



Alberta Conservation  
Association

# Annual Report 2022/23





## 2022/23 Snapshot

- This fiscal marked ACA's 25th Anniversary, which was incorporated throughout all media and marketing campaigns to recognize the milestone.
- We continued to support staff in a hybrid working environment.
- We upgraded to cloud-based accounting software Dynamics 365 October 1, 2023, including Power BI reporting structure.
- ACA had over 55,220 followers on Facebook, 7,045 on Twitter, 2,716 on LinkedIn, 6,919 on Instagram, 845 YouTube subscribers, and 120,400 subscribers to our e-newsletter. Social media continues to play a significant role in our communications with stakeholders.
- Kids Can Catch events across Alberta welcomed nearly 4,400 adults and children and 93 organizations, partners, and sponsors. In all, 23 public events were held this year—the highest number of events to date.
- We captured 177 wild turkeys from southeastern BC and translocated them to southwestern Alberta. The birds were distributed in their capture groups of 20–30 birds.
- Higher counts of pheasant and partridge in 2022 suggest we have turned the corner from the lower numbers seen in 2018 through 2020. Numbers were up near the long-term averages.
- In all, 120,504 twenty-cm long trout (109,794 rainbow, 6,640 brook, 2,300 brown, and 1,770 tiger trout) were stocked into 65 ponds.
- In all, 45 partners and collaborations were involved in Fisheries Program activities.
- In all, 58 rivers/creeks and 40 lakes/ponds were surveyed, generating information on fish population status, distribution, fishing effort, spawning and rearing habitat, and water quality.
- We added four new conservation sites and expanded one existing conservation site, totalling 1,286.2 ac (520.5 ha) with a land value of approximately \$3,096,075.
- We are currently managing 37 Landowner Habitat Program Agreements, conserving 6,710 ac (2,715.5 ha) of wildlife and fish habitat.

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# Annual Report 2022/23



### Our Vision

An Alberta with an abundance and diversity of wildlife, fish and their habitats; where future generations continue to use, enjoy, and value our rich outdoor heritage.

### Our Mission

ACA conserves, protects, and enhances fish and wildlife populations and their habitats for Albertans to enjoy, value, and use.

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Cover (Project): Taber Pheasant Festival  
Description: ACA staff with novice shoot participant  
Photo: ACA



## Board of Directors 2022/23

### Executive

Bill Abercrombie, Chairman – Alberta Trappers Association  
 Robert Gruszecki – Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association  
 Sandra Mellon, Treasurer – Public At Large Business Representative  
 Chuck Priestley, Secretary – Public At Large, Northeast Region

### Directors

Vince Aiello – Public At Large, Central Region  
 Ken Bailey – Pheasants Forever  
 Robin Barnes – Public At Large, Northwest Region  
 Tom Bateman – Director Emeritus  
 Tony Blake – Nature Alberta  
 Rick Blakeley – Alberta Fish & Game Association  
 Dr. Mark Boyce – ACA/University of Alberta Chair in Fisheries and Wildlife  
 Gordon Burton (Interim Representative) – Alberta Professional Outfitters Society  
 Fred Calverley – Trout Unlimited Canada  
 Randy Collins – Northern Board Liaison  
 Sue Cotterill – Minister's Representative  
 Neil Keown – Backcountry Hunters & Anglers – Alberta Chapter  
 Patrick Long – Director Emeritus  
 Richard Mellon – Wild Sheep Foundation Alberta  
 Richard Stamp – Public At Large, Southern Region  
 Brent Watson – Alberta Bowhunters Association  
 Vacant – Treaty 8  
 Dr. Todd Zimmerling – ACA Administration, President and CEO

## Member Groups



# About ACA

Alberta Conservation Association’s (ACA) Communications, Wildlife, Fisheries, and Land Management program staff work on projects around the province to ensure that wildlife, fish, and their habitats flourish. ACA is a non-profit organization dedicated to conserving, protecting, and enhancing these elements for Albertans to enjoy, value, and use now and for generations to come.

# Delegated Roles and Responsibilities

In addition to being a non-profit organization, and a registered charity, ACA holds special status as a Delegated Administrative Organization (DAO), which means that we deliver responsibilities as outlined in the *Wildlife Act* and defined in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (EPA). In our role as a DAO, results from our population studies, surveys and assessments feed directly into EPA management plans and can form the basis for fishing and hunting regulation changes and evaluations of new management strategies.

## Abbreviations Index

Acronym/Abbreviation	Definition
AAFC	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
ABMI	Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute
ABWCI	Alberta Watercourse Crossing Initiative
ac	acre
ACA	Alberta Conservation Association
AFGA	Alberta Fish & Game Association
AHEIA	Alberta Hunter Education Instructors’ Association
AOP	Annual Operating Plan
ATA	Alberta Trappers Association
AVAMP	Alberta Volunteer Amphibian Monitoring Program
CCEG	ACA Conservation, Community, and Education Grants
cm	centimetre
CPIC	Corporate Partners in Conservation
CPUE	Catch per unit effort
CSM	Conservation Site Management
DAO	Delegated Administrative Organization
DFO	Fisheries and Oceans Canada
DO	dissolved oxygen
DUC	Ducks Unlimited Canada
ECCC	Environment and Climate Change Canada
EPA	Alberta Environment and Protected Areas
GiB	Grants in Biodiversity
GOA	Government of Alberta
h	hour
ha	hectare
HCS	Habitat Conservation Strategy
HLP	Habitat Legacy Partnership
HMP	Habitat Management Plan
HSF	Habitat Securement Fund
IT	Information Technology
km	kilometre
LHP	Landowner Habitat Program
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRRRWQSI	Milk River Ridge Reservoir Water Quality Stewardship Initiative
PLUZ	Public Land Use Zone
RAP	Report A Poacher
RG	ACA Research Grants
SAR	Species at Risk
SHARP	Species Habitat Assessments and Ranching Partnership
SMRID	St. Mary River Irrigation District
UOM	upper Oldman
WCDPP	Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention Program
WIN	Wildlife Identification Number
WMU	Wildlife Management Units
WSCT	westslope cutthroat trout



Project: Enchant Project – Strong Farmlands. Thriving Habitat.  
Description: Mule Deer  
Photo: ACA



# Message from the Chairman

Greetings,

In this our 25th anniversary year at the ACA I'm not only excited by what the future holds for our organization but proud to mark the years and look back on what has been a remarkable legacy.

It was a novel concept back in the day to divert licence levy funds from government coffers and reinvest in a new conservation model. But the idea took hold quickly thanks to some very wise and dedicated stakeholders and public servants, and the ACA was born. The procurement of private lands to secure habitat and hunting/recreational opportunities was something hunters and fishermen had been doing for decades. However, a conservation organization that not only purchases and manages private lands for conservation and public access to hunting, fishing, and recreation; funds academic research and community conservation projects; undertakes wildlife, fishery, and habitat research projects on their own behalf as well operating a massive public, landowner, and stakeholder education and partnership program was unprecedented. I think this success story that has consistently grown stronger with a continued increase in scope and capacity can be attributed to several factors.

First, the continued confidence and support of government that the ACA will deliver a high-quality conservation program on their behalf that continues to meet the needs of a changing society and landscape. Second, the continued high-level and broad-based engagement with member groups and the greater conservation community in Alberta. This has been a critical asset when it comes to project partnerships, leveraging additional support and the creation of new conservation opportunities. The third factor has been ACA's ability to develop long-standing relationships with private landowners across the province. Many of these started as conservation habitat enhancement programs such as the MULTISAR conservation initiative but created the goodwill and support for projects such as the very successful Taber Pheasant Festival, and I think increased opportunity to acquire conservation lands for management and public access. The fourth and most important factor is the organization itself. The staff, management and board are passionate, dedicated, very capable and forward-thinking. Their leadership has created a supportive and productive work environment that keeps the organization operating at a high level.

What has become very apparent to me is that ACA is now widely regarded as a "go to, can do" conservation organization. As one looks through this year's annual report it doesn't take long to see the reason why.

We will be facing tremendous conservation challenges in the future but with them will also come opportunity. I am confident that ACA will meet those challenges and continue to create new and exciting opportunities for Albertans in the future.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bill Abercrombie'.

Bill Abercrombie, ACA Board Chair





Project: Waterfowl Warmup  
Description: Todd Zimmerling welcoming event participants  
Photo: ACA, Charmaine Brunes



# President and CEO's Message

Fiscal 2022/23 was a year for celebration for ACA, not only were we finally able to put COVID in our rear-view mirror and start looking towards getting back to normal, but we also celebrated our 25th anniversary! Overall, it was a great year of not just reflecting back and examining where we had come from, but also looking forward to where we want to go. Based on the partnerships and relationships we have build over the first 25 years, it is exciting to think about what can be accomplished for conservation in the next 25 years.

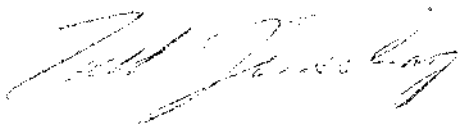
There is no doubt that there are still conservation issues to be dealt with, and I am sure problems that we have not even thought of yet that will arise in the future. However, I am extremely confident, that our hard working and dedicated staff, along with the hundreds of partner organizations, sponsors, volunteers, municipalities, and landowners that we work with will overcome whatever the future throws at us.

This year, we were able to return to a much more normal field season than we have seen in the last few years. And as is the norm at ACA, our staff operated in an efficient and effective manner to accomplish a great deal of conservation activities across the province. As I do every year, I encourage you to take a few moments to look through this report to get a sense of the great conservation work that you, our stakeholders, are supporting. If you take a look at the Information, Education and Communications Program section you will see that 4,400 people participated in Kids Can Catch Events around the province. You can also read about our wildlife folks, who translocated almost 200 wild turkeys into new habitat in Alberta. In the fisheries section you can learn about the myriad of native trout projects that we are involved in along the East Slopes of the Rockies. For those that are interested in habitat, you will be interested in hearing that we added four more conservation sites and expanded one more. You will be able to find these sites online or on our *Alberta Discover Guide* app.

As I said at the start, overall, this has been another great year at ACA. I hope that this report gives you a sense of everything that is being accomplished with your support. If there is information that is missing or if you have a question, please do not hesitate to contact me directly. We understand that we are undertaking our work for the resource, on behalf of you the stakeholder—our supporters. As such, it is our commitment to ensure you are informed about what we are spending are time doing and providing timely answers to all questions.

I hope you have a chance in the near future to get out and enjoy and be thankful for the great natural spaces we have in this province.

Sincerely,



Todd Zimmerling

President and CEO

Alberta Conservation Association

Project: Piping Plover Recovery Project  
Description: ACA employees removing vegetation on created plover breeding habitat  
Photo: ACA, Stefanie Fenson



# Our People. Our Culture.

## Health and Safety

Health and safety for all persons involved with ACA work is a key element in our workplaces, whether at the office or out in the field. ACA's Health and Safety Program was established, and is continually maintained and improved, to provide the necessary tools for our staff and others to work in a manner that meets and exceeds Occupational Health & Safety standards. The end goal is always that everyone working on ACA projects goes home healthy and safe!

All workers (employees, contractors, volunteers, visitors, etc.) are required to comply with ACA's Health and Safety Program to protect themselves and others, which creates a safer and healthier work environment for everyone involved.

## 2022/23 Overview

- In 2022/2023, there were 57 incidents with a rate of 36.47 incidents per 100,000 payroll hours.
- Most incidents consisted of near misses (25), vehicle damage (11), theft/vandalism (8), and minor injury (8) none of which required anything more than cleaning and bandaging.
- The results of the 2022/2023 Employee Survey were positive in that 89% of ACA staff are supportive of the Health and Safety Program, including documentation and practices. The committee continues to engage with staff to improve workplace health and safety.

## Human Resources

ACA completes many conservation projects over considerable territory each year, thanks in large part to our 74 permanent staff and numerous seasonal staff. ACA is dedicated to demonstrating our ongoing efforts to create a positive

work environment by fostering professional growth, and to support the well being of our employees by keeping them engaged and challenged.

Numerous employees reached work anniversary milestones this year. We extend our congratulations and thanks to the following individuals who achieved significant Years of Service milestones:

### 25 Years of Service

Trevor Council, Darren Dorge, Troy Furukawa, Kevin Gardiner, Paul Hvenegaard, Dave Jackson, Ed Kolodychuk, Lori Rhode, Diana Rung

### 20 Years of Service

Brad Downey, Tyler Johns, Mike Jokinen, Sue Peters

### 15 Years of Service

Deb Dueck, Chad Judd, Ken Kranrod, Leila Lassey, Natalia McPhee, Todd Zimmerling

## 2022/23 Overview

### Employee Survey

- 87% of employees agree they are satisfied with ACA as a place to work. This is a 4% decrease from the previous year. ACA will continue to work with staff and address any issues that may come up.
- 97.4% of employees are satisfied with having a good work-life balance. This is an increase of 1.4% over last year. This is very important to our organization as ACA has a culture that values work-life balance.
- 84.2% are satisfied with ACA's benefit plan. This is a 2.2% decrease from the previous year.
- 74% are satisfied with the whole compensation package available to them. This figure decreased by 6% from the previous year. ACA continues to review the whole compensation package to ensure competitiveness.
- ACA will continue to invest in its employees to ensure a supportive and engaging work culture.

### Health and Wellness

ACA continues to put a strong emphasis on employee mental health and wellness this year by introducing a hybrid work model for increased flexibility and to help support employee's overall well-being.

### Employee Retention

Staff turnover was at 11.4%, compared to 12.7% the previous year. Staff retention will still be in the forefront for the coming year.

### Recruitment

We continue striving to hire people who are qualified and are also the best fit for the organization. Finding that person who fits with ACA culture is part of the recruitment process.

We filled four permanent positions and continue to look at efficiencies in determining where new hires are needed.

### Professional Development

Giving employees the tools they need to succeed continues to be a priority for ACA. We recognize that ongoing leadership, team building, and interpersonal training and support is vital to individual growth and success.

## Information Technology

The management and ease of access to systems and databases continues to be a focus for Information Technology (IT). IT is committed to discovering and implementing solutions that increase operational efficiencies and provide strong systems to support the work of our teams.

With changes in the workforce and in digital technology, it is essential for staff to access files from within the office or out in the field, and to work on projects in conjunction with other researchers almost anywhere in the province. The IT team is committed to supporting this collaboration. We consult with staff, talk with partners, and meet with experts in the field to develop systems that ensure staff can focus on their work using efficient processes.

Work continued this year on our long-term plan for technology. Remote work and mobile accessibility were a top priority this year, especially with the need for staff to work remotely during COVID-19 restrictions. We continued to improve online tools, budgeting systems, resource management, and cloud technology. The IT team discussed our priorities with management to ensure alignment with all other resource and functional areas. This collaboration allows the team to better anticipate and meet needs as they arise.

Upgrading to a cloud-based accounting software was a priority this year, along with continuing to enhance tools for remote work environments. Our technology partner continues to work collaboratively with us by providing 24/7 helpdesk support to our staff. The team continues to look for ways to find cost savings, increase efficiency, and improve service to our staff and external partners.

## 2022/23 Overview

- We continued to support staff in a hybrid working environment during the year.
- We continued improving staff remote collaboration by leveraging existing software.
- We accessed expertise by using targeted consultants to increase the timing and effectiveness of IT solutions. IT staff are actively involved in planning and delivering the systems they oversee and maintain, which creates an environment of accountability and strong customer support.
- We continued updating and improving systems to provide better and more consistent online access for staff. Our goal is to streamline system entry to make an efficient and user-friendly environment for staff, whether they are entering data or retrieving information for monitoring the progress of their projects.
- We upgraded to cloud-based accounting software Dynamics 365, which went live October 1, 2023, including shifting to Power BI for all project reporting needs.
- We transitioned to a cell phone only work environment for all staff, removing desktop phones; this included retaining four main lines for stakeholder communication coming into ACA.





Project: Taber Pheasant Festival  
Description: ACA staff mentoring a novice hunter at Taber Pheasant Festival  
Photo: ACA, Colin Eyo

# Business Development

ACA partners with many corporations (big and small), municipalities and community organizations that sponsor, donate, and otherwise support our conservation work and values. These partnerships are integral to helping us achieve the annual goals of our programs including Fisheries; Wildlife; Land Management; and Information, Education, and Communications. Over the past few years, we have also seen a dramatic increase in support for our growing number of Kids Can Catch events that continue to engage and educate people about fisheries and fish conservation in communities across Alberta.

Many of our partnerships are formally recognized in our Corporate Partners in Conservation (CPIC) program, which provides unique opportunities for businesses, municipalities, and organizations to be directly plugged into ACA's conservation work. Our CPIC participants benefit from ACA's promotion of these partnerships and can promote their affiliation with us through their own communications.

Business Development also generates additional revenue through advertising sales to support our communications activities online, and our in-house publications: *Conservation Magazine* and *Alberta Discover Guide*.



Project: Kids Can Catch

Description: Volunteer mentoring youth at Kids Can Catch event

Photo: ACA, Charmaine Brunet

## 2022/23 Overview

- We are pleased to recognize 20 companies, municipalities and organizations that are either a new CPIC or have renewed/increased their ongoing support for ACA programs and projects:
  - Aquality Environmental Consulting
  - Canadian Tire in Cochrane, AB
  - Cenovus Energy
  - City of Edmonton
  - City of Red Deer
  - CCI Inc.
  - County of Barrhead
  - FenceFast Ltd.
  - The Fishin' Hole
  - Holiday Inn & Suites Calgary South Conference Centre
  - Hudson Carbon
  - Thompson-Pallister Bait Company
  - Municipal District of Bonnyville
  - Municipal District of Taber



Project: Kids Can Catch  
Description: Young participant thrilled with first ever catch  
Photo: ACA, Charmaine Brunes





# Our Conservation Programs

## Information, Education, and Communications Program

The Communications Resource Program team does so much more than just inform and educate stakeholders of ACA's Fisheries, Wildlife, and Land Management projects. We also engage with the public and encourage them to enjoy the outdoors through various multimedia platforms and events. We recognize and value Albertans' diverse lifestyles, corporate sectors, and communities, and meet them where they are at. Whether they are an outdoor enthusiast, angler, or hunter, we support and encourage all Albertans to enjoy, use, share, and conserve our wonderful outdoors.

The Communications team is proud to coordinate and promote events such as Kids Can Catch and Waterfowl Warmup to ensure participants not only have a good time but also gain an educated angling or hunting experience leaving them wanting more. We recognize that novice anglers and hunters are the future of conservation in Alberta. Regardless of the stage of their journey, we provide information every step of the way in our social media platforms, digital newsletter, *Alberta Discover Guide*, *Conservation Magazine*, and ACA and Harvest Your Own websites. We share opportunities and other ways for Albertans to create memories and experiences of their own.

Unique to 2022/23, ACA celebrated its 25th Anniversary. This significant milestone marked several achievements ACA has accomplished over the years, all of which were captured in the 25th Anniversary book and highlighted throughout the year in our social media.

### 2022/23 Overview

- This fiscal marked ACA's 25th Anniversary, which was incorporated throughout all media and marketing campaigns to recognize the milestone.
- In partnership with Hunting for Tomorrow and Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association (AHEIA), the Wildlife Identification Number (WIN) Card Reimbursement Program supports the recruitment of young hunters. In 2022/23, over 1,730 information packages were sent to youths who had completed the hunter education course.
- ACA had over 55,220 followers on Facebook, 7,045 on Twitter, 2,716 on LinkedIn, 6,919 on Instagram, 845 YouTube subscribers, and 120,400 subscribers to our e-newsletter. Social media continues to play a significant role in our communications with stakeholders.
- We printed and mailed out 35,000 copies of the *Alberta Discover Guide*—a free annual publication that provides a list of conservation sites accessible for hunting, fishing, and hiking—to subscribers and to distribute to hunting and fishing licence retailers across Alberta. The guide is also available online and as an app. There were 133,569 page views of [www.albertadiscoverguide.com](http://www.albertadiscoverguide.com) between April 1, 2022, and March 31, 2023.
- Harvest Your Own increased its social media audience to 3,623 Facebook followers and 1,451 Instagram followers. In this timeframe, we have also seen growth in the Harvest Your Own podcast hosted by Brad Fenson, which currently has all-time downloads of 14,631.
- Over 13,000 subscribers received *Conservation Magazine* thanks to the combined efforts of writers, editors, biologists, and designers. This free publication is produced biannually and highlights ACA projects and topics about conservation.
- We supported the Wildlife, Fisheries, and Land Management Resource Programs, and Business Development with visual communications, on-demand design, and media services such as regional advertising, site signage, and social media.
- Kids Can Catch events across Alberta welcomed nearly 4,400 adults and children and 93 organizations, partners, and sponsors. In all, 23 public events were held this year—the highest number of events to date.
- As part of the Wildlife Camera project, the livestream peregrine cameras and images from three ferruginous hawk trail cameras were posted on our website, accounting for 20% of the annual web traffic.
- ACA's final installation at the Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum displayed Alberta trappers and their contributions to conservation. The museum attracts more than 100,000 visitors a year.



