
NEWS RELEASE

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Biodiversity BC

NEW ATLAS SHOWCASES BRITISH COLUMBIA'S GLOBALLY SIGNIFICANT BIODIVERSITY

WHISTLER – Biodiversity BC today released *The Biodiversity Atlas of British Columbia*, a map-based overview of the province's natural environment and the most significant threats affecting it.

With sixty descriptive maps and accompanying text, *The Biodiversity Atlas of British Columbia* takes a broad look at the province's range of terrestrial and freshwater biological diversity and provides a window to B.C.'s diverse ecosystems, the species that live in them, and the elements of British Columbia's biodiversity that make it globally significant. The *Atlas* also presents a visual perspective of a number of human-induced threats, including climate change, affecting biodiversity in B.C. today.

The *Atlas* is a companion report to *Taking Nature's Pulse: The Status of Biodiversity in British Columbia* – a scientific report on the state of B.C.'s natural environment released in July 2008. *Taking Nature's Pulse* concluded that there were 23 major concerns facing biodiversity in B.C. The *Atlas* builds on these findings by identifying where the most important elements of biodiversity occur, as well as the most significant threats.

“The *Biodiversity Atlas of British Columbia* provides a portrait of our province's rich ecological diversity,” said Marian Adair, chair of Biodiversity BC. “Our biodiversity serves as a foundation not only for our economy, but for a wide range of recreational, cultural, and spiritual activities as well. The *Atlas* underscores the importance of our ecological resources and the need to conserve these values for future generations. Both publications provide us with the scientific knowledge to guide our actions and measure our progress towards environmental sustainability.”

A key conclusion from the *Atlas* and *Taking Nature's Pulse* is that compared to many other places in the world, biodiversity in British Columbia is in relatively good condition, but without immediate action, is vulnerable to rapid deterioration, especially in light of climate change.

“As the *Atlas* shows, we are blessed with a diversity and richness of life resulting from our unique geological history, landscape and climates,” said Dr. Richard Hebda, curator, Botany and Earth History, Royal British Columbia Museum. “The good news is that much of it is relatively intact, but parts of our natural legacy are under serious stress and that stress is increasing.

“Climate change poses one of the biggest threats and is already having impacts on the workings and components of our ecosystems. The mountain pine beetle outbreak is just one example. As stewards of this globally important biological legacy we have an obligation to ensure that it remains healthy and capable of adjusting to new climatic conditions,” Hebda said.

The Biodiversity Atlas of British Columbia was developed with advice from more than 50 science experts who validated the importance of this province's natural biological diversity. Biodiversity BC is a partnership of government and non-government organizations established in 2005 to develop a provincial biodiversity strategy.

Biodiversity BC announced the release of the *Atlas* at the BC Land Summit being held at Whistler. The announcement set the stage for the presentation given by Biodiversity BC called "Taking Nature's Pulse: Developing Tools to Conserve BC's Globally Significant Biodiversity".

Copies of the *Atlas* and other reports by Biodiversity BC will be available during the summit at the Ducks Unlimited exhibition booth.

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Backgrounder attached

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To view *The Biodiversity Atlas of British Columbia* and related reports produced by Biodiversity BC please go to www.biodiversitybc.org.