



Alberta Wilderness Association

## **COP15: A chance for Alberta to take responsibility in the biodiversity crisis**



Northern Leopard Frog. Photo © N. Pink

Dear Friend,

Next month, representatives and governments from around the world will gather in Montreal for the United Nations Conference on Biodiversity, including the fifteenth Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) is concerned about the increasing losses in biodiversity and would like to see Alberta take a leadership

Biodiversity, which is vital to healthy ecosystems and essential ecosystem services, is rapidly declining. Despite early support for the 2010 Aichi Biodiversity Targets, a previous attempt to address biodiversity loss, these targets ultimately failed to achieve the desired result. *With each year that protection and conservation is delayed, recovering biodiversity will only become more difficult.*

COP15 provides another chance for global leaders to begin resolving the crisis. At this year's conference, participants will discuss goals for the next decade to reverse the current trend of extinction. With the recent decline in many species worldwide, averting continued biodiversity loss is more important now than ever.

"Alberta and Canada need to take this opportunity to prevent further biodiversity loss," says Ruiping Luo, AWA Conservation Specialist.

Previously, Canada produced a set of national targets, including protection for 17% of terrestrial and 10% of marine areas to align with the international target. Alberta co-chaired the Pathway to Canada Target 1 process and promised 17% of lands in Alberta would be protected by 2020 (to date only 15% has been protected). This initiative needs to be repeated for the upcoming COP15, and any commitments made must be fulfilled.

Alberta needs to take further action towards protecting biodiversity. We would like to see Alberta commit to a target of 25% of land protected by 2025, particularly in grassland, parkland and foothills ecosystems where protection is currently lacking, and reduce conversion of and fragmentation of native prairie and forest habitat. Expanding protection of the Twin River Heritage Rangeland Natural Area, approved in the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan, would be one action towards increasing protection in the grasslands.

In addition, the province could protect biodiversity by completing effective regional and sub-regional land-use planning, with cumulative effects assessments and science-based limits on development. Conservation measures to protect species-at-risk should be expanded, and a measure for "protected and conserved areas" reintroduced back into the Government of Alberta Business Plan Standards. Urgent action is vital to finally halting and reversing biodiversity loss.

If you can, please contact Sonya Savage ([aep.minister@gov.ab.ca](mailto:aep.minister@gov.ab.ca); 780-427-2391), Minister of Environment and Protected Areas, and consider asking her to:

- Support Alberta committing to protecting 25% of land by 2025, particularly in the underrepresented grassland, parkland and foothills regions. Request expansion of the Twin River Heritage Rangeland Natural Area as approved in the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan.
- Expand protective measures for species-at-risk and oppose the conversion and fragmentation of native prairie and forest habitats.
- Complete regional and sub-regional land use planning with appropriate science-based limits on development, and reintroduce a measure for “protected and conserved areas” back into the Government of Alberta Business Plan Standards.

Please copy AWA ([rluo@abwild.ca](mailto:rluo@abwild.ca)) on your correspondence. Thank you!

**For more information:**

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