Project: Wildlife Cameras  
Description: Ferruginous Hawk pair with clutch of eggs  
Photo: ACA Wildlife Camera

## Advertising and Marketing

Advertising is key to achieving a number of long-term goals within the Strategic Business Plan, primarily to increase public recognition of ACA's brand; to increase conservation awareness by creating positive profiles of hunting, fishing, and trapping; and to develop corporate partnerships. Project or event promotional advertising engages various audience targets and supports ACA's public brand recognition. 2022-2023 was the 25th Anniversary of ACA and this was incorporated into all media including outdoor billboards. Our "It's an Alberta Thing" campaign is an ongoing approach for strengthening relationships with existing hunting and angling stakeholders and establishing new ones adhering to our retention and recruitment and reactivation marketing strategy. This is significant for keeping conservation valued within today's changing priorities and diverse populations.

Advertising supports several ACA programs, projects, and events that include our 25th anniversary, Report A Poacher, ACA's Fish Stocking project, Taber Pheasant Festival, ACA's Wildlife Cameras project, ABHuntLog, aeration thin ice warnings, the Corporate Partners in Conservation Program, grazing tenders, and the Kids Can Catch project.

## Alberta Discover Guide

The *Alberta Discover Guide* is a free, annual publication that provides outdoor enthusiasts with a list of conservation sites that can be accessed primarily for hunting, fishing, and hiking. The sites are private land owned by ACA or its conservation partners, or public land that is managed by ACA on behalf of the Crown. All sites are available for public use and have been made available through conservation efforts by ACA and its partners.

The publication is a major project for ACA's Information, Education, and Communications Program. Advertising is coordinated and produced for free for ACA member groups. Editorial content is developed and written in house. The Communications team coordinates print production and updates and maintains the subscription database. For 2022/23, we printed 35,000 copies of the guide to mail out to subscribers and to distribute to hunting and fishing licence retailers across Alberta. The guide is also available online and as an app. There were 133,569 page views of [www.albertadiscoverguide.com](http://www.albertadiscoverguide.com) between April 1, 2022, and March 31, 2023.

## Partnerships

Advertisers, Alberta Fish & Game Association (AFGA) and affiliated clubs, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC)

## Alberta Discover Guide app

The *Alberta Discover Guide* app was created so users of the Alberta Discover Guide have a convenient way of accessing information about conservation sites on their mobile device in pursuit of hunting or angling opportunities. The app also provides ACA with a platform for advertising content from ACA's stakeholders and other organizations and businesses focused on fishing, hunting, and conservation. In 2022/2023, around 4,367 active Android users and 3,150 iOS users downloaded the app.

## Annual Operating Plan

Our *Annual Operating Plan* (AOP) informs Albertans, our stakeholders, and partners about the projects we undertake within the current fiscal year, as well as how revenue is directed to our resource programs. Our board members approved the AOP 2022/23 prior to being posted on our website at the beginning of the fiscal year.

## Annual Report

Our *Annual Report* informs our stakeholders how ACA has used funding, details on the conservation outcomes achieved, and how ACA has performed relative to its stated goals. Our Board of Directors received and reviewed the 2021/22 Annual Report for approval. The Annual Report 2021/22 was posted on our website by September 2022.

## Conservation Magazine

Our *Conservation Magazine* is a free, biannual publication that highlights the projects and success we and our member groups experience in the province. ACA's Communications team produces the magazine. It covers topical conservation issues and helps bridge understanding between the hunting and angling communities and the larger conservation community. The magazine also helps increase our profile across Alberta and is used as a tool by some of the following program areas to reach out to potential donors and partners: Fisheries, Wildlife, Land Management, and Business Development. We mail the magazine to our subscribers and distribute it at trade shows and events. It is also available online: [www.ab-conservation.com/publications/conservation-magazine/](http://www.ab-conservation.com/publications/conservation-magazine/)

In 2022/23, we printed a combined 30,000 copies, including articles about the important balance between conservation and agriculture, the science behind fish stocking, and partnerships in conservation with the oil and gas sector. The total number of subscribers now exceeds 13,000.

## Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association, Alberta Native Trout Collaborative, AltaLink, Aquality Environmental Consulting, CCI Inc., Cool As A Moose/Big Bear Trading Company, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Nature Alberta, Nature Conservancy Canada, Shell Canada Limited, Suncor Energy, Syncrude Canada Ltd., Mercer Peace River Pulp Ltd., West Fraser

## Emerging Issues

The Information, Education, and Communications Program must be able to respond to communications needs that arise as ACA projects, partnerships, opportunities, or crises develop. This team provide services in design, copywriting, photography, editing, print production, and digital media to ACA's Executive, Business Development and Human Resources teams, as well as our member groups. On-demand requests for communications support include, but are not limited to, media releases, aeration updates (social and digital media), pheasant release site updates (social and digital media), drone footage documentation, and member group website support.

## ACA Project Reports

ACA's Fisheries, Wildlife, and Land Management Resource Programs are responsible for generating final project reports for completed projects each year to describe the findings of the work. Interim project reports that capture technical aspects of a significant segment of an ongoing project are also generated for some ACA projects.

The Information, Education, and Communications Program is responsible for coordinating the editing, proofing, formatting, and finalization of these reports; and making sure they are available to the public, and ACA's stakeholders and partners through our website. Three Fisheries reports were completed for 2022/23.

## Grants Reports

The aim of the Grants Reports project is to document the grants fund procedures and provide an overview of activities and results of projects financially supported through ACA grants (the ACA Conservation, Community, and Education Grants [CCEG], the ACA Research Grants [RG], and the Grants in Biodiversity [GiB]) each fiscal year. ACA funnels approximately \$1.5 million into conservation work in Alberta

through the grants. These grants were funded by the sales of Alberta hunting and fishing licences, with the GiB having received additional funding from Suncor Energy. As of 2022/23, approximately \$23.4 million has been granted to conservation-related projects throughout the province. In 2022/23, the Grants Program awarded a 98 grants: 71 CCEG, 12 RG, and 15 GiB. ACA Grants Project Summary Reports provides an overview of all the grants funded in 2022/23 and are available on the Grants Program website to demonstrate the impact of the Grants Program and to allow for transparency with regard to how the hunting and fishing levy funds are distributed.

## Harvest Your Own

Harvest Your Own is a multi-platform media property. In 2022/23, we continued to expand our digital audiences by redesigning the website, increasing post frequency in social media and increasing the number of podcast episodes.

Alberta is one of the few jurisdictions in North American seeing a growth in the number of hunters. This increase is often attributed to an interest in organic and local food, and hunting as an empowering way to actively and ethically source your own protein. The gap is that new hunters, in particular men, women, and youth from urban areas, may not have a network of family and friends to help them learn to hunt. Harvest Your Own aims to provide new hunters with timely and relevant content that will help them get started and have success in the field and kitchen.

In 2022/23, Harvest Your Own increased its social media audience to 3,623 (+162) Facebook followers, 1,451 (+216) Instagram followers, 128 YouTube subscribers, and 68 TikTok followers (Twitter is no longer an active platform for Harvest Your Own). In this timeframe, we have also seen growth in the Harvest Your Own podcast hosted by Brad Fenson, which currently has all-time downloads of 14,631.

## Internal Communications

The Information, Education, and Communications Program provides creative and technical services to the President & CEO; Human Resources and Business Development teams; and the Wildlife, Fisheries, and Land Management resource programs. This team works with program managers, regional managers, and project leads to ensure they receive the media and materials needed for the success of their programs and projects.

## Kids Can Catch Program

Kids Can Catch is a province-wide program in which ACA partners with community and corporate partners to create free family fishing events at lakes and ponds. We developed Kids Can Catch as a way to invite Albertans to fish at stocked and natural waterbodies and to hook new and young anglers on fishing, fish conservation, and responsible angling. In 2022, Kids Can Catch events across Alberta welcomed nearly 4,400 adults and children and 93 organizations, partners, and sponsors. A record 23 public events took place this year with a 24th private event in partnership with The Africa Centre. Four of these events were brand new to the program, while some others that had taken a hiatus, opened up their events again. After the COVID-19 pandemic forced families to spend more time outdoors together, we have seen an increased uptake in organizations wanting to host events and more people interested in them. We hope this trend continues!

## Partnerships

Alberta Agriculture, Forestry & Rural Economic Development, Alberta Environment and Parks, Alberta Fish and Wildlife Enforcement Branch, Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association, Alberta Parks, AltaLink, Backroad Mapbooks, Barrow Safety Services, Inc., Bass Pro Shop and Cabela's Outdoor Fund, BGC Airdrie Club, Big Bird BBQ, Big Chief Jerky, Big Lakes County FCSS, Bow River Fly Fishing Company, Braces Plus



Orthodontics, Buy-Low Foods Westeros, Cabela's, Canadian National Railway Company, Canadian Tire, Canadian Tire – Hinton, Canadian Wildlife Federation: WILD Outside Program, Cargill Meats, Castor & District FCSS, Castor Elks Club, City of Beaumont, City of Fort Saskatchewan, City of Lacombe, CN Police Service, Coronation Elks Club, County of Grande Prairie Parks and Recreation Department, D & M Concrete, David Robson, deSIGNS by Tam, Dow, Edmonton Old Timers Fishing Club, Edmonton Trout Fishing Club, Edson Fish and Game Association, EQUUS, Fort Lions Club, Fort Saskatchewan Naturalist Society, Fortis Alberta, Fountain Tire, Fresh Live Bait, Greater Parkland Regional Chamber of Commerce, High Calibre Sports, Home Hardware: Wabamun, Innisfail Fish & Game Association, Jousard Community Association, Lacombe Co-Op, Lake Chaparral Residents Association, Lamont Fish & Game Association, Larry & Janis Schmidek (Pond Owner), Len Thompson Fishing Lures, Lesser Slave Forest Education Society, Lesser Slave Watershed Council, Lil Bettas Swim School, MNP, NFP, Northern Lights Fly Fishers, Okotoks and District Fish and Game Association, Onoway Fish and Game Association, Parkland Citizen Patrol, Parkland County, Parkland County Emergency Services, Pigeon Lake Watershed Association, Pinto Ice Shack Rentals, Real Canadian Superstore, Resident Care Foundation – Hinton, Rig-A-Jig Bait Shop, Servus Credit Union, Stony Plain Fish and Game Association, Sunny 94, Superfly, Sylvan Lake Wranglers Jr B Hockey Club, Taber Fish & Game, Terry's Lease Maintenance, The Fishin' Hole, Thermal Shack Rentals, Thompson Pallister Bait Co., Town of Gibbons, Town of Hinton, Town of Sylvan Lake, Town of Taber, TransAlta, Village Emporium Lifestyle Boutique, Wabamun Watershed Management Council, Walleye Master Tackle & Bait Ltd., Wes David and Fishing the Wild West TV, West Parkland Gas, Wolf Midstream, Yellowhead County Parks and Recreation, Zebco Tackle

## Native Trout Communications

The Native Trout Collaborative is a group of partner organizations working to advance native trout recovery in Alberta via habitat restoration, restoration stocking, land use planning, watershed assessments, public education and more. It is a comprehensive, long-term fish conservation initiative aimed at recovering populations of native trout in the Eastern Slopes of Alberta. Multiple organizations in Alberta are collaborating in this joint application to implement actions to mitigate threats and promote recovery of native trout at risk in the province. These partners include Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Alberta Conservation Association, Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society (Cows and Fish), Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Southern Alberta Chapter, Trout Unlimited Canada, and Foothills Research Institute. These groups all have a role in recovery of native trout including management, monitoring and science, conservation and restoration measures, reporting, and education or outreach. The ACA Information, Education, and Communications Resource Program actively participates on the communications committee focusing on education outreach and media.

### Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society (Cows and Fish), Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society Southern Alberta Chapter, Foothills Research Institute, Trout Unlimited Canada

### On-site Signage

Each conservation site has branded signage to recognize our partners, provide wayfinding for users, and notify users of restrictions on site. Our Information, Education, and Communications Program works with our Land Management, Fisheries, Wildlife, and Report A Poacher programs to produce signs for conservation sites and their boundaries; to support participating landowners/leaseholders; for

fisheries access sites; pheasant release sites; recreational opportunity enhancement sites; and lake aeration sites. Signs are also developed for thin ice areas (warnings), interpretive trails, and in support of stakeholder communications and the ACA Grants Program.

In 2022/23, we produced nine conservation site signs, one landowner habitat sign, eight riparian conservation site signs, 11 lake aeration site signs, two fisheries access site signs, one enhanced fish stocking sign, and various other signs.

## Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum Display

The Philip J. Currie Dinosaur Museum's Conservation Education Room is an opportunity to provide education outreach within an existing tourist and education programming destination. ACA signed a five-year Memorandum of Understanding to lease unoccupied space and provide exhibits that profile contemporary conservation challenges. In its final year, ACA worked with local trappers and the Alberta Trappers Association to develop and install free-standing displays, mounts and custom digital production on Alberta's trappers and their contributions to conservation.

## Social Media

Social media allows ACA to connect with, inform, and grow audiences. By using Constant Contact, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and now LinkedIn, we can inform the public and our followers about ACA projects, support our member groups, recognize, and thank Corporate Partners in Conservation, promote upcoming events, and respond to questions and comments about conservation in Alberta.

## Stakeholder Communications

To foster positive business relationships and partnerships in conservation sectors, ACA promotes projects and events for our stakeholders and member groups whenever possible. This support might appear as a feature article in *Conservation Magazine*, social media support, or web/media support and training.

## Strategic Business Plan

Our Strategic Business Plan provides employees, stakeholders, and partners with a clear understanding of the future direction of ACA. In 2022/23, ACA provided a scorecard and update for the first three years (2019–2021) of the 2019–2029 Strategic Business Plan. All strategic goals and objectives are aimed at meeting our mission and vision statements and all activities are undertaken with our core values in mind.

Of the 19 objectives identified in the 2019–2029 Strategic Business Plan, ACA achieved 15 objectives. Our ability to complete several objectives were directly impacted by COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions.

## Waterfowl Warmup

Waterfowl Warmup is a fundraiser in support of the Report A Poacher Program. Proceeds from the event support efforts to educate the public about responsible hunting and angling and the negative impacts of poaching. In all, 23 teams participated in Waterfowl Warmup this year. The winning team name and members' names were added to the Waterfowl Warmup plaque on display at ACA's office in Sherwood Park. Winning team members each received an individual trophy and prize bag to take home.

### Partnerships

Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association, Bear Scare Ltd., Beaverhill Sporting Clays, Black Rifle Coffee Co., Brad Fenson Outdoors, Cabela's Canada, Cycle Works Motorsports – Calgary, Dee-Jay Plumbing & Heating Ltd., Dentons Canada LLP, High Caliber Products, Kingston Ross Psnak LLP, Korth Group: Fabarm and Retay, Martin Motor Sports, Maverick Inspection Ltd., NFP, PW Transit, Safe and Sound Hearing Solutions, Stoeger Canada: Benelli, Beretta & Franchi, Winchester and Browning, Yeti Roughrider Rentals Ltd.

## Website Maintenance and Development

ACA's website provides an accessible gateway to information about our work using current technology to engage users. It is perhaps the primary platform we use to work toward increasing our profile in Alberta, one of the long-term goals of ACA's 10-year Strategic Business Plan.

In 2022/23, the ACA website achieved approximately 570,353 page views, with the average user spending 1:25 minutes per visit.

## Wildlife Cameras

The peregrine falcon and ferruginous hawk cameras provide a bird's-eye view into the daily lives of each species as they fight for mates and territory, catch food, and raise their young. In 2022/23, ACA ran four peregrine falcon cameras in locations throughout Edmonton—Bell Tower, Genesee Power Plant, Nutrien, and University of Alberta—and livestreamed the video on our website. The project also includes three ferruginous hawk nests monitored by trail cameras. The still images were reviewed and posted on our website. Also, three online species at risk contest quizzes were promoted alongside the ferruginous hawk media. Both the peregrine falcon

and ferruginous hawk cameras highlight these species at risk, other species at risk initiatives, and resources available from Alberta Environment and Parks. In 2022/23, views of the wildlife camera section of our website accounted for 20% of website traffic, and the species at risk contest quizzes reached 519 people and had 51,169 participants.

### Partnerships

AltaLink, Aspen Properties, Capital Power, Nutrien, TeraGo, TransAlta, University of Alberta, Xplornet Enterprise Solutions

## WIN Card Reimbursements

In partnership with Hunting for Tomorrow and Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association, the WIN Card Reimbursement program supports the recruitment of young people into hunting. The project gives ACA and our member groups a way to connect with new hunters when they purchase their first WIN card. In 2022/23, over 1,730 information packages were sent to youths who had completed the hunter education course. A total of 332 youths returned the reimbursement form.

### Partnerships

Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association, Hunting for Tomorrow



Project: Waterfowl Warmup  
Description: Participant clay shooting  
Photo: ACA, Charmaine Brunes





Project: Upland Game Bird 4-H Initiative  
Description: Private grower picking up pheasant chicks  
Photo: ACA, Amanda Rezansoff



## Wildlife Program

This past year was an exciting time for our work with wild turkeys. In January and February of 2023, we captured 177 birds from communities in eastern British Columbia and translocated them to welcoming new ranch hosts across southwestern Alberta. They were dispersed in groups of 20–30 with the hope that they will re-establish a growing local population over the coming years. We anticipate these translocations from BC and other jurisdictions will need to continue annually for 7–10 more years to re-establish a long-term sustainable huntable population in Alberta.

We had a strong record of publications this past year with six papers accepted in the peer-reviewed literature, and featured contributions from a wide group of wildlife staff. It was also a milestone year for noted ungulate ecologist Paul Jones, who received the Prairie Conservation Award for his contribution toward pronghorn and grassland conservation. We continue to promote the use of wildlife-friendly fences with stewardship partners in efforts to mitigate risks for pronghorn and their movement along their age-old migration corridors. The landscape is becoming more rather than less permeable over time, with linear boundaries increasing and affecting pronghorn movements.

Habitat stewardship remains the cornerstone of our long-term conservation efforts. Currently, we work with landowners on more than 650,000 acres helping ranchers and farmers develop and implement long-term conservation plans on their land

base. It's exciting to see these efforts expand annually, with growing support from producer communities. These stewardship efforts benefit a wide cross-section of wildlife, including many species that are highly valued for hunting.

### 2022/23 Overview

- We captured 177 wild turkeys from southeastern BC and translocated them to southwestern Alberta. The birds were distributed in their capture groups of 20–30 birds.
- The count of wild turkeys within huntable zones in Alberta was lower in 2023 compared to the previous two years (not counting translocations), and poult to hen ratios were also low. We speculate that the existing small and widely dispersed groups of Alberta birds are having difficulty with breeding success. Turkeys translocated in early 2023 are unlikely to rear broods in the first year in their new surroundings.
- The fur sale records collected provincially showed a declining trend in marten sales from 2018–2022, while the actual catch per unit effort (CPUE) was stable over the same period. The logbooks provided by trappers demonstrate that the catch rate did not decline over that time frame, which suggests that annual fur sales are an unreliable indicator of marten trends.
- Higher counts of pheasant and partridge in 2022 suggest we have turned the corner from the lower numbers seen in 2018 through 2020. Numbers were up near the long-term averages.
- Our work with St. Mary River Irrigation District (SMRID) led to the adoption of site-by-site grazing plans across their network of leased lands. Additional fencing was also undertaken to exclude grazing on 11 km of sensitive shoreline at four sites.
- The pheasant release program remains popular with 41 sites spread across the province from Medicine Hat to Peace River.



