Protecting our Endangered Spaces

# **Letters to the Editors- Guidelines and Template February 2018**

Dear Nature Canada Members:

Letters to Editors are an excellent way to encourage and promote discussion of nature topics you are passionate about. A Letter to the Editor can help create awareness about an important issue and help to influence public opinion.

Publishing a Letter to the Editor is not a simple process. Most editors of publications receive up to 300- 500 letter submissions daily.

You can significantly improve your chances of having your letter published by following these guidelines.

**Letters to the Editor Guidelines**

* A timely letter will be more likely to be chosen for publication. It is best to respond within seven days to a particular article or news event that was published by the newspaper.
* Try to make the letter concrete if you are commenting on a national issue, highlight the national significance and try to link it to a recent event or article that discusses the issue.
* If you are responding to a community event or issue, your local (community) newspaper is the best publication to submit your letter to.
* Be concise, try to keep letters to fewer than 150 words. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.
* Send letters by e-mail and include the contents of the letter in the body of the e-mail message as plain text only. Do not use Microsoft Word format or rich text format (RTF).
* Do not send letters as an attachment.
* Ensure you include your name, address and daytime phone number.

# **Protecting our Endangered Spaces**

**Letter to the Editor - Template:**

Name of Media Outlet or Publication

Attention: Editor

Address

City, Postal Code

Dear Editor:

RE: *[State your reason for writing your letter right at the beginning. If you are responding to articles or editorials by the media, use the first sentence to reference the title or topic of the article (such as Declining Monarch Butterflies), name of the author or source (i.e, Globe and Mail), and the date the article was published.]*

* In your [DATE] article [ARTICLE TITLE], columnist [NAME OF REPORTER/COLUMNIST] states [MAIN POINT OF ARTICLE].
* Recent reports have shown that Canada’s nature is at risk. Only ten percent of landscapes and less than seven percent of oceans are legally protected. This has resulted in forest, grassland, ocean and wetlands being destroyed and degraded as never before, leaving 50 percent of our wildlife species in decline.

*[If you responding to a current issue, state that you are responding to the issue and where the issue is being addressed. State your points here. Include facts, references, or research here to establish credibility. Keep length in mind.]*

* Many species such as the [i.e Grizzly Bear, Mountain Caribou, Plains Bison, Beluga Whale] are struggling. Due to poorly considered industrial, agricultural and residential development in unprotected landscapes and oceans, the number of species at risk in Canada is increasing.
* Canada is committed to protecting at least 17 percent of our land and inland waters and 10 percent of our oceans by 2020. Thus far, only ten percent of our land and seven percent of our oceans are protected, and this is not enough to protect wildlife habitat or to save species from extinction.
* Nature is fundamental to who we are as Canadians. It provides us with the clean air, water and food we need to survive, and inspirational natural beauty to nurture our soul.

[*Include a CALL TO ACTION: asking readers to follow up with some activity, such as joining in calling on policymakers to address the issue.]*

* Canada urgently needs a realistic and comprehensive implementation strategy to meet its international commitments, create more protected places and build a natural legacy.
* Federal, provincial, territorial and indigenous governments will be required to work together to protect wildlife habitat and save wildlife species from extinction.
* The federal government must lead efforts with provincial, territorial and indigenous partners to negotiate new protected areas. Here in [province] the [proposed protected area] is an excellent candidate for a national wildlife area.

[*Insert text for regional/provincial example of a proposed protected area]*

\**See attached backgrounder for further specific provincial and territorial proposed protected areas.*

[*End with a strong, positive STATEMENT in support of your case*]

* Reflecting on the fact that the 2018 federal budget has $1.3 billion in funds dedicated to protecting Canada’s lands, inland waters and oceans, there is a tremendous opportunity to work together to protect and save our critical wilderness areas.
* For 2020, let’s call on the federal and provincial governments to live up to their commitments to protect Canada’s wildlife habitats and the wildlife species that call them home.
* Please go to [Nature Canada’s website](http://naturecanada.ca/) and sign the Protected Places Petition to let our government know that you support the creation of more protected places, and to sign Nature Canada’s petition asking the province to protect [proposed protected area] in [specific community or province].

