

The Canadian Wildlife Service and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources researched the value of an ecosystem-based approach for describing the habitats of a number of wildlife species in relation to forest management. Results demonstrated distinct patterns of distribution and abundance for more than 70 bird species in relation to 38 mature forest types. Proper management of these forest types can maintain ecosystem features for many other species as well as contribute to forest biodiversity.

Species at Risk

Canadian efforts to protect endangered wildlife involve governments as well as NGOs. The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) produces an annual list of species at risk. Under the RENEW program (Recovery of Nationally Endangered Wildlife), teams of experts develop and implement recovery plans for land-based endangered species. Recovery action is under way for 35 species.

A national wildlife policy was adopted in 1990 to provide a framework for government policies and programs that affect wildlife. Subsequent legislation at the federal level provides for the protection of wild animals and plants threatened by international or interprovincial trade. Also in keeping with the national wildlife policy, the Canada Wildlife Act was amended to broaden the definition of wildlife to include all wild organisms. In November 1994, the federal government initiated a process to develop an integrated approach to the protection of Canada's endangered species, including new federal legislation, meeting a commitment to work with all jurisdictions and stakeholders.

Challenges and Next Steps

Canada has made substantial progress towards its biodiversity goals. However, there are still gaps in both information and public understanding. Continued research is required in many areas to overcome these gaps. For example, we need to improve basic inventory data at a species and ecosystem level. Only approximately 50 percent of the species that are thought to exist in this country have been identified. Continued research is also required to improve our understanding of the dynamic character of the various ecosystems across Canada, especially of those being used most intensively. Expanding our ability to determine the full range of values of biodiversity will also continue to be important.

The Canadian Biodiversity Strategy is expected to be approved in 1995. Governments will then pursue the directions set out in the Strategy, within the context of their plans, priorities, and fiscal capabilities. Maintaining an intergovernmental partnership will be important. Efforts to improve public awareness of the importance of biological diversity will be vital to implementing the Strategy. Completing Canada's networks of protected areas will be an ongoing challenge, especially in parts of the country where there are many competing land uses.