
The Nature Audit: Advancing Canada's Conservation Agenda

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Key Words: The Nature Audit, biodiversity, conservation, Canada

Abstract: Canada has made many national and international commitments to conserve nature, but is the country meeting them? To help answer that, in May 2003, World Wildlife Fund-Canada released a report called *The Nature Audit*, which measured the performance of Canadian governments, industry, and the public in implementing policies, programs and practices aimed at conserving the country's natural assets. This report used the analogy of a financial audit to portray the state of Canada's biodiversity, the pressures acting on it, and the adequacy of our actions to conserve and protect it, and is designed as a tool for everyone working for nature conservation.

The Nature Audit set a baseline from which to measure changes in the state of the country's natural habitats and wildlife populations. It examined the magnitude and geographic extent of various pressures exerted by human uses of the landscape, and produced an estimate of the cumulative pressure currently being placed on Canadian biodiversity. The results show that the type of 'conservation need' varies across different regions of the country, and a three-pronged approach—Protect-Conserve-Restore—is required to fully address the country's conservation commitments and related goals.

The report concluded with a broad overview of Canada's progress in fulfilling its commitments to biodiversity conservation and responding to the demonstrated conservation need. The report presents recommendations for high priority conservation actions, with a focus on specific steps required over the next two years to implement them.

The Nature Audit findings are guiding the World Wildlife Fund's future program development plans, including programming regarding species at risk recovery. Evidence to date suggests that a variety of government and nongovernment organizations are using *The Nature Audit* to inform various aspects of conservation policy and program development across the country.

The entire report is available electronically from the World Wildlife Fund's web site www.wwf.ca.