

Species At Risk in Yoho National Park

Essential information for residents,
businesses and contractors



Barn swallow

Canada's Species at Risk Act

Canada's Species at Risk Act requires you to protect species designated as extirpated, endangered or threatened. Harming a species at risk or its habitat is illegal. As a resident, business, contractor, licensee or other company operating in the park, you have three key responsibilities:

1.



**Know which species
are at risk**

2.



**Keep their
habitat intact**

3.



**Protect individual
species at risk**

**Not sure?
Call us first**

Phone 403-762-1470 if you have questions about your obligations. Parks Canada will work with you to ensure the species and its habitat are protected.

Également offert en français



Little brown myotis



Black swift



Whitebark pine

Be responsible and support the protection of species at risk by:

1. Knowing which species are at risk

It is your legal responsibility to know which species in your area are listed in the Act and to understand your obligations regarding them.

2. Keeping their habitat intact

You must ensure that nests, dens, burrows, hibernation sites or other residences of species at risk are not disturbed or destroyed. This protection extends to all habitat needed for the survival or recovery of at-risk species.

3. Protecting individual species at risk

You must not kill, harm, harass, capture or remove a species at risk from its habitat. It is also illegal to possess, collect, buy, sell or trade any individual or part of a species at risk.

In Yoho National Park, the following species are listed as endangered or threatened, as of Nov 1, 2024:

- Barn swallow
- Black swift
- Whitebark pine
- Bank swallow
- Little brown myotis



Barn and bank swallows in Yoho National Park

Barn swallows



Barn swallows are medium-sized songbirds easily recognized by their forked tail, dark-blue back and wings, chestnut throat and forehead, and tawny underparts.



Barn swallows are present in Yoho National Park from late spring to fall. They are often seen in open habitats or along lake and river shorelines, where they forage for their main food source of flying insects.



Barn swallows are a threatened species

Barn swallow populations across Canada have declined by nearly 80% since the 1980s. In 2017, the barn swallow was designated as threatened under Canada's Species at Risk Act.

Barn swallows prefer to nest in and around human-made structures. Their cup-shaped nests can be found attached to vertical surfaces with a supporting ledge, and beneath an overhang.

Bank swallows



Bank swallows are small songbirds easily recognized by the brown band across their breast, brown back and wings, and white underparts.



Bank swallows are present in Yoho National Park from late spring to fall. They stay close to their nests and prefer to hunt insects in open areas and avoid dense forests.



Bank swallows are a threatened species

Bank swallow populations across Canada have declined by >95% since the 1970s. In 2017, the bank swallow was designated as threatened under Canada's Species at Risk Act.

Bank swallows dig holes with their beaks and feet in the steep banks found along rivers, roads, and sand or gravel pits. Bank swallows nest in colonies as small as ten families or as large as thousands of families.

Barn and bank swallows need our help!



Protecting nests and documenting nesting activity and success are two actions Parks Canada and the public can undertake to protect and recover these threatened species.

Barn swallows often return to the same nesting location year after year. Reusing old nests conserves energy and improves breeding activity which contributes towards increasing their population. Monitoring where and when breeding activity is occurring and noting the number of young that fledge (successfully leave the nest), assists with understanding which factors may be contributing to the decline of barn swallow populations within Yoho National Park and across Canada.

Bank swallows use both natural and human-made nesting sites such as sand and gravel pits. They reuse these locations year after year.

Photo credit: All bird silhouettes were provided by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's All About Birds project

Barn swallows, bank swallows and their nests are protected by law

- In Yoho National Park, barn swallows, bank swallows and their nests are protected by law under the Canada National Parks Act, the Migratory Birds Convention Act, and the Species at Risk Act.
- It is illegal to disturb barn swallows, bank swallows and their occupied or unoccupied nests. Violators will be charged, be required to appear in court, and could pay fines up to \$25 000.
- To report barn or bank swallow nesting activity, or if a nest poses a health or safety risk to humans, call 403-762-1470 and a Parks Canada Resource Conservation Officer will respond.
- If you witness anyone disturbing a barn swallow, bank swallow, or its nest, please observe, record and report this information to Banff Emergency Dispatch at 403-762-1470, anytime day or night.

Barn swallow



Protecting bats and people

What you can do

Why care about bats?



Bats play an important role in healthy ecosystems - they eat half their body weight in insects every night!



Bats are susceptible to a fungal disease called white-nose syndrome that often kills 90-100% of bats roosting together during hibernation. This has caused drastic declines in bat populations across eastern Canada.



Six of Canada's 19 bat species live in Yoho National Park. One of these species - the little brown myotis - is endangered and highly susceptible to white-nose syndrome.



All bats in Yoho National Park are protected by law under the National Parks Act. The little brown myotis is also protected under the Species at Risk Act.

