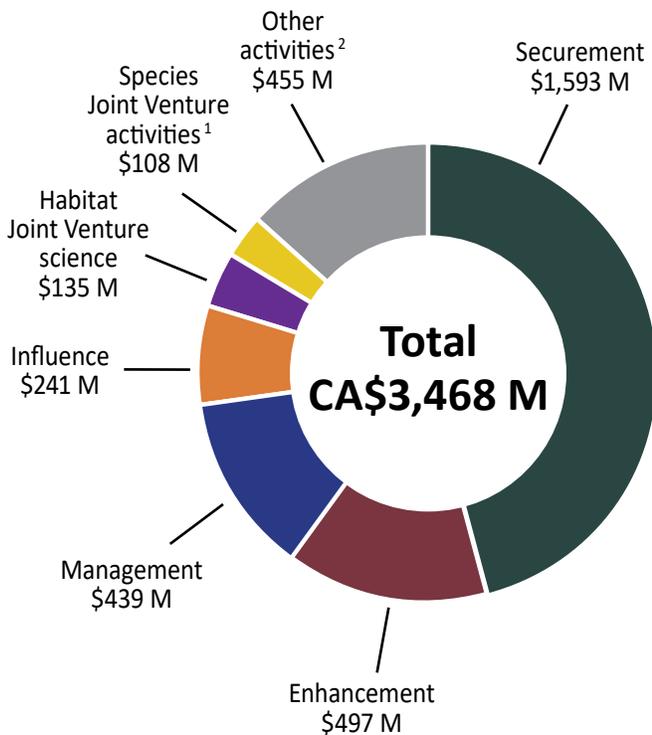
acres of habitat enhanced  
(142.3 thousand hectares)

Note: Managed acres are no longer reported in *Habitat Matters* to avoid redundant data, as all managed acres occur on secured land.

1986–2025 consists of the January 1, 1986, to March 31, 2025, time frame. 2024–2025 consists of the April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, time frame.

# Expenditures

By activity (1986–2025)



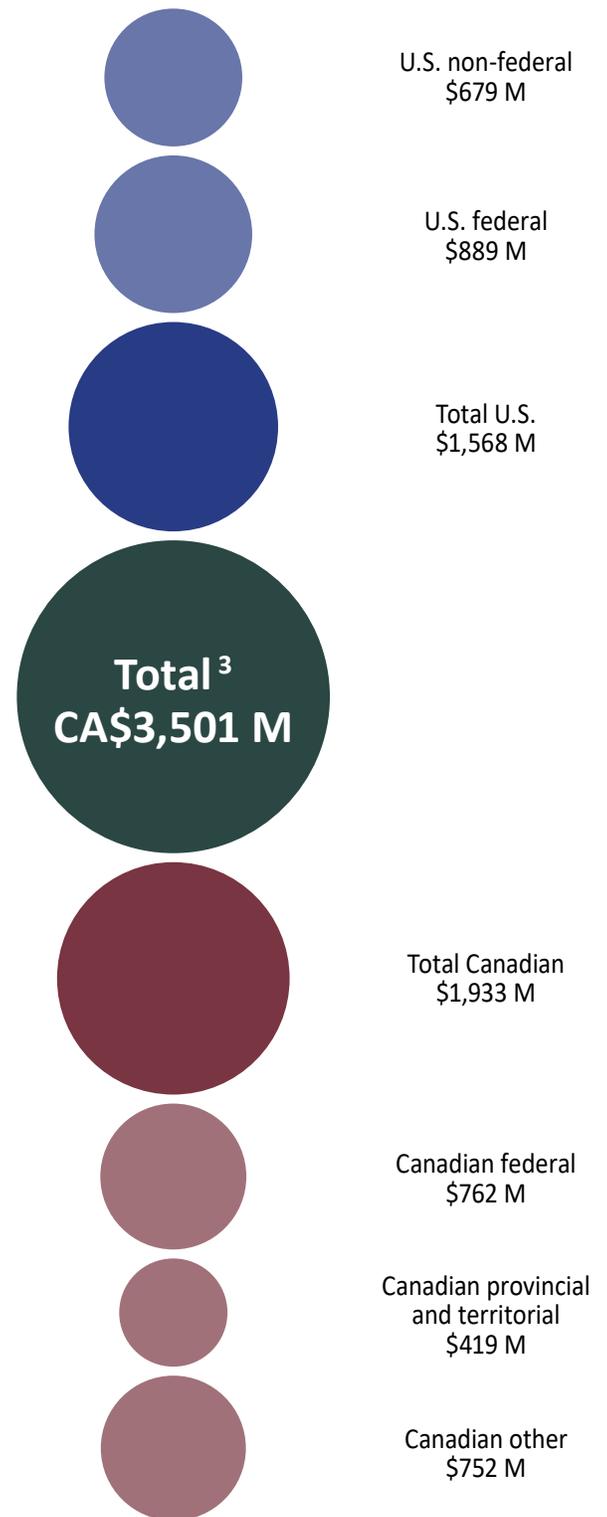
- 1 Banding, survey, research, observation and management.
- 2 Coordination, communication, policy, crop damage and compensatory mitigation.

The successful implementation of Canada’s NAWMP program has been, and continues to be, enabled by the support of partners in both Canada and the United States, including federal, provincial/territorial and state governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals. In particular, funding received under the United States’ *North American Wetlands Conservation Act*—alongside matching funds—remains integral to the success and longevity of the Canadian program.

1986–2025 consists of the January 1, 1986, to March 31, 2025, time frame.

# Contributions

In support of the NAWMP in Canada (1986–2025)



<sup>3</sup> Includes \$0.31 M in international contributions.



# The Benefits of Waterfowl: Nature's Wetland Stewards

Ring-necked Duck.

*Jaden Barney*

The NAWMP champions the many benefits of waterfowl, which extend far beyond what many realize.

Waterfowl, including ducks, geese and swans, are more than just graceful creatures gliding across marshes and lakes. They are integral to the health of our ecosystems, especially wetlands, and play a crucial role in maintaining environmental balance. Their importance is recognized in the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NAWMP). This almost 40-year-old plan acknowledges the role of waterfowl in supporting biodiversity, enhancing agriculture and sustaining freshwater systems. The NAWMP champions the many benefits of waterfowl, which extend far beyond what many realize.

Waterfowl are wetland engineers. They depend on wetlands for nesting, feeding and shelter, but the relationship is mutual: wetlands also benefit tremendously from the presence of waterfowl. As these birds forage, they help control aquatic plant growth, stir up sediment that supports nutrient cycling, and keep waterways open. This natural maintenance helps preserve wetland health, which in turn supports a wide array of wildlife. Wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems on the planet, providing environmental benefits comparable to tropical rainforests.

## Ambassadors for biodiversity

Healthy waterfowl populations often indicate a healthy ecosystem. These birds are part of a broader web of life, sharing their habitat with amphibians, fish, reptiles, insects and countless other birds and mammals. By maintaining wetland ecosystems, waterfowl indirectly support all of these species.

Moreover, waterfowl serve as environmental indicators because they are sensitive to pollution, habitat degradation and climate change. Shifts in their population or migratory patterns can signal deeper ecological changes.

## Human benefits and conservation efforts

The ecological services that waterfowl provide translate into practical benefits for people. Wetlands supported by waterfowl help clean and maintain water supplies, reduce flood risk and store carbon that would otherwise contribute to climate change. They also offer recreational opportunities—birdwatching, photography, hunting—that foster public appreciation for nature and support local economies.

The NAWMP is grateful for successful partnerships with and efforts by conservation groups, public agencies and private landowners that have resulted in millions of acres of waterfowl habitat restoration and conservation. These efforts not only maintain strong waterfowl populations but also benefit countless other species and ecosystem services.

This year's *Habitat Matters* highlights projects across the country:

- Research coordinated by the Arctic Goose Joint Venture shows that grazing by “light geese” (Snow and Ross’s Geese) keeps vegetation short and dense, and stimulates plant productivity, leading to more nutritious matter and greater heterogeneity in vegetation. As well, where geese graze, their droppings contribute to nutrient cycling. Caribou and muskox benefit from the high productivity and nutrient content of these “grazing lawns,” which are also a boon for other arctic birds that rely on grasses and sedges for nesting cover.
- In 1981, Manitoba’s Honkerville group acquired land on Whitewater Lake, one of the province’s top birding destinations, to build a lodge. The group worked to conserve the local wetlands and grasslands. In 2024, Honkerville Inc. signed a conservation agreement with Manitoba Habitat Conservancy to ensure the property’s long-term protection. Up to 250,000 geese and ducks have been recorded at Whitewater Lake during fall migration. As these birds forage and feed, they stir up nutrients, control algae and disperse seeds, contributing to the health and regeneration of this biodiversity hotspot.
- In eastern Canada and British Columbia, researchers are finding new ways to monitor elusive waterfowl. In the Canadian Intermountain Joint Venture, Birds Canada, Ducks Unlimited Canada, and Environment and Climate Change Canada have recorded bird sounds to identify marshland species in B.C.’s Cariboo–Chilcotin region. On the other side of the country, conservation partners working with the Black Duck Joint Venture are using

transmitters, drones and thermal cameras to track female American Black Ducks and their broods.

Waterfowl are more than just seasonal visitors or scenic wildlife. They’re ecological powerhouses that help sustain the natural environment. Their presence in our wetlands signals health, balance and life. By supporting waterfowl conservation, we protect far more than birds. We also safeguard water, wildlife and a future where nature and people thrive together.

## A long-term partnership

One of the NAWMP’s long-term partners is Wildlife Habitat Canada (WHC). Since 1985, WHC has provided over CA\$65 million for more than 1,710 habitat conservation, conservation networking and research projects across Canada. Funding for these grants comes from sales of the Canadian Wildlife Habitat Conservation Stamp (the Stamp). Each year, WHC invites Canadian wildlife artists to participate in a national wildlife art competition. A panel selects one artwork featuring a waterfowl or migratory gamebird in its habitat as the Stamp image. Hunters buy the Stamp to validate their migratory gamebird hunting permit. Collectors and other conservationists also purchase the Stamp and associated lithographic prints to support WHC. In the 2025–2026 grant year, WHC will continue its contribution by supporting partners in another 29 conservation projects across Canada. WHC will work with the four Canadian Habitat Joint Ventures as they strive to achieve the NAWMP’s goals and objectives.

To learn more about Wildlife Habitat Canada, the Stamp or WHC grant programs, please visit [www.whc.org](http://www.whc.org). This program is offered with the financial support of Environment and Climate Change Canada.

