



PACIFICWILD

# THE 5 **Ws** OF MARINE PROTECTED AREAS IN CANADA

[PacificWild.org](https://PacificWild.org)



Marine Protection

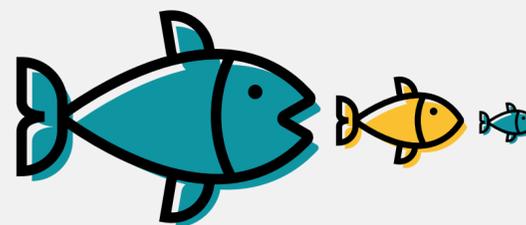
1.

# What are MPAs & MPA networks?

Marine protected areas (MPAs) are used to manage, protect and restore wildlife, habitats and culturally important areas—like parks for the ocean. MPAs come in many types: the size, level of protection, and permitted human uses can vary from one to the next. Protection is most effective when these areas are designed as a network of geographically distinct, yet connected, sites that function together. MPA networks are designed to protect multiple examples of each type of habitat within a region, and be connected, so migratory species can move easily between protected areas.

The most effective MPAs are large, permanent, well-enforced, and prohibit all harmful activities.

**These sites benefit the ocean and coastal communities by:**



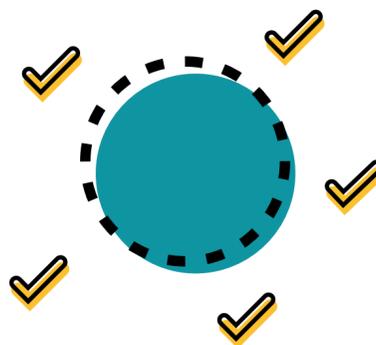
**Re-establishing natural conditions and predator-prey relationships**



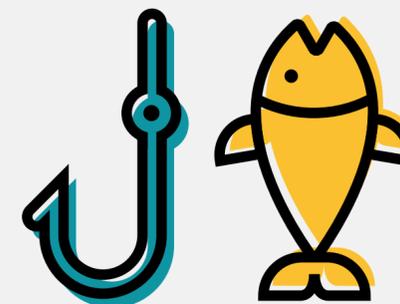
**Supporting scientific research**



**Safeguarding biodiversity and productivity**



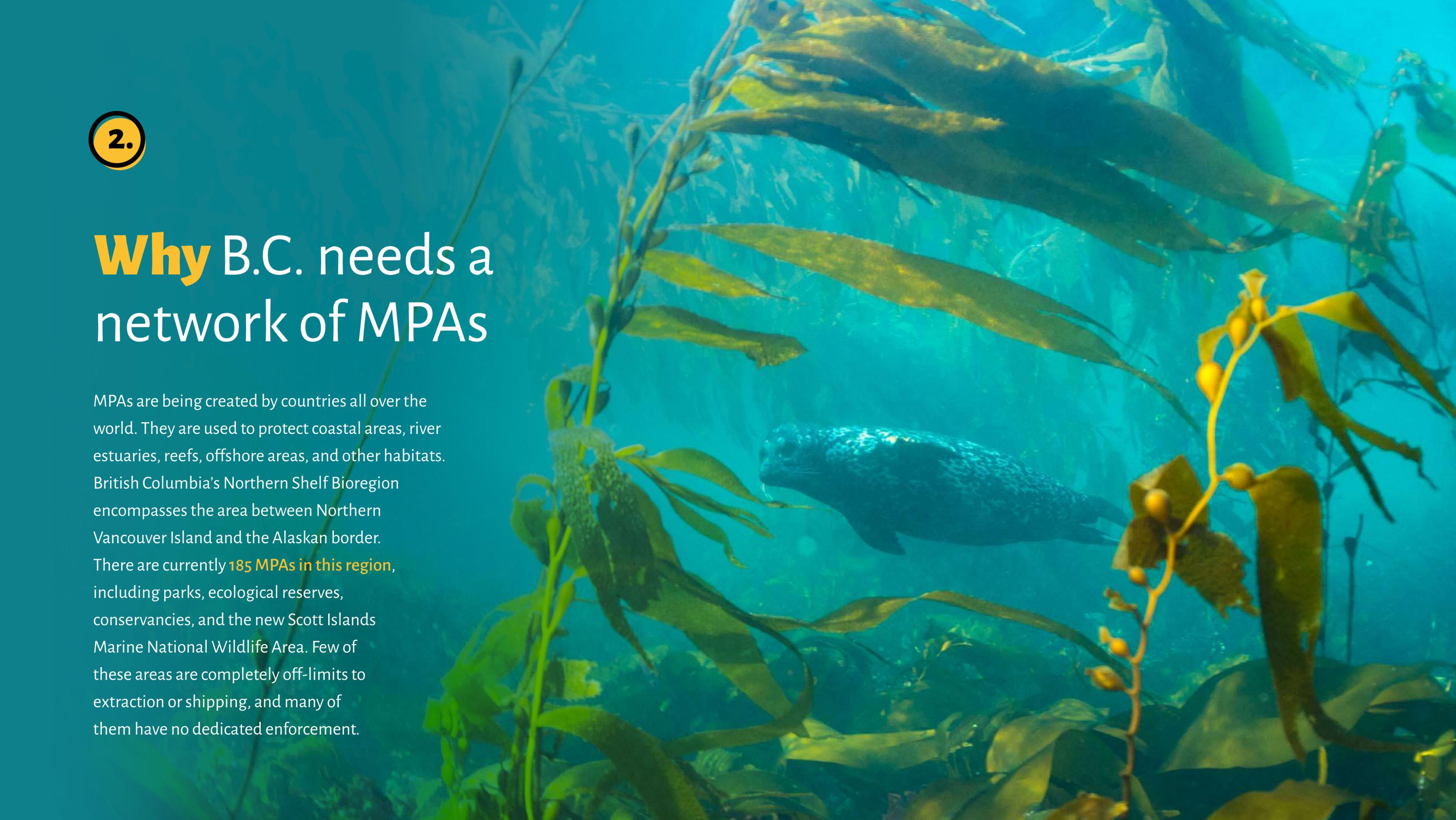
**Providing ecological benefits to surrounding unprotected ecosystems**