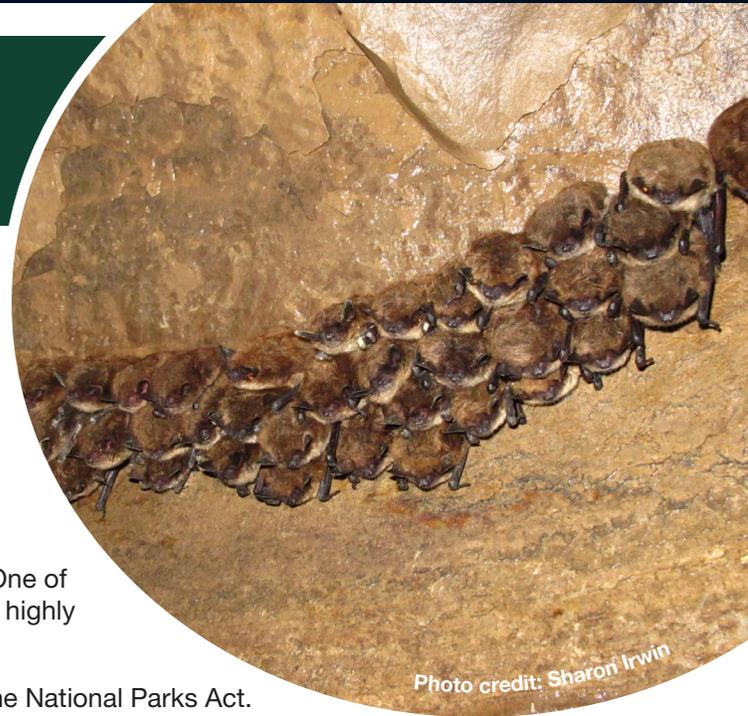


Photo credit: Sharon Irwin



Bats in and around buildings - what to look for

Bats often roost in attics or other hidden spaces in buildings.

Signs that bats may be inside a building include: an accumulation of guano (bat droppings that are solid, black/brown in colour, and contain insect wings), noise coming from between walls, and seeing bats exit a building at sunset or enter at sunrise.

Most roosting bats remain in a location for a few days. However, some roosts, such as those with females and their young, have larger numbers of bats that stay in one location for a longer period of time.

If you discover a bat, dead or alive, in a building or on the ground

- Do not touch or handle the bat.
- Call 403-762-1470 and a Parks Canada Resource Conservation Officer will respond.
- Do not take any actions which could negatively impact the bat or roost.
- If possible, isolate the bat to one room by closing interior doors and windows.
- Keep people and pets away.





If you are undertaking building renovations or construction activities

Always be on the lookout for signs of bats. If you encounter live or dead bats, or find signs of bats, stop work and immediately call 403-762-1470. A Parks Canada Resource Conservation Officer will respond and advise you of appropriate actions to take.

Coming in contact with a bat may pose serious health risks



- There have been documented cases of bats with rabies in the mountain national parks.
- Rabies is a rare but serious viral disease that can infect humans and domestic pets.
- Rabies can be transmitted if you are bitten or scratched by an infected bat. It can also be transmitted if infectious material, such as saliva, gets directly into the eyes, nose, mouth, or a wound.
- If you know or suspect that you have been bitten or scratched by a bat, wash the wound well with soap and water and **immediately** seek medical treatment. **Do not wait.** Rabies is almost always fatal once symptoms appear.
- Seek **immediate** medical advice if you know or suspect that you were in direct contact with a bat, even if there are no signs of a bite or scratch (e.g. a bat present inside your house while you were asleep).
- If a pet comes in contact with a live or a dead bat, immediately contact your veterinarian.

Photo credit: Hugh Broders

White-nose syndrome

All bats are protected by law in Yoho National Park

- It is illegal to disturb or harm bats or their roosts, both inside and outside buildings.
- Violators will be charged, be required to appear in court, and could pay fines up to \$25 000.
- If the violation occurs while performing on-the-job duties, the company's business license may be impacted.
- If you witness anyone disturbing a bat or a roost, please observe, record and report this information to Banff Emergency Dispatch at 403-762-1470, any time day or night.
- Natural caves and mines are critical habitat that some bat species use to hibernate during winter. It is illegal to enter caves and mines in Yoho National Park without the Superintendent's written authorization.

Black swifts in Yoho National Park

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- Black swifts are recognized by their black plumage, streamlined body and long, curved wings.
 - Black swifts may be present in Yoho National Park from late spring until fall. They can be seen singly or in small flocks, flying in and out of canyons or foraging high above for flying insects.
 - Black swifts nest in canyons and cliffs, often near or behind waterfalls. Each year, they lay a single egg in a mossy nest located in shallow pockets or on ledges.
 - Both parents care for and feed the chick until it is ready to fly, which can take up to 49 days.



Photo credit: Aaron Maizlish

Black swifts are an endangered species in Canada

Black swift populations have declined by over 50% in the last 40 years. The causes for their population decline are not fully understood; however, it may be related to changes in the availability of their food supply as they primarily eat flying insects.

Canada hosts 80% of the North American population, mainly in British Columbia. In 2019, the black swift was designated as an endangered species under Canada's Species at Risk Act.



Black swifts need our help

There is potential black swift habitat near waterfalls in Yoho National Park. Parks Canada staff are currently surveying these areas.

Help protect and recover this endangered species by minimizing disturbance to black swift nests at all times of the year. If you see a black swift, report the sighting on ebird.org.

