

# WLD1010: *“What is Wildlife?”*

## Introduction

In this module you will define what wildlife means to Canada and what this definition means for both the people working with wildlife and the public in general. You will also be encouraged to define what wildlife means to you.

As you work towards understanding those definitions you will look at many different parts of our environment and how they impact the wildlife that make Alberta and Canada their home.

WLD1010 contains 3 sections:

### 1. **Wildlife Awareness**

In this section you will:

- define “wildlife”
- identify Alberta’s wildlife species

### 2. **Ecosystems**

In this section you will:

- identify the living (biotic) and non-living (abiotic) parts of a local ecosystem
- examine the relationships between factors in an organisms habitat e.g.. food, water and shelter
- examine the relationship between plants and animals
- examine how populations are affected by factors such as pollution, predation, habitat destruction and climate
- define “limiting factors” and “carrying capacities”
- discover how species change to suit their environment

### 3. **Wildlife Conservation and Preservation**

In this section you will:

- compare wildlife conservation and preservation
- explain how the well-being of organisms depend upon the quality of the natural environment

define and defend your own opinions regarding wildlife conservation, preservation and sustainable management of the environment.

# 1

# AWARENESS

## **Defining “Wildlife”**

The definition of wildlife depends upon who it is that you are asking? The general understanding of most people is that wildlife is a word used to describe animals that are not domesticated. This means all animals that are not pets or that are raised on farms or ranches.

While this partly true the wider definition of “wildlife” includes not only animals but also plants, fungi, algae, protists and bacteria. Put more simply wildlife is a collective name for all of the living things that surround us.

As you progress through this module you will learn that although some of these organisms seem pretty insignificant when you compare them with bears or eagles or mountain lions they are just as important. In fact some of these seemingly insignificant animals are a lot more important than some of the more high profile animals we listed above!

## **WILDLIFE AREAS IN CANADA**

### **Who is responsible for Our Environment?**

In a word: everyone. We are all responsible for maintaining our our environment so that future generations can enjoy Canada in the same way that we are able to today. Even the small things you do every day contribute to improving our environment. Actions such as Reducing, Reusing and Recycling when done by every individual add up to significant improvements.

In an official way a part of Environment Canada called the **Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS)** is responsible for the protection and management of migratory birds and nationally important wildlife habitats, endangered species, research on nationally important wildlife issues, control of international trade in endangered species, and international treaties.

The responsibilities of the service were established in 1973 when the Canada Wildlife Act was passed. This give the federal government authority to undertake wildlife research and, in cooperation with the provinces, to undertake wildlife conservation and interpretation activities. This act applies to all "non-domestic animals" in the nation.

CWS currently holds responsibility for over 140 Protected Wildlife Areas across the nation in a variety of environments. CWS scientific experts also advise the federal and provincial governments

during environmental impact assessments for various construction and development projects which might have an adverse impact on Canadian wildlife.

The CWS has many programs that help highlight areas where wildlife is being threatened as well as research into better ways to do things that will reduce our impact on the Earth.



### Canadas Protected Wildlife Areas

There are three types of protected wildlife areas in Canada:

National Wildlife Areas

Migratory Bird Sanctuaries

Marine Wildlife Areas

Combined, they cover an area twice the size of Nova Scotia.

Alberta has 4 National Wildlife Areas, and 4 Migratory Bird Sanctuaries. These areas are shown to the left.

### Why have Protected Wildlife Areas been created?

Each wildlife species needs a particular *habitat* to be successful. This is a location with a specific climate and the right type of food and shelter available. Animals that migrate, such as caribou, monarch butterflies, and many birds, need several habitats. They may breed in one habitat during summer, winter in another, and cross a number of other habitats as they undertake seasonal migrations.

To preserve abundant and diverse wildlife populations in Canada, we need to make sure suitable habitats exist. This is the purpose of Environment Canada's protected areas. The Canadian Wildlife Service identifies wildlife habitat of national ecological importance whose loss would have a direct impact on the Canadian population of one or more wild species, and it works closely with many groups to ensure that such areas are protected as National Wildlife Areas, Migratory Bird Sanctuaries, or Marine Wildlife Area.

### What Protections Do National Wildlife Areas Provide?

In an NWA it is against the law to hunt or fish, possess any part of an animal living or dead, disturb any plant, remove any soil or objects, pursue any recreational activities, carry a firearm or allow any domestic animal to be at large.

### What Protections Do Migratory Bird Sanctuaries Provide?

In an MBS, it is against the law to hunt migratory birds, to disturb, destroy or take the nest of a migratory bird, or to possess a live migratory bird or a carcass, skin, nest or egg of a migratory bird, except if allowed under the authority of a special permit (e.g., for banding birds during scientific studies). As well, in an MBS, visitors must have a MBS permit to carry a firearm and pets are not

## **THE WILDLIFE OF ALBERTA**

In the next section of this module you will look at the meaning of *habitat* but for now it is enough to know that over time wildlife species have evolved to take advantage different parts of the world. Alberta is no different and there are wildlife species that are found in Alberta that are found nowhere else in the world.

Over the next activities you will take a look at the natural regions found in Alberta and the wildlife you can find there.