

# KEEP THE WILD IN OUR NATIONAL WILDLIFE AREA

The rare prairie grasslands of Suffield IBA were left relatively untouched as part of a Canadian Forces Base. Now designated a National Wildlife Area (NWA), they're threatened by development.



Suffield IBA, Alberta, is a 458 km<sup>2</sup> northern refuge for endemic prairie wildlife.

## Suffield Important Bird Area

The Great Plains landscape of Suffield IBA rolls along the South Saskatchewan River through mixed native grasslands and sand hills. The site teems with life, including 244 vertebrate species, 82 species of breeding birds, 436 catalogued invertebrates, and 462 plant species. As only 6% of Canada's native prairie remains intact, Suffield is especially critical to breeding grassland birds including Brewer's Sparrows, Western Meadowlarks, and Sprague's Pipits. This is also an important wintering area for ungulates such as Mule Deer.



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This endangered Burrowing Owl is one of 13 federal species at risk that rely on Suffield's unploughed grasslands.

Suffield IBA is also home to 13 plant and animal species at risk of extinction, including Sage Thrashers and Ferruginous Hawks.

## Conservation Action

Suffield was designated a National Wildlife Area in 2003, yet a proposal has been made to permit drilling of 1,275 shallow gas wells within the IBA. Nature Canada strongly opposes the project, which would fragment precious habitat, disturb breeding wildlife, and sell out Canada's protected areas to private interests. It would also set a dangerous precedent: No permit of this kind has ever been granted inside a National Wildlife Area in Canada.

We are working to ensure that the environmental assessment process fully accounts for birds and their habitats, and that the project is not permitted to impair the site's ecological integrity.



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The South Saskatchewan River valley supports high concentrations of threatened species like the Loggerhead Shrike.





# Nature Canada's Priority IBA Program

Nature Canada is the Canadian co-partner of the international IBA Program. We've identified 597 designated Important Bird Areas across Canada, developed 150 site conservation plans, and invested in 150 on-site conservation projects.

From vast tracts of intact wilderness to fragmented urban environments, hundreds of sites in Canada are vitally important for breeding, migrating, and wintering birds, and the conservation of these sites is a cornerstone of effective bird conservation. Nature Canada is a co-partner in the international Important Bird Areas (IBA) program, which aims to identify, conserve and monitor a network of sites that provides essential habitat for bird populations.

Of our 597 Important Bird Areas in Canada, Nature Canada highlights the sites of greatest biological significance, those facing the most imminent threats, and those offering timely conservation opportunities, in its series, *Natural Priorities: Protecting our Important Bird Areas*.

To obtain other fact sheets in our series, visit our web site at [naturecanada.ca](http://naturecanada.ca) and click on Reports and Downloads.

Or call 1-800-267-4088 ext. 241 to request one.

Nature Canada promotes stronger National Wildlife Areas through clarification of habitat protection under the Canada Wildlife Act, capacity building in local communities, and federal funding for site management and enforcement. We're recommending new NWA designations based on IBA priorities and landscape ecology planning.

## About Nature Canada

Nature Canada is the Canadian co-partner (with Bird Studies Canada) of BirdLife International, a global alliance of conservation organizations working together for the world's birds and people. We are a member-based non-profit conservation organization with supporters in every province and territory. Our mission is to protect nature, its diversity, and the processes that sustain it.



Burrowing Owls

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For more information visit these Web sites:  
[naturecanada.ca](http://naturecanada.ca) • [ibacanada.ca](http://ibacanada.ca) • [birdlife.org](http://birdlife.org)