



Focus on Wildlife in

Québec

The Québec Government is responsible for the conservation of wildlife and wildlife habitats, in a manner consistent with sustainable development and supported by up-to-date knowledge. It also promotes wealth creation through the development of wildlife resources.

Its actions aim to preserve the balance of wildlife populations and maintain numbers at ecologically and socially acceptable levels. The Government also develops partnerships and joint programs with conservation organizations, user groups and public and private organizations that share its wildlife concerns. Last, it pays particular attention to the conservation and re-establishment of threatened or vulnerable species, and the protection and restoration of wildlife habitats.

All these actions reflect the Québec Government's international commitments arising from the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro. The Convention on Biological Diversity recognizes that conservation of biological diversity is a common concern of humankind and essential for development.

What is biodiversity?

The word *biodiversity* is used to describe the diversity or variety of the living world, made up of individuals, species and ecosystems. Thanks to biodiversity, human beings have access to the natural resources they need to meet their essential needs. For example, 40% of the world's economy is based on biological products and ecological processes. Biodiversity helps maintain a balanced, healthy living environment, with positive effects on human health. Many different species and ecosystems are necessary to purify air, decompose organic matter, regulate water flows and balance all of Nature's cycles.

In addition, biodiversity allows species and ecosystems to adapt and survive when change occurs in the environment. There are many different reasons for maintaining biodiversity, whether ecological, scientific, nutritional, economic or spiritual. The conservation of biodiversity is, today, a planetary issue, directly linked to the future of the human race.

It is now generally recognized that biodiversity must be maintained because of its importance for humans in terms of supply (water, food, wood, fibre), regulation (climate, erosion, flooding) and support (oxygen, soil, habitat), as well as for its sociocultural contributions (recreation, tourism, spirituality) and ontogenetic benefits (individual development, development of the immune system).





Thousands of species

Québec covers an area of 1,667,441 km². It has half a million lakes and thousands of rivers, which contain almost 3% of the world's freshwater reserves.

Wildlife in Québec is represented by around 648 species of vertebrates in all the major animal groups, including mammals, birds, fish, amphibians, snakes and turtles. In addition, several thousand species of invertebrates are found, with the largest group made up of around 30,000 species of insect.

Most species are found in southern and western Québec, where climatic conditions are most favourable. This is also where human pressure on wildlife habitat is strongest, mainly because of urbanization and agriculture.

Wildlife in Québec also has several distinguishing features. Québec has one of the planet's largest caribou herds, as well as the copper redhorse, a fish found in the rivière Richelieu and nowhere else. Wildlife and wildlife habitats must be strictly managed, using high-level expertise and close monitoring of wildlife populations.

Wildlife in figures

The wildlife sector makes an important contribution to Québec's economy, especially in outlying regions. Almost half the population, or over three million people, pursue some kind of outdoor activity:

- 410,000 hunters
- 815,000 fishers
- 10,000 trappers
- 1.75 million other wildlife enthusiasts (wildlife watchers, cottage dwellers, etc.).

Each year, these people spend over \$3 billion on their activities, supporting 32,000 jobs and a total of \$818 million in wages. Wildlife activities also attract a large number of tourists from inside and outside Québec to various regions, and they spend over \$380 million annually.

Natural resource development makes a significant contribution to Québec's economy, and forms the economic basis for several regions.



Wildlife protection

In 1867, the year of Canadian Confederation, Québec became the first province to hire wildlife protection officers, in the form of two gamekeepers. They were the founders of a group that now has 500 members. Wildlife protection officers have the task of maintaining the delicate balance between humans, animals and habitats. They are responsible for enforcing the Acts and Regulations that govern wildlife and wildlife habitats in Québec, providing protection, and raising public awareness about wildlife issues. Their motto provides a neat summary of their mission: protection, education and prevention.