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Common Goldeneye.  
*Jean-Maxime Pelletier*



# Uniting States for Fall Flights: Giving Wings to Cross-Border Waterfowl Conservation

Fall Flights is a powerful partnership program coordinated by the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies (AFWA). It unites state fish and wildlife agencies to conserve critical breeding habitats in Canada. Protecting these landscapes is essential to maintaining healthy populations of waterfowl. In turn, this sustains vibrant outdoor traditions across the continent. **The bottom line: 70% of North America's waterfowl breed in Canada, while nine out of ten hunters are located in the United States.**



State agencies play a leading role in Fall Flights. Through direct investment, they provide the critical first step in a funding model that multiplies their impact. Their funds are leveraged with matching funds from U.S. conservation organizations and U.S. federal funds from the *North American Wetlands Conservation Act* (NAWCA). The result is a return of approximately five dollars for every dollar invested. This makes state participation vital.

## The impact is real and growing

- In 2024–2025, US\$5.8 million in state investments resulted in CA\$30.1 million in conservation delivery due to matching and a favourable exchange rate.
- Since 1991, \$113 million in cumulative state investments has driven over \$500 million in habitat conservation.
- These investments help ensure Canadian wetlands and grasslands remain viable breeding grounds for migratory birds, supporting long-term sustainability.

## Fall Flights return on investment

Fall Flights also delivers economic returns. In 2022, U.S. hunters and wildlife watchers spent nearly \$16.2 billion and supported over 180,000 jobs in the United States focused on outdoor recreation related to waterfowl that originated in Canada.

As we approach 2026, Fall Flights is building momentum toward a \$6 million annual goal, aligning with the 40th anniversary of the NAWMP. Through Fall Flights, states are not only investing in waterfowl habitat. In Canada and the United States they are also:

- Driving outdoor economies.
- Securing continental conservation goals.
- Supporting tourism, hunting and recreation.
- Safeguarding migratory species for future generations.

Waterfowl know no borders, and neither does conservation. Fall Flights turns joint responsibility into meaningful results. For more on Fall Flights, visit the website: [www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-inspires/fallflights](http://www.fishwildlife.org/afwa-inspires/fallflights).

# Habitat Joint Ventures

Lower Wolf Creek.  
*The Nature Trust of British Columbia*

The Canadian Habitat Joint Ventures integrate planning, science, governance, partnerships and management to achieve the NAWMP goals in Canada through a programmatic approach. A science-based Implementation Plan is created to address local, regional and continental goals. Joint Venture partners actively research, monitor and evaluate waterfowl populations and deliver habitat conservation programs at a regional level.



# Eastern Habitat Joint Venture

A DUC-built nature-like fishway in  
Prince Edward Island.

*Ducks Unlimited Canada*



[www.ehjv.ca](http://www.ehjv.ca)  
[www.ehjv.ca/fr](http://www.ehjv.ca/fr)

The Eastern Habitat Joint Venture (EHJV) covers 780 million acres (316 million hectares) spanning the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador. The EHJV supports 30% of Canada's wetlands, including more than 120 million acres (49 million hectares) of freshwater and tidal wetlands. Important habitats include coastal bays and salt marshes, lakeshore marshes, floodplain wetlands and boreal forest wetlands. The EHJV has six priority waterfowl species—American Black Duck, Mallard, Wood Duck, Common Goldeneye, Barrow's Goldeneye and Common Eider (subspecies *dresseri*)—as well as 16 non-waterfowl priority bird species, including water birds, shorebirds and landbirds. The habitat within the EHJV supports 95% of the continental population of American Black Duck (black duck) and 80% of the Common Eider subspecies *dresseri*.

## Restoring wetlands, empowering nature: The vital role of ducks and geese

Wetland restoration is one of the most effective ways to revive ecosystems, protect biodiversity and ensure clean water for future generations. Wetlands act as natural water filters, trapping sediments and excess nutrients that would otherwise degrade water quality. They also provide critical habitat for a wide array of species—from amphibians and insects to migratory birds and pollinators. As these wetlands return to the landscape, so too does the rich biodiversity that depends on them.

Among the most important natural contributors to wetland health are the ducks and geese that inhabit wetlands. These waterfowl are more than just seasonal visitors. They actively support the health and balance of wetland environments. As they forage, migrate and nest, ducks and geese cycle nutrients by depositing nitrogen and phosphorus, which enrich the soil and stimulate plant growth. Their movements across the landscape also aid in seed dispersal, helping native vegetation regenerate and spread. Additionally, by feeding on aquatic insects and larvae, they contribute to maintaining a balanced food web, preventing overpopulation of certain species that could disrupt the ecosystem.

To support the efforts of ducks and geese, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) is working with landowners across Atlantic Canada through its Small Marsh Restoration Program. This program helps turn unproductive farmland into thriving wetlands, bringing back wildlife and improving the health of local ecosystems.

“We work with landowners to identify areas on their property that may not be as productive as they’d like and help come up with options to maximize their land’s potential,” said Santina Beaton-MacEachern, conservation programs specialist for DUC in Atlantic Canada. “We provide the expertise and resources to help them make a lasting difference for the environment and meet their own personal conservation goals.”

DUC’s Small Marsh Restoration Program is supported by the *North American Wetlands Conservation Act* (NAWCA), Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC), the provincial Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program and DUC supporters. Through wetland restoration and the natural contributions of ducks and geese, DUC is helping to build a future where clean water, rich biodiversity and sustainable land use go hand in hand.

Among the most important natural contributors to wetland health are the ducks and geese that inhabit wetlands.



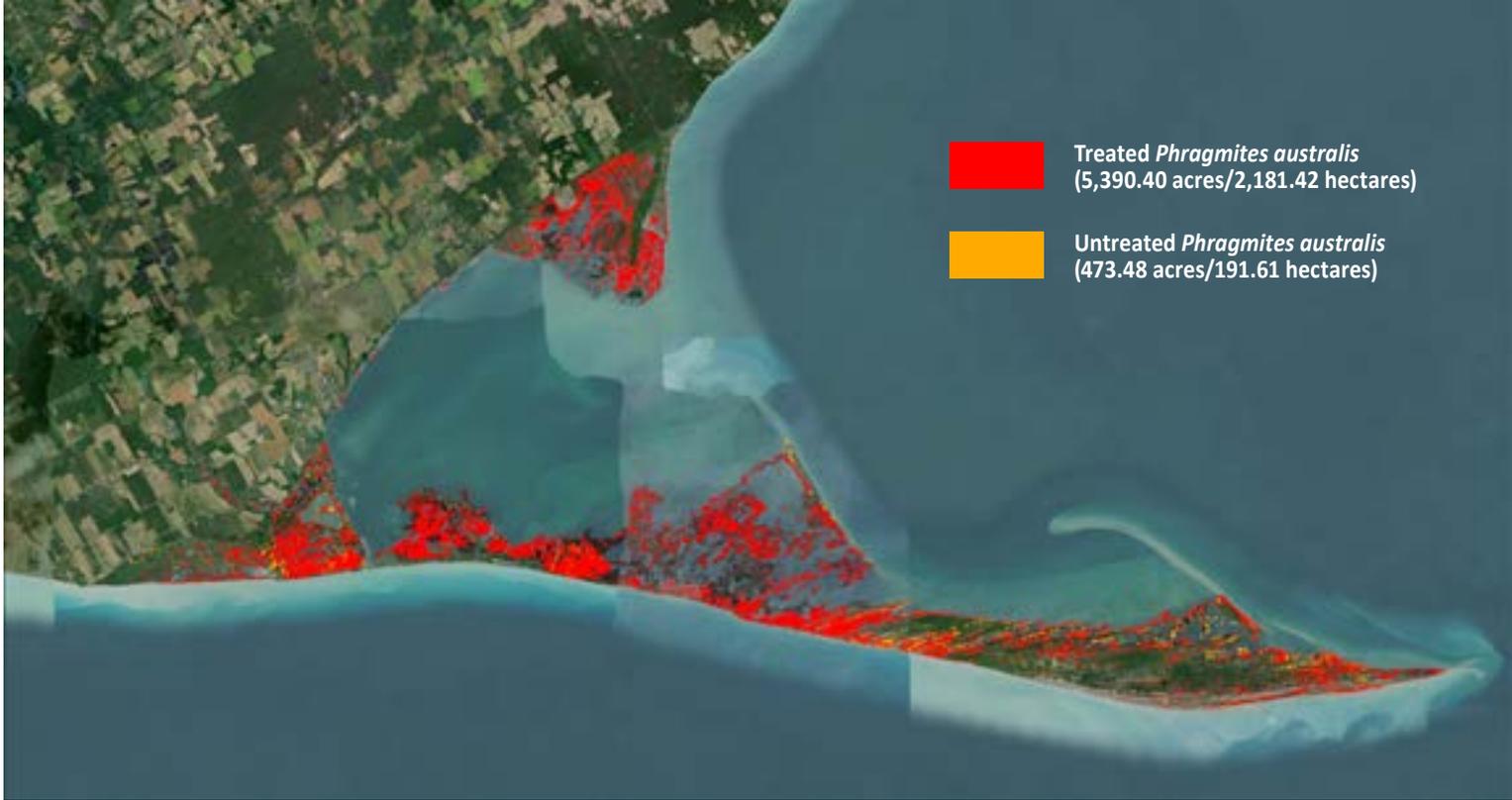
Small marsh restoration project completed near Sackville, New Brunswick, in 2023.

*Santina Beaton-MacEachern,  
Ducks Unlimited Canada*



Small marsh restoration project completed in Prince Edward Island in 2023.

*Santina Beaton-MacEachern,  
Ducks Unlimited Canada*



## Long Point coastal wetland complex: A success story!

The invasive strain of *Phragmites australis* is a tall grass with origins in Europe. It was introduced to Canada, probably in the late 1800s, and is now found throughout the EHJV region. *Phragmites australis* is an aggressive wetland invader that grows up to 20 feet (6 metres) in height. It reduces biodiversity by forming dense monoculture stands that choke out waterfowl and other wildlife and vegetation communities. In recent years, collaboration and new tools have begun to subdue this invader.

Estimated extent of *Phragmites australis* in the Long Point region in 2024.

Nature Conservancy of Canada

For more than 25 years, biologists have been monitoring invasive *Phragmites* in the wetlands of Long Point, Ontario, on Lake Erie. During that time, population expansion was exponential. In 2015, the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) spearheaded a gathering of stakeholders. The result was the creation of the Long Point *Phragmites* Action Alliance. Led by NCC, this collaborative is made up of 29 partnering organizations, including all levels of government, environmental groups, community organizations and local landowners with interests in conserving and managing the diverse wetland habitat in the Long Point region. Working together ensures no populations are left behind: if one area is left untreated, *Phragmites* can rapidly recolonize restored areas.

