

REFLECTION

Why we need nature now – more than ever

As I write this, the entire country (and world) is justifiably preoccupied with coronavirus (COVID-19), a pandemic the likes of which has never been seen. While we grieve those lost, praise frontline workers and experience the challenges that come with isolation and economic uncertainty, it has also provided a rare opportunity to reflect on what matters most to us, our loved ones, of course, but also the soothing comfort that can be found in our relationship with nature.

In these times, I'm drawn to the beauty and vitality of nature and I know that many of you are also finding comfort and strength from the natural world. Nature captivates us, enriches our lives and sustains us. Throughout the pandemic, nature has served as our sanctuary, an escape from the anxiety-inducing news-cycle that plays on a loop in our homes. And we, as Canadians, have embraced it. In the weeks when our parks and trails were closed to the public, it became that much harder to cope proving that as much as nature needs us, we need nature, now more than ever.

Since our planet is tipped on its axis in relation to the sun, seasons have come and gone. Nature continues to follow its natural cycles as plants sprout and wildlife rear their young. While these natural forces may be greater than you and I, they still need our attention because increasingly our single species is altering life on Earth as we know it.

Unsustainable human activities are jeopardizing the future of fish, bears, whales, bees, caribou and other wildlife. We are

seeing heartbreaking losses of plants and animals that scientists are calling a sixth mass extinction. And wildlife loss isn't only happening in far off places. It's happening right here in Canada. Our country is one of abundant nature. Yet the species found in our oceans, rivers, forests, icy Arctic expanses, and even our backyards, are under unimageable pressure from habitat loss and pollution. At the same time, climate change is accelerating this devastating loss of nature.

The challenges facing nature can feel much larger than any one of us, especially now. What keeps me going and gives me hope is Canadians' ability to come together when it counts and meet challenges, no matter how daunting, head on. Whether by marching in the streets to demand climate action or doing our part in the fight against COVID-19, Canadians have shown that we can come together to make lasting change.

And now is the time for change. We can't make a difference if we don't do anything different. We must seize the moment and tap into the restorative power of nature to build a future where people and wildlife thrive.

From Vancouver Island to Newfoundland and Labrador to the Arctic tundra, WWF-Canada has already begun identifying places with the most at-risk species and most potential to store carbon. With this knowledge, we can protect our forests, wetlands and grasslands for wildlife and fight future climate change at the same time.

WWF-Canada has a half century of experience fighting to strengthen and protect



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Canadian nature. Because of this support, sea otters swim free off Haida Gwaii in British Columbia, grizzlies and wolves roam huge swathes of wilderness in the Rockies, burrowing owls have returned to our native grasslands, tiger populations are on the rise, and narwhals glide through protected areas of our Arctic. With you by our side, we will continue to fight to reverse biodiversity loss and slow the rate of climate change. From safeguarding species in the Arctic and protecting important forage fish species like capelin, to advocating for renewable energy solutions, WWF-Canada is hard at work to protect the future of all life on our planet.

Our work is made possible through the generous contributions of individual donors, corporate partners, foundations and organizations. Every donation makes a difference and we are truly grateful for the trust and support we receive.

When this era is written about in history books – and it will be – ours can be a legacy of restoration. There are many ways to safeguard the future for wildlife and wild places. One way that people can extend their love and support for nature into the future is to include a gift in their Will for wildlife. By embracing this transformative moment, we can safeguard the future of wildlife and leave a more beautiful, healthier world to the next generation. By supporting WWF-Canada, you are helping build a future in which people and nature thrive.

Megan Leslie is the president and CEO of World Wildlife Fund Canada.