Sincerely,

*Signature*

Name of writer

**BACKGROUNDER**

**Provincial and Territorial Proposed Protected Wildlife Areas**

**British Columbia** – Nature Canada is proposing to advance protection of Creston Valley Important Bird Area (IBA) as a National Wildlife Area, or under other provincial or federal legislation.

Creston Valley is located in south-central British Columbia on the floodplain of the Kootenay River bordering Kaniksu National Forest in Washington State. Creston Valley is amazingly biodiverse, supporting over 300 bird species, close to 60 mammal species, and 17 fish, 6 reptile and 6 amphibian species, which includes provincially significant fauna such as White Sturgeon, Northern Leopard Frog and Grizzly Bear.

Creston Valley currently enjoys some protection under provincial law as a wildlife management area. Unfortunately, the provincial government endorsed recommendations in 2014 to rescind the legislation protecting the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area, and, despite their desire to enhance the protection of this important ecosystem, the Canadian Wildlife Service lacks the resources to do so.

Nature Canada is also proposing that the Fraser River Estuary be protected as a National Wildlife Area. The Fraser River Estuary is a large complex of interconnected marine, estuarine, freshwater and agricultural habitats in southwestern British Columbia near the city of Vancouver. The Estuary includes Boundary Bay, the estuarine waters of Sturgeon Bank, and Roberts Bank.

An incredible assortment of wildlife inhabit the Fraser River Estuary. This Important Bird Area has Canada’s highest concentration of wintering raptors, such as the Barn Owl, Bald Eagle, Short-eared Peregrine Falcon, and more than 300 species of migratory and resident birds rely on Lower Fraser lands alone. This area harbors 260 Listed Species, such as the killer whale, Sockeye Salmon, and grey whale and, each spring an estimated 10 million salmon return to their home waters in Fraser lakes and rivers to spawn. Despite its proximity to Canada’s third largest urban centre, the Fraser River Estuary forms a rich and important ecosystem to thousands of wildlife species.

**North West Territories** – The Tlicho Government is proposing that the Dinaga Wek’ehodi National Wildlife Area be established given the area’s eco-cultural importance for local Dene and Métis peoples. Dinaga Wek’ehodi would be approximately 790 square kilometers in size within the globally significant North Arm Great Slave Lake Important Bird Area (IBA).

Dinaga Wek’ehodi is home to at-risk species including woodland caribou, wolverine, wood bison and several birds, as well as globally significant numbers of migratory Rusty Blackbirds. This relatively shallow part of Great Slave Lake on the boundary of the Canadian Shield is dotted with rocky islands and lined with bays and shoreline wetlands, making it a superb migratory stopover point for waterbirds and a rich habitat for freshwater fish.

Nature Canada is also proposing the Edéhzhíe National Wildlife Area be established. This area includes the Horn Plateau, Horn River, Mills Lake and Willowlake River in the Northwest Territories. The study area is approximately 25,000 km², and it is both ecologically and culturally important to the Dehcho and Tłįchǫ people.

The federal and territorial Governments are currently reviewing a request from the Dehcho First Nations and Tłįchǫ Government to establish the area as a National Wildlife Area which includes sub-surface protection. Traditional land use continues and monitoring and research activities are in full swing as a formal announcement on an establishment agreement remains outstanding.

**Alberta** – Nature Canada is proposing the One-Four Cooperative Wildlife Management Area be protected as a Cooperative Wildlife Management Area under the Canada Wildlife Act. The One-Four Research Farm comprises 17,000 ha of dry mixed-grass prairie of which 70 per cent is native grassland.

One-Four supports one of the highest densities of rare species in the Prairie Eco-region. It has high value to widespread grasslands songbirds as breeding habitat, and has high value for at least 23 federally listed species at risk.