Within the Long Point region, over 5,680 acres (2,300 hectares) of *Phragmites* have been managed to date across private, Indigenous, municipal, provincial and federally managed lands. This has restored habitat for a variety of waterfowl, shorebirds and wetland-obligate species. As the largest invasive plant control program in Ontario's history, this collaborative model serves as an example for other regions of Ontario. It was made possible through funding from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service–NAWCA grant, Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS), OMNR, NCC fundraising and several other community and private supporters, and through collaboration with CWS, OMNR and

other community partners. This program illustrates the power of working together to both deliver results on the ground and raise the funds needed to support the work.

## Catalyzing action across Ontario

With the Long Point program’s success, NCC began working with OMNR and the Invasive Species Centre (ISC), to develop a coordinated response for the rest of Ontario. In 2024, the Ontario Phragmites Action program was established. It creates working groups that bring together key partners to address invasive *Phragmites* at a landscape scale. A significant investment by OMNR of \$11 million over three years has leveraged some incredible outcomes, including:

- Development of 20 (and counting!) Phragmites Management Areas and associated collaborative working groups.
- Delivery of direct, on-the-ground management actions across Ontario.
- Creation of a community granting program called the Invasive Phragmites Control Fund.
- Building implementation capacity by developing training strategies and enhancing public awareness.
- Advancing new tools and support, such as genetic testing and biological control options for invasive *Phragmites*.

Just a decade ago, invasive *Phragmites* seemed like an impossible challenge to tackle. Wetlands across Ontario were severely threatened by its expansion, and habitat was disappearing at an alarming rate. However, the efforts of dedicated organizations collaborating with their communities and alongside governments is reversing this trend, and the future for our wetlands and the waterfowl and geese that use them is healthy and bright!

The Long Point Phragmites Action Alliance illustrates the power of working together to both deliver results on the ground and raise the funds needed to support the work.

The restored Long Point Crown Marsh after invasive *Phragmites* management.

*Brett Norman,  
Nature Conservancy of Canada*





A biologist working with Ducks Unlimited Canada in Missaquash Marsh, New Brunswick, measures an Alewife before tagging it.

*Ducks Unlimited Canada*

## Ducks and fish

Ducks Unlimited Canada continues to engage in conservation research across the country. Since 2013, this work has included fish-related research in Atlantic Canada. Fish bring nutrients to wetlands, resulting in more invertebrates for waterfowl to eat, along with healthier wetland ecosystems.

DUC manages more than 150 fishways in Atlantic Canada that were originally intended to assist strong-swimming fishes, such as Brook Trout and Atlantic Salmon. To assess passage of more species through DUC structures, scientists have been tagging and tracking weak-swimming anadromous fishes, such as Alewife and Rainbow Smelt. Results have shown that fishway styles and designs, and fish size, sex and experience, contribute to successful passage.

Using an ecosystem management approach, DUC formed partnerships with provincial and federal governments, other conservation agencies, private landowners and industry to address fish passage issues associated with tide gates and road culverts in the study area. Research revealed that watersheds with more human activities, such as obstructions and/or fisheries, have poorer Alewife survival, with few adults taking part in several annual spawning runs during their lifespan.

This research program aims to increase energy and nutrient transfer from marine to freshwater ecosystems by improving river connectivity for these annual migrations. Energy and

nutrient transfer is crucial for the health and productivity of the lake and wetland habitats where these fish spawn, resulting in benefits for the ducks and geese that use them.

*For more information, please contact Kristina Hick, Eastern Habitat Joint Venture Coordinator, (778) 903-5084, [kristina.hick@ec.gc.ca](mailto:kristina.hick@ec.gc.ca).*

### Contributions (CA\$)

	2024–2025	Total (1986–2025)*
Total	\$40,383,301	\$919,281,419

### Accomplishments (Acres)

	2024–2025	Total (1986–2025)*
Secured	15,175	2,811,321
Influenced	72,703	78,392,248
Enhanced	3,918	720,308

Secured and enhanced acres are not additive.

2024–2025 consists of the April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, time frame.

1986–2025 consists of the January 1, 1986, to March 31, 2025, time frame.

\* Includes first-step projects completed from 1986 to 1988, before the formal recognition of the EHJV in 1989.

# Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture

Gates Creek Conservation Area.

*Fernando Lessa*



[www.pacificbirds.org](http://www.pacificbirds.org)

The Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture (PBHJV) is an international Joint Venture that includes portions of British Columbia (B.C.), Alaska, Washington, Oregon, California and Hawaii. The B.C. coastline has over 440 estuaries, which are a focus of many PBHJV programs because of their food-rich tidal wetlands and adjacent floodplains. Near urbanized areas, floodplains have often been highly modified and converted to intensive non-forage agricultural crops, resulting in the loss of considerable natural habitat and food supply for wildlife. Throughout the PBHJV, 40 species of ducks, swans and geese occur regularly at various stages of their life cycles, and an estimated 1 million waterfowl winter along the B.C. coast. The Fraser River Delta in southern British Columbia is the only Canadian Important Bird and Biodiversity Area designated as “in danger” by BirdLife International. This delta supports the highest density of wintering waterfowl in Canada. Key species in the B.C. portion of the Joint Venture include the Wrangel Island Snow Goose (nearly half the population), the Pacific Coast Trumpeter Swan (half the population), American Wigeon, Cackling Goose and Western High Arctic Brant.

Conservation efforts provide many benefits for waterfowl and other species, as well as for the wider ecosystem and even regional economies. For example, in addition to being one of the most ecologically significant areas in British Columbia, the Fraser Valley is also home to agriculturally rich farmland. Besides the direct benefits provided by geese and ducks, like seed dispersal, there are several indirect benefits, such as improved soil productivity. Planting winter cover crops to feed migrating waterfowl also draws birds away from surrounding higher-value crops—and from the nearby airport, where their presence is dangerous both to the birds and to aircraft landing or taking off. Other benefits of conservation work include managing invasive species, slowing erosion and establishing or re-establishing tree cover.



Foraging Snow Geese.  
*Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust*

## Winter cover crops for waterfowl in the Fraser River Estuary

The Fraser River Estuary is an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area. Its abundant nearby farmland provides stopover and wintering sites for upward of 5 million migratory birds, including waterfowl such as American Wigeon, Mallard, Cackling Goose, Snow Goose and Trumpeter Swan. During the winter, the estuary holds the largest density of wintering birds in Canada.

The Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust (DFWT), a non-profit established by conservationists and local farm owners, has partnered with farmers in the Fraser delta since 1990 to plant more than 90,000 acres (36,420 hectares) of winter cover crops. Farms subsidized by the DFWT's Cover Crop Stewardship Program plant winter cover crops like oats, winter wheat and radishes over the fall and winter.

According to ongoing monitoring by the DFWT, waterfowl are more likely to forage on fields planted with winter cover crops than fields without cover crops. They even prefer fields with cover crops over fields with high-value perennial grasses. About half of the fields planted with cover crops are completely grazed by March.

For farmers, cover crops improve soil productivity, enriching fields with organic material that boosts the health and abundance of summer cash crops, and reducing the need for pesticides and herbicides. Cover crops also protect properties from erosion during wet coastal winters, and they entice waterfowl away from surrounding higher-value crops necessary for the regional economy. For migrating waterfowl,

According to ongoing monitoring by the DFWT, waterfowl are more likely to forage on fields planted with winter cover crops than fields without cover crops.

the cover crops provide ample and necessary forage material on their long journeys along the Pacific Flyway.

Delta, B.C., has been a wintering site of particular importance for Lesser Snow Geese migrating south from Russia's Wrangel Island. In the 1970s, the Snow Goose population was estimated at only 15,000. With cover crops drawing geese away from more dangerous areas, like Vancouver International Airport flight paths over Sea Island, that population has increased to between 200,000 and 220,000 as of 2020.

## Enhancing the Alaksen National Wildlife Area

Also in Delta, B.C., the Alaksen National Wildlife Area (NWA), on the northwest tip of Westham Island, is a hub of biodiversity in the Fraser River Delta. This internationally recognized Ramsar site is a critical link in the Pacific Flyway and a stopping place for migratory birds, including Lesser Snow Geese. The area is also adjacent to George C. Reifel Migratory Bird Sanctuary and is surrounded by some of the most productive farmland in British Columbia.

The managed wetlands of Alaksen are home to hundreds of species, including ducks like Mallard, Northern Pintail and American Wigeon, along with shorebirds and amphibians. The NWA also supports many species listed under Canada's *Species at Risk Act*, such as Barn Owl, Barn Swallow, Horned Grebe, Peregrine Falcon, Short-Eared Owl, Pacific Water Shrew, Western Bumble Bee and Western Painted Turtle.

Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) and Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) have co-managed Alaksen NWA for decades, and the partnership recently completed a major multi-year infrastructure project to ensure the long-term resilience of this unique landscape. At the core of the work was the replacement of nine aging water control structures and the restoration of nearly 1.75 miles (2.8 kilometres) of overgrown drainage ditches. By improving how water flows through the area, DUC is helping maintain critical habitat for migratory birds while also supporting local agricultural productivity.

"Our wetland restoration work at Alaksen ensures that wildlife and farming can continue to flourish together," said Matt Christensen, DUC's head of conservation partnerships in British Columbia. "The water infrastructure may not be visible to the public, but it's absolutely essential to the health of this landscape."

Infrastructure is only one piece of the puzzle. DUC also led a series of assessments and studies to guide future management of the site, including a tree risk assessment, a vegetation management plan and agrology studies. These tools will help manage invasive species, protect public safety, improve the soil and hydrology, and maintain the area's ecological integrity.

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Wigeons on a field planted with a winter cover crop.

*Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust*



A Great Blue Heron standing adjacent to a farm field.

*Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust*

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By improving how water flows through the area, DUC is helping maintain critical habitat for migratory birds while also supporting local agricultural productivity.



Top left: An erosion control blanket installed along the bank of a drainage ditch to mitigate erosion.

Top right: A new culvert with headwall, inlet structure and grate for debris control. Riprap surrounding the headwall and an erosion control blanket and straw along the embankments help mitigate erosion.

Bottom left: A revitalized drainage ditch.  
*Ducks Unlimited Canada*

Funding constraints limited the scope of the project. Still, DUC remains committed to ongoing stewardship and collaboration at Alaksen, including future work that builds on the foundation created through this restoration.

This project was funded through ECCC; the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, via the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies’ Fall Flights program, Ducks Unlimited Inc. and the *North American Wetlands Conservation Act*; and Coca-Cola.

