



## **North America's Vanishing Wetlands: Facing the Challenge**

Poets write about it. Conservationists strive to continue it. Sportsmen dream about it. The migration of North America's waterfowl and other birds is one of nature's grandest and most anticipated events.

Wetlands make this migration possible. Wetlands also provide the foundation for North America's water supply. We rely on them for clean and abundant water, flood protection and recreation.

The need to conserve North America's wetlands has never been greater. Canada's wetlands and grasslands have traditionally produced more than half of North America's waterfowl and play a crucial role in sustaining many other wildlife populations. Sadly, in some parts of Canada nearly three-fourths of the original wetlands are now gone. The picture isn't any brighter in the United States, where more than half the original wetlands have been lost, and more than 80,000 wetland acres disappear each year.

## **Ducks Unlimited: Answering the Challenges**

To answer the challenge to save North America's wetlands, grasslands and waterfowl, Ducks Unlimited has embarked upon the Wetlands for Tomorrow campaign, an ambitious continental effort to raise \$1.7 billion for wetland habitat conservation.

With a proven track record of partnering with the private sector, government and other conservation organizations for nearly 70 years, Ducks Unlimited has restored and conserved almost 12 million acres of crucial habitat that benefits waterfowl, other wildlife and people.

Private gifts are the lifeblood of Ducks Unlimited. Once we have secured private funds from individuals, foundations, and corporate partners, we are able to secure matching funds from governmental sources to multiply the impact of the original gifts five to seven times.

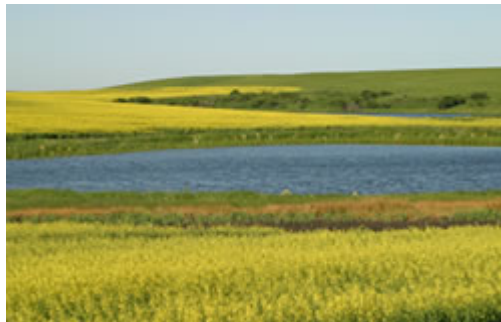


**GOAL: Protect and restore the world's best waterfowl-breeding habitat in South Dakota, North Dakota, Montana, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba.**

~Its mix of small, shallow ponds surrounded by lush, native grasses makes the Great Plains grasslands ideal for nesting hens and growing ducklings.

~Fertile wetlands and grasslands of prairies are under siege – large blocks of native grassland are being plowed at an alarming rate.

~More than 70 percent of the continent's prairie wetlands have been drained or severely degraded.



~Once lost, native prairie is almost impossible to fully restore.

**GOAL: Conserve, protect and manage the most important areas of the forest for waterfowl and other wildlife.**

~The boreal forest contains a quarter of the world's remaining intact forests.

~Its lakes, streams and wetlands hold more fresh water than any other place on the planet.

~The forest is home to 12-14 million breeding ducks annually.

~When drought parches the prairies, the boreal forest provides nesting habitat to maintain core duck populations.



~These wetland systems, once considered remote, stable and undisturbed, are now at risk due to logging, mining and other extraction industries.

~Collaborating with industry leaders and other partners, DU will protect enough forestland for wildlife to coexist with the human need for important natural resources.



**GOAL: Protect and restore imperiled Gulf Coast marshlands that provide wintering habitat for millions of ducks, geese and other wildlife species.**

~The land in this area is melting into the ocean - a football field disappearing every 30 minutes.

~Salt water is covering what was once more than 1 million acres of vibrant, wildlife-rich freshwater marshes.

~Annually, as many as 10 million ducks, geese and other birds spend the winter along the Louisiana coast.

~Coastal wetlands provide a protective buffer against flooding and storm surge. One mile of coastal marsh can reduce storm surge by approximately one foot.

~The coast is famous for abundant natural resources and almost unlimited recreational opportunities.

~It is hard to overstate the importance of coastal Louisiana – it is America's Wetland.



The first image, taken in July 2001, shows narrow sandy beaches and adjacent overwash sandflats, low vegetated dunes, and backbarrier marshes broken by ponds and channels.

The second image shows the same location on August 31, 2005, two days after Hurricane Katrina made landfall on the Louisiana and Mississippi coastline. Storm surge and large waves from Hurricane Katrina submerged the islands, stripped sand from the beaches, and eroded large sections of the marsh. Today, few recognizable landforms are left on the Chandeleur Island chain.

**GOAL: Protect, restore and manage vital wetlands in strategic locations across the continent.**

~Wetlands are among the richest and most valuable ecosystems in the world, providing a home to more than 900 wildlife species.

~They are the lifeblood of our continent, serving as natural systems to purify water and alleviate the effects of flooding.

