

The background of the cover is a close-up photograph of a forest floor. In the foreground, numerous small, light-colored mushrooms with thin stems and flat caps are growing from a bed of brown moss and decaying organic matter. The background is softly blurred, showing more of the forest floor and some green moss.

Nature
CANADA

Raising the Voice for Nature

2026–2031

Strategic Plan



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Letter from the Executive Director

Canada's nature movement is rooted in thousands of local efforts, each shaped by deep knowledge of place and a strong sense of responsibility to land, water, and wildlife. In conversations with local nature groups across the country, I have seen just how deeply that knowledge runs. People know every bend in their rivers, every migratory bird that should be arriving, and the specific places where change is most needed. Their leadership at the local level gives our movement its strength. This strategic plan reflects that reality and defines Nature Canada's role as one of connection, amplification, and partnership at a national scale.

This plan builds on that understanding. It sharpens our focus on the work that matters most and strengthens how we measure progress and learn as we go. It clarifies the change we are here to deliver and reinforces our commitment to reconciliation, equity, and inclusion as essential foundations for effective conservation. It is also a call to show up to every challenge with curiosity, respect, and the confidence to adapt when conditions change.

The work ahead calls for ambition, discipline, and deeper collaboration. We are living through a time when the biodiversity crisis is accelerating, when more and more of our daily lives are spent in front of screens, and when the health of our economy is tied more closely than ever to the health of our ecosystems. These realities can make the moment feel heavy. Yet they also underline why this plan matters: Canadians care deeply about the richness of the natural world. They want leadership that brings people together, strengthens policy, and creates opportunities for communities to drive meaningful change on the ground.

In the midst of these pressures, when the news can feel unrelenting and the scale of the challenges hard to hold, I am often reminded why this work matters most when I am standing quietly in the forest. Even a few minutes among the trees brings a sense of steadiness. The forest does not pretend the world is simple. It simply offers perspective. It reminds me that renewal is possible, that progress is built through patience and persistence, and that protecting these places is both a responsibility and a source of strength.

That is the spirit of this plan. It commits us to advancing strong federal action, supporting local leadership, and bridging divides at a time when shared values like love of land, water, and wildlife can be powerful common ground.

None of this work happens alone. We are part of a national movement of groups, communities, and individuals working every day to protect the places they love. This work is only possible because people choose to stand with it. This plan is our commitment to help connect, support, and strengthen those efforts in a way that is purposeful, strategic, and collaborative. It recognizes the urgency of protecting and restoring nature in Canada while embracing the growing sense of possibility that comes when people see nature as part of their identity and the foundation of a thriving future.

Let's move forward with purpose, together, and ensure nature has the voice it needs at every table where decisions about its future are made.

For the love of nature,

Emily McMillan,



Executive Director
Nature Canada



A note of thanks

Over the past year, our community of staff, Board members, partners, supporters, and allies across the movement has shaped a renewed direction for Nature Canada. This strategic plan reflects that collective effort and charts a path for the next five years grounded in clarity, purpose, and optimism.

Introduction

How we developed this strategy

When we began developing our new five-year strategy at the end of 2024, we knew change was accelerating around us, but we couldn't have predicted just how quickly or in what ways it would unfold.

What we did know was that we wanted to approach this work with openness and inclusion.

So, we asked questions that matter: *Who are we? What is this moment? How do we meet it?*

Over 650 voices joined us in this exploration, including those of our members, nature network partners, youth, Indigenous collaborators, policymakers, staff board and beyond.

These powerful stories and insights reflect the past, present and future of Nature Canada, and are woven into the fabric of our new strategic plan.



Here are some of the stories we heard:

Nature Canada offers a unifying voice for nature.

“Nature Canada has carved a very important role at the federal level—its advocacy and awareness work is unparalleled and nonpartisan.”

~ Nature-Based Organization

Nature Canada is a bridge between local and national efforts.

“Nature Canada amplifies my voice and is able through their leadership to connect with higher-level decision makers where an impact is possible.”

~ Member/Donor

Nature Canada helps me connect to what’s important: nature.

“Whenever I am in Nature and hear all kinds of birds, I feel calm and happy to be alive. I feel gratitude for all that nature has to offer. Nothing makes me want to live like nature does.”

~ Member/Donor

Nature Canada offers a platform for inclusive leadership and a values-driven community.

“For me, it would have to be the teamwork that I have experienced in working with Nature Canada... I appreciated being able to lean on members of Nature Canada when other people within my organization were not an option.”

~ Indigenous respondent

Nature Canada is a trusted communicator and educator.