**Increasing commercial and recreational fishing catches in surrounding areas**



**Minimizing threats that can damage habitats and species, like oil and gas exploration, vessel traffic, or fishing**

An underwater photograph showing a seal swimming through a dense kelp forest. The water is clear and blue, and the kelp leaves are long and green, creating a textured background. The seal is in the center, moving towards the left.

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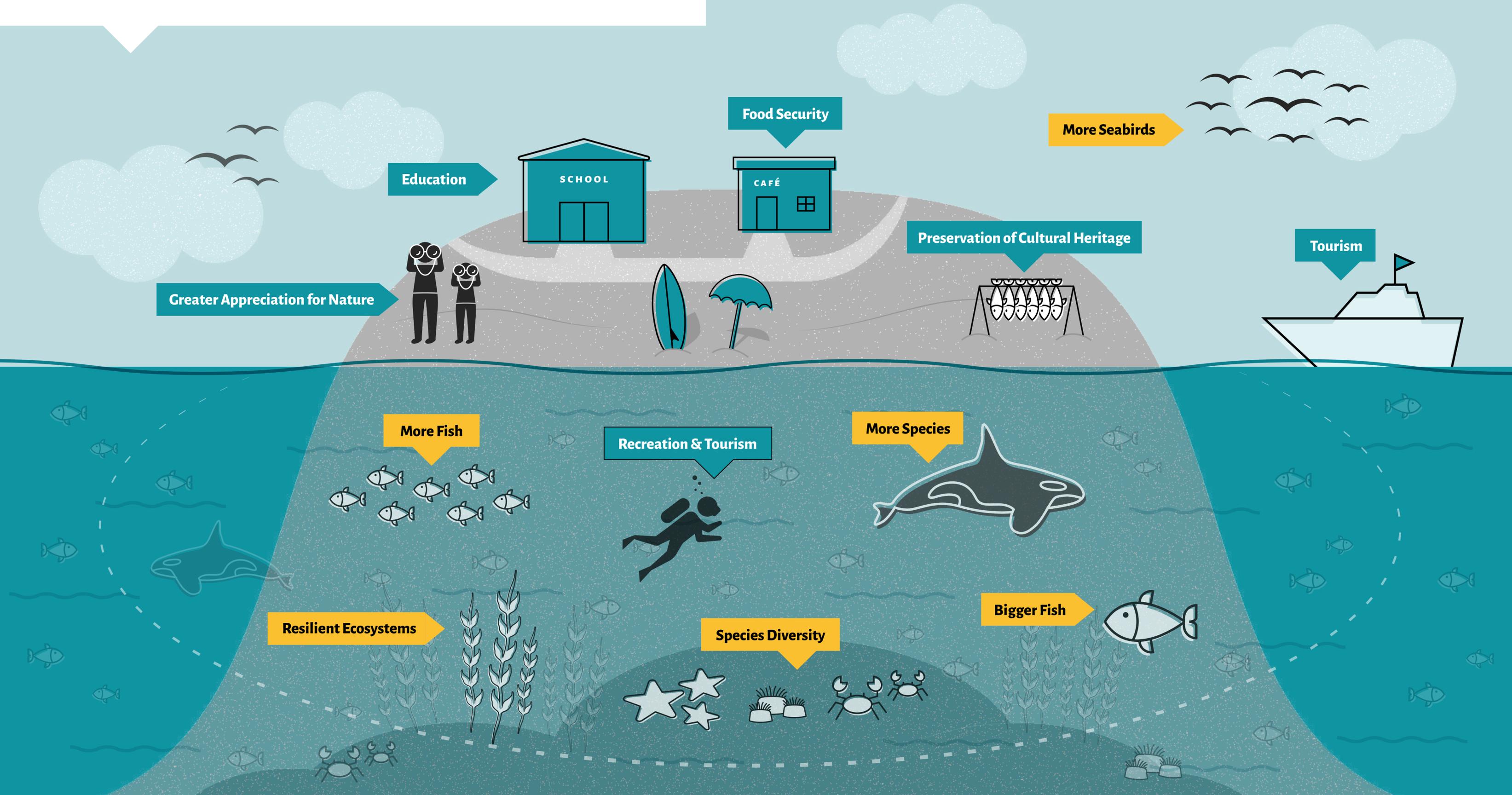
## Why B.C. needs a network of MPAs