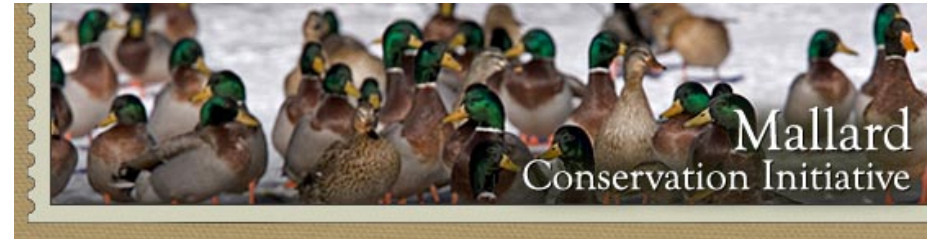
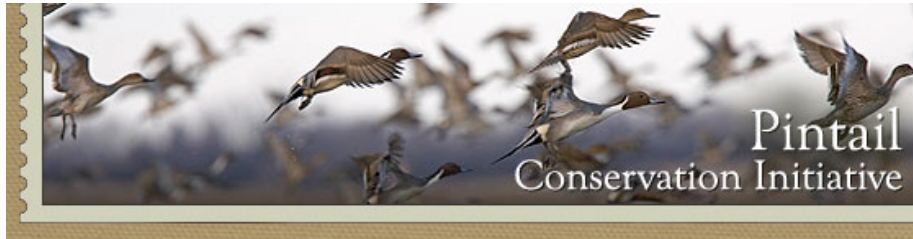
~Wetlands provide people a place to enjoy the outdoors.

~Annually, hundreds of thousands of wetland acres are still lost continentally.

~The only course of action to stop the decline is to protect remaining wetlands and restore lost ones.



Photo: GARYKRAMER.NET



**GOAL:** *Conserve and restore important breeding habitat in Alberta, Saskatchewan and the northern plains of the United States, as well as in the key migration and wintering habitats of California's Central Valley, the Klamath Basin, the Gulf Coast and Mexico.*

~At one time, more than 10 million nesting pintails dotted the grasslands and boreal forest of western Canada and the United States.

~Today, pintails number less than 2 million – a staggering 83 percent decline.

~Scientists largely attribute the decline to habitat loss.

~Nesting habitats in the north are being plowed under and converted to cropland, while some farming practices destroy pintail nests before the eggs have a chance to hatch.

~Compounding the problem is the extensive loss of key migration and wintering habitats in the Klamath Basin and California's Central Valley, along the Gulf Coast and in certain areas of Mexico.



James Overstreet

**GOAL:** *Conserve vital breeding, migration and wintering habitat in the Great Lakes region, Chesapeake Bay, the Mississippi River watershed, the Columbia Basin and key areas of California.*

~North America has more mallards than any other continent.

~Mallards are among the most prolific breeders in the waterfowl world.

~They are present in all 50 states, with specific regions being more important to their annual survival.

~Research indicates that reproductive success is limited by different factors specific to certain regions of the country. For example, nest success is most important factor in the prairies, while brood survival is key in the Great Lakes and water availability is critical in California.



Bill Buckley



**GOAL: Educate students throughout North America about the importance of wetlands to waterfowl, other wildlife and people.**

~Because many people are unaware of the tremendous value wetlands provide for our environment, economy and well-being, these amazing places continue to be destroyed at an alarming rate.

~The goal of Project Webfoot is to reverse this trend by raising awareness and appreciation of wetlands among students, teachers, parents and communities.

~Now, more than ever, children need to know why wetlands are so important as places that purify our water, control flooding, provide a home for more than 900 wildlife species and offer a place for people to enjoy the outdoors.

~Knowledgeable students become good citizens, inspired to conserve and improve the physical environments we all share and upon which we all depend.



**GOAL: Establish a venture capital fund, positioning Ducks Unlimited to respond quickly to urgent, high-priority conservation needs and opportunities, such as major land acquisitions and easements.**

~Opportunities to save critical habitat from the auction block or development often go unmet due to a lack of available funds for quick action.

~In the race to reverse the annual loss of more than 80,000 acres of wetlands, Ducks Unlimited has a proud history of immediately applying nearly all of its income to conservation opportunities.

~The creation of the Strategic Conservation Initiative Fund is one of the cornerstones of the Wetlands for Tomorrow campaign.



**GOAL: Increase the current endowment to provide greater financial certainty in support of DU's vital conservation mission and research programs.**

~Simply stated, a robust endowment is the foundation of DU's long-term financial strength.

~The importance of endowment lies in its permanence, since DU only spends the interest income from invested endowment funds.

~Planned gifts and gifts from estates are an excellent vehicle for building the endowment.