

*Maintaining British Columbia's  
Wildlife Heritage*

**Provincial Wildlife Strategy  
to 2001**



**Province of British Columbia**  
Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks  
WILDLIFE PROGRAM

**March 1994**



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## Preface

The Wildlife Program of the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks has developed this strategic plan, *Maintaining British Columbia's Wildlife Heritage. A Provincial Wildlife Strategy to 2001*. It is the culmination of a planning process that began in 1991 with the release of *Managing Wildlife to 2001: A Discussion Paper* for public comment. Reflected in this strategic plan are comments from the public, staff and other government agencies. Also included are descriptions of what the Wildlife Program must do to protect, to enhance and to sustain the magnificent wildlife resources of British Columbia.

Although hunting wildlife was regulated as early as the 1850s, professional game management did not begin until the late 1940s. At that time, the province was largely rural, resource extraction was more localized and wildlife species were viewed as products for use by people. Then the Wildlife Program's function was primarily to regulate the use of game and fur species. The major users that we dealt with were hunters and trappers, and most of our management was concentrated on game species. Now most people live in cities, more resource extraction and land use occur, more habitat is altered or lost and people's attitudes towards wildlife are changing. As a result, the direction and scope of the Wildlife Program continues to change. More

emphasis must now be placed on protecting and preserving the diversity of native species and the habitats that support them.

We still regulate hunting and trapping but our mandate is now expanded to include national and international conservation of "nongame" and endangered species, biodiversity conservation and aboriginal and appreciative uses. We continue to enjoy financial and volunteer support from hunters as well as commercial users such as trappers and guide-outfitters. At the same time, our partnerships are expanding to include other agencies, First Nations, local governments, tourism and many conservation organizations.

This strategy will be regularly reviewed and updated. Your input and comments are important to us. The years leading up to the next century will be important ones for management of wildlife of this province. As the human population grows and more demands are placed on the land, increasing numbers of wildlife species and their habitats will be imperilled. This strategy describes a course of action for the Wildlife Program that, with the help of the people of British Columbia, will ensure that our wildlife heritage will be maintained for future generations.

*D. Ray Halladay  
Director, Wildlife Branch  
March 1994*

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# ***Vision of the Wildlife Program***

**B**ritish Columbia's wildlife heritage is a rich natural treasury of native animals and plants living in interdependent relationships within ecosystems. Their well-being relies on the health of these ecosystems. The wildlife heritage of the province provides social, cultural and economic values— including living in harmony with wildlife.

**I**n partnership with the people of the province, the Vision of the Wildlife Program is:

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***“Maintaining  
British Columbia’s Wildlife  
Heritage”***

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**O**ur Vision describes the future that we are striving to achieve. Our purpose is to encourage appreciation of the diverse values of wildlife while ensuring the province's wildlife heritage is passed on in undiminished splendour and value to future generations.

## Purpose of this Strategy

The Provincial Wildlife Strategy<sup>1</sup> is an agenda for action to 2001. It sets out the strategy for the Wildlife Program to manage wildlife to the year 2001 on behalf of the people of British Columbia. The strategy reflects the priorities of British Columbians as summarized from responses to *Managing Wildlife to 2001: A Discussion Paper*<sup>2</sup>. It follows provincial direction provided in *Strategic Directions*<sup>3</sup>, the draft strategic plan for the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, and national direction provided in *A Wildlife Policy for Canada*<sup>4</sup>. Further it builds on the past successes in management of game species and furbearers while increasing the emphasis on biodiversity. It is the intention of the Wildlife Program to use this strategy as a framework to

maintain, or recover where necessary, British Columbia's heritage of wildlife and habitats. The recently released *State of the Environment Report for British Columbia*<sup>5</sup> shows that we must be ever vigilant about our wildlife. It lists four species legally designated as endangered, 66 species or subspecies being considered for legal designation as threatened or endangered and 89 species or subspecies considered at risk<sup>6</sup>.

This Strategy provides:

- ◆ Direction to Wildlife Program staff;
- ◆ A framework for Wildlife Program planning, budgeting, program prioritization and evaluation;

<sup>1</sup> Further details can be found in: Wildlife Program. 1993. *Maintaining British Columbia's Wildlife Heritage. Provincial Wildlife Strategy Background Paper*. Prepared by Quadra Planning Consultants for the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, Victoria, BC. 32pp.

<sup>2</sup> Documented in: Wildlife Program. 1993. *Public Response to Managing Wildlife to 2001: A Discussion Paper*. Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, Victoria, BC. 15pp.