Project: Pronghorn Fence Crossing Enhancement  
Description: Smooth wire fence enhancement  
Photo: ACA, Amanda MacDonald

## ABHuntLog

ABHuntLog is an inexpensive and accessible citizen science app feature for collecting large-scale, long-term harvestable wildlife population data, developed through a partnership among ACA, University of Alberta, Métis Nation of Alberta, and iHunter. The second hunting season of ABHuntLog operation saw an increase in participation; between September 1 and December 31, 2022, 361 voluntary ABHuntLog participants completed 1,405 surveys in 135 Wildlife Management Units (WMUs; before data cleaning). The most observational data were submitted for white-tailed deer, followed by waterfowl, mule deer, and upland game birds. Several aggregated summaries by WMU of the 2021 and 2022 data are available on ACA's website (ABHuntLog.ca), allowing hunters to visualize and understand the value and utility of their ABHuntLog data. Alberta hunters have expressed an interest in providing meaningful data to assist in the management of game species, and a desire for better information to help with planning future hunts. ABHuntLog enables voluntary submission of observational data using the iHunter Alberta app that will help achieve these outcomes, as well as provide a private dashboard summary of the individual's observational and harvest information that they can use for planning future hunts and completing their annual mandatory reporting requirements. We anticipate increased participation in future years with improvements to ABHuntLog in 2023 and continued promotion of this tool so that we can expand the number and quality of the data summaries provided on ACA's website.

## Partnerships

Alberta Fish & Game Association, Alberta Professional Outfitters Society, iHunter, Korth Group Ltd., Métis Nation of Alberta, Safari Club International – Northern Alberta Chapter, University of Alberta

## Alberta Volunteer Amphibian Monitoring Program

Volunteers play a crucial role in wildlife conservation efforts through their involvement in biodiversity-related citizen science projects. The Alberta Volunteer Amphibian Monitoring Program (AVAMP) invites people to engage with nature and to provide unique information on amphibian and reptile distribution and life cycle events. To streamline the way AVAMP participants make and report their observations, we partnered with the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute's (ABMI) free NatureLynx mobile application in 2021/22; however, in April 2022, "ABMI" ceased supporting the development of their app. As such, no new wildlife sightings were shared with the platform in 2022/23. In place of NatureLynx, we began exploring a new partnership with iNaturalist for 2023/24. iNaturalist is a social network of naturalists, citizen scientists and biologists, and is accessible via its website or mobile applications. iNaturalist mobile applications will allow AVAMP participants to complete data entry in the field. iNaturalist's community-driven process for species identification and record validation will ensure the upmost quality of data with minimum resources by ACA to manage. Data submitted to iNaturalist will be accessible by ACA via an AVAMP Project on the platform.

In 2022/23, 51 AVAMP participants submitted 107 amphibian and 15 reptile observations, including locations of three snake hibernacula (dens). These data represented 90% of the amphibian and 44% of the reptile species native to the province. Setting appropriate conservation measures for amphibians and reptiles requires a good understanding of species distributions and timing of life cycle events, which are often based on relatively few data. AVAMP is an example of how ACA can work with a network of enthusiastic volunteers and partners to fill data gaps and positively impact conservation.

## Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, volunteer participants

## Connectivity Project

The Connectivity Project addresses habitat fragmentation in southern Alberta by working collaboratively with irrigation districts, municipalities, conservation groups, recreationists, and agricultural producers to improve water quality and re-establish and enhance wildlife habitat. Doing so will benefit agriculture, hunters, anglers, and other outdoor enthusiasts. In 2022, we completed the fifth year of the project and the fourth year of extensive data collection around four SMRID reservoirs: Bullshead Reservoir, West Medicine Hat Reservoir, Stormham Reservoir, Weston Lake Reservoir, and one drainage called Middle Coulee Drainage. We completed 31 lotic riparian health assessments, nine lentic riparian health assessments, 12 visual riparian assessment, eight range health assessments, and 25 visual range assessments for use in the fourth Habitat Conservation Strategy for SMRID. We made 166 incidental wildlife observations across the four reservoirs, 17% of which were species at risk. These data provide a baseline assessment of the plant communities around each reservoir and the wildlife species utilizing them. Baseline assessments also identify priority sites where habitat enhancements and/or grazing management recommendations will improve ecosystem service provision (carbon sequestration, water filtration and nutrient retention, wildlife habitat, and biodiversity). The hydrogeomorphology of these reservoirs pose ecological and physical challenges to these ecosystem service provisions, developing unique data sets and vegetation communities in comparison to natural systems. To help mitigate these challenges, adaptive management plans to enhance and protect these ecosystems were developed and implemented in 2022. Working

with the partners of the project, approximately 11 km of exclusion fencing on four reservoirs were installed, exposed areas were reseeded, and willows and shrubs were planted in specified areas for the benefit of wildlife and water quality. We also implemented integrated protection plans for sensitive and at-risk wildlife species in select areas. The recommendations from the report are developed to assist with planning, and aid in the design of enhancements needed to improve water quality and wildlife habitat, while cohesively increasing the resilience of the irrigation district operations and grassland ecosystems.

**Partnerships**

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Alberta Fish & Game Association (Zone 1), Canadian Agricultural Partnership, Lethbridge Fish & Game Association, Pheasants Forever, Southern Alberta Bowhunters Association, St. Mary River Irrigation District, Taber Irrigation District

**Enchant Project – Strong Farmlands. Thriving Habitat.**

We have a long-term working relationship with a modern farm to evaluate approaches for re-establishing vibrant upland game bird densities while maintaining a profitable farming operation. We also monitor a range of non-target species to assess how these treatments impact biodiversity (amphibians and birds). We trial enhancements that focus on improving habitat features important for nesting, brood rearing, and winter survival of ring-necked pheasants and grey partridge. This includes approaches within the crop, the juxtaposition of crop types and rotation, harvest method, field edge improvements, water management and wetlands, and trialling seed mixes important for chick survival. In 2022, we completed a vegetation inventory of the plant species present at

the Enchant farm. We planted Roundup Ready Corn to provide escape and thermal cover for pheasants, but also to help control unwanted weeds. We assisted farm staff with planting 0.5 km of additional shrub rows (500 shrubs) to increase territorial space for pheasants and grey partridge at the farm. We planted approximately 1,000 willow stakes along a decommissioned canal bed.

The density of partridge pairs decreased from 70 pairs (11.8 pairs/km<sup>2</sup>) in spring 2021 to 53 pairs (8.9 pairs/km<sup>2</sup>) in spring 2022, our lowest count to date. However, our autumn counts were very promising and the highest since 2018 at 391 individuals. We trialled two different soft-release methods, releasing a total of 500 pheasants at the farm.

**Partnerships**

Haggins Family, Stamp Farms



Project: Connectivity Project  
Description: Great Plains Toad  
Photo: ACA



## Forest Grouse Monitoring Initiative

There is concern that spruce grouse (*Falci pennis canadensis*, *Canachites canadensis*) numbers may be trending lower in some areas of Alberta, although the information to validate this assumption is lacking. EPA asked ACA to develop an approach for gaining a better understanding of grouse trends over space and time. We began the effort in 2021 with three main tasks: 1) we summarized spruce grouse harvest data from 2015 to 2021 to better understand hunter success spatially and among years; 2) we asked trappers to provide their insight on spruce grouse numbers using a brief survey to help detect problem areas for grouse; and 3) we trialled a methodology to detect occupancy based on the presence/absence of spruce grouse pellets. This method to detect grouse occupancy is viable, although it is very time consuming and logistically expensive. The data derived from voluntary hunter harvest reports are problematic for several reasons, especially for game birds where a specific species licence is not required in Alberta: 1) the total number of hunters pursuing spruce grouse and the total number of harvested birds within Alberta is not known, 2) it appears that at least some hunters struggle to differentiate spruce grouse from other grouse species within Alberta, and 3) it is likely that many hunters that pursue spruce grouse do so while primarily hunting other species, and therefore harvest metrics that factor in hunter effort may not be a reliable means of detecting trends.

From 2015 to 2021, the reported average annual harvest of spruce grouse was 6,127 birds taken by an average of 2,622 hunters, although we do not know the total number of hunters or the total harvest per year. From 2015 to 2019, spruce grouse harvest and hunter numbers were stable to increasing as suggested through voluntary reports; however, in 2020 and 2021, the number of voluntary reports decreased as did the reported number of spruce grouse harvested. It is not clear if these declines represent a decrease

in those pursuing spruce grouse, a real decrease in harvest, or simply a decrease in the number of hunters willing to fill out the voluntary report.

Hunter harvest reporting systems can be extremely cost-effective tools for tracking population trends over time. Voluntary based harvest reports provide less information compared to mandatory reports, and in the case of voluntary reports for game birds in Alberta, the reported data lacks the utility to detect meaningful trends for spruce grouse spatially and temporally. Mandatory reporting by species would increase the utility of harvest reports for detecting trends with game birds. This approach would track harvest and effort more accurately and provide an early warning indicator if grouse numbers are trending dangerously low over time in a particular geographic area. Moreover, these reports would provide much greater utility if hunters identified each bird harvested to species, as well as to sex and age class (young of year vs. adult).

### Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Alberta Trappers Association

### Furbearer Trends

The Government of Alberta (GOA) and Alberta Trappers Association (ATA) asked ACA to assist with the development of a logbook for trappers to record information about their activities and fur harvesting results. This resource-user-derived information provides an opportunity to track furbearer population trends over time at the provincial and natural region levels. The 2021/22 trapping season marked the fifth year of marten data collection and the third year for quota species (fisher, lynx, wolverine, and otter). During the 2021/22 trapping season, despite a continued low number of marten pelts being exported from the province, marten catch for an equivalent amount of effort remained similar to previous years at 0.85 marten per 100 trap nights. The number of logbook submissions

increased by 13 logbooks in 2021/22 when compared to the previous year. This is a step in the right direction; however, we hope to expand logbook program participation as the information provides valuable insight into patterns of furbearer harvest and population indices. New logbook-related training resources are being developed for project participants and the format will continue to be adapted to maximize the value of the information for wildlife managers and trappers.

### Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Alberta Trappers Association, Lethbridge College

### Habitat Legacy Partnership

The Habitat Legacy Partnership (HLP) project works with a multitude of stakeholders to improve upland game bird habitat in southern Alberta. The Milk River Ridge Reservoir Water Quality Stewardship Initiative (MRRRWQSI) is part of the HLP and is a multi-year collaborative initiative with a current focus in the County of Warner. The MRRRWQSI is overseen and managed by a working group consisting of ACA, EPA, and the County of Warner, whose actions are guided by terms of reference. The initiative consists of nine segments around the Waterton–St. Mary headworks inlet canal and along the shorelands of the Milk River Ridge Reservoir. These segments are predominantly focused on provincial Crown land—known as the “provincial land corridor”—surrounding the reservoir. The overall goal of this initiative is to improve water quality through the restoration of the vegetation community along shorelands and riparian areas. This restoration translates into the creation of vital wildlife habitat that also filters nutrients and reduces erosion. Approximately \$2.2 million has been raised and invested to date. Thus far, we have installed 61 km of fencing to protect shoreland and riparian habitat. In all, 25 off-site watering units have been installed in strategic areas surrounding the reservoir to redirect cattle away from fragile

riparian zones. We have planted approximately 45,900 shrubs and seeded 456 acres back into perennial wildlife habitat. A large 6.18-acre wetland was developed on the west side of the reservoir, acting as a large filter for nutrients and a magnet for wildlife. During the 2022/23 season, approximately 3,400 more shrub and willows were planted. Partner meetings are ongoing for potential shrub plantings and permanent cover seeding for the 2023/24 season.

### Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Alberta Fish & Game Association – Zone 1, County of Warner, David Bissett, Irrican Power, Landowners, Lethbridge Fish & Game Association, Magrath Rod and Gun Club, New Dayton Rod and Gun Club, Pheasants Forever – Calgary Chapter, Raymond Agricultural Society, Raymond Irrigation District, Southern Alberta Bowhunters Association, St. Mary River Irrigation District, Taber Irrigation District, Westwind School Division

### Hunter Perspectives on Obtaining Access to Private Land in Alberta

A voluntary online survey was used in 2021/22 to investigate the perspective of hunters on acquiring access to private land in Alberta. We received over 3,500 visits to our online survey with just under 3,000 people completing the entire survey. The vast majority of survey participants were Alberta Resident licensed hunters from across the province. There was a near even split between those who lived in cities versus small towns and rural areas. During 2022/23, we explored factors that might be associated with whether a hunter was granted permission the last time they contacted a landowner. We found that hunters who live in large cities were less likely to be granted access compared to those who live in rural areas. When compared to the largest age group in our survey (55 to 64 years old), those in the 35- to 44-year-old and 45- to 54-year-old categories were less likely to obtain permission, while those in the 65

and older age group had a higher probability of success. Hunters who were seeking permission on cropland were more likely to have been granted access than those who were seeking permission on non-agricultural land. Those asking for permission in a pronghorn management zone were more likely to have had success than those asking for permission in the rest of the province. Permission was least likely to be obtained in the Foothills Wildlife Management Unit zones (300 series), with the southern 300 series producing a lower likelihood of success than the northern 300 series. Factors that did not appear to be associated with getting hunting permission on private land included how avid a hunter was (i.e., how many days in the year they typically hunt on private land) and whether they identified as a visible minority. We will continue to investigate and report on these data in 2023/24.

### Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Alberta Fish & Game Association – Minister's Special Licence Program, Alberta Professional Outfitters Society, Brad Fenson Outdoors, University of Alberta, University of Waterloo

### Landowner Hunting Access Survey

In 2021, we conducted a voluntary online survey, designed with input from social scientists at the universities of Alberta and Waterloo, to understand the views of private landholders on allowing hunting access on their land. While the survey results do not represent all Alberta landowners' viewpoints, they offer general information on common patterns. We received 2,036 responses from across the province and summarized some of the interesting findings into infographics. We also examined a subset of survey participants who permit hunting on their property and discovered that property size and concerns related to hunters have the most substantial impact on landowners' decisions to grant public hunting access. Generally, landowners with

larger landholdings are more likely to allow hunting to the public, whereas those with holdings of less than 100 acres were very unlikely to permit it. We also found that concerns such as trespassing, safety, property damage, and poaching reduce the chance that a landowner allows public access to their land for hunting. Further analysis and reporting on the survey will take place in 2023/24.

### Partnerships

Alberta Beef Producers, Alberta Crop Sector Working Group, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Alberta Fish & Game Association – Minister's Special Licence Program, Alberta Professional Outfitters Society Wildlife Management Fund, Alberta Wheat & Barley Commissions, Cabela's | Bass Pro Shops, Creative Motion Publishing, Glacier FarmMedia, municipal district and county offices across the province, University of Alberta, University of Waterloo, Western Stock Growers' Association

### MULTISAR – Milk River

We focus on multi-species conservation at the landscape level that promotes stewardship through voluntary participation of landholders on both Crown and private lands. In 2022, we worked collaboratively with multiple partners to maintain, increase, and improve habitat for species at risk within the greater sage-grouse range of Alberta. This partnership involves habitat assessments, development of voluntary habitat conservation plans, and subsequent implementation and monitoring of on-the-ground enhancements. We completed a Habitat Conservation Strategy (HCS) for 1,890 acres of lease land on an existing MULTISAR participant's ranch and one newly acquired ACA property of 158 acres along the Milk River Natural Area. The HCS included 30 detailed range transects, eight range health assessments, three visual plots, five riparian assessments, and recorded 461 wildlife observations. We also conducted wildlife surveys and made an additional 328 wildlife observations on one new landowner's property, which is scheduled to



have range surveys and an HCS completed in 2023/24. Twenty-nine different species at risk were recorded, including five listed as *Endangered/At Risk*, seven listed as *Threatened/May Be At Risk*, and 17 listed as *Special Concern/Sensitive*. We also collaborated with three landowners to install four portable watering units and two solar pumps for existing wells and refurbished 23 dugouts. These water developments are designed to improve grazing distribution and habitat management by alleviating cattle pressure in sensitive riparian areas. On a separate property, we replaced one mile of fenceline with wildlife-friendly fence and installed half a mile of new wildlife-friendly fence with Clipex posts so a site previously reseeded with native grasses can now be grazed separate from an adjoining hay field. We will monitor this Clipex fenceline to assess if these small diameter posts eliminate raptors from perching in the area, decreasing risk to sage-grouse. We worked with a contractor to collect 150 pounds of silver sagebrush seed in late November and will use this to reseed future sites. Our interaction with the ranching community in this drainage continues to grow and, moving forward, we anticipate taking on additional operators as well as seeking additional enhancements on the dozens of existing ranches that we are currently engaged with.

### Partnerships

Alberta Beef Producers, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Canadian Cattle Association, Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, Cows and Fish – Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society, Environment and Climate Change Canada, landholders, Milk River Watershed Council Canada, Prairie Conservation Forum

### MULTISAR – South Saskatchewan

There are numerous species at risk in southern Alberta, often overlapping with agricultural landscapes. Existing management practices on these lands are what have allowed these species to persist, but there are also many opportunities on these lands and adjoining lands to further enhance habitat quality for these species while also benefiting agricultural operations. We work collaboratively with multiple partners to maintain, increase, and improve habitat for species at risk within the Grassland Natural Region of Alberta. In the past year, we collaborated with five new ranchers completing HCS on their properties, completed an HCS reassessment on a sixth ranch, and completed Habitat Management Plans (HMP) for three additional operators, covering a

total of 101,060 acres of land. We identified 178 different species on these nine properties, including four species listed as federally *Endangered*, nine species listed as *Threatened*, and nine species listed as *Special Concern*. In all, we had 5,533 wildlife observations. On these same nine properties, we conducted 180 detailed range transects, 344 range health assessments, 37 tame pasture assessments, 253 visual assessments, 56 HMP litter/Robel pole measurements, and 72 riparian health assessments.

We also partnered with 12 producers to implement 19 enhancements including two portable electric fencing units, two fencing projects (riparian fencing and fencing off loggerhead shrike habitat), three portable watering units, five upland water developments (i.e., pasture pipeline designed to move water throughout the property, spring development, permanent water troughs), three ferruginous hawk poles and two platforms (delivered to landowners to create their own ferruginous hawk poles), and weed control assistance on three properties.

Our interaction with the ranching community throughout southern Alberta continues to grow, and we anticipate partnering with two to three additional operators each year moving forward. In addition to formulating a long-term detailed plan with each ranch, we will continue to identify and help the operator to implement key enhancement activities as opportunities occur in the coming years.

### Partnerships

Alberta Beef Producers, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, AltaLink, Canadian Cattle Association, Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, Cows and Fish – Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society, Environment and Climate Change Canada, EQUS, landholders, Prairie Conservation Forum



## MULTISAR – West

The majority of species at risk (SAR) are found in the Grasslands Natural Region of southern Alberta. However, the Foothills, Parkland, and Rocky Mountain natural regions of southwestern Alberta boast some of the province's most ecologically diverse landscapes and provide habitat for many SAR including little brown bat, bull trout, grizzly bear, limber pine, western wood-pewee, and westslope cutthroat trout. Best management practices and habitat enhancements occurring on farmlands within this area have enabled many of these species to persist, but there are also many opportunities to further enhance habitat quality for these species while mutually benefitting agricultural operations.

In 2022, we collaborated with a private landowner in southwest Alberta to complete a HCS reassessment on a ranch totalling approximately 22,171 acres. We identified 101 different wildlife species on this ranch, including 12 that are considered *Endangered*, *Threatened*, or Species of *Special Concern*. In total, we had 767 observations of wildlife species and conducted 133 range health assessments.

We also collaborated with a second private landowner in southwest Alberta to complete a HCS reassessment on a ranch totalling approximately 2,196 acres. On this ranch we identified 66 different wildlife species, including 11 that are considered *Endangered*, *Threatened*, or *Special Concern*. In total, we had 233 observations of wildlife species and conducted 28 range health assessments.