“Nature Canada tells updates on stories about wildlife and nature, they provide petitions we can sign and update us on current happenings. I wouldn’t have the time to find this information otherwise, so I’m grateful to receive Nature Canada’s email updates.”

~ Member of the Public

What is this moment?

Biodiversity is in crisis.

Over 1 million of Earth's estimated 8 million species are threatened with extinction. Human activities have altered 75% of the land surface and 66% of the oceans, while wild-life populations have dropped by an average of 73% since 1970¹. In Canada, we have lost 80% of the original wetlands in and around urban areas, and approximately 80% of the native prairie grasslands have been cultivated². Responding to this crisis is at the heart of all our work.



Nature is central to who we are as Canadians.

With Canadian sovereignty under pressure, polling³ shows that nature stands as our strongest symbol of national identity, ahead of hockey, maple syrup, and even the flag. This is a moment to protect what truly defines us and keep Canada's nature alive for generations to come.



Disconnection from nature is deepening, even among those who care.

Urbanization, economic pressure, ecological grief, and screen-filled lives can make nature feel distant, inaccessible, or irrelevant. Embedding nature in everyday decisions, such as education, infrastructure, and healthcare, can help rebuild meaningful connections between people and the natural world, sparking both care and action.



Facing overlapping crises, nature connects the solutions.

From climate impacts to rising polarization and mental health issues, people are searching for stability and meaning. Nature-based solutions are cross-cutting, delivering benefits for biodiversity, climate, and health, while strengthening communities and building resilience.

¹ <https://www.unep.org/facts-about-nature-crisis>

² <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/biodiversity/canada-2030-nature-strategy.html#toc3>

³ <https://www.ekospolitics.com/index.php/2025/04/nature-tops-list-of-most-resonant-sources-of-national-identity/>

Policy windows are open, but progress can stall.

The Government of Canada has committed to bold targets, such as protecting 30% of land and water by 2030, and has adopted a national Nature Strategy. Nature Canada plays a crucial role in driving progress and holding decision-makers accountable for these commitments, despite shifting priorities and constraints.

A cultural shift is underway.

Indigenous-led conservation and public support for nature are showing a more hopeful way forward. By normalizing nature in how we live and govern, we can help shape a future rooted in respect, renewal, and belonging.



And ultimately, why nature? Why now?

Nature has the right to exist, to flourish, and to renew itself – independent of its usefulness to humans. Protecting it is not an act of generosity, but rather an act of balance and of justice. It asks us to listen to the land, waters, and wildlife as integral voices in shaping the world we share, not as resources to be managed, but as a life force to be respected.

In a time of uncertainty and change, the constancy of nature reminds us of our place within, not above, the living web of Earth. To centre nature in our choices is to act in service of life's ongoing story.

This premise is central to who we are as an organization and where we are going. To safeguard nature for its own sake, to defend the integrity of all species and habitats, and to restore balance to a world that sustains us all.



Who We Are

Since 1939, Nature Canada has been the voice for nature.

We cultivate and strengthen the connections and conditions needed for species and habitats to flourish. We work toward a Canada where nature is restored, thriving, and an integral part of everyday life, rooted in all the decisions that shape our shared future.



Mission

As the voice for nature, we cultivate and strengthen the connections and conditions needed for species and habitats to flourish.

Vision:

A Canada where nature is restored, thriving, and an integral part of everyday life, rooted in all the decisions that shape our shared future.

Principles:

We spark wonder: We lead with hope, inclusion, and courage, welcoming people into a national movement that celebrates nature and champions its protection.

We amplify local action: We work with humility and respect, walking alongside communities and collaborators to build collective power for nature.

We seek deeper understanding: We listen to those closest to the land and the issues, honouring community wisdom, science, diverse lived experience, and knowledge in our work.

We enable systemic change: We mobilize nature-lovers, network partners, and allies from across the country to speak for nature and influence decision-making.

Values:

Interdependence: We value the intrinsic right of all species to flourish and the interconnection of all living beings and ecosystems.

Connection: We foster meaningful relationships between people and the rest of nature.

Collaboration: We work in partnership to build collective power for lasting change.

Indigenous Leadership: We honour and uphold First Nations, Metis, and Inuit knowledge, rights, and leadership in conservation.

Integrity: We lead with transparency, trust, and a strong, credible voice for nature.



Our Theory of Change

Like a mycelium network beneath a thriving forest, we cultivate and strengthen the connections and conditions needed for nature to flourish. Through distributed action, contagious energy, and mutual support, we grow a hopeful and collaborative movement – locally and nationally – that rises above the surface, nurtures thriving biodiversity, and enables collective benefits.