MPAs are being created by countries all over the world. They are used to protect coastal areas, river estuaries, reefs, offshore areas, and other habitats. British Columbia's Northern Shelf Bioregion encompasses the area between Northern Vancouver Island and the Alaskan border. There are currently **185 MPAs in this region**, including parks, ecological reserves, conservancies, and the new Scott Islands Marine National Wildlife Area. Few of these areas are completely off-limits to extraction or shipping, and many of them have no dedicated enforcement.

# Benefits of MPAs

● Ecological

● Social / Cultural / Economic



3.

## Where should MPAs exist?

In 2014, the **World Parks Congress recommended protecting at least 30% of the world's oceans** to recover fisheries and maintain or restore biodiversity and ecosystem services. Currently, less than 4% of Canada's marine environment is strongly protected, even though we have the **seventh largest ocean area and the world's longest coastline**. The three oceans that border Canada's coasts are home to thousands of species of marine animals and plants. Their habitats include icefields, archipelagos, saltmarshes, and fjords. In particular, the **Northern Shelf Bioregion**, which includes the waters of British Columbia's north and central coasts and Haida Gwaii, contains spectacularly biodiverse and productive ocean environments that are worthy of protection.

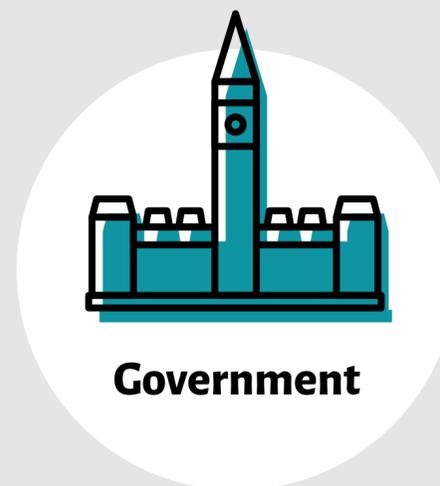
### The biodiversity and productivity of the North and Central Coast and Haida Gwaii makes this place a unique home for:



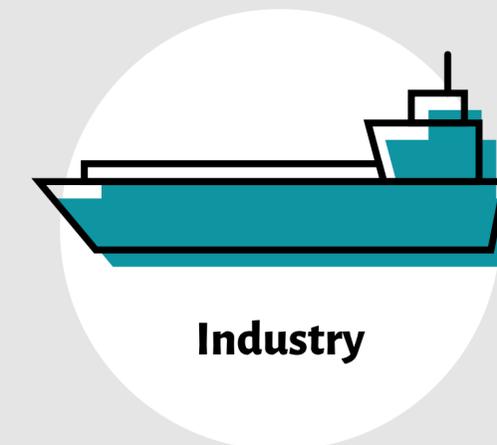
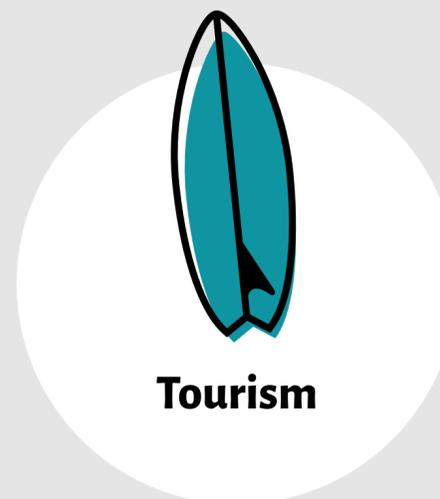
4.

## Who helps to create MPAs?

The creation of a new MPA can affect many people. MPAs with higher levels of community support have better conservation outcomes, because the people living and working near MPAs are more likely to follow the rules when they see the benefits to the environment and their livelihoods. For this reason, the MPA design process includes consultation with diverse stakeholders. In the waters of the Great Bear Rainforest, **seventeen First Nations** are working with the **Federal and Provincial governments** to protect parts of the marine environment in a network of MPAs. The **Northern Shelf Bioregion MPA Network** planning process is incorporating feedback from many sectors, including conservation, tourism, fishing, shipping, and other industries.



## MPA Stakeholders



# 5.

## When will we see MPAs in Canada?

Canada has committed to protecting 10% of our coastal and marine areas by 2020. The **Aichi Biodiversity Target 11** outlines how this action can “safeguard ecosystems, species, and genetic diversity.” Areas with many species that provide important ecosystem services should be conserved in well-connected MPA networks. MPA designation is already underway: the federal government plans to develop **13 different networks** of MPAs in Canada’s oceans, in partnership with provinces, territories, and First Nations.

### A timeline of marine protection on the B.C. coast.

- 1911** The first marine area in B.C. is legally protected, as part of Strathcona Provincial Park.
- 1985** The Haida Nation protects Gwaii Haanas as a Haida Heritage Site.
- 1996** The Oceans Act is passed.
- 2005** B.C.’s Northern Shelf Bioregion is identified as a priority area in Canada’s Ocean Action Plan.
- 2009** The first marine planning initiative is launched by the governments of Canada, B.C. and First Nations.
- 2010** Canada commits to protecting 10% of its oceans by 2020.
- 2012** The MPA Network process begins in the Northern Shelf Bioregion.
- 2019** A draft MPA Network plan is currently under review.
- 2020** Public consultation on the MPA Network is expected to begin.
- 2030** All countries should have 30% of oceans strongly protected.

# How does Canada rank in marine protection?

Canada has deep economic and cultural connections to the sea, but we are falling behind other countries in marine protection. Of the ten countries with the largest ocean areas globally, **Canada ranks seventh** in the percentage protected. Despite being the **first country in the world to establish comprehensive oceans-management legislation**, **Canada has protected only 8.3% of its oceans, lagging far behind leading countries like Australia, the UK and Chile.** This year, **Canada banned industrial activity in all new federally protected marine areas,**

but these regulations will not apply to the many areas protected by provinces and territories.

Effective marine protection also depends on cooperative agreements that respect Indigenous rights, traditional knowledge, and governance. Historically, protected areas often violated Indigenous rights