In 2022, we partnered with four cattle producers to implement five habitat enhancements, including the implementation of rig mats/creek crossings on Ings Creek, a

single span bridge across Sheppard Creek, two portable watering units and one portable fencing unit to reduce cattle disturbance on riparian systems, and planting 1,000 riparian shrubs along Cabin Creek.

Our interaction with the ranching community in the southwest continues to grow, and we anticipate partnering with two to three additional landholders each year moving forward. In addition to formulating a long-term detailed plan with each ranch, we will continue to identify key enhancement activities and help the cattle producer to implement these activities as opportunities occur in future years.

### Partnerships

Alberta Beef Producers, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Alberta Fish & Game Association – Minister's Special Licence Program, Alberta Forestry, Parks, and Tourism, Canadian Cattle Association, Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Huvar Construction, landholders in southwestern Alberta, Municipal District of Ranchland No. 66, Prairie Conservation Forum

### Pheasant Releases to Enhance Hunting Opportunities

Upland game bird hunting is a long-standing tradition in Alberta. Following the introduction of the ring-necked pheasant in the early 1900s, wild populations became established in select areas of southern Alberta. To accommodate the high demand for hunting opportunities, the Government of Alberta started a hatchery in 1945 and created the Provincial Pheasant Release Program, which saw thousands of hatchery-raised pheasants released onto the landscape each fall. The hatchery

was eventually privatized due to government cutbacks and closed in 2013. ACA took over the release program in 2014, with the overall goal of providing greater hunting opportunity for Albertans.

We developed a web page that shows a map with directions to release sites and expanded the number of sites to 41, from Lac Cardinal near Peace River in the northwest to several sites south and east of Medicine Hat. We continue to partner with five Fish & Game clubs in southern Alberta who play key roles in the weekly release of pheasants at 22 sites from Medicine Hat to Cardston.

We also partnered with several local growers within Alberta who raised male pheasants for release at several of our sites. MacFarlane Pheasants continues to be our main supplier of adult birds for release; they deliver birds multiple times per week at 17 sites, as well as supplying some of the birds for the Peace River area. The more northern sites initiate releases September 1 for nine weeks, while those further south correspond with the later opening day for pheasants beginning October 15.

We continue to receive strong support from those participating in this hunting opportunity. These release sites are an excellent opportunity to introduce someone new to upland hunting, and a nice addition to the opportunities for wild hunts on a variety of game birds throughout the province.

### Partnerships

Capital Power, Cardston Fish & Game Association, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Fort Macleod Fish & Game Association, Lethbridge Fish & Game Association, MacFarlane Pheasants, Medicine Hat Fish & Game Association, Peace River Fish & Game Association, Picture Butte Fish & Game Association

## Piping Plover Recovery Program

Piping plovers are small, black and white, short-billed *Endangered* shorebirds that nest and feed along gravel beaches. They face a number of threats including high rates of predation and damage to their nesting and feeding habitat. ACA is working with landowners across east-central and southern Alberta to improve habitat and promote awareness of the plight of the piping plover. Each year, we also conduct piping plover counts on key breeding lakes that allow us to monitor population numbers and distribution, and help us guide habitat improvement activities. We surveyed 22 waterbodies, on which we found 50 adults on eight lakes, with ten or more adults on three of these lakes. We worked with our partners to improve over 5 km of shoreline habitat through the implementation of seasonal grazing, mechanical and chemical control to reduce the encroachment of vegetation that impairs this habitat for piping plovers. Since large-scale recovery efforts began in 2002, we have improved over 58 km of shoreline habitat, with the majority of “critical” piping plover habitat being protected or improved through fencing.

### Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Environment and Climate Change Canada – Habitat Stewardship Program, landholders

## Pronghorn Fence Crossing Enhancement

A simple and effective method to mitigate the negative impact fences have on pronghorn is to implement wildlife-friendlier fencing techniques. For pre-existing fences, the retrofitting of wires to wildlife-friendlier standards is time consuming and costly. In 2022, we were able to alleviate these burdens on landholders interested in improving fence permeability for pronghorn by replacing the bottom

barbed wire of 39 km of fenceline with double-stranded smooth wire raised to 46 cm. Retrofitting was completed by volunteers with the AFGA. In total, the Pronghorn Fence Crossing Enhancement Project facilitated the establishment of nearly 615 km of wildlife-friendlier fencing throughout the pronghorn migration corridor of southeastern Alberta.

### Partnerships

Alberta Fish & Game Association

## Pronghorn Movement Enhancement – Fence Trials

The proliferation of fencing that followed cattle ranching since the 1880s throughout the Canadian prairies poses a serious barrier to ungulate movement. We have documented that pronghorn and deer show a propensity to cross under fences. For deer, this propensity to cross under may be an artifact of the top wire height being too high to allow passage over. Our results indicated that deer, even though we lowered the top wire, still displayed a propensity to cross under the bottom wire. In addition, we demonstrated that fences, roads, and fenced roads all influence the crossing success and spatial distribution of pronghorn. Lastly, we demonstrated that both road and fence density negatively impacted pronghorn survival. We published four papers in peer-reviewed journals and had a book chapter on pronghorn accepted for publication by Springer. We will disseminate our results and conclusions to stakeholders, wildlife managers, and conservation groups.

### Partnerships

AFGA, Bushnell Corporation, Cabela’s Canada, Canadian Forces Base Suffield, National Wildlife Federation, Safari Club International – Northern Alberta Chapter, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, The Nature Conservancy

## Pronghorn Road Crossing Enhancement (Pronghorn Xing)

Among the diversity of prairie wildlife, the pronghorn is the most specialized and representative large mammal. Within the Northern Sagebrush Steppe of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Montana, 55% of collared pronghorn made seasonal migrations from summer ranges to winter ranges. Along the migration pathway, pronghorn must navigate their way across primary and secondary highways that are often fenced on both sides, resulting in pinch points where animals pile up. These pinch points along the migration pathway are a formidable challenge for migrating pronghorn.

To address this migration challenge, a citizen science project called Pronghorn Xing was initiated in the spring of 2017. Pronghorn Xing was developed to ground truth seasonal movement pinch points identified by connectivity modelling across highways in the Northern Sagebrush Steppe and increase public engagement in pronghorn science and conservation. Analysis of the pronghorn data collected between November 2017 and June 2020 via the app was completed and potential mitigation sites were presented to stakeholders in a workshop setting. Initially, 16 potential sites were identified along Highway 1 in Alberta and Saskatchewan where road mitigation could improve pronghorn movement. Following a ranking exercise by workshop participants, the number of potential mitigation sites was narrowed down to four sites in Alberta and three sites in Saskatchewan. The prioritized mitigation sites in Alberta and Saskatchewan provide a starting point for assessing the feasibility of implementing a mitigation structure (overpass).

### Partnerships

Alberta Transportation, Miistakis Institute, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, National Wildlife Federation, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Saskatchewan Government Insurance, Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment and Infrastructure



## Species Habitat Assessments and Ranching Partnership

Species Habitat Assessments and Ranching Partnership (SHARP) is a voluntary, collaborative project designed to work with producers to maintain the unique grazing and ecosystem values on their property in central and northwestern Alberta. We develop habitat strategies after first completing range and riparian health assessments as well as wildlife inventories. We evaluate these results with the needs of target species and the long-term objectives of the landholder. This results in mutually agreed-on solutions that benefit both wildlife and the producer's operations. As cost-shared enhancements are made, we develop a monitoring plan to assess their progress and effectiveness.

We continued to work on three ranches (total 16,575 acres) and enrolled three new ranches (total 1,760 acres). We identified 144 different wildlife species on these three new properties, including 30 species that are considered provincially Sensitive or higher under Alberta's General Status evaluation process. On these three properties, we also completed 19 range health assessments, 82 range visual plot assessments, 15 riparian health assessments, and two riparian visual plot assessments.

We partnered with four producers to implement eight habitat enhancements. In collaboration with one producer, we planted additional wildflowers along an eco-buffer shelterbelt to attract a greater diversity and abundance of pollinators. We also replaced barbed wire on the top and bottom wires with double-stranded smooth wire to help facilitate ungulate movement and reduce the chance of entanglement. In partnership with a second producer, we replaced existing fences with wildlife-friendly fencing and installed fence reflectors on fences adjacent to wetlands to prevent waterfowl and other birds from colliding with the fence. We partnered with a third producer to implement two watering systems, and install wildlife-friendly fencing around riparian areas, designed to help with cattle distribution on the property to avoid overgrazing, improve water

quality, and encourage grazing away from sensitive riparian areas. We also partnered with a fourth producer to install a livestock crossing at two locations to reduce cattle pressure on sensitive riparian areas, and planted saskatoon seedlings along the perimeter of a dugout to contribute to riparian function. Long-term relationships built on mutual respect and trust between conservation groups and landowners are the key to effective on-the-ground conservation efforts being undertaken through initiatives like the SHARP Project.

### Partnerships

Alberta Community Bat Program, Alberta Fish & Game Association – Minister's Special Licence Program, ALUS Canada, Canadian Cattle Association, Canadian Roundtable for Sustainable Beef, Environment and Climate Change Canada – Habitat Stewardship Program, landholders

## Taber Pheasant Festival

The Taber Pheasant Festival has been a fixture in the town of Taber since 2011, with sponsors, partners, and supportive landholders bringing the event to life each year. The festival celebrates Alberta's diverse hunting heritage, with focus on one of the most recognizable game birds in Alberta, the ring-necked pheasant. Since its inception, the festival has been hosted by the Town of Taber and has fostered a strong sense of community among hunters and other festival participants. Other benefits of the festival include positive economic contributions to the community through hunters supporting locally-owned restaurants, lodging, and many other businesses with their travel dollars. We released pheasant roosters daily at 40 pre-determined hunting sites within the municipal district, with many locations provided by private landowners. During the festival, we also hosted a Novice Shoot training event in collaboration with Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association. The Novice Shoot is designed for those who are either brand new to hunting or interested in furthering

their game bird hunting experience with practice and instruction in a supportive setting; 75 novice hunters participated in this training event.

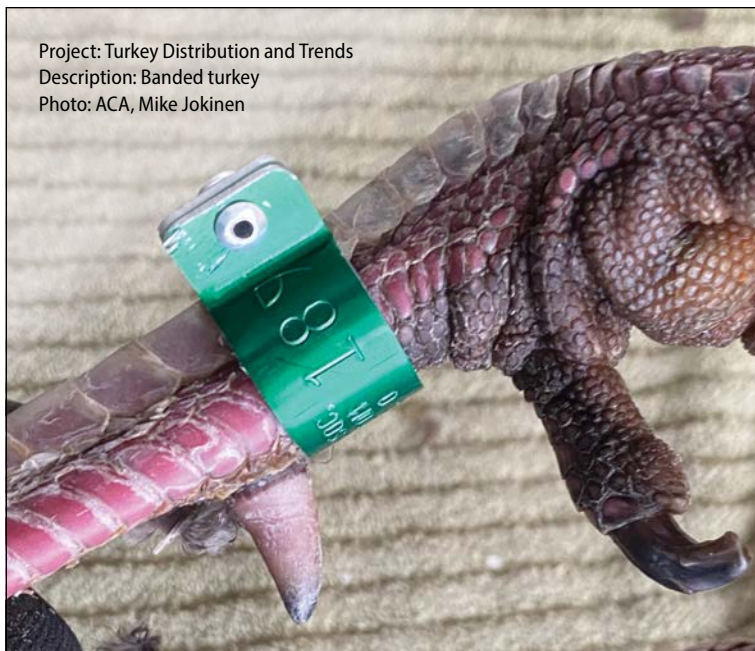
An important aspect of the festival is promoting local habitat stewardship. This is primarily accomplished through discussions with partnering landholders, and festival participants, about the habitat needs of pheasants and other wildlife. The festival also showcases the concept of hunting from field-to-plate to the non-hunting community. There is no registration fee to hunt in the festival, and it is open to anyone who holds the appropriate licence to hunt ring-necked pheasants in Alberta.

To help raise funds for next year's festival, we hosted raffles and an online auction. The year 2022 marked the 12th year of the festival and an unwavering interest in the event by hunters and other supporters. In total, 657 hunters registered for the festival and participated in the drawn hunts, with participants attending the festival from locations in Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia as well as from the United States.

### Partnerships

A1 Fabrication, Alberta Fish & Game Association, Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association, Alberta Professional Outfitters Society, Ashbros Enterprises Ltd., Benchmade, Beretta/Benelli/Tikka/Sako, Cabela's Bass Pro Shops, Can West Legacy Inc., Chinook Arms Ltd., Cycle Works Calgary, Gateway Livestock Marketing Inc., Heritage Inn Taber/Canadian Destinations, High Caliber Products, Johnson's Drugs, landowners, Lethbridge College, MacFarlane Pheasants Inc., McKay Roughrider Resources Ltd., Municipal District of Taber, NFP, Pivot Spirits, Perlich Bros Auction Market Ltd., Predator Camo, Royal Hotel, Taber & District Chamber of Commerce, Taber and District Housing Foundation, Taber Economic Development, Taber Irrigation District, Thiessen, Town of Taber, Taber Organizing Committee, United Farmers of Alberta Co-operative Ltd., Vortex Optics

Project: Turkey Distribution and Trends  
Description: Banded turkey  
Photo: ACA, Mike Jokinen



## Turkey Distribution and Trends

In Alberta, the demand for hunting wild turkeys is very high, with 5,585 applicants pursuing 200 tags in 2022 (3.6% draw success awarded to only those with 12+ years priority), while an additional 18,736 hunters applied to boost their priority level. With 24,300+ hunters seeking a turkey tag, it has become a once-in-lifetime opportunity for most hunters, and many will never be drawn at the current allocation rate.

Wild turkeys were first introduced into Alberta in 1962 when 21 wild turkeys from South Dakota were translocated to the Cypress Hills in southeastern Alberta. At the same time, three wild turkeys were sent to the Brooks Pheasant Hatchery for breeding purposes and future introductions. Since then, several translocations have established populations of varying size, scattered throughout southwestern Alberta.

In 2021, we initiated a citizen science approach to monitor wild turkeys with private landholders across their range in southwestern Alberta. We divided the anticipated range of wild turkey into five zones from south to north and contacted at least ten landholders from each. Direct sightings from landholders enabled

us to identify the winter location of local populations in winter 2021 along with their associated habitat features (e.g., roosts, feeding sites). We contacted 118 landowners in 2021, with many reports that turkeys were once commonly sighted in previous years but were no longer present or remained with very low numbers. In 2022, we again gathered input from 30 landholders who observed turkeys in the previous year, and together they reported roughly 790 wild turkeys observed through winter across the five zones. We are using these annual landowner counts to establish an index and help us better understand how wild turkey populations vary over time. Our online volunteer summer brood survey had 23 replies with 376 wild turkeys sighted including 126 hens, 122 poults, 41 males, and 87 with sex unknown. Poult to hen ratios are an indication of breeding success and, with an adequate sample size, these ratios can help predict population trajectory.

At the time of this report, we are translocating wild turkeys from communities in the Columbia Valley of eastern British Columbia (Edgewater, Invermere, and Radium Hot Springs) and releasing them at select sites in southwestern Alberta north of Highway 3 to Turner Valley. We have moved 177 wild birds to

date and expect this number to increase before the field season end this winter.

Plans are underway to translocate wild birds from cooperating jurisdictions for the next ten years as part of a long-term strategy to build up a sustainable wild turkey population within Alberta. Translocation efforts also include the capture and relocation of wild birds from within Alberta to jump start many dozens of local populations.

## Partnerships

Alberta Fish & Game Association, British Columbia Ministry of Forests, Calgary Fish & Game Association, District of Invermere, Lethbridge Fish & Game Association, Onoway Fish & Game Association, private landholders in southwestern Alberta, Regional District of East Kootenay, Sarcee Fish & Game Association, Spruce Grove Fish & Game Association, Wheatland Conservation and Wildlife Association, Village of Radium Hot Springs, Zone 1 – Southern Alberta Fish & Game Association

## Upland Game Bird 4-H Initiative

Ring-necked pheasants were first introduced into Alberta in 1908 by a group of recreational enthusiasts to provide enhanced upland hunting opportunities. Now, more than 100 years later, the tradition continues as we partner with stakeholders to improve the future of upland game bird hunting in Alberta. Changes in agricultural practices and the conversion of native prairie into cropland have dramatically modified the landscape to the point where native game birds are nearly eliminated from areas dedicated to cropland. Pheasants can adapt to areas predominately used for cropland, provided that certain habitat features are available.

In 2014, we initiated a new partnership with 4-H Alberta, offering clubs the opportunity to raise day-old chicks to adult birds. This year, we had 33 4-H members successfully raise



approximately 2,000 pheasants (mostly hens), and either released them into suitable upland habitat or marketed them for sale.

In addition to the 4-H members, other interest groups including private landowners, AFGA, and Boy Scout groups also received the opportunity to purchase day-old chicks to raise. We did not record how many birds were successfully raised and released, or marketed for sale, as the growers were free to do what they wanted with their birds.

### Partnerships

4-H Alberta, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, ConocoPhillips Canada, MacFarlane Pheasants, private donations

## Upland Game Bird Fall Forecast

As in 2020 and 2021, we reached out to the hunting dog community in 2022 to ask for their assistance with conducting annual upland game bird productivity surveys throughout Alberta. The survey information collected by the volunteers enabled us to expand the geographical areas covered as well as the overall survey effort, particularly for partridge. We anticipate this will provide a broader representation of the annual survey results for pheasant and partridge recruitment leading up to the annual hunting season. In 2022, we also received volunteer surveys for ruffed grouse and spruce grouse. We hope to receive more forest grouse surveys over the coming years to generate forecasts for those species as well. Flush rates for both pheasants and partridge in 2022 are similar to the long-term moving average, although they are both greater than the lows seen for the past 4–5 years. The information acquired from these surveys helps us understand population trends and brood success for pheasants and partridge, as well as heighten the excitement for the upcoming hunting season as we release the survey results on our website and various social media outlets each fall. More data is required for forest grouse species to understand population dynamics.

### Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, landowners, Pheasants Forever – Calgary Chapter, volunteer survey participants – dog handlers

## Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention Program

The intent of the Waterfowl Crop Damage Prevention Program (WCDPP) is to assist agricultural producers in reducing damage to crops caused by waterfowl during fall migration. In 2013, ACA began offering scare cannons free of charge to counties and municipal districts, enabling them to incorporate this equipment into their existing equipment lending programs. This has greatly improved efficiency by placing cannons much closer to end users. In 2022/23, we continued to work with producers as well as counties and municipal districts to ensure that scare cannons were available where needed for waterfowl crop damage prevention. We provided locations where scare cannons were available for loan as well as laying out strategies on our website for avoiding crop damage.

### Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Athabasca County, Big Lakes County, Camrose County, Clearhills County, County of Grande Prairie, County of Minburn, County of Northern Lights, County of Paintearth, County of St. Paul, County of Stettler, County of Two Hills, County of Vermilion River, Flagstaff County, Lac La Biche County, Lacombe County, Mackenzie County, Municipal District of Bonnyville, Municipal District of Fairview, Municipal District of Greenview, Municipal District of Peace, Municipal District of Provost, Municipal District of Smoky River, Municipal District of Spirit River, Northern Sunrise County, Ponoka County, Saddle Hills County, Smoky Lake County

## Wolverine Reporting

We worked with ATA to learn more about where wolverines and other furbearer species occur in the province, using trapper-maintained trail cameras. Camera data identified a close relationship between wolverines and lynx in the Boreal Forest Natural Region, with the presence of one species being a strong predictor for where we would find the other. Unexpectedly, marten in the boreal forest were associated with sites that had lower amounts of conifer forest in the surrounding landscape. To investigate fine scale habitat use by wolverines in a landscape dominated by wildfires, we deployed radio collars on animals in north-central Alberta. A total of ten wolverines were captured and fitted with collars over the course of the study. We found that radio-collared wolverines selected for habitat within their home ranges that had higher expected densities of snowshoe hares and grouse, as well as higher expected densities of wolves. We also found that wolverines selected for areas near the edges of recent wildfires but avoided the interiors of these regenerating forests until they reached a medium age (11–24 years).