This work must grow from the soil of reconciliation: recognizing Indigenous Peoples as the stewards of these lands and waters, honouring their knowledges and wisdom, and supporting their leadership in conservation and governance.



If we...

Inspire people to discover, learn from and connect with nature,

Grow and activate an interconnected nature movement,

Empower the movement with tools, resources, and trusted knowledge,

Bridge local leadership and grassroots energy with national advocacy,

Use our collective power to shape laws, policies, and public expectations.

Then we can...


Protect and restore species and habitats,

Prioritize nature in decision-making at all levels, and

Shift culture and governance so that protecting biodiversity is treated as essential, not optional.

So that...

Nature across Canada is defended, restored, and able to flourish.



“We need organizations like Nature Canada to act as a constant reminder to our national and provincial/territorial leaders that the biodiversity crisis also demands attention and action, and make it clear to governments, policymakers, stakeholders and Canadians alike that there is no Canada without our Nature.”

~ Government Policymaker

5-Year Strategy (2026-2031)

Our North Star

The Normalization of Nature in Decision-Making

A Canada where nature is an integral part of everyday life and rooted in all the decisions that shape our shared future.



Why Our North Star Matters

Normalizing nature in decision-making is a systems-level goal. It means rebalancing how governments and citizens make decisions so that biodiversity and ecological well-being are at the centre of how we govern, educate, and care for each other.

This means:

Shaping public expectations so voters, communities and civil society demand leadership that places nature at the centre of decision-making.

Influencing policy frameworks so that nature is a first principle, not an afterthought.

Building political will so that ecological well-being is recognized as essential to prosperity, health, and justice.

Our North Star reflects a profound shift in which nature is not only protected but also respected and upheld as a shared responsibility across all sectors of society.

This future demands political courage, cultural renewal, and the power of a connected movement to make it real. Our role, as the voice for nature, is to be loud and clear about what nature needs to thrive: naming the systems that are failing it, and advocating for the bold, collective action required to change them.

Guided by our North Star and grounded in our Theory of Change, Nature Canada's five-year strategy will align our work around three interconnected priorities—strengthening our internal alignment with the road ahead, building collective power through organizing, and activating a movement to influence the laws, policies, and culture shaping our shared future.

How We Do It

Nature Nation

The roots: Our 250,000+ members and supporters connecting to nature and bringing their voices into the movement to defend it.

Nature Network

The web: 1000+ partner organizations form a living system of shared learning, solidarity, and impact.

Nature Policy

The fruiting body: We bring community-rooted insight to Parliament Hill and beyond, pushing for systems-level change in law and policy.

Mycelium: Connections Beneath the Surface

Mycelium is a vast underground network of fungi that connects plants and trees, allowing them to nourish, support, and communicate with each other. Like this hidden system, strong, reciprocal connections across communities and organizations help nature and biodiversity thrive.



Our Strategic Priorities

This strategy will be implemented through deliberate, values-aligned priorities and pathways, rather than a fixed roadmap. It emphasizes clarity of direction and flexibility to respond to change. It is grounded in a deep focus on our north star and guided by our mission and values.

