



Anybody
home?
The National Parks of Canada

Everyone Needs a Home

Your home is more than just walls and a roof. It's a **system**.

Pipes carry water for drinking, bathing, cleaning and cooking. The furnace heats your home. Electricity lights it and runs the fridge, stove, TV, computer and CD player.



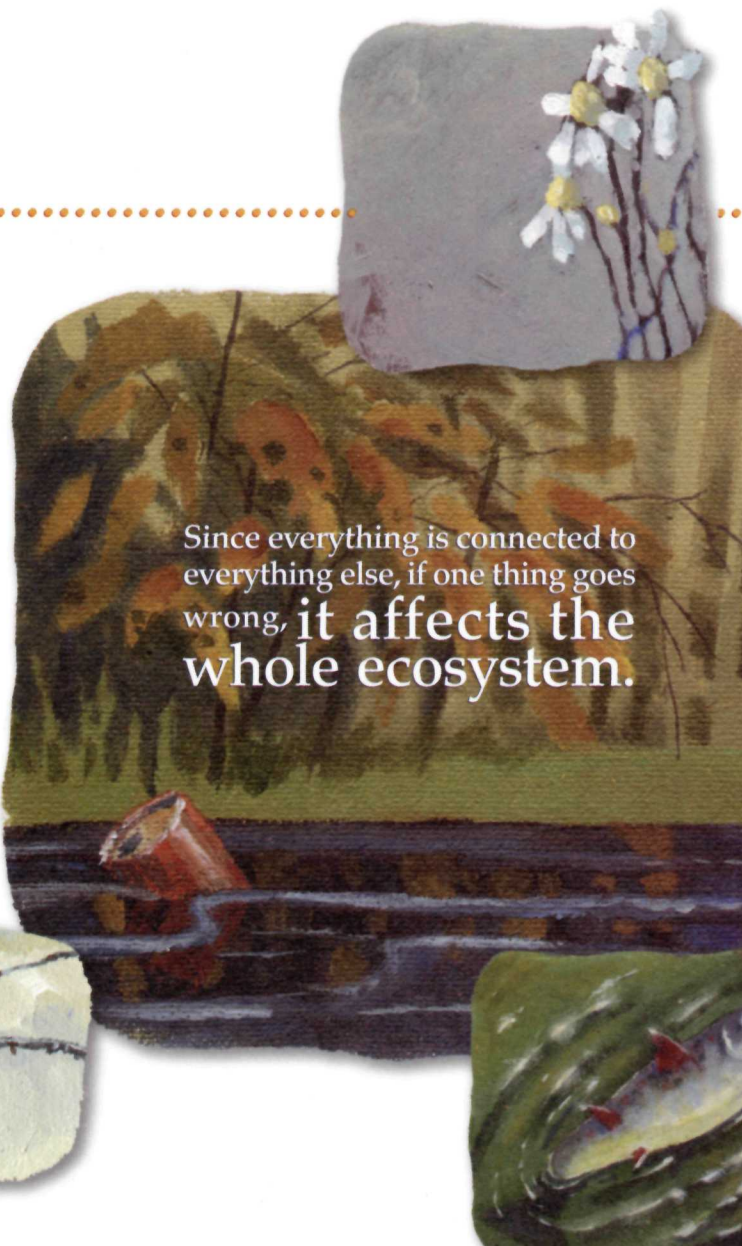
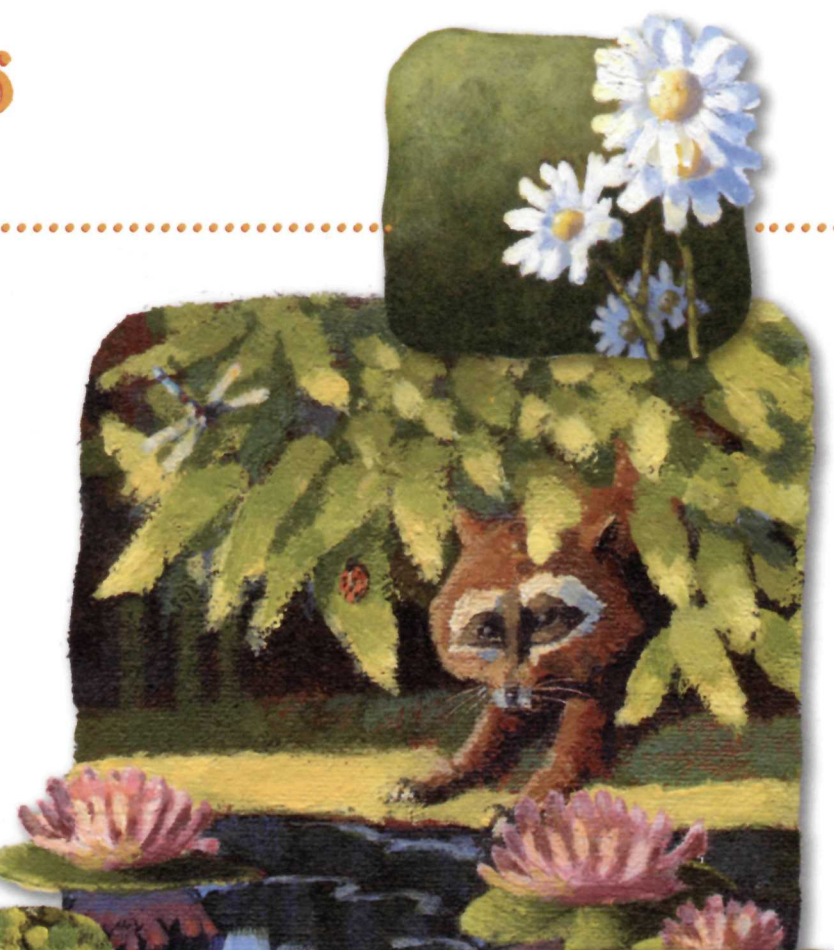
When everything's working, it's great. If something goes down or the power goes off, you're in trouble.

