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# *A Wildlife Policy for New Brunswick*



**September 1995**



# A WILDLIFE POLICY FOR NEW BRUNSWICK

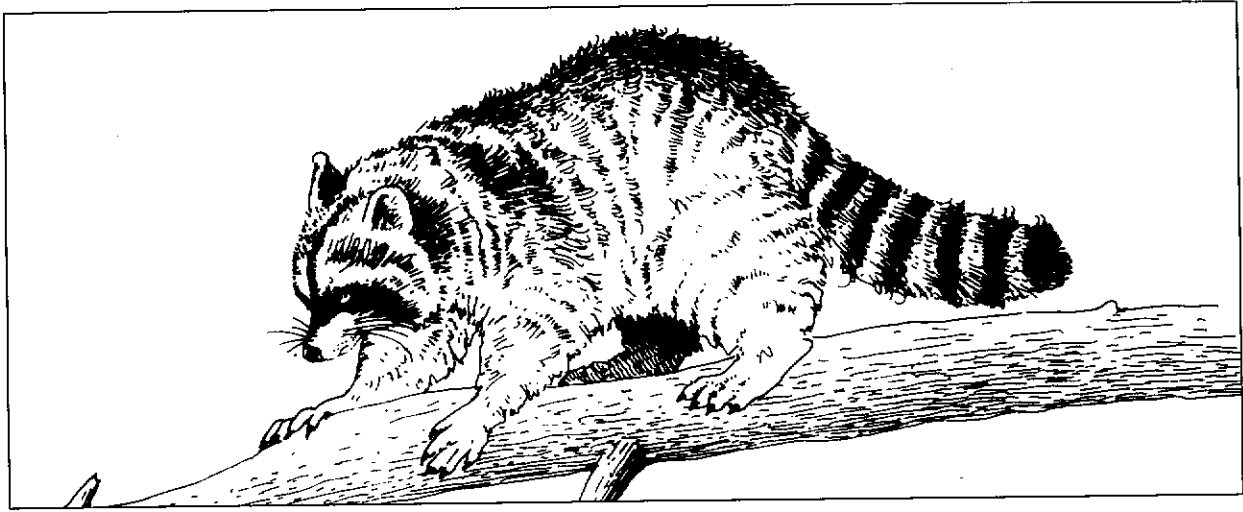
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION .....	1
POLICY FOUNDATION.....	2
GUIDING PRINCIPLES .....	2
VALUES AND USES OF WILDLIFE .....	3
WILDLIFE POPULATIONS .....	4
WILDLIFE HABITAT .....	5
POLICY IMPLEMENTATION .....	7
GLOSSARY .....	9



# INTRODUCTION



**W**ildlife is a living heritage blending history, tradition and natural beauty in a lifestyle that is distinctively New Brunswick's. Rolling green mountains, lakes, forested ponds and wild-running rivers are home to a rich variety of wildlife from moose and roving salmon, to the great whales that gorge on miniature life in coastal waters. Other wildlife, like the swirls of shorebirds flitting over mud-flats at low tide, are distant wanderers with migratory traditions of their own. All wildlife, whether travellers on a global journey, or residents of a wooded glen, bring an added measure of quality to life in New Brunswick.

The rural environment is still the foundation of human lifestyles in New Brunswick, and has profoundly shaped our relationship with nature. Although the faster pace of modern living encourages population growth in urban centres, most people have their roots in the countryside. Traditions of hunting and fishing have evolved from pioneering times and a historical dependence on wildlife as a natural food source in unsettled areas. Nowadays, wildlife is a prominent aspect of the pleasure and satisfaction derived from all forms of outdoor recreation, whether it is based on the pursuit of fish and game, or simply the enjoyment of wildlife encountered during an outing.

New Brunswickers spend many leisure-days enjoying wildlife-related activities. Wildlife is a highlight of recreational experiences like bird-watching, hiking, canoeing, camping, snowmobil-

ing and cross-country skiing. These activities are increasing public awareness of wildlife and stimulating a thriving industry based on outdoor recreation. Adventure tourism is a growing industry in Atlantic Canada and the thrill of encountering wildlife ranks high in attracting visitors to the Province. All these wildlife activities coupled with traditional uses like hunting, fishing and trapping, are contributing millions of dollars and thousands of jobs to New Brunswick's economy.