### Partnerships

Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Inc., Animal Damage Control – A Division of Bushman Inc., Crowsnest Conservation Society, Alberta Trappers Association, Daishowa-Marubeni International Ltd./ Mercer Peace River Pulp Ltd., McGill University, Roadrunner Leasing and Sales Ltd., Shell Fueling Change, TD Friends of the Environment, University of Alberta





Project: Westslope Cutthroat Trout Population and Habitat Monitoring  
Description: ACA staff collecting biological measurements  
Photo: ACA, Brad Hurkett



## Fisheries Program

Fishing is one of Alberta's favourite pastimes, so ACA has an entire team of biologists dedicated to keeping its lakes, rivers, and their fish populations healthy. Projects we engage in reflect our emphasis on the enhancement of recreational fishing opportunities across the province and native fish conservation.

Stocked fish populations are an important component of Alberta's recreational angling experience. Along with partners, we stocked 65 ponds with four trout species and aerated 23 lakes to improve water quality and ensure year-round survival of stocked fish; the lakes we aerate are prone to both summer and winter fish kills. This year, we added Little Bear Lake to expand the aeration project and evaluated two additional lakes as potential candidates for future aeration. Similarly, we evaluated six ponds as potential candidates for trout stocking. Our fish stocking and aeration projects provide Albertans with recreational angling in areas of the province where such fishing opportunities would not otherwise exist. In addition, most stocked ponds are close to towns and cities, making them popular family destinations and ideal for the recruitment of new anglers.

We conducted angler surveys on four lakes to evaluate the efficacy of new management strategies at select walleye and northern pike fisheries, generating information that feed directly into GOA fisheries management plans. Also, we initiated a long-term project to determine the current and potential recreational fishing opportunities for historically lower-profile game species, including burbot, goldeye, and mooneye. We believe that lower-profile game species can

provide unique and significant angling and harvest opportunities. In 2022/23, we focused on burbot.

Other projects generated information to support provincial fish conservation and species recovery initiatives. Projects in the Clearwater, Ram, McLeod, Wildhay, Oldman, and Livingston river systems variously determined: the distribution, abundance, spawning, and habitat of native trout species, the potential of fish passage barriers to serve as conservation agents for native trout, the potential for streams and lakes to support westslope cutthroat trout (WSCT) range expansion, and on the ground remediation of point source sedimentation to native trout streams. The Beaverlodge River project fills in data gaps to support Arctic grayling restoration and the Owl River project determined fish community composition to aid riparian and fish habitat restoration.

Overall, the success of our Fisheries Program activities in 2022/23 involved the support of 45 partners consisting of provincial and federal governments, industry, non-governmental organizations, counties/municipalities, individual donors, and other interested groups.

### 2022/23 Overview

- Seven final project reports were produced.
- In all, 120,504 twenty-cm long trout (109,794 rainbow, 6,640 brook, 2,300 brown, and 1,770 tiger trout) were stocked into 65 ponds.
- Six ponds were evaluated as potential candidates for future trout stocking.
- All 23 aerated lakes successfully overwintered stocked trout with no reported winterkills.
- One new lake was added to expand the aeration project: Little Bear Lake.
- Aeration infrastructure was upgraded on three lakes.
- Two lakes were evaluated as potential candidates for future aeration.
- Five new financial partnerships were established in support of fish stocking and aeration projects.
- In all, 2,003 anglers were counted with 310 interviewed during angler surveys on four lakes.
- Initiated long-term project to determine current and potential recreational fishing opportunities for historically lower-profile game species.
- In all, 58 rivers/creeks and 40 lakes/ponds were surveyed, generating information on fish population status, distribution, fishing effort, spawning and rearing habitat, and water quality.
- Nearly 7,000 km of river were surveyed, including 61 km of electrofishing and 9 km of redd surveys; logged 152,473 seconds of electrofishing.
- In all, 40 stream crossings were assessed along 40 km of off-highway vehicle trail in the upper Clearwater River watershed; 2 crossings identified for remediation work in 2023/24.
- We are developing a list of the most suitable locations for WSCT reintroductions and range expansions above fish barriers; assessed 22 high mountain lakes in 2022/23.
- Participated in the Native Trout Conservation Collaborative, a multi-stakeholder group led by GOA that implements conservation programming for recovery of native trout in Alberta and funded through a grant from Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) Canadian Nature Fund for Aquatic Species at Risk.
- Sport fishes surveyed include walleye, northern pike, bull trout, Arctic grayling, cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, and burbot.
- In all, 45 partners and collaborations were involved in Fisheries Program activities.



## Assessment of Lower Profile Game Species

Of the 18 sport fish species in Alberta, angler catch largely consists of northern pike, yellow perch, walleye, and rainbow trout. We believe that lower profile game species in Alberta can provide unique and significant angling and harvest opportunities. In 2022/23, we focused on burbot, goldeye, and mooneye to explore the current and potential recreational fishing opportunities for these species. We piloted burbot capture methods for future population monitoring; completed a social survey to understand angler interest and motivations regarding burbot, goldeye, and mooneye angling; and explored existing species data from the Fish and Wildlife Management Information System database. Most survey respondents do not angle for burbot, goldeye, and mooneye, largely due to lack of knowledge on how to catch and cook them. In the future we may be able to enhance existing opportunities by providing information on how to catch, clean, and cook less popular species.

### Partnerships

Government of Alberta

## Effectiveness of Walleye-Pike Fishing Regulations

In 2018, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas released updated management objectives for walleye and northern pike fisheries that included manipulations with different harvest regimes at select lakes (GOA 2018a, 2018b). To aid in evaluating the impact of these manipulations, we conducted angler surveys on four impacted fisheries (Lac Ste. Anne, Gull, Buck, and Pigeon lakes) during the summer angling seasons of 2022. These angler surveys followed an instantaneous count methodology completed using boats or from shore during unsafe

weather conditions. They were accompanied by angler interviews on shore. Estimated angler effort was 2.08 h/ha at Lac Ste. Anne, 3.03 h/ha at Gull Lake, 11.30 h/ha at Buck Lake, and 2.09 h/ha at Pigeon Lake. Mean catch rates were 0.92 walleye/h and 0.22 northern pike/h at Lac Ste. Anne, 3.41 walleye/h and 0.29 northern pike/h at Pigeon Lake, 1.25 walleye/h and 0.19 northern pike/h at Gull Lake, and 1.09 walleye/h and 0.29 northern pike/h at Buck Lake. Mean walleye harvest rates were 0.07 walleye/h at Gull Lake and 0.13 walleye/h at Buck Lake. We did not calculate walleye harvest at Lac Ste. Anne or Pigeon Lake as they are regulated by a specific number of tags.

### Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Government of Canada: Service Canada, Canada Summer Jobs

## Fish Pond Rehabilitation

Fishing pressure at ACA stocked ponds can exceed 2,000 h/ha in the summer months, indicating these ponds can be popular among anglers. However, some of these ponds may not be capable of supporting trout survival beyond mid-summer due to low dissolved oxygen (DO). Therefore, we are investigating two techniques to improve water quality and DO concentrations in these ponds to increase angler opportunity: diffuse aeration during the open water season (spring-fall) and alum treatment. We have aerated Shell True North Pond during the open water season for the past five years and continue to improve DO concentration deeper into the water column and during winter months with each year. In 2022/23, we secured permits to conduct a pilot alum treatment study at Rainbow Park Pond. We retrieved dataloggers from four ponds installed in the fall of 2022. All four ponds experienced prolonged low DO concentrations (<1 mg/L) throughout the 2021/22 winter. Rainbow Park Pond will

be treated with alum in June 2023 and will be studied to determine if alum can improve water quality and overwintering DO concentration.

### Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Saddle Hills County, Westlock County

## Fish Stocking

The Fish Stocking Project provides anglers with increased opportunities to catch and harvest rainbow trout, brook trout, brown trout, and tiger trout in regions of Alberta where angling opportunities are limited. Recipient waterbodies are prone to winterkill and require annual stocking of fish to maintain angling opportunities. We stocked 65 waterbodies with 109,794 rainbow trout, 6,640 brook trout, 2,300 brown trout, and 1,770 tiger trout, for a total of 120,504 trout. We stocked 63 waterbodies with rainbow trout; of these, we supplemented 8–10 ponds with various combinations of brook trout, brown trout, and tiger trout. We stocked one pond (Shell True North) with brook trout and tiger trout only and another one (Mirror Reservoir) with brown trout only. Overall, we stocked 43 ponds with single species and 22 ponds with multiple species to increase diversity in fishing experience for anglers. Approximately 64% of the stockings were completed in spring before the May long weekend, 17% in early June, and the rest in the fall. We acquired four new corporate partners.

### Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Canadian Tire – Cochrane, CCI Inc., City of Beaumont, City of Fort Saskatchewan, City of Lacombe, City of Medicine Hat, City of Red Deer, County of Grande Prairie, Lethbridge County, NFP, Nutrien, Saddle Hills County, Shell Canada Energy, Southern Alberta Outdoorsmen, SysGen Solutions Group Ltd., Town of Cochrane, Town of High River, Town of Morinville, Town of Taber

## Fish Stocking Evaluation

Evaluation of our Fish Stocking Project suggests that poor water quality (high temperatures and low DO) and avian predation at some of our ponds may limit their ability to support stocked trout throughout the summer months. In 2022/23, we estimated summer angler use was 185 hours/ha at Shell True North Pond, 375 hours/ha at County Sportsplex, and 611 hours/ha at Lacombe Park Pond, indicating that these ponds are receiving low to moderate angler use. We used a citizen science approach to collect angler catch and trip length data at Lacombe Park Pond and found in-person data reported more fish per hour (1.40 fish per hour) and fewer zero catches than online reported data (0.24 fish per hour). Further evaluation of citizen science data collection is required to evaluate the discrepancy between in-person and angler submitted data. Mirror Reservoir and Windsor Lake both experience avian predation, typically peaking in spring. To mitigate this, we stocked additional trout in the fall of 2021 creating late season angling opportunities. We evaluated these opportunities by estimating angler use from fall to end of March. We found angler use to be very low at 1 and 2 hours/ha at Windsor Lake and Mirror Reservoir, respectively. All brown trout captured at Mirror Reservoir were from spring 2023 stocking, indicating fish stocked in the fall did not overwinter. Similarly, overwintering appears to be poor in Windsor Lake as very few 2022 fall-stocked fish were captured in the spring of 2023.

## Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, City of St. Albert

## Fish Stocking Expansion – Channel Catfish Ponds

Roughly one quarter of all fishing efforts in Alberta is sustained by trout stocking, and demand for recreational angling opportunities in the province is high. To help meet demand, millions of hatchery-reared trout are stocked annually into 300 Alberta lakes, reservoirs, and ponds. The stocked trout are cold-water species and require cool, oxygen-rich environments to thrive. High summer water temperature and low DO stresses trout and increases mortality such that some of Alberta's stocked waterbodies are incapable of supporting trout survival beyond mid-summer. For stocking to be successful at these waterbodies, an alternative to trout is required. Following a detailed evaluation of the suitability and availability of commonly stocked sport fish by ACA in 2020/21, a channel catfish x blue catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus* x *I. furcatus*) hybrid was selected as the most

promising alternative. Catfish of the genus *Ictalurus* do not currently occur within Alberta so their stocking to provincial waterbodies required careful consideration. To assist in the evaluation, we completed a detailed review of the biology, ecology, management, and culture of catfish in North America. In 2021/22, we continued to gather information in support of the evaluation as requested by provincial managers. The evaluation was completed in 2022/23 and included assessing ecological risk, as well as consideration of the management and social implications of stocking catfish. Although the final decision rested with the GOA, ACA participated in the review and was conditionally approved for the introduction of sterile hybrid channel catfish to Alberta in August 2022. However, after careful assessment of the logistical and financial challenges associated with meeting the conditions of approval, we decided to not proceed with importation.



Project: Assessment of Lower Profile Game Species  
Description: Burbot measure at Peerless Lake  
Photo: ACA, Scott Seward

## Fish Stocking Expansion – New Lakes

Stocked trout fisheries are popular in Alberta, with rainbow trout being the third most sought-after fish by anglers in Alberta. Given the popularity of stocked trout fisheries in Alberta, this project seeks to expand the number of stocked ponds through identification and screening of ponds with potential to support a stocked trout fishery. We identified and evaluated six new ponds (FS 1 in Didsbury, FS 179 in Carstairs, FS 232 in the Weberville area, FS 233 in Ponoka County, FS 234 in Penhold, and FS 235 in Rimbey) during the 2022 field season and determined that none met ACA criteria (e.g., water depth, DO, temperature, conductivity, pH, water clarity, absence of invasive species, barriers to prevent fish escapement, etc.) for a stocked fishery. However, three ponds—Chestermere Pond (near Chestermere), a borrow pit (BP1 near Fort McMurray), and Rotary Park Pond (Westlock)—identified in previous field seasons may be suitable for future fisheries. We are working with Alberta Environment and Protected Areas and local municipalities to determine next steps.

### Partnerships

Alberta Fish & Game Association, Alberta Transportation, County of Grande Prairie, Evelyn and Leslie Wadey, Lacombe Fish & Game Association, Saddle Hills County, Taber Irrigation District, Town of Taber

## Lake Aeration

We use lake aeration as a fisheries management technique to provide Albertans with diverse recreational angling opportunities in areas of the province where such opportunities would be otherwise limited. Aerated waterbodies are typically shallow, eutrophic, experience prolonged ice cover, and are prone to summer and winter fish kills. Using aeration, we maintained DO levels above 3 mg/L to promote year-round survival and availability of larger fish to

anglers. In 2022/23, we aerated 23 waterbodies across the province, all of which successfully overwintered stocked trout without any reported fish kills. We conducted monthly summer DO and temperature monitoring at Beaver, Birch, Fiesta, and Winchell lakes, and Kerbes Pond. This year, we expanded the aeration project by the addition of Little Bear Lake and upgraded electrical infrastructure at Millers Lake. We added two subsurface diffusers to the existing open water aeration system at Kerbes Pond to increase effectiveness. We replaced the windmill-driven summertime diffusers at Hansens Reservoir with a more efficient electrically powered diffusers to mitigate recent summer algal blooms and fish kills. We completed bathymetric mapping for Kerbes Pond and Mitchell Lake.

### Partnerships

Alberta Fish & Game Association, Aquality Environmental Consulting Ltd., Clear Hills County, County of Barrhead, County of Northern Lights, Edmonton Trout Fishing Club, Government of Alberta, Mercer Peace River Pulp Ltd., Mountain View County, Municipal District of Bonnyville, Municipal District of Greenview No. 16, Northern Lights Fly Fishers – Trout Unlimited Canada, Northern Sunrise County, Parkland County, Saddle Hills County, Thorhild County, West Fraser – Edson Forest Products

## New Lake Aeration Development

ACA Lake Aeration Project promotes angling opportunities in stocked waterbodies across Alberta where such fishing opportunities are otherwise limited. Waterbodies we aerated are prone to fish kills during winter and summer months due to low DO, but with aeration, we maintain DO concentrations at levels that promote year-round survival of stocked trout. Each year, we receive several requests to aerate waterbodies throughout the province. Given the substantial cost associated with aeration operations,

we carefully screen candidate waterbodies to ensure that we address top GOA provincial-level priorities. In 2022/23, we screened two waterbodies, Chatwin Lake and Blue Ridge Pit Pond, by monitoring DO and temperature profiles during winter months. With assistance of local GOA (Cold Lake fish hatchery) staff, this is the third year collecting DO and temperature data at Chatwin Lake, and our first year at Blue Ridge Pit Pond.

### Partnerships

Government of Alberta

## Owl River Fish Habitat Protection

In partnership with Syncrude, ACA is monitoring fish community and aquatic habitat on the Owl River from 2020 to 2045 related to riparian habitat restoration and anticipated improvement of the fish habitat. Fish community in the Owl River system consisted of five species: walleye, white suckers, yellow perch, northern pike, and burbot. Walleye was the most encountered species along the Owl River. Overall, walleye, yellow perch, and white suckers exhibited good condition ( $K > 1.0$ ). Dominant substrate was large gravel in the most upstream site and transitioned to sand, then fines further downstream. Instream fish cover was mostly provided by turbid waters and aquatic vegetation. Fish community composition and aquatic habitat information from this year supports previous monitoring on riparian habitat and water quality and will be used as a baseline for monitoring potential outcomes of restoration and livestock exclusion fencing zones along the river. Our work is done with the support of Syncrude, County of Lac La Biche, GOA, and the many landowners and leaseholders throughout the Owl River system.

### Partnerships

Cooperating landowners and leaseholders, County of Lac La Biche, Government of Alberta, Syncrude Canada Ltd.





Project: New Lake Aeration Development  
Description: Installing dataloggers  
Photo: ACA, Troy Furukawa

## Oxygen-Temperature Trends in the Beaverlodge-Redwillow River Watershed

Arctic grayling were historically abundant in the Beaverlodge and Redwillow River watersheds but have been extirpated from the Beaverlodge watershed since the mid-1990s and are thought to be in decline in the Redwillow River watershed. ACA has been working in the Beaverlodge watershed since 2004 to improve riparian health and water quality in hopes of bringing Arctic grayling back to the watershed. To determine if riparian health improvements have improved water quality for Arctic grayling re-introductions, we installed 61 temperature loggers and 11 DO loggers to assess the spatial and temporal oxygen and temperature patterns in the Beaverlodge and Redwillow River watersheds. We noted 18 temperature logger sites with no water at time of removal in October. Mean August water temperature fell into three thermal categories for Arctic grayling: optimal (7.5–17°C) at 18 sites, avoidance

(17–20°C) at 14 sites, and stressed (20–25°C) at three sites. Water temperature and water quantity may be limiting Arctic grayling recovery in Beaverlodge River watershed.

### Partnerships

Beaverlodge River Arctic Grayling Society, County of Grande Prairie, Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance, TC Energy

## Ram River Bull Trout Assessment

Bull trout is a native sport fish species classed as *Threatened* in Alberta and is particularly sensitive to habitat change. A government-led initiative, the Native Trout Recovery Program, was implemented in 2017 to recover native trout throughout the Eastern Slopes of Alberta. The program involves implementation of recovery actions (e.g., trail remediation/closures, implementing industry best-management practices, and suppression of non-native species) in an adaptive management framework. In the fall of 2022, we used multiple redd surveys to assess the bull trout

population in the lower Ram River watershed. Fall Creek remains an important spawning tributary in the watershed. We counted 54 bull trout redds on a survey of a 3.5 km reach of Fall Creek. We continued to use our solar-powered video recording system to count adult bull trout exiting the Fall Creek spawning area. We obtained 37 days of footage during the spawning migration counting 56 bull trout moving downstream past the cameras; an additional seven bull trout were observed upstream of the camera at the time of removal. This resulted in a ratio of 1.2 spawners per redd, an index that can be used to estimate bull trout abundance from future redd surveys. Our study provides managers with information on trends in bull trout redd distribution and abundance that can be used to evaluate bull trout response to recovery actions.

### Partnerships

Fisheries and Oceans Canada – Canada Nature Fund, Government of Alberta, Sundre Forest Products – A Division of West Fraser Mills Ltd.



## Upper Clearwater River Native Trout Recovery

Three native trout species along the Eastern Slopes of the Rocky Mountains are listed under the Species at Risk Act because of decreasing populations. A government-led initiative, the Native Trout Recovery Program, was implemented in 2017 to recover native trout throughout their historic range. The program involves implementation of recovery actions (e.g., trail remediation/closures, implementing industry best-management practices, and suppression of non-native species) in an adaptive management framework. Watercourse crossings can have a negative impact on native trout by fragmenting habitat, depositing sediment, and changing stream channels. Using the Alberta Watercourse Crossing Initiative (ABWCI) app, we inspected 40 stream crossings in Elk, Peppers, and Cutoff creeks within the upper Clearwater River watershed. Most crossings were in good condition, but three are high priority for bioengineering to mitigate point

source sediment inputs entering into the creek. This work will be completed in 2023. We completed a short redd survey on Cutoff Creek to identify bull trout critical habitat. Complete redd surveys on Elk, Peppers, and Cutoff creeks will be completed in 2023.