Well, the same goes for all Earth's creatures. If their homes can break down, so can theirs.

Nature's Homes

Unlike humans, most creatures live in the natural world – but their homes are systems too. We call them **ecosystems**.

All creatures in an ecosystem – like insects, plants, mammals, birds and fish – need clean air, water, healthy soil, and many other things to survive.



Since everything is connected to everything else, if one thing goes wrong, it affects the whole ecosystem.

Ecosystems – large ones like oceans, forests and deserts, or small ones like ponds and marshes – can lose their **ecological integrity**.

Let's say the soil is contaminated. If plants can't grow in it, birds and other animals that feed off these plants will have to move away or die. If that happens, larger animals that feed on these smaller ones will also be in trouble.

At Home with Parks Canada

So what can we do to help protect ecosystems? Well, having national parks and national marine conservation areas across the country is a good start. Not only are they wonderful places for us to visit, they are also **safe places** for creatures and plants to live.

But when you think about it, ecosystems do not stop at a park's boundary. They must be protected both inside and outside the park. **It's up to us** to make sure that all creatures have a cleaner and healthier environment to live in, now and in the future.

Ecological integrity means healthy ecosystems. Healthy ecosystems need many different kinds of wild creatures, wild plants and wild animals living together along with clean air, water and soil.

National Marine Conservation Areas are protected areas of water. They provide a safe environment for aquatic creatures to live in and help us better understand where and how they live, and what can be done to protect them for all time.



How You Can Help

If you visit a national park:

Read the trail signs. They'll help you understand and enjoy these special places.

Stay on the trails. Don't trample sensitive habitats or disturb wildlife.

Leave all flowers, berries, leaves, twigs and other plant life alone. They provide food for wildlife and play an important role in their ecosystems.

Ask staff about the research they do. National parks are living laboratories where we can learn a lot about the environment.

Do not feed the animals. It's not safe and it interferes with their natural habits. Remember, you're in their home.

Respect animals' and plants' homes just as you would respect other people's homes when you go to visit.

If you can't visit a national park:

Ask your teacher to contact your local Parks Canada office to find out more about classroom material. Help organize a poster contest or invite a speaker from Parks Canada.

Grow your own tree and get your friends to do the same. Stage a play about the environment to raise money to buy the trees.

Help clean up a beach or start an anti-litter campaign.

Do a project on air pollution, acid rain or endangered species.

Visit these Internet sites:

Parks Canada
www.parkscanada.gc.ca

Natural Resources Canada
www.nrcan-nrcan.gc.ca

Environment Canada
www.ec.gc.ca

Species at Risk
www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca

National Wildlife Federation
www.nwf.org/kids

World Wildlife Fund Canada
www.wwf.ca



Contemporary canoeists, Ontario, Tony Stone

The story of how our country became what it is today is told through the national historic sites, national parks and national marine conservation areas of Canada. Parks Canada works to protect and present our natural and cultural heritage so that it may continue to be enjoyed by present and future generations of Canadians.

For more information:

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Internet site: www.parkscanada.gc.ca

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