The scope of wildlife management required to support the benefits we enjoy from these resources and secure the future for wildlife has broadened. Concerns for wildlife habitat, ecosystem health and the maintenance of populations of all species have become completely entwined in the fabric of social-economic development in the Province. The Wildlife Policy will help integrate the overall needs of wildlife with development, by contributing useful directions for wildlife conservation to the policies and plans undertaken at all government levels.

The Wildlife Policy is a vision to care for wildlife resources and maintain outdoor traditions that make New Brunswick a good place to live and work. The Policy was written on behalf of the people of New Brunswick, and offers guidance on decisions affecting wildlife and its use. Broad endorsement of the Wildlife Policy by the citizens of the Province provides a mandate and the directions needed to build a bright future for wildlife.



## POLICY FOUNDATION

The Wildlife Policy for New Brunswick is consistent with policy directions for living resource conservation put forth by the **World Conservation Strategy**, and supported by policy statements developed under its general guidance, including **A Wildlife Policy for Canada**, and the **Convention on Biological Diversity**. These policies advocate a broad approach to conservation of natural resources by managing natural systems, and taking action where needed to maintain the basic structure of the ecosystem and the roles that each part of it plays in supporting wildlife. Ecosystem conservation and management for wildlife is based on the following:

- maintaining ecological processes - these processes maintain the capacity of ecosystems to sustain life;
- conserving biological diversity;
- ensuring the use of wildlife resources and ecosystems does not exceed their capacity for renewal, and jeopardize their value to future generations.

The Wildlife Policy uses a broad definition of wildlife. Wildlife means all wild life, as most living things have a role in the ecological processes that support traditional values and benefits derived from wildlife resources. Although the comprehensive definition increases the range of living things which may be considered as wildlife, wildlife will continue to be managed under the mandates of responsible government agencies. The full definition used in the policy expands awareness of how all parts of an ecosystem work together to support wildlife.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Wildlife is a common property resource in New Brunswick, and all citizens share a responsibility for its stewardship. Achieving the goals set out in this Policy depends on the adoption of a common philosophy and approach to conservation by governments, individuals and the private sector. The collective vision for wildlife should be guided by the following principles:

- The use of wildlife must not exceed its capacity for renewal.
- Wildlife depends on quality habitat in a healthy environment.
- Wildlife and supporting ecosystems must be managed to provide multiple benefits and maintain healthy wildlife populations.
- Wildlife management must be based on sound ecological principles and scientific information.
- Wildlife management will focus on native species in their natural environments.
- The managed use of wildlife is consistent with achieving conservation goals, and maintaining the wildlife heritage in New Brunswick.

# VALUES AND USES OF WILDLIFE

Wildlife offers many values and benefits to the people of New Brunswick. Some values are measured in jobs and revenues, others in traditions that add to the quality of life. Many benefits are difficult to quantify, like the value of a day spent fishing with family, birdwatching with friends, or the millions of kilograms of fish, bird, mammal and wild plant food gathered by the public each year. Other values reflect human ties to the natural world. Wildlife health, diversity and abundance are indicators of the health of the environment humans share with wildlife.

## Policy Goal for Wildlife Values and Uses

Native wildlife species and populations will be maintained and managed to:

- preserve their intrinsic and ecological values;
- provide the full range of sustainable cultural, social and economic uses in New Brunswick.