### Partnerships

Fisheries and Oceans Canada – Canada Nature Fund, Government of Alberta

### Upper McLeod River Native Trout Inventory

Athabasca rainbow trout and bull trout abundance and distribution has decreased from historical levels in Alberta. These species are listed under the Species at Risk Act, which identifies many anthropogenic threats to native trout in the province. Alberta's Native Trout Recovery Program is a collaboration of government and non-government organizations tasked with assessing native trout populations and, through remediation activities, recovering at-risk populations. The Upper McLeod River watershed is a priority for

assessment. In the summer of 2022, we used backpack electrofishing gear to sample 38 sites randomly distributed throughout four sub-watersheds within the Upper McLeod River watershed. We completed an additional 15 sites in the Upper McLeod above Beaverdam Creek sub-watershed initially sampled by the GOA in 2017. We captured a total of 2,101 fish, with rainbow trout being the most widely distributed species across the four sub-watersheds. Bull trout were the most abundant fish species in the Upper McLeod above Beaverdam Creek sub-watershed. This is the second and final year of the project with four additional sub-watersheds completed in 2021. A final report summarizing our results will be complete by April 2023. Project results provide up-to-date information on the population status of native Athabasca rainbow trout and bull trout in the Upper McLeod River watershed.

### Partnerships

Alberta Native Trout Collaborative, Fisheries and Oceans Canada – Canada Nature Fund, Government of Alberta



## Westslope Cutthroat Trout Population and Habitat Monitoring

In 2018, the *Livingstone-Porcupine Hills Land Footprint Plan* was introduced by the GOA to reduce cumulative impacts on the landscape by changing land-use patterns to allow existing land footprints to recover. The resulting Livingstone-Porcupine Hills Public Land Use Zone (PLUZ) encompasses the largest remaining WSCT core area in Alberta. Current land-use restrictions and habitat recovery activities in these critical habitats are anticipated to benefit fish populations and aid in species recovery. ACA conducted a multi-year WSCT population monitoring study in four sub-watersheds (i.e., Livingstone River, upper Oldman [UOM] River, Dutch Creek, and Hidden Creek) in the UOM River WSCT core area to collect fish data at index sites for five years to determine natural WSCT population variations within the PLUZ. These data will be used to examine population response to the new PLUZ restrictions. In 2022, the final year of the study, we completed fish surveys at 39 electrofishing sites in the UOM core area. In comparison to previous years, overall CPUE of WSCT in 2022 were highest in the UOM River and Livingstone River sub-watersheds and lowest in the Dutch Creek and Hidden Creek sub-watersheds. Average fish size was largest in the Hidden Creek sub-watershed and smallest in the Dutch Creek sub-watershed. This was the final population monitoring year and results will be used to examine the ongoing effects of the recent changes to land use in the Livingstone-Porcupine Hills PLUZ.

### Partnerships

Fisheries and Oceans Canada – Canada Nature Fund, Fisheries and Oceans Canada – Habitat Stewardship Program Fund, Government of Alberta

## Westslope Cutthroat Trout Range Expansion

Recovery of WSCT in Alberta requires recolonization and expansion of their range, which is currently 5% of the historical distribution. Since 2018, we have been adapting a framework originally developed for bull trout into a framework for WSCT range expansion feasibility in Alberta, into watersheds that are secure from invasion, above barriers. Across the WSCT range, many watersheds are fed directly or indirectly by headwater lakes, where thermal habitat is promising for WSCT survival, but overwintering and spawning potential remain key uncertainties. Since WSCT are almost exclusively stream spawners, we assessed lake outlets for suitable spawning substrates, and performed littoral habitat surveys to investigate rare shoal spawning potential at over 20 high mountain lakes. Since upwellings are thought to create stable winter refuge areas by inhibiting below-ice freezing, we also tested new methods to evaluate overwintering and spawning potential using thermal infrared drones to detect upwellings. We used remote camera surveys to estimate angler use at high mountain lakes containing WSCT. Of the 14 high mountain lakes we assessed for angler effort, total observed anglers and total estimated angler effort were highest at Rawson Lake, whereas estimated angler effort by lake area was the highest at Picklejar Lake 4. Conversely, Commonwealth Lake had the lowest number of observed anglers, total estimated angler effort, and estimated angler effort by lake area. In 2023, we will complete estimates of angler use at the four remaining lakes, complete analyses, and catalogue lake suitability information including outlet and littoral survey data, drone survey footage for detecting upwellings, outlet and lake profile temperature data, and environmental DNA results.

### Partnerships

Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Alberta Native Trout Collaborative, Fisheries and Oceans Canada through the Canada Nature Fund

## Wildhay River Native Trout Inventory

Athabasca rainbow trout and bull trout are listed under the Species at Risk Act, which identifies many anthropogenic threats to native trout in the province. Alberta's Native Trout Recovery Program is a collaboration of government and non-government organizations tasked with assessing native trout populations and promoting recovery of at-risk populations. Through this collaborative, the Wildhay River watershed was identified as a priority for native trout population assessment. In the summer of 2022, we used backpack electrofishing to assess fish populations at 44 sites randomly distributed across five sub-watersheds in the Wildhay River system. We captured a total of 200 fish of six species. Athabasca rainbow trout, captured in three of the sub-watersheds, were the most widely distributed species. Bull trout were caught in two of the five sub-watersheds. Brook trout were the most abundant species captured, but only occurred in one sub-watershed (Moberly Creek).

### Partnerships

Alberta Native Trout Collaborative, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Government of Alberta



Project: Provincial Habitat Securement Program  
Description: Manyberries Creek Conservation Site  
Photo: ACA, Tyler Johns





## Land Management Program

ACA's Land Management Program is all about conserving habitat across Alberta, which means protecting, enhancing, and restoring wildlife and fish habitat while providing recreational opportunities for Albertans to enjoy. Our *Alberta Discover Guide* highlights ACA and partner-owned conservation sites, which span hundreds of thousands of acres (ac) across our province. Each site has its own unique characteristics that provide an array of opportunities to hunt, fish, forage, or view wildlife. Our goal is to conserve key habitat, benefiting our precious wildlife and fish resources, and in the process, providing an added value for outdoor enthusiasts.

Each year we add acres to the inventory of land assets by securing habitat through purchase or donation. Thanks to our partners and conservation-minded landowners, we secured five new land acquisitions; four acquisitions were new conservation sites, and one was a conservation site expansion. Combined, they conserved a total of 1,286.2 ac (520.5 hectares [ha]) of habitat. These lands have an estimated value of \$3,096,075. We manage 23 fisheries access sites that add value by providing quality angling opportunities for Albertans on several stocked lakes and on several rivers where access is considered challenging.

We collaborate with landowners on other habitat-based programs such as our Landowner Habitat and Riparian Conservation programs, which focus on enhancing and conserving wildlife and fish habitat while improving recreational access on deeded lands. Currently, we manage 37 Landowner Habitat Agreements and 49 Riparian Conservation Agreements conserving a total of 15,657.9 ac of wildlife and fish habitat.

Our Recreational Opportunity Enhancement Program is aimed at easing access to privately owned lands by facilitating access management through a hunter/angler sign-in

system. We also focus other project initiatives on providing access to rivers, wetlands, and lakes to improve hunting and/or angling opportunities in areas where access may be limited.

The success of our Land Management Program is a testament to the support and effort of over 60 partnerships, including government, industry, non-governmental organizations, counties/municipalities, leaseholders, private landowners, corporate partners, and other interested groups. These collaborative partnerships are vital to our success. Moreover, they help us maximize each levy dollar we receive, allowing us to achieve the many conservation goals within ACA's Land Management Program.

### 2022/23 Overview

- We added four new conservation sites and expanded one existing conservation site, totalling 1,286.2 ac (520.5 ha) with a land value of approximately \$3,096,075. Collaborative partnerships with government, landowners, conservation groups, and other organizations contribute significantly to our success in conserving habitat. Nearly two-thirds of the value of habitat secured this year came from private land donations and grant contributions from Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC).
- Participation in our habitat securement activities by corporate partners has declined significantly in recent years. Many companies have been focused on reducing carbon emissions. However, we were successful with a one-year grant application to Enbridge for \$15,000. We will continue discussions with industry partners in 2023/24, providing opportunities to meet corporate biodiversity conservation targets.
- We are currently managing 37 Landowner Habitat Program Agreements, conserving 6,710 ac (2,715.5 ha) of wildlife and fish habitat.
- We renewed four Landowner Habitat Agreements that expired in 2021/22, conserving 1,377 ac (557.3 ha).
- We continued discussions with GOA on management of Crown conservation sites (disposition process ongoing).
- We enhanced habitat on 60 conservation sites, including restoring a 10-acre wetland, planting 85,240 trees and shrubs, restoring 9 acres to native grass species, planting 8 acres of food plots for upland game birds, removing 1,950 m of barbed wire fence, and modifying/installing 4,800 m of wildlife-friendly fencing.
- We inspected 199 conservation sites and completed routine maintenance on 64 sites including fences and invasive vegetation control.
- We completed baseline inventories and other assessments on 20 conservation sites.
- We improved facilities for public foot access by installing foot access gates, and/or restricted vehicle trespass with barriers, to nine conservation sites.
- We installed new project signs on five conservation sites and continued installing boundary and "Foot Access Only" signs on conservation sites.
- We provided recommendations on 150 land-use referrals and public inquiries.
- We provided angler access at 23 fisheries access sites, of which five received site upgrades and enhancements that included installing a floating dock, constructing a parking area, and installing a permanent outhouse, repairing damaged infrastructure, and replacing site signage.
- We completed 14 conservation site management plans.
- We delivered 20 riparian enhancement projects: four fencing projects, seven landowner agreements, six off-site livestock watering initiatives, and three bioengineering projects. As part of this work, we planted 6,500 willow stakes, 60 silverberry, 450 balsam poplar, and 18 trembling aspen.
- We conserved 151.2 acres (61.2 ha) of riparian habitat and 1.46 acres (0.6 ha) of upland habitat through new riparian habitat lease agreements; installed 3.2 km of new wildlife-friendly fencing; and removed 0.3 km of old fence. We also monitored 49 existing agreements that conserve 8,947.9 acres (3,621.1 ha) of riparian and adjacent upland habitat lands throughout the province.
- We provided 15 participating landowners with recreational user sign-in access services for existing properties, totalling approximately 217,900.8 acres (88,184.5 ha) of accessible land.
- We enrolled one new landowner that historically did not allow hunting access to our sign-in program in the Southern Region, totalling approximately 14,160 acres (5,730.6 ha).

## Conservation Site Management

ACA's Conservation Site Management (CSM) project currently manages 391 conservation sites and 11 conservation easements, which include over 217,000 acres (approximately 88,000 hectares) of titled and Crown land in Alberta. The CSM Project is responsible for ongoing management and enhancement of these sites; activities are guided by site-specific management plans. In 2022/23, our field staff completed inspections and maintenance tasks on 210 sites. Our team also completed habitat enhancement projects on 60 conservation sites, including restoring a 10-acre wetland, seeding 9 acres to native grass species, planting 85,240 trees and shrubs, planting 8 acres of food plots for upland game birds, installing and modifying fencing to facilitate wildlife movement on nine sites, and removing garbage and anthropogenic structures on eight sites. Recreational access modifications were completed at nine sites, including construction of foot access gates and installing barriers to restrict vehicle trespass. We installed new project signs on five conservation sites and replaced project signs on six sites. Staff provided recommendations on 45 land-use referrals and 105 public inquiries. We also managed public access on one high-use conservation site through a reservation system. Further, we continued discussions with GOA representatives to determine long-term partnership roles and responsibilities at conservation sites on Crown land that ACA manages. Our success in managing and enhancing conservation sites is achieved through a collaborative effort with a growing number of partners and volunteers throughout Alberta.

### Partnerships

Alberta Fish & Game Association, AFGA Minister's Special Licence Program, Bow River Irrigation District, Brooks and District Fish & Game Association, County

of Newell, County of Warner, Cows and Fish, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Eastern Irrigation District, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Government of Alberta, Grey Wooded Forage Association, landowners, Lethbridge County, MULTISAR, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Pheasants Forever – Calgary and Chinook Chapters, Project Forest, Red Deer County, Trout Unlimited Canada, volunteer stewards

## Corporate Partners Program

Our Corporate Partners Program is a collaboration between ACA and key industry partners to offset the impact of industrial activity through the securement of ecologically important lands in Alberta's Natural Regions. The properties that are secured through our Corporate Partners Program are incorporated into ACA's network of conservation sites and provide key habitat for wildlife and fish species while allowing for increased recreational opportunities for all Albertans. ACA has been working with industrial partners since 2003 to secure ecologically important land. In 2022/23, we approached Suncor Energy, Shell Canada, and TC Energy to become a Corporate Partner through multi-year agreements; however, reducing carbon emissions currently has a higher priority for many of these companies. We were successful with a 1-year grant application to Enbridge for \$15,000. Our goal is to continue working with industry partners in 2023/24 to secure a financial partnership conserving key habitats using a collaborative approach. ACA staff continue to respond to landowner enquiries wanting to sell their land to us for conservation purposes.

## Fisheries Access Site Management

ACA's Land Management Program encompasses activities intended to conserve, protect, and enhance wildlife and fish habitat and to increase sustainable recreational

opportunities including angling and hunting. One of the activities of the program is the delivery of the Fisheries Access Site Management Program, which provides angling access to key streams, rivers, and lakes throughout the province. We inspected and maintained 23 fisheries access sites and commissioned ten contracts to maintain 19 sites in 2022/23. We completed upgrades and repairs at five sites with improvements to day-use facilities and access areas including installing a floating dock, constructing a parking area, installing a permanent outhouse, repairing day-use infrastructure, and replacing two damaged project signs. We moved forward on the process to acquire ACA leases on three Crown land sites. We recognized 26 partners in 2022/23 who generously contributed financially or with in-kind assistance. We worked to secure partners and applied on grants to complete final access developments planned at the Boulder Lake site. We continued to strive to ensure anglers have high-quality experiences at ACA fisheries access sites across the province.

### Partnerships

Agroforestry and Woodlot Extension Society, Alberta Fish & Game Association, Alberta Transportation, Alternate Land Use Services Canada, Camrose County, Clearwater County, County of Newell, County of Northern Lights, Cows and Fish, Devon Canada Corporation, Dickson Fish & Game Association, Government of Alberta, Haul-All Equipment Ltd., Lacombe County, Lacombe Fish & Game Association, Lethbridge County, Lethbridge Northern Irrigation District, Municipal District of Greenview, North Raven River Working Group, Rocky View County, Saddle Hills County, Stettler County, Trout Unlimited Canada – Bow River Chapter, Trout Unlimited Canada – Central Chapter, Waldron Grazing Co-Op Ltd., Wetaskiwin County



# Landowner Habitat Program

Privately owned lands in Alberta have a significant role in sustaining healthy wildlife and fish populations. There are approximately 65 million acres of private land in Alberta and over 52% of this land has been cultivated (The Western Producer, 2013). Private lands that have not been cleared or excessively altered provide a variety of natural habitats for wildlife. Protecting these natural habitats, including forest, wetlands, and native grasslands, help maintain threatened ecosystems. The Landowner Habitat Program (LHP) was initiated to help conserve key habitats and reduce habitat loss and fragmentation on privately owned land. The program provides incentives for landowners who are willing to sign a legally binding agreement to retain habitat for a term of five to 20 years; a condition of the agreement is for landowners to provide reasonable public

foot access. Participants in this program are acknowledged with a project sign and provided with *Use Respect – Ask First* signage to display along the perimeter of their property. We currently manage 37 LHP agreements across the province, which conserves approximately 6,710 acres (2,715.5 ha) of important wildlife and fish habitat.

## Partnerships

Landowners

## Management Plan Development

ACA currently manages 414 sites, 391 conservation sites, and 23 fisheries access sites in Alberta. Of these, three new conservation sites were added in 2022/23 by completing two purchases and one eco-gift donation. To manage our conservation assets effectively, ACA develops management plans for all of our sites. We place emphasis on developing

detailed habitat management objectives that maintain the ecological integrity of each site while also providing recreational opportunities to the public. ACA works with our partners to develop management plans that are used as guiding documents for overall site management. These plans provide specific details regarding site features, objectives regarding enhancement or restoration, recreational and facility enhancements, guidelines, and other planned activities for the site. Management plans are reviewed by ACA and our partners as required or on a term basis (e.g., after five or ten years) to ensure we are meeting our intended goals and objectives. In 2022/23, we developed 14 management plans.

## Partnerships

Alberta Fish & Game Association, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Government of Alberta



Project: Conservation Site Management  
Description: Ross Creek wetland restoration in progress  
Photo: A. Price

Project: Riparian Conservation Program  
Description: Livestock crossing improvement on Beaverlodge River  
Photo: M. Kennedy



## Provincial Habitat Securement Program

Alberta's population experienced significant growth in 2022 increasing to 4.60 million by the third quarter, up from 4.44 million in 2021. The activities and economy in agriculture, oil and gas industry, and municipal development have increased; thus, a greater impact on the loss of habitat. ACA's Provincial Habitat Securement Program conserves important wildlife and fish habitat through land purchases, land donations, and leases on Crown land. In 2022/23, we improved our ranking criteria to help us focus and prioritize lands in a corridor between Edmonton and Calgary and lands that support species at risk. We collaborate with conservation groups, industry, various companies, and conservation-minded private individuals allowing us to maximize our conservation impact and efficiency

in our securement efforts. Securing habitat ensures these lands will be conserved in perpetuity to benefit our valued wildlife and fish resources, and to provide Alberta's outdoor enthusiasts with year-round, sustainable recreational opportunities. Together in 2022/23, we completed two land acquisitions and one eco-gift donation, which conserved 880 acres (356.1 ha). These lands have an estimated land value of \$2,182,950. Management plans will be prepared in 2023/24 to collaboratively address roles and responsibilities between managing partners.

### Partnerships

Anne Katherine Packer, Ducks Unlimited Canada, Enbridge, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Government of Alberta, Medicine Hat Fish & Game Association, Pheasants Forever – Calgary Chapter, Pheasants Forever – Chinook Chapter, Sherwood Park Fish & Game Association

## Recreational Opportunity Enhancement

ACA established the Recreational Opportunity Enhancement Project to improve opportunities for fishing and hunting, as well as other non-consumptive activities such as hiking, canoeing, or photography. The major focus of this project is to improve waterfowl hunter access to Crown waterbodies and improve upland and big game hunter access to private lands. In addition, the project will focus on initiatives that enhance access to major rivers and waterbodies such as the Bow and North Saskatchewan rivers for angling and other water-related recreational activities. Working with individual landowners has allowed us to improve hunter access to approximately 217,900.8 acres (88,184.5 ha) of private land across southern Alberta through a sign-in access system. Increasing access opportunities for hunters may provide the GOA additional options to use hunters as a management tool when managing game species. Not only will increased opportunities encourage hunter and angler recruitment, but it will also help maintain quality outdoor experiences by distributing hunters and anglers across the landscape.

### Partnerships

Alberta Fish & Game Association, landowners, Lethbridge Fish & Game Association

## Riparian Conservation Program

The ecological integrity and health of Alberta's rivers, streams, and surrounding landscapes are often negatively affected by ongoing human development. Riparian areas are complex ecosystems that provide important ecological functions and are critical to maintaining watershed health. Proper management of this sensitive habitat is essential to maintain water quality and habitat integrity. The primary goal of ACA's Riparian Conservation Program is to protect and restore riparian habitat in priority watersheds through on-the-ground habitat



restoration projects by engaging landowners, the public, and other stakeholders through community outreach and education activities. Our collaborative partnerships with landowners, industry, government, watershed groups, and other stakeholders are an integral component of project delivery. In 2022/23, we focused conservation efforts in the following priority watersheds: Beaverlodge, Heart, Raven, Owl, North Raven, Redwillow, and St. Mary rivers; and Beaver, Clear, Dogpound, Todd, Sharples, and Five Mile creeks (including their associated tributaries). We delivered 20 enhancement projects using a variety of management tools, including implementing agreements to conserve 151.2 acres (61.2 ha) of riparian and associated upland habitat: six off-site watering systems, seven landowner agreements,

three bioengineering projects; and installing 3.2 km of wildlife-friendly fencing and removing 0.3 km of old fence to protect important riparian habitat as part of new and existing agreements. We also monitored water quality and riparian health on two systems to help evaluate the effectiveness of riparian enhancements, supported landowners with riparian enhancement activities, and communicated our Riparian Conservation Program to various communities. Our efforts have contributed to improvements in riparian habitat health and have positively influenced the stewardship approach of many landowners and leaseholders.