“DUC’s work at Alaksen is a great example of conservation in action,” Christensen noted. “We’re proud to partner with ECCC to protect one of [British Columbia’s] most important wetland landscapes, and we look forward to continuing this work in the years ahead.”

## Gates Creek Conservation Area expansion

In 2024, the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) increased the size of the Gates Creek Conservation Area by 50 acres (20 hectares), bringing the total area to 320 acres (130 hectares). The same year, NCC began a multi-year project to restore and improve salmon habitat along Gates Creek, among other objectives.

Gates Creek is located north of Pemberton, B.C., near D’Arcy, on N’Quatqua First Nation reserve lands. Established in 2021 in partnership with the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program (FWCP), the Gates Creek site is strategically important for conservation.

The Gates Creek Conservation Area provides habitat for many at-risk species, including Olive-sided Flycatcher, Western Screech Owl, Monarch Butterfly, Western Toad and wolverine. The wetlands will support species such as Mallard, Common Merganser and Barrow’s Goldeneye. Species known to breed in the region include Wood Duck, particularly in wooded wetlands; Harlequin Duck, in faster-moving waterways; and Bufflehead, in larger ponds along riparian areas. Canada Geese may also breed on site. The creek itself is home to Coho and Sockeye Salmon, Dolly Varden and other trout, Mountain Whitefish and other freshwater species.



Gates Creek Conservation Area.

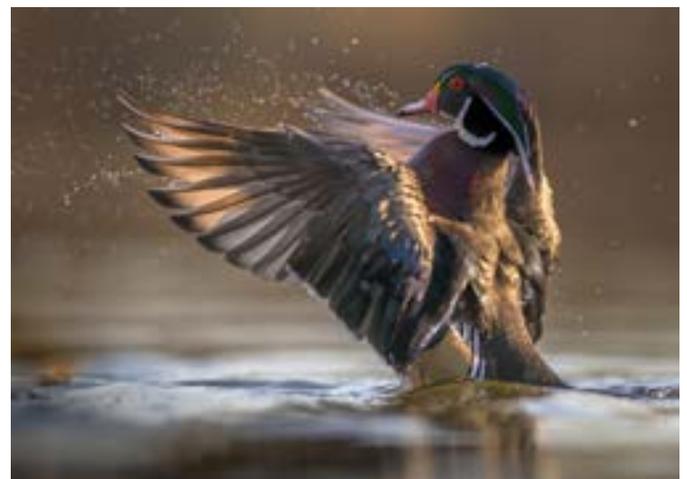
*Fernando Lessa*

The Gates Creek Conservation Area provides habitat for many at-risk species, including Olive-sided Flycatcher, Western Screech Owl, Monarch Butterfly, Western Toad and wolverine.

Significantly, the site also offers a safe place for bears from the at-risk South Chilcotin and Stein Nahatlatch Grizzly populations to encounter one another and increase the genetic diversity of their populations. The two populations are divided by a road running through the centre of the Gates Creek valley.

In the coming years, other goals for the project include broadening wetland areas for waterfowl, improving the site’s habitat for rearing young, slowing the erosion of Gates Creek’s main channel and re-establishing tree cover over the creek to provide shade.

This ongoing project has been made possible by the FWCP, which originally purchased the land before giving it to NCC for long-term conservation management. The FWCP is a partnership between BC Hydro, the Government of British Columbia, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, First Nations and public stakeholders. It aims to conserve and enhance wildlife in watersheds impacted by hydroelectric dams. Long-term stewardship of the Gates Creek Conservation Area has been further supported by partnerships with the Government of Canada’s Natural Heritage Conservation Program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Telus Communications, the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, the Longhedge Foundation and the Pemberton Wildlife Association.



Wood Duck.

*Jean-Maxime Pelletier*

For more information, please contact Andrew Huang, Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture Coordinator, (604) 350-1913, [andrew.huang@ec.gc.ca](mailto:andrew.huang@ec.gc.ca).

### Contributions (CA\$)

	2024–2025	Total (1991–2025)
Total	\$22,169,321	\$319,189,203

### Accomplishments (Acres)

	2024–2025	Total (1991–2025)
Secured	1,689	143,758
Influenced	12,578	6,684,154
Enhanced	357	205,854

Secured and enhanced acres are not additive.

2024–2025 consists of the April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, time frame.

1991–2025 consists of the January 1, 1991, to March 31, 2025, time frame.

# Canadian Intermountain Joint Venture

A curious cloud formation in B.C.'s Cariboo—Chilcotin Coast region.

*Rémi Torrenta, Birds Canada*



[www.cijv.ca](http://www.cijv.ca)

Lower Wolf Creek provides habitat for several migratory waterfowl species, such as Bufflehead, Cinnamon Teal, Common Goldeneye, Trumpeter Swan and Tundra Swan.

With an area of 123.5 million acres (50 million hectares), the Canadian Intermountain Joint Venture (CIJV) covers portions of British Columbia (B.C.) and Alberta. The CIJV encompasses a diverse landscape of grasslands, dry and moist coniferous forests, riparian areas and wetlands, alpine tundra and even a pocket desert, with 24 breeding waterfowl species. The Joint Venture's estimated 1.45 million birds represent 70% of British Columbia's and roughly 4% of Canada's breeding waterfowl population. The CIJV supports roughly one-quarter of the world's breeding population of Barrow's Goldeneye, along with significant breeding populations of Mallard, Hooded Merganser and Ruddy Duck.

The presence of waterfowl is a sign of a thriving ecosystem. But ducks and geese do more than just rely on wetlands—they also help sustain them. Sometimes called “biological delivery birds,” migrating ducks and geese help spread biodiversity and enrich habitats and wetland ecosystems by transporting seeds, plant fragments, fish and other organisms between wetlands. Thus, a day in the life of ducks and geese can make a significant contribution to a wetland's biodiversity and productivity. A healthy wetland is a shared success story that benefits not only waterfowl but also all wildlife that call these precious ecosystems home.

## Lower Wolf Creek: A vital wetland for migratory birds

On their long migratory journeys, waterfowl rely on stopover sites for food, rest and shelter. Lower Wolf Creek, at the confluence of Wolf Creek and the Kootenay River, is one such place. Designated a Key Biodiversity Area and home to as many as seven at-risk ecological communities, Lower Wolf Creek is adjacent to provincial conservation land and lies within the unceded and traditional territory of the Ktunaxa Nation, near the Ktunaxa community of ʔaąam.

Lower Wolf Creek provides habitat for several migratory waterfowl species, such as Bufflehead, Cinnamon Teal, Common Goldeneye, Trumpeter Swan and Tundra Swan.



Lower Wolf Creek.

*The Nature Trust of British Columbia*

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The Long-billed Curlew, the Western Toad and the Western Painted Turtle, all species of special concern under the federal *Species at Risk Act* (SARA), use this important wildlife corridor, as do other endangered or threatened species under SARA, including Barn Swallow, Black Swift, Bobolink, Lewis’s Woodpecker and American Badger. The area also provides winter range for Mule Deer, White-tailed Deer and Elk.

The Nature Trust of British Columbia (NTBC) has raised funds to secure this ecologically rich area, the site of a previous wetland creation project undertaken by Ducks Unlimited Canada with the former landowners to develop migratory waterfowl habitat. By securing the land, NTBC has ensured the persistence of these habitat values.

The conservation of Lower Wolf Creek is part of NTBC’s commitment to conserve the most ecologically significant habitats in the province and address the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss. The project will increase connectivity for wildlife in the Kootenays and improve the resilience of the floodplain and benchland ecosystems. It is also part of a cross-border partnership, thanks to funding from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) through the *North American Wetlands Conservation Act* (NAWCA).

## Wetland range fencing at Larsen Lake

In 2023, the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) added a property at Larsen Lake to the Kootenay River Ranch Conservation Area, just south of Canal Flats, B.C. The 320-acre (130-hectare) parcel comprises wetlands and mixed second-growth forest, with its southeastern border backing onto 656 feet (200 metres) of shoreline on Larsen Lake.



Canada Geese in Lower Wolf Creek.

*Kent Kallberg*

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The Larsen Lake Conservation Area,  
south of Canal Flats, B.C.

Nick Nault



The new fence installed at Larsen Lake.

*Nature Conservancy of Canada*

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When the land was acquired, the only fence was on the western side of the property, and it had broken or fallen down in some places. Without a fence, the area's shoreline and marsh had been degraded for years by roaming cattle from neighbouring properties. High-impact motorized recreation caused further challenges, disturbing wildlife and leading to soil compaction, erosion and the spread of invasive plants.

In an effort to protect and restore the property's marshlands and shoreline, NCC launched the Larsen Lake Range Fencing Project in 2024. Using local contractors, NCC erected 2.5 miles (4 kilometres) of wildlife-friendly fence, replacing the dilapidated western fence and enclosing the rest of the property. The fencing will keep cattle out of sensitive shoreline and wetland habitat on the property.

While the area is still open to low-impact recreation, keeping the area free from disturbance by trespassing cattle and motorized recreational vehicles will help wetland plants and shoreline vegetation re-establish. The hope is that the terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems will recover over time. NCC monitored the health of the conservation area's habitat during the summer of 2024 and will continue to do so annually. With minimal human disturbance, the area has already become a haven for nesting and migratory wetland birds, including Mallard, Ruddy Duck, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, American Wigeon, Canada Goose, Pied-billed Grebe and American Coot. The wildlife-friendly fence has made it possible for Mule Deer, Elk and other wildlife to enjoy the property as well.

## A new water control structure for Mayook Marsh

Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) recently completed a significant restoration project in Mayook Marsh, a 60-acre (24-hectare) wetland located east of Cranbrook on an oxbow of the Kootenay River, in the traditional territories of the Ktunaxa Nation. In the relatively dry climate of the Kootenays, this wetland oasis is a jewel of biodiversity. It is frequented by several species of water birds, such as Great Blue Heron and Trumpeter Swan; migratory songbirds, such as Bank Swallow; and other at-risk species, including Common Nighthawk and Lewis's Woodpecker. Hundreds of Western Painted Turtles, a species of special concern and B.C.'s only native turtle species, make their home there, along with amphibians like Columbia Spotted Frog, and mammals such as White-tailed Deer, Elk and bats. The marsh is on provincial rangeland and provides watering for local cattle.

DUC has been working in Mayook Marsh since the early 1970s, installing a water control structure in 1976 to help maintain water levels. Within the last year, DUC undertook a necessary and multi-faceted restoration project, at the heart of which was replacement of the 50-year-old water control structure with a modern concrete chute with water-level controls. The goal was for the new structure to not only maintain but also slightly increase the marsh's freshwater capacity. Some areas of



Curious turtles watch the action.