## Policy Directions and Actions

- developing public knowledge, interest and participation in wildlife conservation, promoting wildlife values and benefits, and the need to conserve the natural environment
- encouraging public leadership and initiative in wildlife
- providing public education and awareness of wildlife
- developing public appreciation for wildlife and modifying high expectations for traditional benefits
- cooperating with individual and corporate landowners, and government land managers to maintain wildlife values and access to benefit from wildlife opportunities

- providing for the aboriginal use of wildlife
- acknowledging the treaty rights of aboriginal people to harvest wildlife for food
- determining access to wildlife resources by aboriginal people
- promoting cooperative management of wildlife populations
- encouraging and promoting self-regulation of wildlife use by aboriginal people
- achieving a fair and equitable allocation of benefits derived from wildlife
- maintaining open and accessible government processes for consultation
- providing opportunities to benefit from wildlife that minimize user conflicts
- providing a range of opportunities and quality experiences to benefit from fish and wildlife in special ways or settings
- establishing an allocation and the regulation of commercial use and sale of wildlife
- monitoring all commercial uses of wildlife
- ensuring the commercial harvest of fish minimizes the impacts on non-target species and recreational opportunities
- establishing wildlife regulations and enforcement operations that protect wildlife, while imposing the least infringement on individual freedom and the ability to achieve maximum benefits from all wildlife resources
- maintaining a well-trained, well-equipped enforcement presence
- promoting self-regulating behaviour in the public
- ensuring that wildlife use is ethical and humane

# WILDLIFE POPULATIONS

New Brunswick's wildlife heritage is reflected in the abundance and diversity of naturally-occurring wildlife species and populations, distributed in a wide range of habitats across the Province. The Policy focuses on conserving native wildlife populations and the benefits they provide to all citizens.

Harvesting of wildlife must be managed to ensure it is maintained within the capacity of the species for renewal, and to allow wildlife populations to fully utilize the habitat available. There are conservation limits to wildlife harvests that must be observed by all people in order to ensure a future for wildlife and promote further opportunities for benefits.

## Wildlife Populations Policy Goal

To maintain viable populations of all native wildlife species by:

- maintaining a natural distribution of species throughout the Province.
- restoring populations of endangered species to self-sustaining levels in the wild; and,
- maintaining or restoring populations of key species to provide benefits to wildlife users;

## Policy Directions and Actions

- assessing New Brunswick's wildlife populations
- coordinating wildlife surveys to assess the overall status of wildlife
- initiating surveys of indicator species as required
- managing wildlife populations to achieve a balance with carrying capacity of the habitat and a variety of uses
- conserving wildlife species diversity and population abundance
- maintaining genetic diversity and unaltered genetic stock

- conducting research on factors limiting wildlife populations
- developing scientific information and biological criteria to determine conservation limits and guide the wildlife regulation-setting process
- determining optimal populations for heavily utilized species, and establishing management plans
- rehabilitating populations of endangered species
- maintaining a priority on endangered and threatened wildlife
- recognizing the national/international significance of endangered species, and undertaking cooperative recovery plans
- minimizing the risks to native wildlife from captive wildlife, game-farming and aquaculture
- determining the types of wildlife that may be held in captivity
- outlining areas where game-farming and aquaculture may be undertaken that minimizes risk to wild stock
- developing operating criteria and standards for game farms and aquaculture that minimizes escape of captive stock
- undertaking steps to minimize diseases spread from captive stock to wildlife.
- controlling and managing wildlife introductions, restoring depleted populations and realizing increased benefits through stocking
- the priority or emphasis will be on restoration of natural populations by other methods before stocking or introductions are considered
- assessing limiting factors operating on natural populations as a pre-requisite to stocking or introductions

## WILDLIFE POPULATIONS

- assessing the risks and benefits of stocking or introductions to resolve problems in "altered" ecosystems
- restoring extirpated or severely depleted natural populations, using genetically pure wild stock
- stocking fish of varying genetic stock in self-contained systems to provide enhanced recreational fishing opportunities
- minimizing conflicts between wildlife and humans
- identifying potential risks to human life and property and making reasonable efforts to advise the public and minimize damage (e.g. deer-vehicle collisions)
- encouraging landowners to make reasonable attempts to control and alleviate wildlife damage without destroying wildlife
- promoting an understanding of wildlife as a natural part of the ecosystem among landowners and the public

## WILDLIFE HABITAT

Loss or degradation of wildlife habitat is a major challenge facing wildlife managers today. Wildlife is a product of its ecosystem; dependent upon the ecological processes that provide food, cover, and the resources needed to successfully reproduce and rear offspring. The type, quantity and quality of wildlife habitat available has a fundamental bearing upon the abundance of any species, and its capability to produce benefits.

