



## Hunting and fishing – for wildlife’s sake

*The levies placed on hunting and fishing licenses sold in Alberta are making a difference where it matters most.*

What do hunting and fishing have to do with wildlife conservation in Alberta? Kelly Semple wants everyone to understand the connection.

Semple, a hunter and advocate of conservation, is one of 4,900 Alberta women who hunt. She was introduced to hunting as a teenager, and is now executive director of the Hunting for Tomorrow Foundation.

Representing a coalition of hunting organizations in Alberta, her foundation promotes ethical hunting among hunters. To support hunting as a valid recreational pursuit, the foundation also shares information about the benefits of the activity with the public. Those benefits include vigorous support for conservation. According to Semple, sportsmen and women are at least three times more active in organized wildlife conservation efforts than non-hunters.

As for the money raised via hunting and angling licenses, “it’s not so much the money that matters, as what you can do with that money,” says Steven Hull, managing director, Alberta Conservation Association (ACA).

### Wildlife, fisheries and habitat: a record of success

ACA is a non-profit, non-government association that is partly funded by a portion of those license levies. Working with government, conservation-minded groups and industry, ACA’s portion of the levies - about \$7 million - helps conserve and enhance wildlife, fisheries and habitat.

ACA’s wildlife programs are as diverse as the species that live here. Some focus on specific game species, like Bighorn Sheep or Pronghorn Antelope. Others involve monitoring non-game animals, like amphibians. ACA also produces a program that compensate agricultural food producers for waterfowl crop damage or livestock predation.

On the fish front, ACA’s much-celebrated projects include one at Stauffer Creek, west of Red Deer. Here, ACA improved the stream channel to increase the population of brown trout. Other fisheries projects range from installing aeration devices to help fish survive in lakes over winter to stocking 50 to 70 recreational fishing sites a year.

To supplement funds received from hunters and anglers, ACA frequently works on habitat programs with

other conservation agencies and individuals in Alberta. This past spring, one partner initiative earned an Emerald Award for environmental excellence. The award honored a decision to buy, for long-term habitat protection, 1,120 acres of native wildlife habitat in central Alberta. The Buffalo Lake Moraine Conservation Area is open to legal hunting of waterfowl and big game during specific fall months, and for the rest of the year, the property is accessible to non-hunting activities such as hiking or bird watching.

“What excites me about ACA is that we bring different kinds of conservation organizations together,” says Trevor Thera, ACA’s director of operations and strategy. The Buffalo Lake land purchase, for example, included Ducks Unlimited Canada, Nature Conservancy Canada and Alberta Fish & Game Association.

### Beyond the hunt

“Good information gets people engaged in discussions about conservation,” explains Hugh Norris, Head, Fisheries Allocation and Use, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development. “Teaching people that it takes 10 years for a walleye to reach 20 inches in length, for example, helps put into perspective the long-term realities of conservation management decisions.”

Terry Birkholz, a professional hunting outfitter based at Sherwood Park, echoes the sentiment.

“Our participation in conservation is about so much more than the act of hunting or fishing,” says Birkholz, who chairs ACA’s volunteer board of directors and is second-president of the Alberta Professional Outfitters Society. “It’s rooted in the whole natural experience and the fact we’re spending time in the natural environment. Being there means we see the negative impact of landscape changes - and how solid conservation management strategies can make a difference to that landscape and the wildlife that depend on it.”

For more information on ACA visit [www.ab-conservation.com](http://www.ab-conservation.com) where you can also register a free copy of “Conservation Magazine”, ACA’s official publication published twice a year to keep you up to date on important conservation issues across the province.