**Partnerships**

Agroforestry and Woodlot Extension Society, Alberta Fish & Game Association, Cenovus Energy Inc.,

County of Grande Prairie, Cows and Fish – Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society, Critical Mass, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Foothills Forage and Grazing Association, Give Back Contracting Ltd., Grey Wooded Forage Association, HUVAN Construction, landowners, Mighty Peace Watershed Alliance, Milk River Watershed Council Canada, Mountain View County, Northern Sunrise County, Oldman Watershed Council, Ovitiv Inc., Red Deer River Watershed Alliance, Sinopec Canada, Syncrude Canada Ltd., TC Energy Corporation, Tree Time Services Inc., Trout Unlimited Canada, West County Watershed Society, Wood PLC

**Corporate Partners Program and Provincial Habitat Securement Program Transactions in 2022/23**

Project Name	Securement Tool & Partners	Size (ac)	Special Features
<b>Northeast</b>			
<b>Bruce</b> SE-36-047-16-W4M	A land purchase between ACA, DUC, and ECCC.	160.0	This site is approximately 38 km east of Camrose in the central parkland. There are three DUC conservation sites (French, Naslund, and Winczura) and one ACA conservation site (Daysland) within 3.6 km of this site. It consists of grassland, small patches of aspen, snowberry, saskatoon, willow, and a 44-acre wetland. It also has approximately 57 acres of cropland. Wildlife in the area include moose, deer, coyote, upland game birds, and waterfowl.
<b>Packer</b> Pt. SW-21-056-20-W4M	An eco-gift land donation from a landowner to ACA.	80.0	This site is approximately 15 km northeast of Fort Saskatchewan and 30 km northeast of Edmonton in the dry mixedwood. The North Bruderheim Provincial Recreation Area is approximately 1.6 km north of this site. The landscape is characterized by upland sand dunes and sandy plateaus interspersed with low marsh and fen wetlands. Small patches of aspen are scattered throughout the site. Wildlife in the area include moose, deer, coyote, ruffed grouse, and waterfowl.
<b>Northwest</b>			
<b>Side Family</b> Pt. NW-07-072-07-W6M, Pt. NE-07-072-07-W6M	An eco-gift land donation from a landowner to ACA.	247.3	This site is approximately 16 km west of Grande Prairie in the dry mixedwood forest. It is 2 km from Saskatoon Island Provincial Park and 13 km from a DUC conservation site. It consists of mixedwood forest, riparian habitat, shrubs, and hay land. The site is on the northeast shore of Saskatoon Lake, which is a major staging lake for migration in the spring and fall. Wildlife in the area include moose, deer, black bear, and ruffed grouse.
<b>Central</b>			
<b>Sadie</b> NW-33-036-21-W4M	A land purchase between ACA and DUC.	159.4	This site is approximately 56 km from Red Deer and 25 km from Stettler. There are several conservation sites within 12 km including Kerbes 2, Wood Lake, Kerbes Pond, and Wilfort. It consists of central parkland habitat including grassland, shrubland, riparian, and poplar forest cover. Wildlife in the area include moose, white-tail and mule deer, waterfowl, and coyote. This site falls within the northern leopard frog historical range as well.
<b>Northeast</b>			
<b>Manyberries Creek (Expansion 1)</b> 10-006-05-W4M	A land purchase between ACA, DUC, ECCC, Enbridge, PF-Calgary, PF-Chinook, Medicine Hat Fish & Game, and Sherwood Park Fish & Game.	640.0	This site is approximately 70 km south of Medicine Hat in the dry mixed grass. It is adjacent to the Manyberries Creek Conservation Site and 25 km from Silver Sage Conservation Site. It consists of grassland, shrubland, riparian habitat, tame pasture, and hayland. Wildlife in the area include moose, deer, pheasant, sharp-tailed grouse, and 17 <i>At Risk</i> species including sage grouse and burrowing owl.
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>1,286.7</b>	



Description: Walleye  
Photo: ACA, Kelly Riehl



# ACA Project Reports

The following is a list of ACA Project Reports published in 2022/23. These reports are available on our website. Annual Summary reports for all ongoing projects can also be found on our website.

## Fisheries Program

Blackburn, J. 2023. Assessment of waterfall fish barriers in the Bow River watershed, 2020–2021. ACA Project Report: Final, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada. 15 pp + App.

Dowbush, L., L. Engley, and M. Rodtka. 2023. Owl River fish community, aquatic habitat assessment, and riparian enhancement 2022: Supplement to the 2021 Owl River riparian restoration and enhancement project monitoring report. ACA Project Report: Final, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada. 15 pp + App.

Judd, C., M. Rodtka, and Z. Spence. 2023. Ram River bull trout assessment, 2017–2022. ACA Project Report: Final, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada. 20 pp + App.

Lebedynski, N. 2023. Summer angler surveys on four walleye-pike fisheries in central Alberta, 2022. ACA Project Report: Final, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada. 8 pp + App.

Spence, Z., C. Judd, and M. Rodtka. 2023. Upper McLeod River trout inventory, 2021–2022. ACA Project Report: Final, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada. 21 pp + App.

Redman, L., and J. Blackburn. 2023. Temperature and dissolved oxygen conditions of Callum Creek, Alberta, 2021–2022. ACA Project Report: Final, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada. 9 pp + App.

Hurkett, B. H., and J. Blackburn. 2023. Westslope cutthroat trout population monitoring in the upper Oldman River watershed, 2018–2022. ACA Project Report: Final, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada. 16 pp + App.

## Land Management Program

Lund, T. 2023. Comparison of 2009 and 2021 Riparian health assessments in the Beaverlodge River watershed of Alberta using aerial videography. ACA Project Report: Final, produced by Alberta Conservation Association, Sherwood Park, Alberta, Canada. 17 pp + App.



Project: ACA Conservation, Community, and Education Grants: Environmental Education Project  
Description: Learning about ungulates at the Fur & Feathers Family Nature Night  
Photo: Steph Weizenbach



# ACA Grants Program

Alberta's hunters and anglers contribute directly to conservation through levies on their hunting and fishing licences. The levy funds come to ACA, and one of the many things we do with that money is to support community and research efforts via our Grants Program.

## ACA Conservation, Community, and Education Grants

This fund supports conservation activities that contribute to wildlife and fish population health and the health of their environments, and to the understanding, appreciation, and use of those environments. Projects that increase participation in, and awareness of, outdoor opportunities, while developing knowledge and respect for conservation, are also funded through this grant. The projects range from youth hunter, angler, and archery programs to local festivals to restoration and stewardship projects.

### 2022/23 Overview

- We received 112 applications, requesting just under \$1.69 million.
- We supported 71 projects with \$966,740 of funding.
- We leveraged an estimated \$3.1 for every \$1 spent by ACA Conservation, Community, and Education Grants.

## ACA Research Grants

ACA Research Grants fund high-quality research projects on wildlife, fish, and habitat that inform the effective management of wildlife and fish populations and habitat in Alberta. Topics range from the economic values of hunting from data collected from a smart phone app to the morphological diversity of Arctic grayling in Alberta.

### 2022/23 Overview

- We received 27 applications requesting \$781,819.
- We funded 12 research projects with a total of \$330,344.
- We leveraged an estimated \$1.9 for every \$1 spent by ACA Research Grants.

## ACA Grants in Biodiversity

The ACA Grants in Biodiversity Program supports projects by master's and doctorate students from around the world who are studying the flora, fauna, and habitat of Alberta. Grants are given for two-year terms. The program is funded by ACA with a sponsorship from Syncrude Canada Ltd. (a \$250,000 commitment over five fiscal years [2019/20 to 2023/24]).

### 2022/23 Overview

- A total of \$193,000 of grants were distributed with individual grants ranging from \$4,160 to \$18,580.
- In all, 15 student projects were funded: ten master's and five PhD candidates from the University of Alberta, University of Calgary, University of Lethbridge, University of Montana, and McGill University.
- The funded projects include an investigation into moose-killing liver flukes, outfitting bears with cameras to see if they impact caribou kill rates, a look at ground beetles in crop fields, and projects looking at tree mortality and resilience.

## ACA Chair in Fisheries and Wildlife at the University of Alberta

The ACA Chair was established through an endowment to the University of Alberta, providing educational initiatives to wildlife professionals. By addressing issues and problems relevant to Alberta's biological resources, the Chair, Dr. Mark Boyce, supports ACA's goals for long-term, sustainable wildlife and fish resources. A contribution to teaching is also an essential duty of the position. The ACA Chair is expected to contribute to the activities of the Department of Biological Sciences and to the university as a whole. Dr. Boyce's expertise is internationally recognized, and he has significantly enhanced ACA's efforts to conserve Alberta's wildlife and fish resources. For more information and for a list of publications, visit: [apps.ualberta.ca/directory/person/boyce](https://apps.ualberta.ca/directory/person/boyce).

### 2022/23 Overview

- In 2022/23, Dr. Boyce was awarded the Stan Hodgkiss Outdoorsperson of the Year Award by the Canadian Wildlife Federation for his continued contributions to conservation. He was granted a 5-year renewal of his Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) Discovery grant with a 25% increase in funding. Along with his students he published 13 research papers in peer-reviewed journals. The research ranged from impacts of various grazing practices on carbon sequestration and carbon emissions, to the impact of predators on prey species. In addition, Dr. Boyce continues to supervise students working on bighorn sheep, deer, bison, wolves, sandhill cranes, and American marten. Next year he will initiate a new project on Alberta's wild boar.

## ACA Conservation, Community, and Education Grants

Recipient	Project	Funding
Alberta Fish & Game Association	Conservation of Grassland Species at Risk through Stewardship and Implementation of Best Management Practices in Alberta	\$42,500
Alberta Fish & Game Association	Pronghorn Antelope Migration Corridor Enhancement	\$42,656
Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association	AHEIA Teachers' Workshop	\$6,000
Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association	AHEIA's Outdoor Women's Program	\$30,000
Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association	AHEIA's Outdoor Youth Seminar	\$6,000
Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association	AHEIA's Provincial Hunting Day Initiatives	\$20,000
Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association	AHEIA's Youth Hunter Education Camps 2022-23	\$32,000
Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association	National Archery in the Schools Program (NASP)	\$40,000
Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association	Natural Gas Conversion at Alford Lake	\$4,800
Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association	Outdoor Bound Mentored Hunt Program	\$7,000
Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association	Outdoor Bound! Primitive Weapons Mentored Hunt	\$7,000
Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association	Women's and Youth Shotgun Leagues	\$3,000
Alberta Hunter Education Instructors' Association	Women's Archery League	\$3,000
Alberta Hunters Sharing the Harvest	Wild Game for the Food Bank Program	\$8,000
Alberta Invasive Species Council	'Don't Let It Loose' Encouraging Albertans to C.A.R.E. about their Aquarium Pets	\$22,500
Alberta Junior Forest Wardens Association	Pathfinder and Trailblazer North Camp 2022	\$2,500
Alberta Mycological Society	Alberta Mycological Society Fungal Herbarium (Fungarium)	\$10,400
Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society - Cows and Fish	Grazing Schools for Women: Promoting habitat and improved livestock grazing stewardship in south and central Alberta	\$3,000



Recipient	Project	Funding
Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society - Cows and Fish	Implementing Responsible Recreation and Riparian Habitat Improvements for Westslope Cutthroat Trout and Bull Trout	\$15,500
Alberta Trappers Association	Trapper Education in Schools	\$26,000
Alberta Trappers Association	Youth Camp and Youth Mentoring Program	\$30,000
Ann & Sandy Cross Conservation Area	Remediation of Spring #19	\$11,000
Athabasca Watershed Council	Upper Athabasca Watershed Biomonitoring Project	\$12,000
Beaverhill Bird Observatory	Public Engagement, Wildlife Monitoring, and Conservation at Beaverhill Lake	\$24,750
Brooks & District Fish & Game Association	Habitat Enhancement Project at Brooks Aqueduct Trout Pond Property	\$10,750
Calgary ATV Riders Association	Cabin Creek/Hunter Valley Connector	\$16,800
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) Southern Alberta Chapter	bioDIVERSITY: Celebrating 25 Years of Conservation Education and Building a More Inclusive Future	\$20,000
Castor & District Family and Community Support Services	Let's Try Fishing	\$1,075
Pheasants Forever - Chinook Chapter	Ross Creek Conservation Site Food Plots Planting	\$6,100
Clear Vista School	Clear Vista Vikings Archery Program	\$3,990
County of Grande Prairie	Resilient Riparian Zones	\$15,000
County of Two Hills	Jackfish Lake Restoration	\$14,000
Edmonton and Area Land Trust	Citizen Science Expansion	\$2,808
Ghost Watershed Alliance Society	Watershed Restoration, Education and Literacy Project	\$15,000
H.A. Kostash School	H.A. Kostash Youth Mentorship Program	\$6,250
Hinton Family Centre	Kids Can Catch in Hinton	\$2,000

Recipient	Project	Funding
Innisfail Fish & Game Association	Kids Can Catch	\$1,500
Inside Education Society of Alberta	Wildlife Conservation Interactive Learning	\$17,500
Junior Forest Wardens - Mallards	Fall Wilderness Family Camp	\$850
Junior Forest Wardens - Mallards	Youth Conservation and Outdoor Education Program	\$3,900
Junior Forest Wardens - Northwest Regional Council	Leadership in a Box	\$1,000
Junior Forest Wardens - Northwest Regional Council	NW Regional Camp 2022	\$3,000
Junior Forest Wardens - Yellowhead Regional Council	Introduction to Trapping and Winter Clothing	\$2,950
Junior Forest Wardens - Yellowhead Regional Council	Trailblazer Advanced Camp	\$5,350
Junior Forest Wardens - Yellowhead Regional Council	YRC Winter Outreach Camp	\$8,000
Lacombe Fish & Game Association	Lacombe Annual Kids Can Catch Event	\$2,894
Lacombe Fish & Game Association	Len Thompson Trout Pond Replacement Dock	\$20,000
Lesser Slave Lake Bird Observatory Society	Avian Monitoring and Outreach Education Programs at Lesser Slave Lake	\$21,500
Lesser Slave Watershed Council	Kids Can Catch Family Day 2023 Event	\$1,900
Mountain View County	Riparian and Ecological Enhancement Program	\$25,000
Nature Alberta	Environmental Education Project (EEP)	\$15,000
Northern Lights Fly Fishers - TUC Edmonton Chapter	Conserving and Restoring Arctic Grayling in the Upper Pembina River Watershed - Habitat Restoration Planning	\$21,050
Northern Lights Fly Fishers - TUC Edmonton Chapter	Dogpound Creek Riparian Protection - Diamond F Ranches	\$28,793
Northern Lights Fly Fishers - TUC Edmonton Chapter	NLFF North Saskatchewan River Recapture Study	\$3,000



Recipient	Project	Funding
Northern Lights Fly Fishers - TUC Edmonton Chapter	North Raven River Riparian Protection - Zukowski Property	\$24,839
Oldman Watershed Council	Community Restoration and Knowledge-sharing in the Oldman Watershed	\$25,000
Partners in Habitat Development c/o Eastern Irrigation District	Partners in Habitat Development	\$15,000
Red Deer County	Wildlife and Native Habitat Enhancement in Red Deer County via ALUS (2022)	\$40,000
Red Deer Fish & Game Association	Youth Pheasant Land Relocation	\$29,236
Southern Alberta Bible Camp	Archery Program	\$2,250
Southern Alberta Bible Camp	Pelletry Program	\$1,500
Southern Alberta Bible Camp	Walleye - Pike Fishing	\$1,500
Sturgeon County	Habitat Heroes Day Camp	\$2,680
Alberta Lake Management Society	LakeKeepers: Community-based Monitoring	\$27,050
Town of Taber	Kids Can Catch	\$3,000
Trout Unlimited Canada	East Slopes Native Trout Recovery	\$28,470
Trout Unlimited Canada	Water Edu-kits and New Education Development	\$14,000
Waterton Biosphere Reserve	Supporting Long-term Conservation Ethic through Experiential Learning in Waterton Biosphere Reserve	\$7,846
Weaselhead/Glenmore Park Preservation Society	Invasive Plant Project	\$2,800
Wetaskiwin County	Wetaskiwin/Leduc Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS)	\$15,000
Wildlife Conservation Society Canada	Alberta Bat Conservation Project	\$20,000
<b>TOTAL FUNDING: ACA CONSERVATION, COMMUNITY, AND EDUCATION GRANTS</b>		<b>\$966,737</b>

## ACA Research Grants

Recipient	Project	Funding
Athabasca University	Conservation of Athabasca Rainbow Trout using Environmental DNA (eDNA) and Environmental RNA (eRNA)	\$24,300
Athabasca University	The Sustainability of Fish Populations in Alberta's Saline Lakes	\$7,200
MacEwan University	Measuring Up: Morphological diversity of Arctic grayling in Alberta	\$32,625
University of Alberta	Advancing Mammal Conservation through Integration of Remote Camera Data Systems and Analysis	\$27,000
University of Alberta	Effects of Copper Nanopesticide Agricultural Runoff on Fish and Fish Prey Items in Alberta Waters	\$20,700
University of Alberta	Interactive Effects of Landscape Diversity and Local Flower Abundance on Wild Pollinator and Other Beneficial Insect Abundance, Diversity, and Interactions in Agricultural Landscapes	\$32,544
University of Alberta	Soil Carbon Sequestration Potential in Agroforestry Systems in Central Alberta	\$31,032
University of Alberta	Temporal Reliability of Economic Values of Hunting from Data Collected using the ABHuntLog Activity Survey App	\$36,000
University of Lethbridge	Evaluating the Predictive Performance of Distribution Models Based on Autonomous Recording Units using Calling Western Toads as Case Study	\$33,777
University of Manitoba	Effects of Unpredictable Industrial Noise on Species at Risk and Nest Predators in Alberta - Season 2	\$24,255
University of Montana	Evaluating Bull Elk Reproductive Success using a Wild Pedigree Model: Year 2	\$35,042
University of Saskatchewan	Advancing Tools to Determine Beaver Dam Carrying Capacity of the Headwaters of the Bow River in Support of Trout Habitat Restoration	\$25,867
<b>TOTAL FUNDING: ACA RESEARCH GRANTS</b>		<b>\$330,344</b>



# 2022 ACA Grants in Biodiversity Recipients

Syncrude Canada Ltd. continued to support the ACA Grants in Biodiversity Program with a \$250,000 commitment over five fiscal years (2019/20 to 2023/24).