*Kasey McKenzie, Ducks Unlimited Canada*

the marsh were also graded to improve drainage. The new water control structure is expected to sustain the area for another 30 years.

To improve the marsh habitat, natural coconut matting was laid over the soil to promote the growth of newly planted native and forage plants by suppressing weed growth, absorbing water and protecting the exposed soil. The coconut matting does double duty by protecting the banks from erosion.

Perhaps the most compelling part of the month-long project was the care taken to protect the area’s wildlife. DUC staff installed fish barriers and carefully relocated curious and watchful turtles from around the work zone to safer parts of the marsh.

DUC was able to realize this project with the help of funding from the B.C. Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship; USFWS under NAWCA; Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation; Coors Seltzer; and Washington and Oregon States, as well as through consultation with archaeologists, biologists and engineers.

## Autonomous recording in the Cariboo–Chilcotin Coast region

In the face of climate change and disappearing wetland habitats, how can conservation groups be sure they are making a difference in the fight for waterfowl conservation, especially when waterfowl can be elusive and their habitat inaccessible? In 2023, Birds Canada partnered with DUC and Environment and Climate Change Canada on a multi-year project to measure the effect of conservation efforts on bird diversity and abundance in B.C.’s Cariboo–Chilcotin Coast region.



Installing barriers to prevent fish from entering the work zone.

*Kasey McKenzie, Ducks Unlimited Canada*

DUC staff installed fish barriers and carefully relocated curious and watchful turtles from around the work zone to safer parts of the marsh.



Deploying the autonomous recording units (ARUs) in the wetland sites.  
Rémi Torrenta, Birds Canada



An ARU in the Cariboo–Chilcotin Coast region.  
Rémi Torrenta, Birds Canada

Between 2023 and 2024, the team set up autonomous recording units (ARUs) across CIJV properties and unmanaged control wetlands to capture sounds from marsh birds, which can be difficult to spot in the dense vegetation. Between May and July 2023, surveyors deployed ARUs at 36 locations across 19 sites. In 2024, surveyors deployed ARUs at 40 new locations in 20 additional sites over a three-week period during the breeding season. The ARUs were programmed to record audio from dusk until late the next morning. Upon retrieving the ARUs, the survey team ran the recorded bird sounds—six terabytes from over two years—through BirdNET, an app that identifies birds by their calls and songs.

So far, 22 of the 27 targeted marsh species have been detected, including Barrow’s Goldeneye, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, American Wigeon, Green-winged Teal and Trumpeter Swan. All of this was accomplished with minimal disturbance to the sensitive marshland habitat as well as reduced survey effort, as the surveyors needed to enter these areas for only a brief period to set up and take down the ARUs. As research continues and trends are established, the resulting data will continue to shape our knowledge of the efficacy of conservation efforts.

For more information, please contact Andrew Huang, Canadian Intermountain Joint Venture Coordinator, (604) 350-1913, [andrew.huang@ec.gc.ca](mailto:andrew.huang@ec.gc.ca).

### Contributions (CA\$)

	2024–2025	Total (2003–2025)
Total	\$9,096,176	\$135,942,627

### Accomplishments (Acres)

	2024–2025	Total (2003–2025)
Secured	2,861	368,589
Influenced	0	50,865
Enhanced	1,069	208,313

Secured and enhanced acres are not additive.

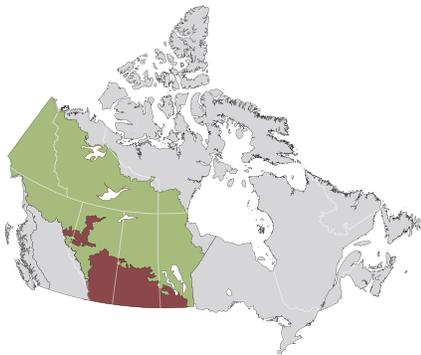
2024–2025 consists of the April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, time frame.

2003–2025 consists of the January 1, 2003, to March 31, 2025, time frame.



# Prairie Habitat Joint Venture

Wetland within the Lekach Project purchase.  
*Ducks Unlimited Canada*



[www.phjv.ca](http://www.phjv.ca)

The Prairie Habitat Joint Venture (PHJV) delivery area covers two distinct biomes in western Canada—the Prairie Parklands and the Western Boreal Forest (WBF)—and supports approximately 50% of North American breeding waterfowl. One of the continent’s first priority landscapes under the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, the PHJV Prairie Parklands encompasses 158.4 million acres (64.1 million hectares) of prairie and aspen parklands in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the Peace Parkland Region of British Columbia. The WBF, which covers parts of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Yukon and Northwest Territories, has been acknowledged under the NAWMP as second only to the Prairie Pothole Region as an important waterfowl breeding area. The PHJV contains a range of wetland types, from small potholes to marshes and bog systems.

Together, the Prairie Parklands and WBF regions of Canada provide habitat for most North American duck species. They also provide habitat for hundreds of priority species identified in the Bird Conservation Region plans. The Prairie Parklands and WBF Implementation Plans highlight linkages between habitats and species.

Collaborations between DUC, NCC, MHC, local communities and U.S. partners exemplify the “whole of society” approach to conservation.

Waterfowl are key to the health of wetlands. They are insect predators, seed dispersers and prey in complex food webs. Also crucial to wetland health are the relationships between people and nature. Collaborations between Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC), the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), Manitoba Habitat Conservancy (MHC), local communities and U.S. partners exemplify the “whole of society” approach to conservation. The partner-based achievements highlighted here support waterfowl and the ecosystem services they provide.

## Prairie Parklands

### Saskatchewan: Last Mountain Lake

In 2024, NCC established the Last Mountain Lake Conservation Area, 101 acres (41 hectares) in the valley of the Qu’Appelle River, a major continental waterway flowing



Mallard.  
*Jason Bantle*

Last Mountain Lake, Saskatchewan.

*Rob Dufty*

into the Great Plains. Formed by ancient glaciers, this region stretches from the south end of Last Mountain Lake and Diefenbaker Lake east to the Manitoba border.

The area's wetlands and waterways play a crucial role in sustaining waterfowl and provide essential stopover and nesting grounds for migratory birds, including Ruddy Duck, Mallard, Snow Goose, Ross's Goose and Sandhill Crane. Its rolling hills and diverse landscapes also provide vital habitat for wildlife, and the area is a critical corridor for more than 30 rare and endangered species, including Loggerhead Shrike, Northern Leopard Frog, American Badger and Bigmouth Buffalo Fish.

The continued presence of wildlife, migratory birds and waterfowl at Last Mountain Lake is a strong signal of a healthy, balanced ecosystem and demonstrates how conservation in this remarkable landscape is helping nature thrive.

### **Conservation benefits biodiversity in the Lekach Project**

DUC's newly acquired Lekach Project conserves eight quarter sections of land in the Touchwood Hills near Jasmin, Saskatchewan, and a combined 1,265 acres (512 hectares) of natural areas. The abundance of water is noteworthy, with drone footage showing large numbers of ducks and other water birds in the wetlands.

The habitat is estimated to support 30 to 60 duck pairs per square mile (259 hectares), a strong indicator of the health of this ecosystem. Waterfowl success can have implications for other bird species. Areas targeted for conservation based on their suitability for waterfowl can similarly benefit grassland- and wetland-dependent birds that share the same wetlands and upland nesting cover.

Areas targeted for conservation based on their suitability for waterfowl can similarly benefit grassland- and wetland-dependent birds that share the same wetlands and upland nesting cover.



Aerial view of the Lekach Project lands.

*Ducks Unlimited Canada*

DUC plans to restore an additional 10 acres (4 hectares) of wetlands and seed 940 acres (380 hectares) of cropland to perennial nesting cover. This project will be a haven for waterfowl and will deliver essential biodiversity to Saskatchewan’s agricultural landscape.

### **Alberta: A legacy in ranching and conservation**

The Baird family ranch lies near Endiang, Alberta, in “knob and kettle” terrain. This area of diverse wildlife habitat hosts the highest densities of Northern Pintail breeding pairs in North America. The ranch is a mixture of hayland, tame pasture and native prairie parkland.

Russel Baird worked with DUC’s Bob Thomson to include his family’s ranch in DUC landowner programs. A total of 618 acres (250 hectares) are now conserved, including wetlands and native grasslands that provide key breeding habitat. This habitat is maintained through a rotational grazing system. Baird said the system is now part of everyday life: “I like seeing things taken care of. It just comes down to that.”

Research has demonstrated that properties with conservation approaches have more wildlife species and higher biodiversity than unmanaged sites. This emphasizes the importance of ranch-level partnerships that conserve natural habitat.

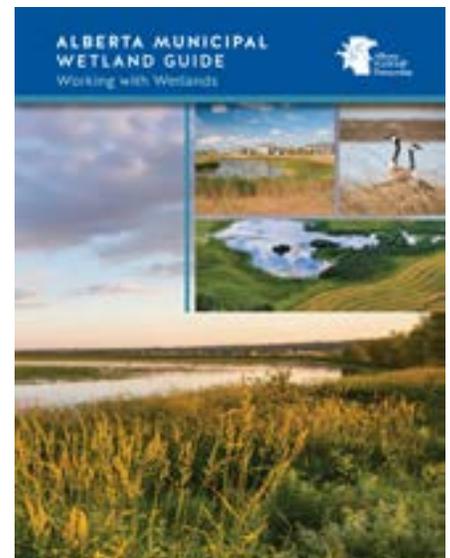
### **Municipalities working with wetlands**

Alberta municipalities play an important role in maintaining wetland ecosystem services. To support municipalities, the Alberta NAWMP Partnership developed the *Alberta Municipal Wetland Guide: Working with Wetlands* (online at [abnawmp.ca](http://abnawmp.ca)). Its 10 modules outline key information regarding wetland stewardship. The guide ensures that Alberta’s 4 million acres (1.6 million hectares) of wetlands will provide fresh, clean, sustainable water resources for future generations of waterfowl, wildlife and humans.



Restored wetlands in native parkland habitat on the Baird family ranch.

*Ducks Unlimited Canada*



Aerial view of Cutbank Creek Project—restoration in progress.

*Ducks Unlimited Canada*



### Cutbank Creek: A fitting piece in the wetland basin puzzle

Part of DUC’s long-term hold program, Cutbank Creek in southern Alberta comprises 208 acres (84 hectares) of key upland and wetland habitat. This land provides breeding and nesting grounds for up to 60 pairs of ducks through May and June. Mallard, Northern Pintail and Blue-winged Teal are the primary species benefiting from the secured habitat. Numerous breeding pairs are an indication of higher moisture conditions from spring runoff and seasonal rains. This translates to elevated soil moisture, better growing conditions for crops and pastures, higher agricultural yields and increased habitat values for a diversity of wildlife.