<sup>3</sup> British Columbia Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks. 1993. *Strategic Directions*. Victoria, B.C. 32pp.

<sup>4</sup> Wildlife Ministers' Council of Canada. 1990. *A Wildlife Policy for Canada*. Canadian Wildlife Service. Ottawa, Ont. 29pp.

<sup>5</sup> British Columbia Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks and Environment Canada. 1993. *State of the Environment Report for British Columbia*. Victoria, BC. 127pp.

<sup>6</sup> Sensitive, vulnerable, threatened, or endangered species.

- ◆ A basis for determining financial and human resources needed to meet Wildlife Program objectives;
- ◆ A basis for ongoing communication and support within the provincial and other governments for the strategic direction of the Wildlife Program;
- ◆ A report to the public showing how their input was used to develop priorities and strategic directions for the Wildlife Program; and,
- ◆ A basis for continuing communication and discussion with the public.

**T**his document does not identify specific activities that the Wildlife Program will undertake to the year 2001. Rather, this document identifies strategic objectives that guide setting of priorities and allocating annual budgets.

**W**ildlife, as set out in the Wildlife Act and regulations, includes all amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals native to British Columbia and some exotic species that have been introduced or might cause ecological or safety concerns if introduced to the province. The public has increasingly

recognized the need to consider and protect the interdependencies found among an expanding range of living organisms. The public views the wider spectrum of wild species as contributing to people's quality of life, and a trust held on behalf of future generations. As an example of this expanding mandate, the *Wildlife Policy for Canada* recommends "wildlife" includes wild mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fishes, invertebrates, plants, fungi, algae, bacteria and other wild organisms. The Fisheries Program has developed a strategy to manage fish in British Columbia<sup>7</sup>. In recognition of the need to manage on an ecosystem basis, this strategy is directed to all other wild vertebrates and the habitat they depend on as well as invertebrates and plants considered to be vulnerable, threatened or endangered.

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Environment. 1991. *Conserving our Resource: Fisheries Program Strategic Plan 1991-1995*. Fisheries Program, Victoria, B.C. 25pp.

# Principles of the Wildlife Program

**T**hese Principles guide us in making decisions and carrying out our activities.

## **Organizational Principles:**

- ◆ We seek to adapt to the changing values, attitudes and needs of people.
- ◆ We endeavour to make decisions in a timely, professional, cost-effective, and accountable manner, based on the best available information.
- ◆ We value and practice trust, honesty, respect, loyalty, teamwork, professionalism, responsiveness, open communication, creativity and innovation.
- ◆ We strive to provide staff with the knowledge, skills and tools needed to meet our Goals.
- ◆ We delegate appropriate responsibility, authority and accountability to our staff.
- ◆ We consult and build partnerships with others to meet our Goals.

- ◆ We practice leadership in managing British Columbia's wildlife heritage.

## **Wildlife Management Principles:**

- ◆ We apply an ecosystems approach that recognizes healthy habitats and ecosystems are essential for abundant, diverse and secure wildlife populations.
- ◆ We recognize that ecosystems have limited abilities to absorb natural and human disturbances.
- ◆ We recognize that people are components of ecosystems.
- ◆ We emphasize the management of wildlife populations over individual animals.
- ◆ We base our management on the best available biological, ecological and social information.
- ◆ We support and participate in integrated resource planning to ensure that land-use decisions incorporate the needs and values of wildlife.





◆ We recognize that maintaining wildlife species and their habitats is more effective than restoring them .

◆ We maintain B.C.'s wildlife heritage for the benefit of all people.

◆ We strive to ensure that human uses of wildlife are sustainable, humane, safe, and shared among aboriginal people, other British Columbians and non-residents.

◆ We emphasize the use and enjoyment of wildlife in their natural habitats over their use in captivity.

## Goals of the Wildlife Program

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### **Goal One:**

#### ***Maintained diversity and abundance of native species and their habitats throughout British Columbia.***

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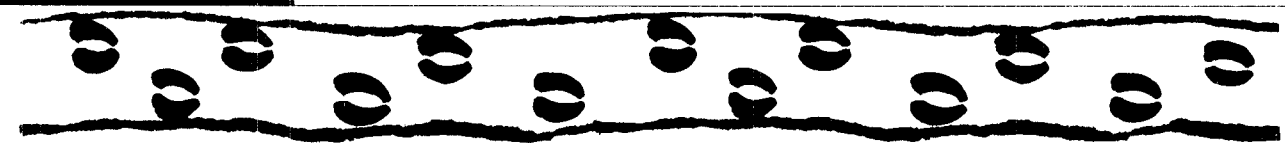
**G**oal One is our highest priority. It commits us to maintaining the broad diversity of wildlife throughout the province. We will work to maintain, and where necessary restore, B.C.'s native wildlife species and their habitats. We will discourage the importation of non-native species that could harm wildlife species directly or jeopardize ecosystems upon which native wildlife depend.