**Saskatchewan** – Nature Canada is proposing the Govenlock, Nashlyn and Battle Creek grasslands in southwestern Saskatchewan be protected by law as a National Wildlife Area. These Southwest Saskatchewan Grasslands are primarily native prairie and support more than 11 species at risk, including Greater Sage Grouse, Burrowing Owl and Swift Fox.

This biologically diverse area is widely recognized nationally and internationally for its significant concentration of migratory birds and is designated as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA).

**Manitoba** – The Southwest Manitoba Mixed Grass Prairie Important Bird Area should be protected as a Migratory Bird Sanctuary with enhanced stewardship agreements with local landowners and communities.

This Important Bird Area (IBA) currently includes important habitat for grassland specialist birds such as Sprague's Pipit, Ferruginous Hawk, Chestnut-collared Longspur and Loggerhead Shrike.

**Nunavut** - Nature Canada is proposing that the Thelon Game Sanctuary be protected by law as a National Wildlife Area and expanded to the east. The Thelon Game Sanctuary (52,000 sq. km) straddles the Northwest Territories and Nunavut. It is home to the most northerly known moose north of the tree line, as well as muskox, barren-ground caribou, Arctic wolf, Arctic wolverine, and barren ground grizzly bear. The proposal is to expand the Sanctuary east to encompass the eastern portion of the Thelon River Important Bird Area, which provides breeding habitat for thousands of Canada Geese as well as small numbers of Greater White-fronted Geese and Lesser Snow Geese.

**Ontario** - Nature Canada is proposing that the North French lands be protected as a Natural Wildlife Area, and withdrawn from potential mining exploration and development.

The North French River watershed in northeast Ontario is an intact boreal ecosystem in the homeland of the Moose Cree First Nation, and one of the last Ontario watersheds that remains untouched by industrial development and hydro-electric dams. The North French is home to species at risk such as Boreal Caribou, Rusty Blackbird, Olive-sided Flycatcher and Common Nighthawk, as well as an abundance of migratory birds and fish.

Moose Cree declared the North French River watershed permanently protected in 2002 and reaffirmed this in a 2015 letter to the Premier of Ontario. Despite that, the Government of Ontario has still had not withdrawn the lands from potential mining exploration and development, meaning 5080 km2 of the watershed remains vulnerable to industrial development.

Nature Canada is also proposing a National Marine Conservation Area of the Prince Edward County’s south Shore that includes the shoreline and offshore areas of Prince Edward County.

Prince Edward County’s south shore is an area of significant terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity that has been recognized as a globally significant Important Bird Area and an International Monarch Butterfly Reserve. It also includes several identified life and earth science Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest and three designated Provincially Significant Wetland complexes. The south shore is home to several species at risk including the Blanding’s turtle, Eastern Whip-poor-will, as well as several provincially rare plants that live on the area’s alvars.

Despite its significant biodiversity, the only protected area along the south shore is Prince Edward Point National Wildlife Area at the southeastern end. The remaining public lands are open to wind energy development and unregulated access resulting in negative impacts on natural cover and sensitive wildlife.Advancing the legal protection of this area is urgently needed to achieve the goal of protecting Lake Ontario’s marine heritage for present and future generations as laid out in the national system plan.

**Ontario/Quebec** - Nature Canada is proposing the James Bay Southern Coast Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network (WHSRN) Site be protected by law as a National Wildlife Area.

This area is globally significant for at least 15 species of birds and harbours high numbers of other threatened species such as the Yellow Rail. There are efforts to recognize Canada’s 8th Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network at this site.

The Southern coastal area of James Bay is of great significance for birds. The heart of this area is the Pei lay sheesh kow IBA in the Moose Cree homelands of southwestern James Bay.

Areas to the east along the Quebec coast including Boatswain and Rupert Bays and Charleton Island, and to the north and west side of the Bay, up to and including Akimiski Island are also highly significant.