Black swifts and their nests are protected by law

- In Yoho National Park, black swifts and their nests are protected by law under the Canada National Parks Act, the Migratory Birds Convention Act, and the Species at Risk Act.
- It is illegal to disturb black swifts and their occupied or unoccupied nests. Violators will be charged, be required to appear in court, and could pay fines up to \$25 000.
- To report black swift nesting activity, call 403-762-1470 and a Parks Canada Resource Conservation Officer will respond.
- If you witness anyone disturbing a black swift or its nest, please observe, record and report this information to Banff Emergency Dispatch at 403-762-1470, anytime day or night.



Whitebark pine

Whitebark pine is a keystone species of high-elevation ecosystems in western North America. Listed as endangered in Canada's Species at Risk Act, whitebark pine is in serious decline over much of its range due to the combined effects of white pine blister rust, mountain pine beetle, altered fire regimes and climate change.



White pine blister rust is a serious disease caused by a fungus. It was introduced to North America from Europe in the early 1900s. Since then, it has spread and infected many whitebark pines, becoming the primary reason for population declines.

The rust infects trees through the needles and then spreads into the trunk of the tree. As the infection grows, the bark and phloem dies. **Less than one percent** of all whitebark pine trees are resistant to blister rust.

Habitat loss from fire suppression and climate change

Historically, forests burned more often but most fires were small and low-intensity. They created open, sunny spaces and good growing conditions for whitebark pine. Past practices of extinguishing wildfires changed this. Many forests are now dense and shady. They provide poor habitat for whitebark pine and fuel large, high-intensity fires.

Climate change affects mountain ecosystems in many different ways. For example, natural disturbances like fire, mountain pine beetle and drought are becoming more extreme. Also, tree species typically found at lower elevations are moving higher, competing for resources with whitebark pine.



An important partnership

Whitebark pine and the Clark's nutcracker have evolved to depend on each other for survival. Whitebark pine cones do not open on their own to disperse seeds. Clark's nutcrackers use their long, pointed beaks to break apart the large cones and remove the seeds. They fly to different locations to "cache" the seeds as a winter food source. A single bird can place thousands of seeds, just below the soil's surface, every year. Roughly half the seeds are forgotten and will germinate and grow into seedlings.

Where can you find whitebark pine?

Whitebark pine has evolved to play an important role in high-elevation forests of the Rocky and Columbia Mountains. The trees are found in seven of Canada's national parks: Mount Revelstoke, Glacier, Kootenay, Yoho, Jasper, Banff and Waterton Lakes.



Identification

Whitebark pine

Needles

Needles occur in bunches of five, ranging from 3 to 9 cm. They are stiff, slightly curved, usually bluish-green, and tend to be clumped towards the ends of the branches.

Cones and seeds

Cones range from 8 to 10 cm long and 6 to 10 cm wide, are egg-shaped and grow at right angles to the branch. Cones are permanently closed and seeds are dispersed by wildlife such as Clark's nutcrackers.

The seeds are large, light-brown and wingless.

Pollen cones are bright red to purple-red and grow in July and August.



Bark

Bark is thin, smooth and chalky-white on young stems. However, as the tree matures the bark thickens and forms darker brown, scaly plates.

Height

Mature trees grow up to 20 m tall.

Habitat



Grows in the subalpine, up to treeline. Thrives in well-drained, dry sites, often in poorly developed soil or talus, and usually on ridges and south-facing slopes.



What is Parks Canada doing to help whitebark pine?

Protection and restoration efforts include:

- Collecting seeds from trees that show resistance to blister rust.
- Growing and planting rust-resistant seedlings.
- Reintroducing fire to mountain ecosystems to create more habitat.
- Long-term monitoring of the spread and impact of white pine blister rust.
- Monitoring annual whitebark pine cone abundance.
- Contributing to whitebark pine research.
- Educating the public about the importance of whitebark pine.



Species of special concern in Yoho National Park

Species of special concern are sensitive to human activities or natural events but aren't endangered or threatened yet. Canada's Species at Risk Act does not provide the same legal protections to species of special concern as it does to species listed as endangered or threatened.

However, the Canada National Parks Act and the Migratory Birds Convention Act provide legal protection to species of special concern. **It is important to protect and recover these species so they do not become endangered or threatened.**

For projects that require an Environmental Assessment

If the assessment identifies adverse effects to species of special concern, you must take measures to mitigate those effects.

Yoho National Park provides habitat for many species of special concern. For example:



Wolverine

These elusive carnivores are very sensitive to human activity and need vast stretches of wilderness to survive. Human developments like towns, high-use trails, roads and railways can break up their habitat.



Grizzly bear

Grizzlies need lots of space and natural food. Their habitat has been broken into small pieces by towns, roads, railways and other human use. **Grizzlies are struck and killed on the Trans Canada Highway and railroad.**



Westslope cutthroat trout (Pacific populations)

One of the few naturally occurring wild trout species in Western Canada, these fish now occupy less than 10% of their historic range due to non-native fish and habitat alterations.

Without our help, species of special concern could become endangered or threatened