**S**ustaining secure populations of any wildlife species depends on sustaining healthy ecosystems. The survival of any species depends on the welfare of other animals and plants. More than their place in a simple food chain, many of these relationships among species are part of a highly complex, sometimes indirect, and always dynamic, web with its own intrinsic value. Resource developments in one part may have unexpected repercussions in other parts of the ecosystem. In times of change, ecosystems with the natural diversity of species and genetic variability, each slightly different in habitat needs or genetic adaptability, are more resilient

than depleted systems. In complex ecosystems wildlife managers do not yet understand all the interconnections among animal and plant species.

**F**or most people of British Columbia, wildlife contributes substantially to their quality of life. Prosperity of the complete spectrum of wildlife diversity is fundamental to the character of our province. As the human population of British Columbia increases, we will strive to ensure there continues to be places for wildlife species to live.

**T**he international *Convention on Biological Diversity*, signed by Canada at the 1992 United Nations Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and effective December 29, 1993, calls for international cooperation to halt the global extinction of animal and plant species and ecosystems. British Columbia strongly supports this convention and the Wildlife Program is uniquely positioned in the provincial government to contribute to the achievement of this provincially and globally important goal.



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## **Goal Two:**

### ***A variety of opportunities for the use and enjoyment of wildlife.***

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**G**oal Two focuses on the sustainable use and enjoyment of wildlife species and their habitats. This includes management of wildlife to meet the needs of First Nations as set out in law and government policy, and to provide opportunities for other activities including viewing, hunting and trapping.

**W**ildlife viewing is enjoyed by a large and growing number of people, providing benefits of conservation, education, recreation and tourism. The Wildlife Program is the lead agency in British Columbia Wildlife Watch, a viewing program that provides opportunities to view, study and photograph wildlife species in their habitats. It increases public knowledge and awareness of wildlife and habitat. We will continue to provide wildlife viewing opportunities.

**H**unting has a long history in British Columbia. It is both an important tradition and recreation. It provides food for many people. Hunters through financial support and volunteer labour make a substantial contribution to wildlife conservation. We will continue to manage game populations to provide a variety of hunting opportunities.

**T**rapping is a source of income and a way of life for some provincial residents. We will continue to work with licensed and First Nations' trappers to ensure the conservation of furbearers and to further develop and implement humane trapping methods.

**T**he Wildlife Program issues permits to regulate live-capture of wildlife for facilities such as zoos, wildlife rehabilitation centres, and scientific institutions and restricted private uses such as falconry. Such permits are only issued in exceptional circumstances and contain conditions to ensure public safety and humane husbandry.

**W**e also recognize that there are uses and benefits of wildlife species not yet fully realized or explored. We will strive to pass on, without impoverishment, our province's wildlife heritage to future generations so that their options for appreciation and use of wildlife are not diminished.

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### **Goal Three:**

#### ***People and wildlife living in harmony.***

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**G**oal Three focuses on reaching a balance between meeting the needs of wildlife and the needs of people. Conflicts can occur particularly as more and more people encroach on wildlife habitat and interact with wildlife in ways that create problems. Impacts of human activities on wildlife can severely affect wildlife species abundance, distribution, diversity and even survival. Impacts of wildlife on people are less widespread and are mostly economic (crop, landscape, livestock, or structural damage), safety or health ones.

**W**e will assist agencies and people to take actions that will reduce the risks and damage caused by peoples' activities on wildlife and by wildlife on people. We seek a future where people no longer view wildlife as nuisances, pests or problems, but as an integral part of the ecosystems we share.

## Key Issues and Strategic Objectives

**T**here are five key issues that affect the potential success of the Wildlife Program in achieving its Vision and three Goals:

- ◆ Insufficient information
- ◆ Adverse impacts on species and habitat
- ◆ Increased responsibilities and changing expectations

- ◆ Communicating with the public
- ◆ Competition for human use of wildlife

**T**he “Strategic Objectives” listed under each issue are measurable accomplishments needed to address the issues and to achieve our Goals.