This extensive network of beaches, salt marshes, gravel ridges and offshore habitat is one of the most important sites in Canada for arctic breeding shorebirds and several species of waterfowl including Brant, Black and Surf Scoters due to the areas rich ecology and the funnelling effect of its geography in fall migration.

Nearly 20 percent of the global population of Brant has been recorded off shore in fall, and 15 percent to 20 percent of the global population of the endangered Rufa Red Knot uses the coastal habitats as stopover before it long flights to South America each fall.

**Quebec** - Nature Canada is proposing the Baie de l’Isle-Verte and Cacouna Marsh National Wildlife Area (QC) be expanded.

The offshore areas of Isle-Verte, which include the proposed 8700 square-kilometer Île aux Basques et Les Razades / Îles Les Boules / Îles Plerins - Marine Important Bird Area, makes up a portion of critical habitat for the threatened St. Lawrence Estuary population of Beluga whale, and provides passage to other threatened species such as American Eel and Atlantic Sturgeon.

At 789 ha, the existing Baie de I’Isle-Verte National Wildlife Area and contiguous L’Isle-Verte Migratory Bird Sanctuary (379 ha) sit within a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance and two globally significant Important Bird Areas: the Marais de Gros-Cacouna and the Marais de la baie de L’Isle-Verte.

This varied landscape of marshlands, riparian cliffs and tidal flats is home to globally exceptional numbers of migratory Snow Geese, Brant and Black-bellied Plovers, as well as 13 SARA-listed species including Bobolink, Peregrine Falcon and Short-eared Owl.

**New Brunswick** - Nature Canada is proposing the Manawagonish Island IBA be protected by law as a National Wildlife Area.

The land portion of the Manawagonish Island Important Bird Area is a protected Nature Preserve, serving to protect nesting Herring and Greater Black-backed Gulls, Double-crested Cormorants, Great Blue Herons and Common Eiders, whose presence has collectively contributed to the island’s diverse coastal lichen flora. Sitting just west of the mouth of the St. John River, the rich inter-tidal waters surrounding this Bay of Fundy Island attract a variety of marine life, as well as globally significant numbers of migratory shorebirds – including endangered Piping Plovers – at the adjacent Saint’s Rest Marsh and Beach Important Bird Area.

**Nova Scotia** - Nature Canada is proposing the Brier Island and Offshore IBA be protected by law as a National Marine Conservation Area.

Located at the mouth of the Bay of Fundy, Brier Island is renowned as a premiere destination for whale watching and ecotourism. This 1000 square-kilometer Important Bird Area also plays host to exceptional seasonal migrations of raptors, waterbirds and landbirds.

The isolated archipelago and its rich surrounding waters are also home to at-risk North Atlantic Right Whales, Fin Whales, endangered Eastern Mountain Avens flowers, Peregrine Falcons, and some of the continent’s most important in-shore waters for migratory Red Phalaropes. A small Nature Preserve on Brier Island is presently the only portion of the area that is protected.

**Newfoundland** - Nature Canada is proposing the 1,350 square-kilometer land- and seascape Witless Bay Islands IBA be protected by law as a National Marine Conservation Area.

This exceptional site – dubbed the province’s ‘official bird nest’ – draws tourists and scientists, alike, to the communities dotting Newfoundland’s Avalon Peninsula to the west of St John’s, where they can enjoy whales – including and other wildlife alongside seasonal icebergs.

The Witless Bay Islands terrestrial and (proposed) marine Important Bird Areas encompass an archipelago of four islands – Great, Green, Gull and Pee – that also make up the provincial Witless Bay Ecological Reserve.

It is home to the continent’s largest Atlantic Puffin colony, the world’s second largest Leach’s Storm-petrel colony, as well as fantastic breeding colonies of other seabirds including Sooty Shearwaters, Common Murres and Guillemots, and Black-legged Kittiwakes.