Land ownership in New Brunswick is a major consideration in wildlife habitat management. Crown land, industrial freehold and private property offer different opportunities for conserving habitat, and require diverse approaches. The direct purchase or setting aside of an adequate supply of habitat to fulfil the range of wildlife opportunities demanded by the citizens of New Brunswick, is neither practical nor financially feasible. Meeting wildlife habitat requirements depends upon leadership by all levels of government in responsible land management, and upon the cooperation of individual and corporate landowners, working in partnership with governments to meet habitat goals.

### Habitat Policy Goal

To ensure an amount, quality and distribution of wildlife habitat in New Brunswick sufficient to:

- maintain viable populations of all native species;
- restore and maintain populations of species threatened by habitat loss; and,
- support population objectives in wildlife management plans.

### Policy Directions and Actions

- identifying and maintaining habitats
- monitoring rates of habitat change and its capability to support wildlife
- identifying and managing sites of unique or critical importance
- implementing habitat management processes on a landscape basis, in accordance with the natural growth cycle to maintain
  - diversity
  - a range of habitats in different successional stages
  - habitat corridors or links between areas
- achieving habitat conservation through progressive land and water-use policies
- promoting stewardship of federal lands and water in New Brunswick



## WILDLIFE HABITAT

- promoting stewardship of provincial Crown land
- instilling the requirement that all sectors using Crown land must provide for habitat conservation
- developing multiple land-use strategies and integrated resource management on provincial Crown lands
- promoting stewardship of wildlife habitat on private land
- instilling a land ethic
- encouraging non-government wildlife interests to work with industrial and small private landowners
- encouraging stewardship agreements on industrial freehold property between corporate landowners, government agencies and wildlife groups
- encouraging the maintenance and enhancement of wildlife habitat by private land owners
- achieving habitat conservation through legislation
- using current legislation such as the provincial **Crown Lands and Forests Act**, **Clean Water Act**, and the federal **Fisheries Act** to maintain habitat
- developing habitat legislation as required
- minimizing environmental impacts on habitat and wildlife populations through assessment and mitigation measures
- developing an ethic that industries and individuals benefiting directly from natural resources, or having impacts upon them, have a special responsibility for their stewardship
- recovering the costs of special measures required to rehabilitate wildlife populations, or degraded habitats from those responsible for the impacts
- monitoring contaminants in wildlife, determining sources, potential impacts on human health, mitigation measures, clean-up and cost recovery



## POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

New Brunswickers share a responsibility and desire to conserve their wildlife legacy. The goals, directions and actions in the Policy must be shared on a provincial basis to accomplish this task. Undertaking the full range of activities outlined in the Policy is beyond the capability of governments acting alone. Full implementation requires coordination of efforts among all levels of government and approaches to conservation projects based on partnerships among individuals, corporations and the private sector.

The vision created in the Policy must be framed within the broad context of social-economic change, and become part of the foundation of economic development in New Brunswick. Policy directions should result in implementation measures that plug into the spectrum of multiple land and water use, resource integration, and the range of policies that will guide the entire process.

The Department of Natural Resources and Energy will continue its lead role in developing a sustainable future for wildlife through the Policy. The government will operate a core program to deliver roles for which it is directly responsible, based on constitutional, legislative and wildlife stewardship needs, and fulfil the basic requirements for providing wildlife benefit opportunities.

Other indirect actions may benefit wildlife by influencing or encouraging other private and public sector interests to accommodate wildlife needs in their actions on the landscape. It is this area of activity under the Policy that holds the greatest promise for meeting long-term goals for wildlife conservation. The Department will promote and coordinate multi-sector approaches to implement the Policy, and will serve as a focal point for integrating wildlife conservation in the social-economic development of New Brunswick.