Agricultural producers and the public will have access to the area through DUC’s Haying and Grazing Tender Program. Cutbank Creek is an example of how co-operative conservation on working landscapes is our future, sustaining wildlife and landowners alike.



Honkerville group’s Scuttlebuck Lodge sits in the midst of wetland and grassland habitat.

*Manitoba Habitat Conservancy*

### Manitoba: How the Honkerville group is helping conserve an important ecosystem

Whitewater Lake, a Manitoba Heritage Marsh and Important Bird Area, is one of the province’s top birding and hunting destinations. In 1981, the aptly named Honkerville group, made up of several conservation-minded hunters, acquired land on the lake in order to build a lodge and conserve its wetlands and grasslands. In 2024, the group signed a conservation agreement with MHC to ensure its long-term protection.

“Signing the agreement was a win-win,” said landowner Bob Johnston. “We get to retain ownership and continue making agricultural decisions on the tame grasslands, while ensuring the habitat is conserved for the future.”

Up to 250,000 geese and ducks have been recorded at Whitewater Lake during fall migration. As these birds forage, they stir up nutrients, control algae and disperse seeds, contributing to the health of this biodiversity hotspot.

Collaborations between MHC, U.S. state duck stamp partners, and landowners like the Honkerville group are securing resilient wetlands and grasslands that benefit waterfowl, wildlife and watersheds.

### The ecological benefits of Lizard Lake

In the rolling plains near Miami, Manitoba, a unique DUC project provides solutions for landowners, local government and conservationists who struggle with fluctuating water levels.

Lizard Lake helps control flooding in the municipality, supplies farmers with a reliable hay crop and offers waterfowl over 2,000 acres (809 hectares) of early-season habitat.

Up to 250,000 geese and ducks have been recorded at Whitewater Lake during fall migration. As these birds forage, they stir up nutrients, control algae and disperse seeds, contributing to the health of this biodiversity hotspot.



“There’s also a critical benefit that’s not obvious,” said Mark Francis, DUC’s manager of operations in Manitoba. “Lizard Lake is reducing the nutrient load from this area that ends up in Lake Winnipeg.”

With funding from the Lake Winnipeg Basin Program, DUC completed major repairs on a 3.75-mile (6-kilometre) ring dyke to create the 580-acre (235-hectare) lake and 1,500 acres (607 hectares) of marsh.

Lizard Lake is one of DUC’s largest conservation projects in Manitoba and is a partnership involving the rural municipalities of Thompson and Pembina, Redboine Watershed District and 32 adjacent landowners.

## Western Boreal Forest

### An award-winning collaboration

About 85% of the nation’s critical wetlands are in the Western Boreal Forest (WBF), and roughly 40% of North America’s waterfowl breed here. The Yukon Territory, which is located within the WBF, plays an important role in supporting millions of waterfowl each summer.

In 2024, DUC released the *Yukon Wetland Field Guide* (online at [boreal.ducks.ca](http://boreal.ducks.ca)). This visual, plain-language guide is tailored for use by those working in and around Yukon’s diverse wetlands, including Indigenous land guardians, landowners, conservationists, educators, governments and industry professionals.

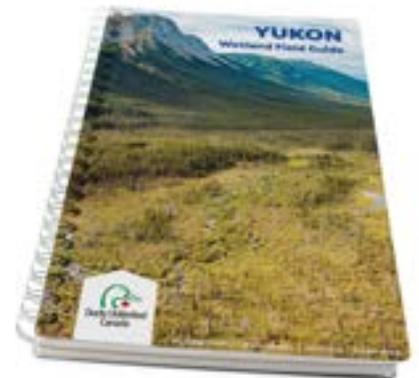
The *Yukon Wetland Field Guide* is the result of a collaboration between DUC, local Indigenous Knowledge Holders, the Yukon government and environmental organizations. The collaboration ensures the guide is a practical resource that respects and recognizes Indigenous wisdom and caretaking and the relationships between Indigenous Peoples and wetland ecosystems.

In March 2025, DUC received a Knowledge Braiders Award from Braiding Knowledges Canada for its work on the guide. “The [guide] is a testament to our commitment to wetland conservation and our dedication to supporting the diverse ecosystems that thrive in these environments,” said Michael Nadler, DUC CEO. “Working alongside Indigenous Knowledge Holders, we have developed a guide that not only serves as a practical resource but also recognizes and respects the rich cultural and ecological wisdom of Indigenous Peoples.”

Repairs in progress in early 2025 on the ring dyke at Lizard Lake, Manitoba.

*Ducks Unlimited Canada*

Lizard Lake helps control flooding in the municipality, supplies farmers with a reliable hay crop and offers waterfowl over 2,000 acres (809 hectares) of vital early-season habitat.





For DUC’s work on the *Yukon Wetland Field Guide*, James Kenyon, DUC’s head of Conservation Partnerships—Boreal Yukon and NWT (second from left), and Copper Joe Jack, Indigenous Knowledge Holder and collaborator on the guide (third from left), accepted the Knowledge Braiders Award from Braiding Knowledges Canada’s co-research directors, Dr. Paulina Johnson (left) and Dr. Murray Humphries (right), in March 2025.

*Braiding Knowledges Canada*

Copper Joe Jack, a traditional Knowledge Holder and collaborator on the guide, noted, “Indigenous Peoples have been stewarding wetlands since time immemorial because wetlands are so important for ensuring clean water and providing food and medicine as was shared by the Indigenous Knowledge Holders. This field guide provides Traditional Knowledge shared by Knowledge Holders from across the Yukon alongside Western Scientists to help educate people on why wetlands are important and the traditional laws used to safeguard these important areas.”

For more information, please contact Mara Erickson, Prairie Habitat Joint Venture Coordinator, [mara.erickson@ec.gc.ca](mailto:mara.erickson@ec.gc.ca).

“Indigenous Peoples have been stewarding wetlands since time immemorial because wetlands are so important for ensuring clean water and providing food and medicine as was shared by the Indigenous Knowledge Holders.”  
—Copper Joe Jack,  
Indigenous Knowledge Holder

**Prairie Parklands  
Contributions (CA\$)**

	2024–2025	Total (1986–2025)
Total	\$93,498,267	\$1,794,386,052

**Accomplishments (Acres)**

	2024–2025	Total (1986–2025)
Secured	84,529	8,785,602
Influenced	214,662	8,162,697
Enhanced	346,389	3,169,470

Secured and enhanced acres are not additive.

2024–2025 consists of the April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, time frame.

1986–2025 consists of the January 1, 1986, to March 31, 2025, time frame.

**Western Boreal Forest  
Contributions (CA\$)**

	2024–2025	Total (1986–2025)
Total	\$1,700,549	\$199,684,133

**Accomplishments (Acres)**

	2024–2025	Total (1986–2025)
Secured	0	12,091,184
Influenced	11,620,151	154,960,108
Enhanced	0	107

Secured and enhanced acres are not additive.

2024–2025 consists of the April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, time frame.

1986–2025 consists of the January 1, 1986, to March 31, 2025, time frame.



# Species Joint Ventures

Snow Geese.

*Christian Marcotte*

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Species Joint Ventures are international in scope, spanning North America and including circumpolar countries. These Joint Ventures focus on critical science needs to inform the management of over 20 species (50+ populations) and their related habitats. Additionally, research directed through the Species Joint Ventures addresses questions for other bird species that share the habitats.

# Sea Duck Joint Venture

Common Eider.

*Emile David*



[www.seaduckjv.org](http://www.seaduckjv.org)

The Sea Duck Joint Venture (SDJV) encompasses all of Canada and the United States. It focuses on coastal waters for migrating and wintering sea ducks and on boreal forest and tundra for nesting sea ducks. North American sea ducks include 22 recognized populations among 15 species (tribe Mergini): Common Eider, King Eider, Spectacled Eider, Steller's Eider, Black Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Surf Scoter, Barrow's Goldeneye, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Long-tailed Duck, Harlequin Duck, Common Merganser, Red-breasted Merganser and Hooded Merganser. As a group and depending on the season, sea ducks use all four flyways.

Education and training were identified as a critical need in the NAWMP 2018 Update. This led to the development of the North American Waterfowl Professional Education Plan (NAWPEP) in 2020. The NAWPEP calls for NAWMP partner organizations, such as migratory bird joint ventures, to work with educational institutions to provide support for students focused on waterfowl research and management. The SDJV is in a unique position to answer this call due to its focus on filling scientific information gaps and its cross-border network of partners and stakeholders.

The SDJV Student Fellowship program is now in its fourth year. To date it has supported 14 students, including four in the 2025 cohort. The fellowships give students an opportunity to explore any topic related to sea duck biology or conservation. This leads to a variety of projects in such areas as management, hunting, genomics, climate change, pollution and disease. Student projects can involve state/provincial/territorial, federal and agency partners; non-profits; and waterfowl management and hunting organizations. The projects illustrate both the collaborative nature of this field and the many connections between people and waterfowl.

Reyd Dupuis-Smith was one of the first recipients of an SDJV student fellowship in 2022. She dedicated her studies to understanding how anthropogenic factors and pollution affect birds of all kinds. Reyd is currently finishing up her PhD program at Carleton University. Her work there is focused on understanding long-term oil exposure patterns and diet in seabirds in Nunatsiavut, Labrador. It has the potential

to impact the health of the birds, and has implications for oil pollution monitoring programs related to both humans and wildlife in other areas.

A more recent SDJV fellowship awardee is Rob Blenk, a Ph.D. candidate at the University of California, Davis. His project uses next-generation genomic sequencing to explore whether there is evidence of genetic structuring in populations of Harlequin Ducks on the West Coast. His ultimate goal is to identify the origins of wintering birds and their breeding sites. This will have implications for harvest and population management. Rob is working with many partners, including the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, hunters, private companies and academic institutions.

Shayla (Shay) Kroeze, a Ph.D. student at Queen’s University, is focusing on avian cholera in Common Eiders on Mitivik Island (also known as East Bay Island) in Nunavut. The colony experienced an avian cholera outbreak between 2006 and 2011. The initial outbreak in 2006 killed over 30% of the female eiders breeding at the colony. The research team wondered why some of the birds were infected and survived, and some were seemingly not infected at all, despite being exposed to the disease. Shay’s research will use innovative genomic techniques to help identify genes that could provide resistance to cholera in eiders. It will also determine how the genes have changed before, during and after the epidemic. This is another project that has survival and management implications for a species.