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### **Key Issue:**

### ***Insufficient Information***

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**B**ritish Columbia is a province with a great variety of ecosystems and more than six hundred species of amphibians, birds, mammals, and reptiles. While we enjoy the greatest diversity of birds and mammals of any province in Canada<sup>8</sup>, our knowledge about many species of wildlife is limited. Strategies to achieve our Vision and meet our three Goals require inventory and research information. Inventory data on the variety, numbers, distribution and trends of wildlife and habitats are

needed. In addition, an understanding of the interrelationships among species and their habitats is essential to planning and managing for biodiversity.

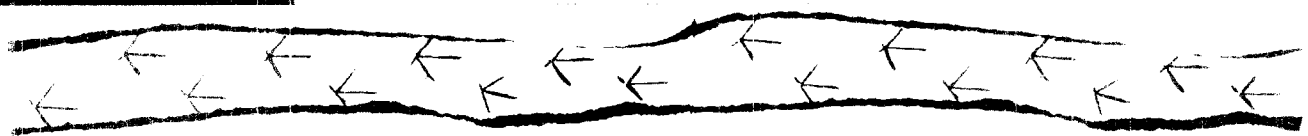
### **Strategic objectives:**

**B**y the year 2001, we will have:

- ◆ Inventories on the distribution, numbers and trends of species and habitats at risk or of management concern (Goal One and Goal Two).

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<sup>8</sup> From *State of the Environment Report for British Columbia* (1993).



- ◆ Specific habitat needs of wildlife identified for priority areas (Goal One and Goal Two).
- ◆ Knowledge about levels and trends of various wildlife uses and values (Goal Two).
- ◆ A data management strategy to improve the availability, accessibility and integration of wildlife data to meet management needs (Goal One, Goal Two and Goal Three).

- ◆ Results of research required to manage priority species and habitats (Goal One and Goal Two).
- ◆ Assessments of implemented management prescriptions to determine their effectiveness (Goal One and Goal Two).

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**Key Issue:**  
***Adverse Impacts on Species and Habitats***

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**T**he major threat to wildlife is the loss or alteration of habitat. Wildlife is indirectly affected by impacts on its habitat, such as urban growth, industrialization, logging, mining, agriculture, fire suppression, transportation, oil and gas development, increased and improved access, and other land and resource uses. The number of wildlife species at risk and of management concern, including endangered species, is increasing. The primary cause has been the progressive degradation of habitat.

**W**ildlife is also affected directly by many human actions, including poaching, harassment, road and rail kills, the use of pesticides and other chemicals and trade in animal parts. These impacts are increasing as the variety of human activities expands and human access to wildlife and wildlife habitats increases (e.g., new roads, all-terrain-vehicles). These impacts may jeopardize species' survival where populations are at critical levels.

**N**early all land in the province is capable of supporting more than one resource value. The most productive valley-bottom habitats often have

many competing and conflicting uses. Traditionally, land in British Columbia has been allocated to a single use and wildlife species are rarely considered as priority users of the land. Wildlife habitat options are frequently lost as land development proceeds. As public concern and demand for wildlife increases, conflicts among land uses escalate. We seek to minimize and mitigate those conflicts.

**U**nlike agencies that zone or reserve municipal or Crown lands for use or protection, the Wildlife Program has limited authority for wildlife habitat protection. We manage habitat mainly through identifying habitat needs of wildlife and then bringing that information to those agencies with control over habitat. At present, to protect habitat it must be reserved through other agencies or acquired from private land owners. We have learned by experience that it is more effective to accommodate species' habitat needs in early land use planning and thus maintain existing populations than to try to restore wildlife species at risk.

**Strategic objectives:**

**B**y the year 2001, we will have:

- ◆ A strategy for conservation of biodiversity (Goal One).
- ◆ An improved legal basis for protecting and managing animals, plants and their habitats (Goal One and Goal Three).
- ◆ A major role on inter-ministry task forces that address biodiversity issues (Goal One).
- ◆ Biannual status evaluation of wildlife species and habitats (Goal One).
- ◆ Status assessments for species and habitats at risk within two years of their having been identified (Goal One).
- ◆ Recovery plans within two years of the species having been designated as threatened or endangered (Goal One).
- ◆ Implementation of recommendations contained in approved recovery plans (Goal One).
- ◆ Needs of wildlife integrated into government land-use planning processes and practices (Goal One and Goal Two).
- ◆ A program to secure voluntary stewardship of wildlife habitats on private lands (Goal One).
- ◆ Secured habitat as specified in approved recovery and other management plans (Goal One).
- ◆ Adequate protection of wildlife habitats representative of each ecosection (Goal One).
- ◆ Habitat evaluation methods and standards (Goal One and Goal Two).
- ◆ Habitat and population management strategies to maintain or increase the abundance and distribution of wildlife populations of management concern (Goal Two).