As the scope of maintaining wildlife increases with New Brunswick's changing social, cultural and economic environment, new challenges and opportunities for wildlife conservation will emerge. Flexible and innovative implementation measures

are an ongoing requirement to meeting Wildlife Policy goals. As the traditional system of financing the full costs of wildlife program delivery from government general revenues cannot keep pace with expanding needs, strong partnerships in reaching habitat goals and fulfilling public demand for recreational opportunity must be forged and maintained. A key, catalytic role of partners is to stimulate private sector initiatives to finance wildlife conservation, and for the citizens of New Brunswick to actively participate in delivering programs to meet wildlife goals in the long-term.

### Wildlife Policy Implementation Goals

The wildlife policy implementation goals are:

- to organize and deliver the leadership roles and responsibilities of the Department of Natural Resources and Energy;
- to organize and facilitate roles, responsibilities and innovative initiatives for individuals, corporations, private sector interests and all levels of government to effect this policy.

### Policy Directions and Actions

- The Department of Natural Resources and Energy will determine the direct roles and responsibilities of government under the Policy and implement these through a Wildlife Strategy for the Department of Natural Resources and Energy.

Examples of direct roles include:

- managing resident populations of wildlife
- managing wildlife habitats
- allocating benefits of wildlife among users
- enforcing wildlife regulations
- The Department of Natural Resources and Energy will organize, coordinate and promote the overall implementation of the Wildlife Policy in partnership with other interests and sectors.



## POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Examples of indirect roles include:

- representing New Brunswick's interest in wildlife, nationally and internationally
- promoting stewardship of wildlife on industrial freehold lands and private property
- promoting private sector partnership initiatives to provide wildlife recreational opportunities and deliver programs
- developing new mechanisms with private sector interests to finance Wildlife Policy implementation
- establishing partnership agreements to implement Wildlife Policy goals
- promoting an understanding of the value of ecological processes, wildlife and sustainable use through public education

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Aquaculture:** the farming of fish and aquatic invertebrate species, usually for sale on commercial markets.

**Biodiversity:** the variety of life in all its forms, including not only the numbers and relative abundance of plant and animal species, but the diversity of their genetic composition as well.

**Commercial use:** netting and trapping of wildlife for sale or the provision of outfitting services to clients who participate in wildlife related activities.

**Conservation:** the wise use of wildlife and habitat, usually involving active management of species or ecosystems but including protection where appropriate.

**Ecological value:** most often refers to the value of the ecological role a wildlife species plays in an ecosystem. For example, the decomposition of dead plant material by bacteria is of value to an ecosystem because plant litter and nutrients are recycled for further growth. Ecological values may not have direct economic benefits that can be measured in monetary terms.

**Ecosystem:** a network of living plants and animals that includes humans, and non-living components such as air, water, soil and rocks, interacting with each other and other ecosystems. Ecosystems may be as small as a rotting log or as large as a global system.

**Endangered species:** a wildlife species facing a high risk of extinction in the wild in New Brunswick.

**Extirpated species:** a wildlife species that has disappeared from New Brunswick but is present elsewhere.

**Game farming:** the husbandry of wildlife for production of meat and other animal products, in an intensive operation on a fenced and closely managed area. Game ranching usually refers to a more extensive game-farming operation where hunting privileges are sold.

**Habitat:** means the components such as the plants, animals and sources of nutrients and energy that allow wildlife to live and successfully renew their populations.

**Integrated Resource Management:** the management of ecosystems to provide multiple benefits from different resources to people.

**Intrinsic value:** the value of something for its own sake.

**Limiting factors:** these limit the growth of a wildlife population in a specific habitat. Limiting factors include lack of food or suitable shelter, severe weather, excessive predation, or impediments to reproduction.

**Native species:** a species naturally occurring in the wild.

**Population:** a group of wildlife of the same species that typically interact with each other to meet life requirements.

**Sustainable use:** use of renewable resources in such a manner that their capacity for renewal is not impaired, and the value of the resource is maintained for future generations.

**Threatened species:** a species at risk of becoming endangered.

**Viable populations:** the minimum number of individuals comprising a wildlife population that are required to ensure population maintenance, growth potential and genetic diversity.

**Wildlife:** all wild life, including but not limited to animals, plants and the variety of organisms that support naturally-functioning ecosystems.