Sea duck management affects people across the globe in terms of harvesting rights, cultural activities, hunting, recreation and more. Through student fellows and funded research projects, SDJV continue to improve understanding of sea duck population numbers, species health and reproductive rates. This in turn informs species management and conservation. The result is thriving sea ducks and sea duck habitats, and a host of benefits for the people who love, care for and rely on them.

*For more information, please contact Margaret Campbell, Sea Duck Joint Venture Coordinator, (867) 334-5379, [margaret.campbell@ec.gc.ca](mailto:margaret.campbell@ec.gc.ca).*

### Expenditures (CA\$)

	2024–2025	Total (1998–2025)
Banding	–	\$695,345
Research	\$550,698	\$14,964,529
Surveys	–	\$3,630,006
Conservation Planning	–	\$1,040,515
Communication and Education	\$51,764	\$269,504
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$602,462</b>	<b>\$20,599,899</b>

2024–2025 consists of the April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, time frame.

1998–2025 consists of the January 1, 1998, to March 31, 2025, time frame.



Reyd Dupuis-Smith with a Black Guillemot.  
*Sarah Wong*



Rob Blenk with a Harlequin Duck.  
*Rob Blenk*



Shayla Kroeze with a Common Eider.  
*Daniel Giesbrecht*

# Arctic Goose Joint Venture

Canada Geese on intertidal grazing lawn on Akimiski Island, Nunavut.

Rod Brook



[www.agjv.ca](http://www.agjv.ca)

[www.pcoa.ca](http://www.pcoa.ca)

[www.ganso](http://www.ganso)

[delartico.com](http://delartico.com)

The Arctic Goose Joint Venture (AGJV) covers 924 million acres (374 million hectares) spanning North America and circumpolar countries on other continents. It focuses on 24 populations among seven species: Greater White-fronted, Emperor, Snow, Ross's, Brant, Cackling and Canada Geese. Arctic geese use all four North American flyways and the Western Atlantic Flyway of Europe. Since inception, the scope of the AGJV has aligned with the NAWMP Waterfowl Habitat Areas of Geographic Concern, and the AGJV supports work in all the important arctic and subarctic areas identified for the NAWMP.

Since 1986, the AGJV has coordinated research programs and funding opportunities across multiple jurisdictions and agencies to support the study and monitoring of Arctic-nesting geese. This strengthens the Joint Venture's overarching goal, which is to inform effective management of arctic goose populations for sustainable and resilient arctic ecosystems.

The perception of arctic geese is often overwhelmed by their role in habitat "damage." A common example of this is the dramatic population growth of Snow and Ross's Geese, otherwise known as "light geese," between 1970 and the early 2000s. The overabundance of these populations on their arctic nesting grounds caused extensive ground and vegetation disturbance in coastal and wetland ecosystems. The population boom was a result of three factors in combination: the establishment of sanctuaries and protected areas in response to earlier population declines; changing agricultural practices that provide food subsidies for wintering and migrating geese; and the species' flexibility in adapting to shifting resource availability and human land-use patterns.

Arctic geese are primarily grazers. Below-ground grubbing, which is more likely to reduce standing vegetation, is most prevalent in a short period each year during spring migration. At that time, variation in snow melt and its influence on foraging patterns of geese can, in turn, influence variation in the composition and diversity of plant communities in a given area.

Throughout the breeding season, moderate levels of grazing will keep vegetation short and dense, and stimulate plant productivity, leading to more nutritious matter and greater heterogeneity in vegetation. Areas defined by this short and dense growth are commonly referred to as “grazing lawns.” Additionally, where geese graze, their droppings contribute to nutrient cycling, often in areas that would otherwise be unproductive because nitrogen and phosphorus are limited.

At the broader scale, shifts in distribution of geese move grazing intensity around, influencing the heterogeneity of vegetation on the landscape. This can support large herbivores, such as caribou and muskox, which benefit from the high productivity and nutrient content of these grazing lawns. Alternatively, in many arctic ecosystems where these large herbivores are absent, geese are the primary foraging species. This can benefit other arctic birds, which rely on grasses and sedges for nesting cover.

A new threat facing arctic ecosystems is rapid “shrubification.” With warming temperatures, birch and willow species can thrive and expand into new areas. This reduces plant diversity, changes snow cover and distribution, and can contribute to permafrost thaw. Eventually, this chain reaction will turn the Arctic from a carbon sink to a carbon source. In this context, geese perform an increasingly vital role in preserving grazing lawns. This is beneficial to a huge variety of species and helps to maintain ecological integrity.

Greater White-fronted Geese in a banding enclosure on Victoria Island, Nunavut.

Frank Baldwin



Since the late 20th century, more liberal harvest management practices and special regulatory actions were introduced in both the United States and Canada to meet rising concerns about light goose overpopulation and the resulting impacts on arctic ecosystems. These ongoing, and adaptive, management strategies continue to be informed by vital research collaborations across North America’s flyways and are essential to maintaining stable populations of geese, and other migratory birds, for sustainable arctic ecosystems.

For more information, please contact Frank Baldwin, Canadian Co-Chair, AGJV Technical Committee, [frank.baldwin@ec.gc.ca](mailto:frank.baldwin@ec.gc.ca).

### Expenditures (CA\$)

	2024–2025	Total (1986–2025)
Banding	\$332,340	\$20,618,588
Research	\$1,966,297	\$30,815,798
Surveys	\$72,026	\$12,053,009
Collar Observations	–	\$1,324,185
Management	–	\$272,992
Conservation Planning	\$35,075	\$1,000,858
Communication and Education	–	\$51,882
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,405,738</b>	<b>\$66,137,312</b>

2024–2025 consists of the April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, time frame.

1986–2025 consists of the January 1, 1986, to March 31, 2025, time frame.

Snow Geese in an enclosure on Victoria Island, Nunavut, waiting to be banded.

Frank Baldwin





# Black Duck Joint Venture

American Black Duck.

*Jaden Barney*



[blackduckjv.org](http://blackduckjv.org)

The Black Duck Joint Venture (BDJV) includes partners from the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador and 14 eastern states. The American Black Duck (*Anas rubripes*; hereafter black duck) can be found in saltwater marshes, brackish and freshwater impoundments, riverine and estuarine marshes, swamps, shallow lakes and wetlands throughout the boreal landscape. Black ducks are mostly found in the Atlantic and Mississippi Flyways.

Waterfowl broods are difficult to study. This is primarily because female ducks keep their ducklings hidden in dense cover, especially during the first week of life. Most brood studies rely on ground-based efforts to find and monitor broods. Researchers then estimate overall brood numbers based on those ground detections, also called detection rates. Detection rates can vary greatly over the geographic range of a species. Brood survival is critical to population stabilization and growth, and understanding brood habitat use and movement is important for habitat and species management to improve survival rates. This connection shows the importance of brood studies.

For the past four years, conservation partners working with the BDJV have fitted more than 800 female black ducks with GPS-acceleration (ACC) transmitters. Transmitters were attached during the winter on ducks from the Maritimes in eastern Canada to Virginia and from Ontario to Tennessee. Technology in the transmitters allows researchers to understand movement, survival and behaviour of the female ducks, but until recently they haven't been useful in studying broods. Now researchers are making significant breakthroughs in this area. They can use data from each transmitter to identify not only when and where a female builds a nest, but also the approximate day that eggs in the nest will hatch.

Equipped with this information, the researchers assembled and coordinated a network of experienced drone pilots whose goal is to find tagged females with their broods to confirm nesting success and brood survival. Abbey Butler, a master's student at State University of New York–Brockport, is one of these pilots, and combining

transmitter data with drone surveys is the subject of her thesis project. The drone pilots conduct three aerial surveys. The first occurs shortly after the eggs in a nest hatch. The next two take place 15 and 30 days post-hatch. Using sophisticated high-resolution thermal cameras, drone pilots search for the hen and her ducklings. This replaces the ground-based survey and reduces the challenges of detection in dense vegetation. Pilots are trained to first identify the hen wearing the transmitter and then identify and count the number of ducklings. At the same time, they record still images and video of the brood. The thermal camera is particularly effective in identifying ducks in otherwise inaccessible locations.

Drone footage allows researchers to enhance the value of the ACC transmitters by evaluating additional critical demographic parameters, like brood survival, as well as duckling movement and habitat use. Comparing how these traits vary over time and space will provide important insights into how black duck numbers are changing.

What's more, researchers are building a library of data associated with the field-confirmed broods. With this data, they will build a machine-learning algorithm designed to isolate and identify broods from the collection of all the black duck hens marked with ACC transmitters. In other words, they'll be able to identify female ducks with broods, even if they haven't seen the duck on the ground. This completes the loop and will allow researchers to estimate brood success and movements

for all the black ducks carrying transmitters in this large-scale project.

Preliminary results indicate the researchers have a brood detection rate of roughly 84% using the drone/thermal imagery, which far exceeds detection estimates from traditional ground-based surveys. These results show that combining drone surveys with ACC-transmitter data can lead to more accurate detection rates and act as effective tools for studying black duck and other waterfowl broods.

*For more information, please contact Kristina Hick, Black Duck Joint Venture Coordinator, (778) 903-5084, [kristina.hick@ec.gc.ca](mailto:kristina.hick@ec.gc.ca).*

### Expenditures (CA\$)

	2024–2025	Total (1986–2025)
Banding	\$324,707	\$10,381,128
Research	\$42,408	\$2,195,964
Surveys	\$633,342	\$11,360,388
Conservation Planning	\$36,059	\$560,642
Communication and Education	\$2,268	\$82,696
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,038,784</b>	<b>\$24,580,818</b>

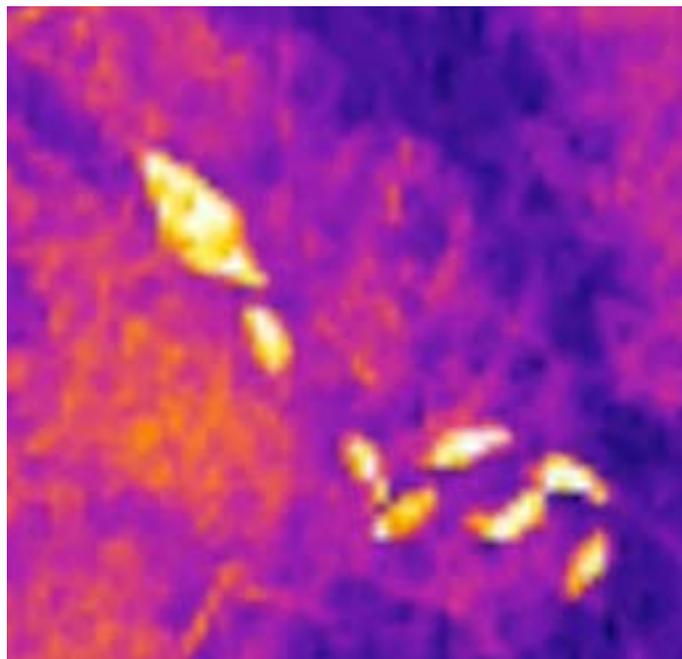
2024–2025 consists of the April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025, time frame.