Priority 1

Build Collective Power
Through Partnerships

- Grow the movement
- Organize and inspire collective action

Priority 2

Mobilize the Movement to
Influence Policy, Laws & Culture

- Mobilize for systemic change
- Shape policy, laws and culture

Priority 3

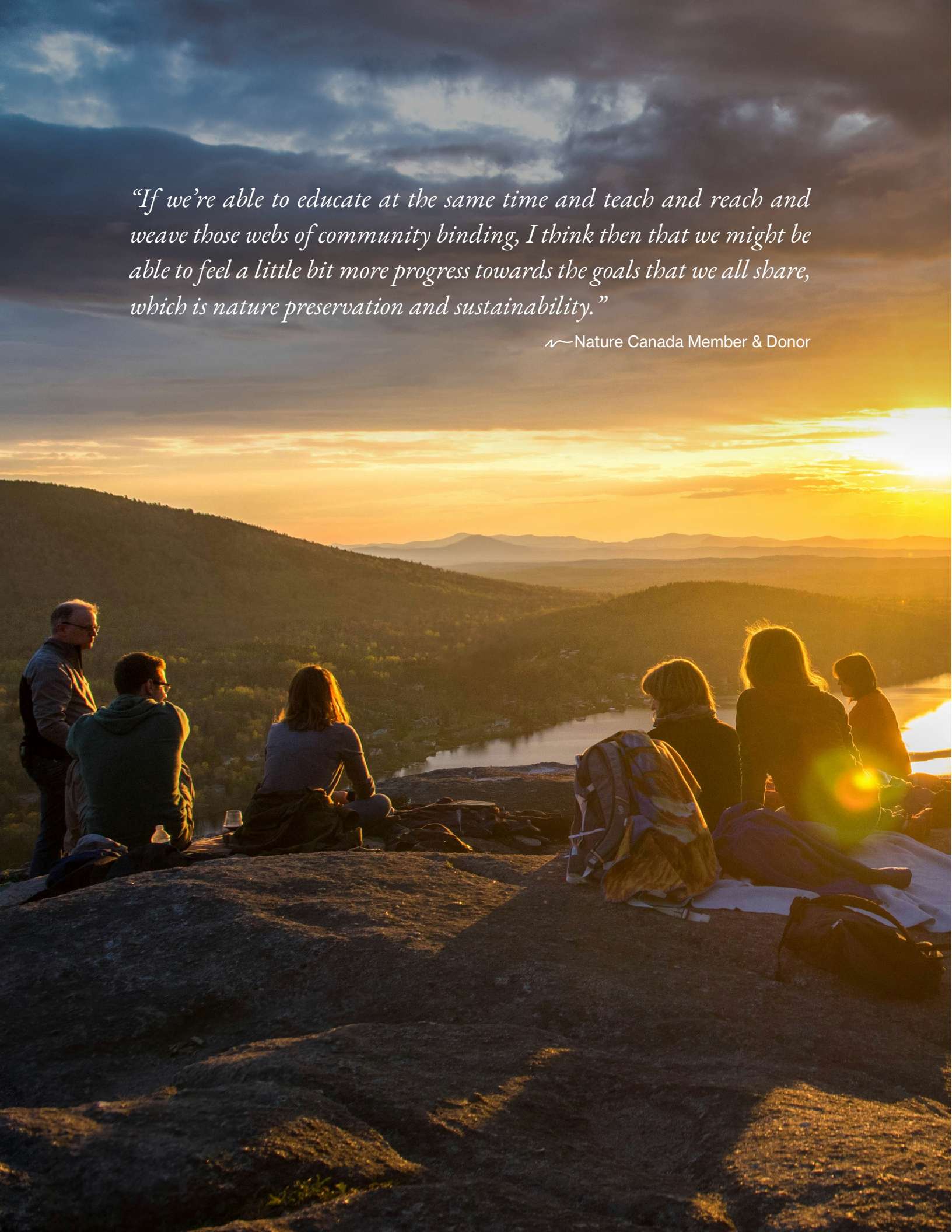
Lead with Focus

- Sharpen internal alignment with the North Star
- Grow a culture of hopeful ambition



“If we’re able to educate at the same time and teach and reach and weave those webs of community binding, I think then that we might be able to feel a little bit more progress towards the goals that we all share, which is nature preservation and sustainability.”

~ Nature Canada Member & Donor



Priority 1

Build Collective Power Through Partnerships

We will broaden and deepen our partnerships, relationships and engagements across sectors, regions and communities to grow a more powerful, collective voice for nature that influences how decisions are made.

This means building on our strengths as the trusted national voice, partner and connector to expand who we reach, work with, and engage, cultivating a Nature movement grounded in hope, collaboration and inclusive participation.



Pathways to get there:



Grow the movement:

Deepen relationships and collaboration with Indigenous partners.

Broaden our cross-sector relationships to expand the base of support for normalizing nature in decision-making.

Grow public support for nature-positive policies.

Expand our engagement with populations historically underrepresented in nature advocacy.

Collaborate with trusted messengers and equity-deserving communities to foster an inclusive nature movement.

Ensure partnerships are reciprocal, purposeful, and not tokenizing.

Organize and inspire collective action:

Share stories of nature that spark wonder and participation in the movement.

Offer coaching, convening, and knowledge-sharing to strengthen capacity, share lessons learned and inspire participation in the Nature movement.

Equip the movement with resources, knowledge, and tools to cultivate grassroots and community action.

Ensure our collaborations are hopeful and inclusive, embracing care, connection, and honest disagreement as core elements of healthy change.

“I admire Nature Canada for being a strong voice for what nature represents in Canada. Creating opportunities for collaboration between like-minded organizations, and bridging communications to everyone as to why Canadian Nature deserves to be protected, preserved, and celebrated.”

~ Nature Canada Member & Donor



Priority 2

Mobilize the Movement to Influence Policy, Laws & Culture

We will mobilize an interconnected nature movement to shape laws, policies, and culture, delivering measurable progress for biodiversity outcomes and ensuring nature's well-being is central to decision-making.