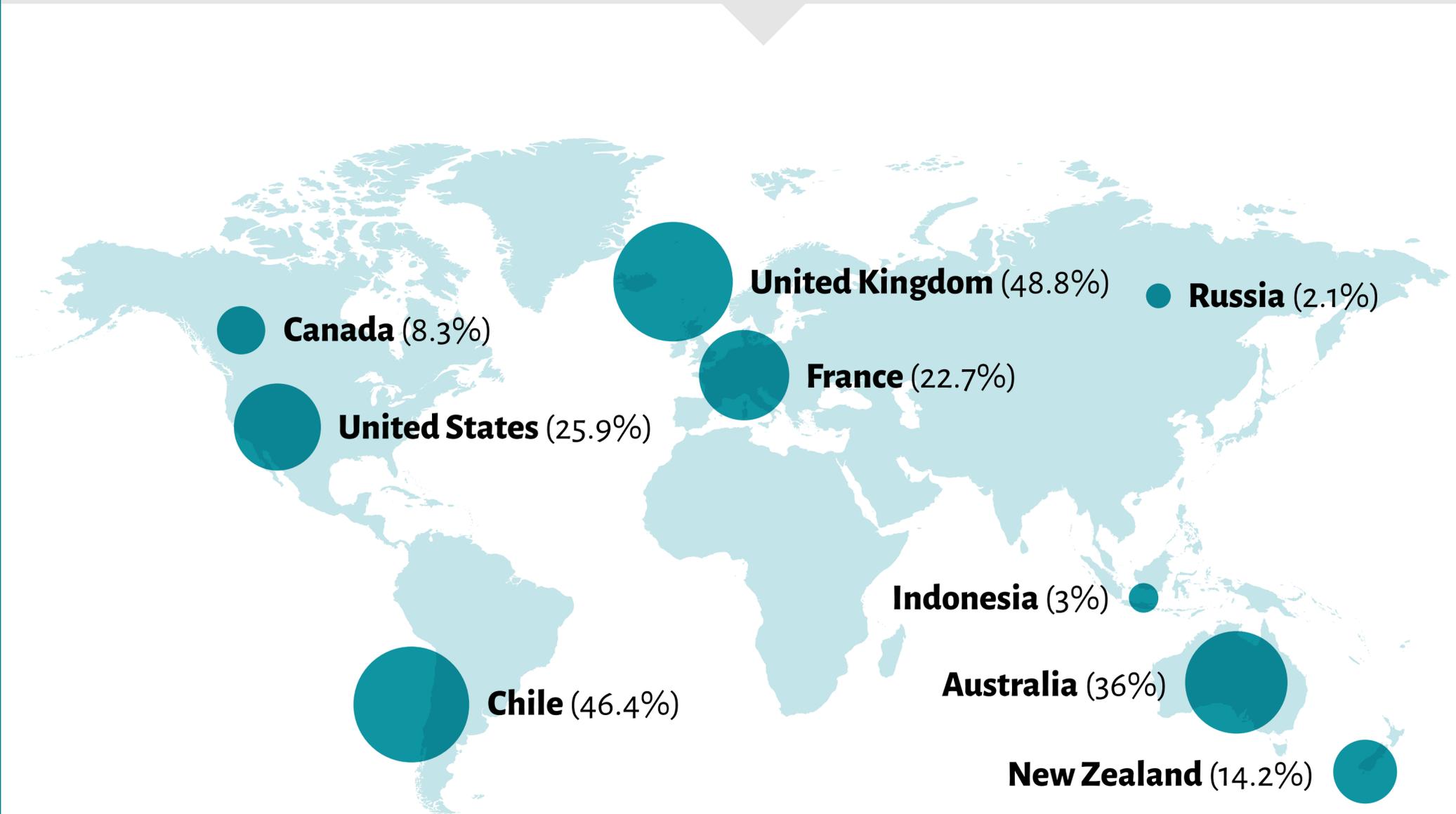
by forcefully relocating communities and prohibiting access to territories, medicines and foods. In recent decades, Canada has committed to renewing its relationship with Indigenous peoples and **co-governance arrangements are being negotiated** in both new and established MPAs.

**“Canadians believe that half of the oceans need to be protected.”<sup>1</sup>**

*Wright, P., Moghimehfar, F., & Woodley, A. (2019). Canadians' perspectives on how much space nature needs. Facets.*

## Marine conservation progress among countries with the largest Exclusive Economic Zones

*Percentage equals the amount of ocean estate that is protected.*





PACIFICWILD

LEARN MORE AT [PACIFICWILD.ORG](https://pacificwild.org)

### **ABOUT PACIFIC WILD**

Pacific Wild is a non-profit located in the heart of the Great Bear Rainforest on Denny Island. We are committed to defending wildlife and their habitat on Canada's Pacific coast by developing and implementing conservation solutions in collaboration with First Nations communities, scientists, other organizations and individuals. Pacific Wild supports innovative research, public education, community outreach and awareness to achieve the goal of lasting environmental protection in the lands and waters of the Great Bear Rainforest.

*All photos by Ian McAllister unless otherwise noted.*