1986–2025 consists of the January 1, 1986, to March 31, 2025, time frame.



Black duck brood photo from still images from video.

*Abbey Butler*



Black duck brood photo from high-resolution thermal camera.

*Abbey Butler*

# Partners



Canada Geese in the Fraser River Estuary.  
*Delta Farmland and Wildlife Trust*

## Thank you to all of our partners who contributed financially in 2024–2025:

### Canadian agencies

Age of Union Foundation  
Aiviq Hunters and Trappers Organization  
Alberta Environment and Protected Areas  
Alberta Sport, Recreation, Parks and  
Wildlife Foundation  
Aqqiumavvik Society  
ATB Financial  
AV Group  
BC Hydro  
British Columbia Conservation Foundation  
British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture  
and Food  
British Columbia Ministry of Environment  
and Parks  
Canada First Research Excellence Fund  
Canadian National Railway  
Capital Regional District (B.C.)  
Cenovus Energy Inc.  
Comox Valley (Regional District of)  
Crabtree Foundation  
Dalhousie University  
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Delta Agricultural Society  
Delta Waterfowl  
Ducks Unlimited Canada  
EnCana Corporation  
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Fisheries and Oceans Canada  
Fondation de la faune du Québec  
Fort Good Hope Renewable Resources  
Council  
Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation  
Irving Oil

Island Nature Trust  
K'ahsho Got'ine Foundation  
Ladco Company Limited  
Manitoba Finance  
Manitoba Forage and Grassland Association  
Manitoba Habitat Conservancy  
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la Faune et des Parcs  
Moncton (City of)  
Mount Allison University  
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Natural Resources Canada—Polar  
Continental Shelf Project  
Natural Sciences and Engineering Research  
Council of Canada  
Nature-Action Québec  
Nature Conservancy of Canada  
New Brunswick Department of Natural  
Resources and Energy  
New Brunswick Environmental Trust Fund  
New Brunswick Wildlife Trust Fund  
Newfoundland-Labrador Department of  
Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture  
Niskamoon Corporation  
Nova Scotia Crown Share Land Legacy Trust  
Nova Scotia Department of Natural  
Resources  
Nova Scotia Environment and Climate  
Change  
Nova Scotia Habitat Conservation Fund  
Nunavut Wildlife Management Board

Nutrien Ag Solutions  
Ontario Ministry of Environment,  
Conservation and Parks  
Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources  
Ontario Ministry of Transportation  
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Prairie Mines and Royalty Ltd.  
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Richardson Foundation Inc.  
Richmond (City of)  
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Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment  
Saskatchewan Water Security Agency  
Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation  
Sitka Foundation  
TC Energy  
The Nature Trust of British Columbia  
Université Laval  
University of Alberta  
University of Manitoba  
University of Toronto  
Vancouver Foundation  
Vancouver Fraser Port Authority  
Weston Family Foundation

Wildlife Habitat Canada  
 Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation  
 Initiative Foundation  
 Yukon Department of Energy, Mines and  
 Resources  
 Yukon Territorial Government

## U.S. agencies

Alabama Department of Conservation and  
 Natural Resources  
 Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
 American Friends of Canadian Nature  
 Arizona Game and Fish Department  
 Arkansas Game and Fish Commission  
 Atlantic Flyway Council  
 California Department of Fish and Wildlife  
 Central Flyway Council  
 Colorado Parks and Wildlife  
 Colorado State University  
 Connecticut Department of Energy and  
 Environmental Protection  
 Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife  
 Ducks Unlimited Inc.  
 Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation  
 Commission  
 Georgia Department of Natural Resources  
 Heart of the Rockies Initiative  
 Idaho Department of Fish and Game  
 Illinois Department of Natural Resources  
 Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
 Innoko National Wildlife Refuge  
 Iowa Department of Natural Resources  
 Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife  
 Resources  
 Louisiana Department of Wildlife and  
 Fisheries  
 Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and  
 Wildlife  
 Maryland Department of Natural Resources  
 Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and  
 Wildlife  
 Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
 Minnesota Department of Natural  
 Resources  
 Mississippi Department of Wildlife,  
 Fisheries and Parks  
 Mississippi Flyway Council  
 Missouri Department of Conservation  
 Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and  
 Parks  
 Nebraska Games and Parks Commission  
 Nevada Department of Wildlife  
 New Hampshire Fish and Game  
 New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife  
 New Mexico Department of Game and Fish  
 New York State Department of  
 Environmental Conservation  
 North Carolina Wildlife Resources  
 Commission  
 North Dakota Game and Fish Department  
 Ohio Division of Wildlife  
 Oklahoma Department of Wildlife  
 Conservation  
 Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife  
 Pacific Flyway Council  
 Pennsylvania Game Commission

Rhode Island Department of Environmental  
 Management  
 South Carolina Department of Natural  
 Resources  
 South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks  
 State University of New York—Brockport  
 Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency  
 Texas Parks and Wildlife Department  
 The Nature Conservancy  
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
 U.S. Geological Survey—Alaska Science  
 Center  
 U.S. Office of Aviation Services  
 University of Nebraska—Lincoln  
 Utah Division of Wildlife Resources  
 Vermont Agency of Natural Resources  
 Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources  
 Washington Department of Fish and  
 Wildlife  
 Waterfowl Research Foundation Inc.  
 West Virginia Division of Natural Resources  
 Wilburforce Foundation  
 Wisconsin Department of Natural  
 Resources  
 Wyoming Game and Fish Department  
 Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation  
 Initiative—U.S.

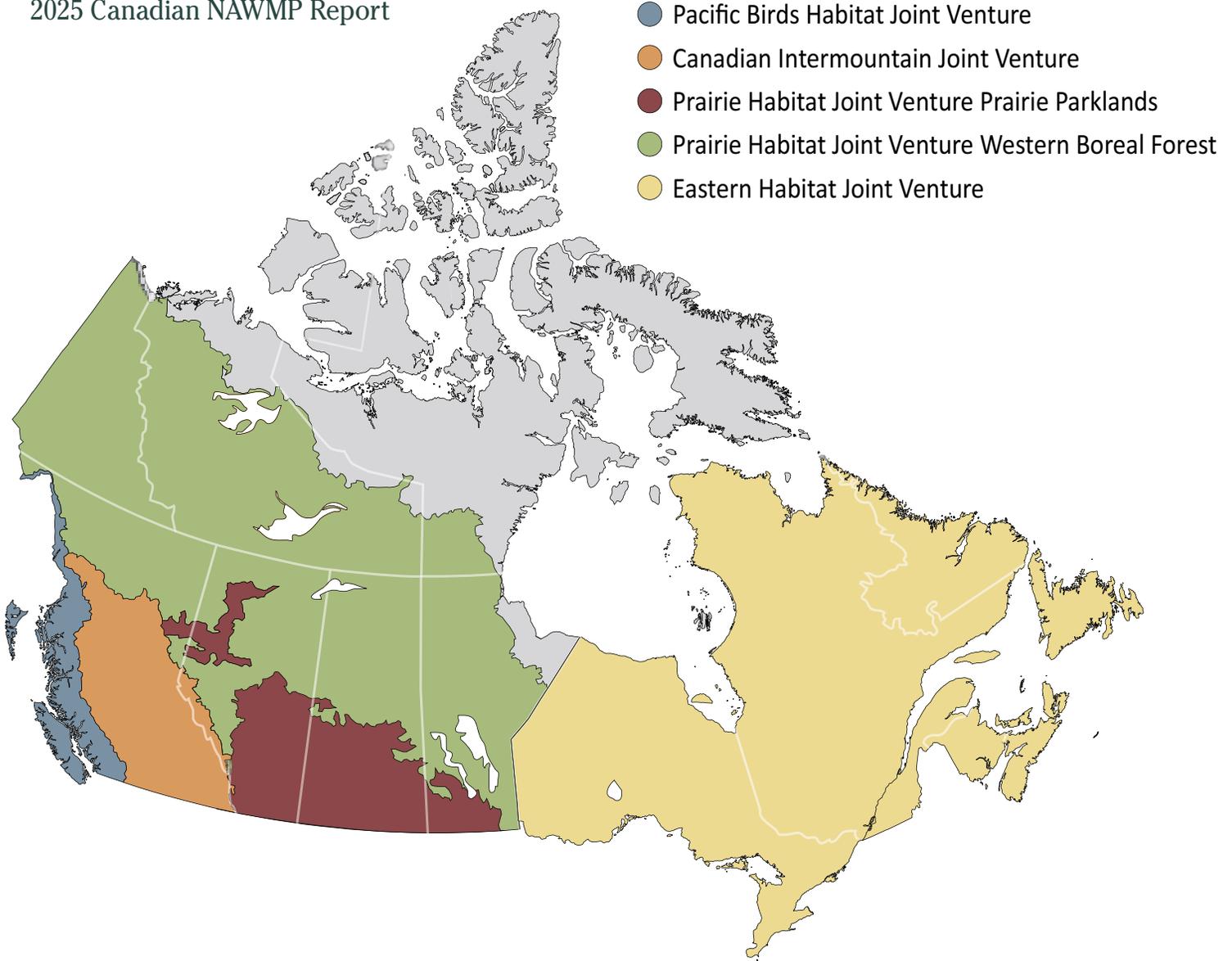
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Common Mergansers.  
*Marcel Gahbauer*



# Habitat Matters

## 2025 Canadian NAWMP Report



- Pacific Birds Habitat Joint Venture
- Canadian Intermountain Joint Venture
- Prairie Habitat Joint Venture Prairie Parklands
- Prairie Habitat Joint Venture Western Boreal Forest
- Eastern Habitat Joint Venture

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To view this publication electronically  
[nawmp.wetlandnetwork.ca](http://nawmp.wetlandnetwork.ca)

**North American Wetlands Conservation Act grants in Canada**  
[fws.gov/service/north-american-wetlands-conservation-act-nawca-grants-canada](http://fws.gov/service/north-american-wetlands-conservation-act-nawca-grants-canada)

**North American Bird Conservation Initiative**  
[nabci-us.org](http://nabci-us.org)

**Map of Bird Conservation Regions**  
[nabci-us.org/resources/bird-conservation-regions](http://nabci-us.org/resources/bird-conservation-regions)