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**Key Issue:**  
***Increased Responsibilities and  
Changing Expectations***

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**T**he public is expressing increasing concerns about stewardship of living resources and the quality of the province's environment. This public sentiment includes broadened concerns for the health and sustainability of ecosystems and the viability of all species. Responding to this demand, the responsibilities of the Wildlife Program have expanded greatly and need to continue to expand in order to manage not only large vertebrate species but also endangered, non-harvested, invertebrate and plant species and to provide greater habitat and ecosystem protection.

**D**emands on staff time have increased greatly. Examples include consultations with First Nations and others, new environmental legislation, Freedom of Information legislation, hearings, land planning initiatives and protected areas strategy. These activities occur at all levels from local to international and place new demands on staff to represent the goals and objectives of the Wildlife Program and the values of wildlife. Additional resources and new partnerships will be required to meet increased responsibilities and changing public expectations.

**Strategic objectives:**

**B**y the year 2001, we will have:

- ◆ An effective program for public involvement in wildlife management (Goal One, Goal Two and Goal Three).
- ◆ Co-management agreements with First Nations for the management of wildlife.
- ◆ Partnerships with a spectrum of public and private groups to address a range of wildlife management concerns (Goal One, Goal Two and Goal Three).
- ◆ A strategic management system that links Program planning, budget allocations and evaluation to make the most effective use of existing staff and budget (Goal One, Goal Two and Goal Three).
- ◆ Increased public participation and support for conservation programs (Goal One, Goal Two and Goal Three).

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**Key Issue:**  
***Communicating with the Public***

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**A** pressing need exists to communicate effectively with the public. Today, most British Columbians live in urban areas with little or no direct contact with wildlife species in their native habitats. Every year, new people move to B. C. from other provinces and countries who are unfamiliar with the province's wildlife and the values of wildlife to the environment and the economy. The demand for information about wildlife and wildlife conservation issues continues to increase and is measured by thousands of requests received at Wildlife Program offices throughout the province. Public education plays a crucial role in both meeting the demand for information and for building public understanding and support for wildlife management activities.

**Strategic objectives:**

**B**y the year 2001, we will have:

- ◆ A full range of information on wildlife available to the public including information on the benefits of wildlife, issues, uses and public attitudes (Goal One, Goal Two and Goal Three).
- ◆ Wildlife information integrated into the province's education system (Goal One, Goal Two and Goal Three).
- ◆ Mandatory education programs for selected wildlife uses such as hunting and trapping, and for viewing in high risk situations or sensitive areas (Goal Two, Goal Three).
- ◆ A process to track views of the public regarding wildlife management priorities (Goal One, Goal Two and Goal Three).

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**Key Issue:**  
***Competition for Human Use of Wildlife***

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**A**ctivities such as wildlife viewing, photography, and nature study are sometimes incompatible with uses such as hunting and trapping. There may also be conflicts within the same type of use, such as resident versus non-resident hunting. As the human population of British Columbia and wildlife-related activities increase, so will conflicts. We must address these conflicts in regulating allowable uses of wildlife.

**W**ildlife has always been important to the survival and culture of First Nations people. In recent years the courts, treaty negotiations, and other processes have recognized the rights of First Nations to wildlife. First Nations will have a larger role in wildlife use and management as their rights become more clearly defined.

**Strategic objectives:**

**B**y the year 2001, we will have:

- ◆ Consultative processes to develop mutual understanding among different users of wildlife regarding their respective needs (Goal Two).
- ◆ Provincial policy, integrated plans and regulations to reduce conflicts among different users of wildlife (Goal Two).
- ◆ A variety of recreational opportunities for different user groups, both by season and by location (Goal Two).
- ◆ Allocation mechanisms among the various users, e.g., First Nations, residents and non-residents, consistent with sustainable harvest (Goal Two).

## ***Conclusion***

**T**his strategy is the framework around which the Wildlife Program will develop its activities. We welcome your thoughts on its implementation. Ongoing consultation with the public, Program and Ministry staff, and other government agencies will ensure that the provincial wildlife strategy will continue to reflect the priorities of the people of British Columbia.

**R**esponsibility for the stewardship of wildlife in British Columbia requires broad-ranging partnerships especially between the people of the province and the Wildlife Program. As the lead agency for wildlife management, we believe that only when wildlife becomes everyone's responsibility will the welfare of British Columbia's wildlife heritage be secure.