Recipient	Institution	Supervisor(s)	Project Title
Carmen Allen (PhD)	University of Alberta	Toby Spribille	The rise and fall of jelly fungi: exploring a microecosystem of aspen branches in boreal Alberta
Erin Casper (M.Sc.)	University of Calgary	Mathieu Pruvot	Development of dynamic indicators of resilience in wild rodent <i>Peromyscus maniculatus</i>
Jéssica Chaves Cardoso (PhD)	University of Alberta	Charles Nock	Boreal mixedwood resilience to drought across a gradient in moisture availability
Taylor Hart (M.Sc.)	University of Alberta	Erin Bayne	A critical evaluation of Black-throated Green Warbler ( <i>Setophaga virens</i> ) response to human disturbance in space and time
Tanisha Henry (M.Sc.)	University of Calgary	Kathreen Ruckstuhl	Is there an association between male Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep ( <i>Ovis canadensis</i> ) horn morphology and their reproductive success?
Liam Horne (M.Sc.)	University of Alberta	Stan Boutin	Using “bear’s-eye view” video data to estimate black bear ( <i>Ursus americanus</i> ) kill rates of boreal caribou calves ( <i>Rangifer tarandus caribou</i> ) and the resulting effect on caribou population dynamics
Chantelle Klaczek (M.Sc.)	University of Alberta	Greg Goss & Chris Glover	Assessing the effects of coal mine effluent contaminants on native fish and invertebrate species of the North Saskatchewan River Watershed, Alberta, Canada
Natalie LaForest (M.Sc.)	University of Alberta	Boyd Mori	Identifying weed seed predation by ground beetles (Coleoptera: Carabidae) in central Alberta agroecosystems
Connor Meyer (PhD)	University of Montana	Mark Hebblewhite	Using remote cameras to estimate wolf density and predation risk in Western Alberta
Olivia Meyers (M.Sc.)	University of Calgary	Mathieu Pruvot	Giant liver fluke spatio-temporal distribution in Elk Island National Park
Tobyn Neame (M.Sc.)	University of Calgary	Paul Galpern	Determining the effects of herbicide application on feeding guilds of ground beetles (Coleoptera: Carabidae) for conservation biological control in Alberta
Rosanise Odell (M.Sc.)	University of Alberta	Charles Nock	Assessment of tree mortality in forest island remnants and reference stands following wildfire and forest harvest using dendrochronological methods
Olivia Rahn (M.Sc.)	McGill University	Anna Hargreaves	Does habitat availability decline towards the range edge of <i>Rhinanthus minor</i> ?
Aldo Rios Martinez (PhD)	University of Alberta	Boyd Mori	Characterization of the arthropod community and ground beetle diet in canola agroecosystems in central Alberta

# Report A Poacher and Livestock Compensation Program

## Report A Poacher

The Report A Poacher (RAP) Program encourages all Albertans—not just hunters and anglers—to help protect our wildlife, fish, and natural habitats. In addition to providing education about poaching, perhaps the most important RAP program tool is the toll-free phone number: 1-800-642-3800. It allows people to report suspected illegal activities 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Alberta Fish and Wildlife enforcement officers often rely on information from these calls; individuals and communities are RAP’s eyes and ears, and the important information they provide regularly leads to investigations and convictions.

RAP is delivered jointly by ACA, Alberta Hunter Education Instructors’ Association (AHEIA) and Alberta Justice and Solicitor General. ACA is responsible for program promotion and education activities to enhance public awareness and understanding of poaching, and for the administration of program funds. AHEIA aids in delivering the program through operation of the RAP education trailer and interacting with the public at tradeshow and other public events. Alberta Justice and Solicitor General retains sole responsibility for liaising with informants, investigating reports, and enforcing laws.

### 2022/23 Overview

- \$41,900 in rewards were paid to individuals whose call and information led to charges.
- 15,044 total calls were received from the public to the RAP toll-free hotline.

## Livestock Compensation Program

For producers whose livestock may have been killed or injured because of predators (i.e., eagles, cougars, bears, and wolves) or careless discharge of a firearm, ACA provides relief through the Wildlife Predator Compensation and Shot Livestock Compensation programs. Like RAP, we are responsible for program promotion and compensation fund management, while Alberta Justice and Solicitor General is responsible for incident investigations and determining payouts.

### Predator Compensation 2022/23

Wildlife Predator	Claims	Compensation (\$)
Bear & Black Bear	21	29,859
Cougar	19	15,646
Grizzly Bear	76	131,419
Wolf	128	222,645
TOTAL	306	354,727

### Shot Livestock Compensation 2022/23

Livestock Predator	Claims	Compensation (\$)
Horse	1	2,000
TOTAL	1	2,000





Project: Westslope Cutthroat Trout Range Expansion  
Description: ACA staff conducting littoral survey  
Photo: ACA, Erin VanderMarel



# Financial Highlights

## Summarized Financial Statements

In 2022/23, ACA received \$13,528,110 in levy revenue from hunting and angling licences, representing a decrease of \$807,886 from the previous year. Residential fishing licences decreased over the previous year by approximately 39,700, decreasing levy revenue by approximately \$728,000. Resident hunting (which includes licences, wildlife certificates, and draw applications) decreased overall compared to the previous year by approximately \$317,000, with the largest decrease in resident white-tailed deer licences (approximately \$125,000 decrease). Non-resident licences in hunting and angling increased over the previous year by approximately \$237,000. Levy revenue has declined in the past two years and is back to close to 2019/20 levels.

Our staff were able to complete a wide range of projects and provide substantial leverage to the levy funds we received. Together, our Wildlife, Fisheries, Land Management, Communications, Grants, Predator Compensation, Shot Livestock, and RAP programs had expenditures totalling \$13,448,691, plus an additional \$3,096,075 in land purchases using partner funds, levies, and donations (for accounting purposes, these funds are recorded as assets, not direct operational expenditures). Total expenditures for the year (including land purchases and donations) were \$20,847,942, resulting in approximately 122.3% of the levy value collected being directly invested back into conserving Alberta's resources.

ACA received approximately \$6,966,850 in non-levy revenue (including \$2,907,874 in land donations and funds for land purchase), representing 34.0% of total revenue. These funds came from various donors, including individuals, corporations, granting foundations, the federal government, and other conservation organizations. The total revenue was \$20,494,960, which

means ACA was able to leverage levy dollars, an additional 51.5% for conservation activities. This does not include increased dollar leveraging that has occurred because of grants provided to third-party conservation organizations.

## Expenditures by Program

Often stakeholders want to determine what funds are being directed toward their passion. When examining the Expenditures by Program, the numbers shown are somewhat arbitrary and do not necessarily represent all projects that may relate to a particular program area. For instance, fisheries access sites, which are directly related to increasing angling opportunities, are administered and budgeted for under our Land Management Program instead of the Fisheries Program. Granting is shown separately even though it relates to all four resource areas.

Administration costs (6.0% of expenditures) continue to be well below the federal guideline for charitable organizations and include areas such as regional building operations and corporate administration.

2022/23 ended in an unbudgeted operational deficit of \$(164,780) (revenues minus expenses). ACA had capital expenditures totalling \$3,225,161 in the fiscal, included in the capital expenditure was \$3,096,075 of land purchases (\$2,907,874 partner dollars, \$188,201 of funds from the Habitat Securement Fund [HSF]) and \$129,086 of funds used to purchase vehicles, boats, and other capital equipment. An additional \$596,792 has been restricted for the Habitat Securement Fund for future securement activities in the upcoming fiscal year, as well as \$390,000 (\$110,000 was paid in the fiscal) remains for the internally restricted fund in support of CWD Vaccine Research through the University of Saskatchewan approved by the Board of Directors. The

addition of realized and unrealized losses and gain from investments, investment income, interest income, transfer of land assets to a partner and exchange gain resulted in an accounting deficit of \$(15,472).

## Revenue by Source

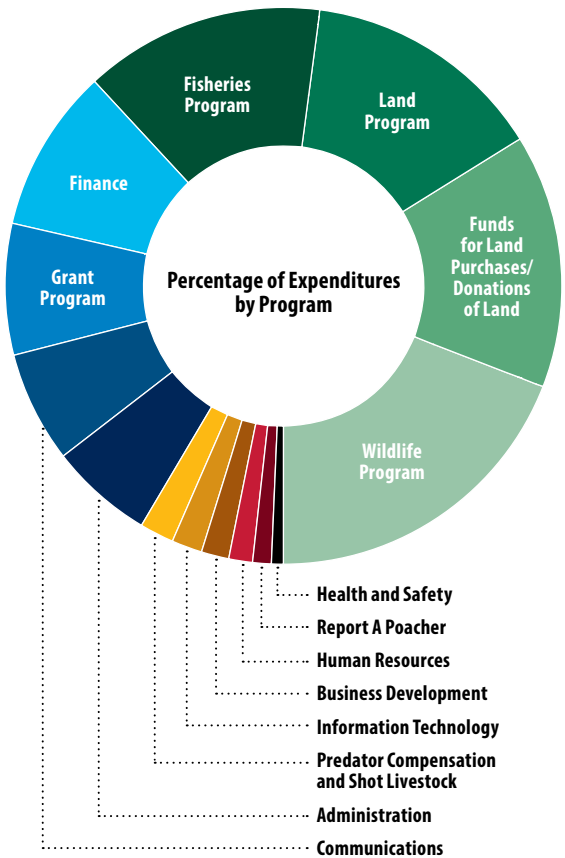
Approximately 34.0% of ACA's total revenue was generated from non-levy sources (\$6,966,850). Miscellaneous revenue is made up of a variety of revenue sources; these include reimbursement by EPA for Predator Compensation, raffle ticket sales for various ACA events, and registration for Waterfowl Warmup and Taber Pheasant Festival. Land donations and purchases added approximately 1,287 acres to ACA's conserved lands, for future generations to use, value, and enjoy.

## 2022/23 Overview

- Total revenue was \$20,494,960.
- We received \$13,528,110 from levies on hunting and angling licences.
- We received \$6,966,850 in non-levy revenue; \$2,907,874 is related to the land purchases and donations in the fiscal.
- We applied 122.3% of levy value directly toward the conservation of Alberta's wildlife, fish, and habitats.
- ACA partnered with AHEIA in delivering education through the RAP Trailer, providing funding to AHEIA in the amount of \$64,000.
- Administration costs consisted of 6.0% of total expenditures.
- The current year's operational deficit is \$(164,780), which reflects a decrease in levies, and increase in partner revenues, and continued expenditure management.
- ACA administered funds related to the federal Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) grant for living labs in the fiscal totalling \$1,148,110. This fund management has been reflected in the Finance category on expenditure by program.

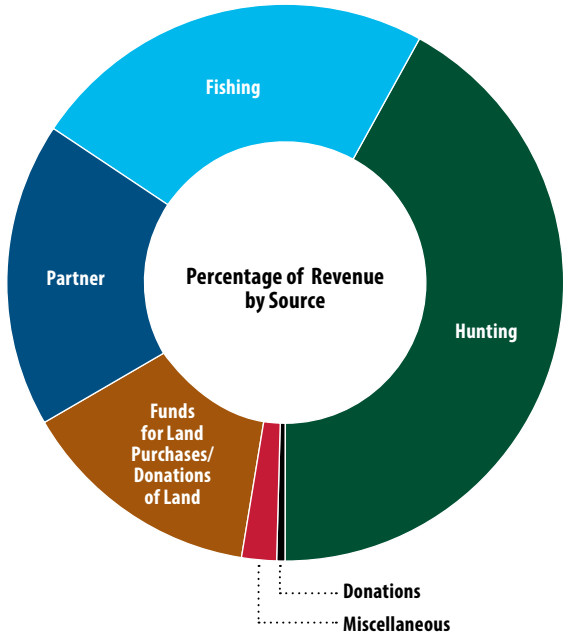
Expenditures by Program

%		Levy	Partner	Total Dollars
19.3%	Wildlife Program	2,991,887	1,025,450	4,017,338
14.9%	Funds for Land Purchases/Donations of Land	188,201	2,907,874	3,096,075
14.2%	Land Program	2,115,050	835,755	2,950,804
14.1%	Fisheries Program	2,400,749	532,007	2,932,755
9.6%	Finance	844,432	1,153,504	1,997,936
7.7%	Grant Program	1,562,147	50,000	1,612,147
6.4%	Communications	1,101,245	223,954	1,325,199
6.0%	Administration	1,194,367	46,314	1,240,680
1.9%	Predator Compensation and Shot Livestock	209,776	191,793	401,570
1.7%	Information Technology	358,565	58	358,623
1.5%	Business Development	303,547	-	303,547
1.3%	Human Resources	268,158	142	268,300
1.0%	Report A Poacher	208,878	-	208,878
0.6%	Health and Safety	134,090	-	134,090
100%	Total	13,881,091	6,966,851	20,847,942



Revenue by Source

%		Total Dollars
42.2%	Hunting	8,646,472
23.8%	Fishing	4,881,638
17.8%	Partner	3,649,629
14.2%	Funds for Land Purchases/Donations of Land	2,907,874
1.9%	Miscellaneous	385,973
0.1%	Donations	23,374
100%	Total	20,494,960



## INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

June 20, 2023  
Edmonton, Alberta

To the Members of Alberta Conservation Association

### Opinion

The summary financial statements, which comprise the summarized statement of financial position as at March 31, 2023, and the summary statement of operations are derived from the audited financial statements of Alberta Conservation Association for the year ended March 31, 2023. We expressed a qualified audit opinion on those financial statements in our report dated June 20, 2023.

In our opinion, the accompanying summarized financial statements are a fair summary of the audited financial statements, on the basis described in Note 1. However, the summary financial statements are subject to conditions equivalent to those of the audited financial statements of the Alberta Conservation Association for the year ended March 31, 2023, upon which we issued a qualified audit opinion.

### Summary Financial Statements

The summary financial statements do not contain all the disclosures required by *Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations*. Reading the summary financial statements and the auditors report thereon, therefore is not a substitute for reading the audited financial statements and the auditors report thereon.

### The Audited Financial Statements and Our Report Thereon

We expressed a qualified audit opinion on the audited financial statements in our report dated June 20, 2023. The basis for our qualified opinion was that, in common with many charitable organizations, the Association derives some of its revenue from donations, the completeness of which is not susceptible to satisfactory audit verification. Accordingly, our verification of these revenues was limited to the amount recorded in the records of the Association and we were not able to determine whether any adjustments might be necessary to contributions, excess of revenue over expenses, current assets and net assets.

### Responsibilities of Management for the Summary Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the summary financial statements on the basis described in Note 1.

### Auditor's Responsibilities

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on whether the summary financial statements are a fair summary of the audited financial statements based on our procedures, which were conducted in accordance with Canadian Auditing Standards (CAS 810), *Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements*.

  
**Kingston Ross Pasnak LLP**  
Chartered Professional Accountants



# ALBERTA CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

## Summarized Statement of Operations

Year Ended March 31, 2023


	2023	2022
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Levy, fees and assessments	\$ 13,528,110	\$ 14,335,996
Partner contributions	3,649,629	2,557,709
Miscellaneous	385,973	398,683
Donations	23,374	37,264
	<b>17,587,086</b>	<b>17,329,652</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>		
Salaries and benefits	7,463,496	7,733,689
Contracted services	3,151,110	1,696,039
Materials and supplies	2,061,361	1,904,085
Grants	1,661,919	1,635,018
Rentals	561,066	554,087
Repairs and maintenance	497,171	350,967
Amortization	333,955	292,115
Landowner agreements	316,795	284,835
Insurance	264,122	227,432
Travel	261,384	129,932
Fuel and lubricants	242,914	212,412
Office	221,665	251,397
Advertising	191,941	189,553
Telephone and communications	160,304	160,784
Utilities	135,890	110,247
Freight and postage	80,163	76,604
Bank charges and interest	45,855	53,410
Training and membership	37,627	39,496
Hosting and conferences	34,466	7,973
Fees, licenses and permits	28,662	76,087
	<b>17,751,866</b>	<b>15,986,162</b>
<b>(DEFICIENCY) EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENDITURES FROM OPERATIONS</b>	<b>(164,780)</b>	<b>1,343,490</b>
<b>OTHER REVENUES (EXPENDITURES)</b>		
Investment and interest income	437,642	415,083
Foreign exchange gain	63,988	5,078
Gain on sale of investments	54,467	107,038
(Loss) gain on disposal of property and equipment	166	(69,417)
Large grant expense	(875)	(551,237)
Unrealized loss on marketable securities	(406,080)	(26,375)
	<b>149,308</b>	<b>(119,830)</b>
<b>(DEFICIENCY) EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>\$ (15,472)</b>	<b>\$ 1,223,660</b>

**ALBERTA CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION**  
**Summarized Statement of Financial Position**  
**March 31, 2023**

	2023	2022
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>CURRENT</b>		
Cash	\$ 3,136,234	\$ 3,604,137
Short term investments	8,886	8,314
Accounts receivable	624,921	309,543
Goods and Services Tax recoverable	122,190	73,878
Prepaid expenses	134,756	89,604
	<b>4,026,987</b>	<b>4,085,476</b>
<b>LONG TERM INVESTMENTS</b>	<b>7,336,075</b>	<b>7,115,204</b>
<b>PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>44,217,973</b>	<b>41,421,965</b>
<b>FILM COLLECTION</b>	<b>1,549,577</b>	<b>1,549,577</b>
	<b>\$ 57,130,612</b>	<b>\$ 54,172,222</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
<b>CURRENT</b>		
Accounts payable and accrued liabilities	\$ 1,890,018	\$ 1,892,009
Source deductions payable	45,172	33,962
Deferred contributions	3,591,059	3,538,260
Deposits	5,454	6,659
	<b>5,531,703</b>	<b>5,470,890</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
Invested in property and equipment	45,767,550	42,971,542
Internally restricted	986,792	603,993
Unrestricted	4,844,567	5,125,797
	<b>51,598,909</b>	<b>48,701,332</b>
	<b>\$ 57,130,612</b>	<b>\$ 54,172,222</b>

**ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD**

 Director

 Director

**BASIS OF PRESENTATION**

The summary financial statements are derived from the audited financial statements, prepared in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations, as at March 31, 2023 and for the year then ended. The preparation of these summary financial statements requires management to determine the information that needs to be reflected in them so that they are consistent in all material respects with, or represent a fair summary of, the audited financial statements. Management prepared these summary financial statements using the following criteria:

- the summary financial statements include a statement for each statement included in the audited financial statements;
- information in the summary financial statements agrees with the related information in the audited financial statements;
- major subtotals, totals and comparative information from the audited financial statements are included; and
- the summary financial statements contain the information from the audited financial statements dealing with matters having a pervasive or otherwise significant effect on the summarized financial statements.

The audited financial statements of Alberta Conservation Association are available upon request by contacting the Association.

# Corporate Partners in Conservation



Alberta Conservation Association wishes to thank our Corporate Partners in Conservation who have provided multi-year financial contributions in support of our conservation programs and projects. Together we are conserving Alberta's natural heritage for generations to come.

Abacus Datagraphics Ltd.	HUVAN Construction
AltaLink	Korth Group
Aquality Environmental Consulting Ltd.	Lethbridge County
Backroad Mapbooks	MacFarlane Pheasants Inc.
Beretta/Benelli/Tikka/Sako	Matrix Solutions Inc.
Black Box Customs	McKay Roughrider Resources
Cabela's Canada	Mercer Peace River Pulp Ltd.
Can West Legacy Inc.	Mountain View County
Canadian Cattlemen's Association	Municipal District of Bonnyville
Canadian National Railway	Municipal District of Greenview
Canadian Natural Resources Limited	Municipal District of Taber
Canadian Tire – Cochrane	NFP Inc.
Capital Power	Northern Sunrise County
Cenovus	Nutrien
CCI Inc.	Ovintiv
City of Beaumont	Parkland County
City of Edmonton	Saddle Hills County
City of Fort Saskatchewan	Shell Canada Limited
City of Lacombe	Southern Alberta Bowhunters Association
City of Medicine Hat	Southern Alberta Outdoorsmen
City of Red Deer	St. Mary River Irrigation District
Clear Hills County	Suncor Energy
ConocoPhillips Canada Resources Corp.	Syncrude Canada Ltd.
Cool As A Moose / Big Bear Trading Company	SysGen Solutions Group Ltd.
County of Barrhead	Taber Irrigation District
County of Cardston	TC Energy
County of Grande Prairie No. 1	TeraGo Networks
County of Northern Lights	Thompson-Pallister Bait Company Ltd.
County of Warner	Thor Resources Inc.
Cycle Works Motorsports	Thorhild County
Dentons Canada LLP	Town of Cochrane
Dow Chemical Canada	Town of High River
Edmonton Trout Fishing Club	Town of Morinville
EQUUS	Town of Taber
FenceFast Ltd.	Toyota on the Trail
The Fishin' Hole	TransAlta
Give Back Contracting	Tree Time Services
Haul-All Equipment Ltd.	Vortex Canada
Heritage Inn Hotel & Convention Centre (Taber)	West Fraser Mills Ltd.
High Caliber Products	Xplornet Enterprise Solutions
Holiday Inn & Suites Calgary South Conference Centre	Yeti Roughrider Rentals Ltd.
Hudson Carbon	





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