This means activating and empowering the movement with tools, resources, and trusted knowledge to ensure that Nature Nation, Nature Network, and Nature Policy continue to grow into a hopeful and impactful force for change.



Pathways to get there:

Mobilize for systemic change:

Empower leaders, volunteers, and communities to take initiative, lead campaigns, and scale their impact through structured organizing approaches.

Deepen community engagement to bridge local grassroots energy with national advocacy.

Connect mobilizations to measurable progress and shifts in biodiversity outcomes.

Amplify the impact made by our partners and the Nature Network.

Shape policy, laws and culture:

Influence policy so that protecting biodiversity is treated as essential to prosperity, health, and justice, not optional.

Strengthen recognition that a thriving natural world is integral to who we are as Canadians, affirming nature in our shared identity and values.

Hold leaders and decision-makers accountable, celebrating alignment with our North Star, and calling out when actions fall short of the needs of nature.

Maintain our role as a trusted source of knowledge by embedding and amplifying science, community learning, and Indigenous knowledge in all aspects of our work.

“Nature Canada is making a real difference. We’re a qualified, knowledgeable, trusted voice for the general public, our Nature Network, and all levels of decision-making. I feel lucky to be part of the movement toward a sustainable future.”

~ Nature Canada Staff Member



Priority 3

Lead with Focus

We will focus our energy where it matters most – aligning our work, structure, and culture around our North Star of normalizing nature in decision-making and strengthening our capacity to enable ambitious systems-level change and lasting impact for nature.

This means continually reflecting on what we do and how we work, remaining adaptive to changing conditions, fostering a culture of hopeful ambition, and ensuring our collective efforts are focused on achieving measurable progress for species and habitats.



Pathways to get there: 

Sharpen internal alignment with the North Star:

Continually reflect on and reorient our programs, pillars, campaigns, and organizational structure to focus on our North Star.

Set clear boundaries around what we will and won't do to avoid overextension and maintain focus.

Tell a consistent story so members, partners, and decision-makers hear one unified voice for nature, including strengthening our presence in both official languages.

Track and demonstrate progress on outcomes for species and habitats through North Star-oriented impact reporting.

Grow a culture of hopeful ambition:

Encourage boldness in decision-making by challenging internalized limitations and confronting scarcity thinking.

Strengthen internal collaboration and coordination by breaking down silos, reducing inefficiency and focusing on outcomes and impact.

Nurture a 'culture of philanthropy' approach, growing unrestricted funds (e.g., through membership and donor expansion) that can be directed toward achieving our north star.

The background of the page is a deep blue, textured image. The top half shows gentle ripples on the surface of water. The bottom half shows the head of an orca (killer whale) swimming, with its white patch and dark body visible against the blue water.

Bringing the Strategy to Life

Guided by our North Star, Nature Canada works to ensure nature is part of the decisions that shape our future. Our priorities come to life through action and partnerships across the country.

Law & Policy

We are advancing strong laws and policies to secure lasting protection for nature. By pressing governments at every level to embed biodiversity into legislation, strategies like 30x30, species protection measures, and forestry reforms, we are ensuring that ecosystems are restored and safeguarded for generations to come.

Municipal & Local Leadership

We believe communities are on the frontlines of nature protection. Through Bird Friendly Cities, municipal protected areas, and local restoration initiatives, we are helping municipalities weave biodiversity into daily planning and decision-making, creating safer and more resilient spaces for both people and wildlife.

Indigenous Leadership & Knowledge

We know that conservation is successful when led by Indigenous Peoples. From shorebird protection in the James Bay to community-led biodiversity recovery, we are supporting Indigenous rights, knowledge, and stewardship to ensure outcomes that are durable, just, and culturally grounded.

Equity & Emerging Leadership

We are building a diverse and resilient conservation movement for the future. Through mentorship, leadership grants, and meaningful work opportunities, we empower youth, women, and others facing barriers to build a movement that represents Canada's full diversity and is equipped to meet the challenges ahead.

Narrative & Culture

We are working to change how Canadians see and value nature. Through campaigns that elevate the rights of nature, ensure equitable access, and build large-scale awareness like World Migratory Bird Day, we are fostering a culture where biodiversity is treated as essential, embedded in both society and governance.

Economic & Sectoral Transformation

We are driving change so Canada's economy works with nature, not against it. By addressing subsidies and practices that degrade ecosystems, emerging technology risks, and advancing nature-based climate solutions, we are aligning infrastructure and economic systems with biodiversity and climate goals, ensuring ecological health and economic resilience go hand in hand.



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