

As a general rule, Canadian animal populations are stable or increasing. However, nearly 30 plant and animal species are in danger of extinction, and some species have been seriously decimated in certain areas, largely because of the destruction of their habitats. A number of rescue attempts have been successful: peregrine falcons raised in captivity have been set free and the wood bison population, which was gravely diminished not so long ago, has increased noticeably thanks to conservation efforts. On the other hand, fish and birds in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River basins still show signs of toxic poisoning, in spite of some impressive progress made by limiting the disposal of such substances as mercury.

Besides toxic pollution, the major threats to animals are farm expansion, hunting and trapping, resource development and the climate. But the greatest threat is unquestionably the disappearance of habitats. This is why Canada and the provinces have set aside extensive areas for animal sanctuaries and introduced many programs to evaluate the situation more accurately and preserve endangered species. Canada also has the world's most severe penalties for poaching in its parks and reserves. The law allows up to a \$150 000 fine and six months in prison for offenders.