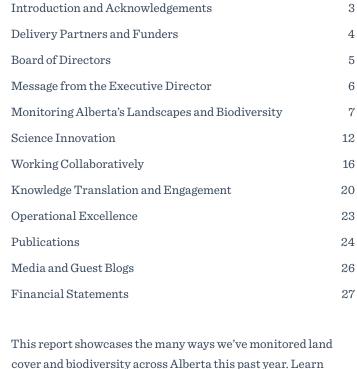


ANNUAL REPORT | 24-25



Contents



cover and biodiversity across Alberta this past year. Learn about these efforts, and more at abmi.ca.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute. 2025. Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute Annual Report 2024-25. Available at: https://abmi.ca/home/publications.html

3

6 7

Introduction and Acknowledgements

The ABMI is a leader in biodiversity monitoring.

The Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute (ABMI) is an independent, not-for-profit, non-regulatory institute housed at InnoTech Alberta, the University of Alberta (U of A), and the University of Calgary (U of C). Since 2007, we have monitored and reported on Alberta's biodiversity and land cover. This report highlights our activities and achievements for the 2024-25 fiscal year, illustrating the value of our collaborations. Through these partnerships, we strive to deliver results that meet diverse and evolving needs.

OUR VISION

The ABMI advances biodiversity monitoring to inform responsible resource management and land stewardship, now and for future generations.

OUR MISSION

We track changes in wildlife and their habitats across Alberta, working collaboratively to provide ongoing, relevant, and scientifically credible information about our living resources.

OUR VALUES

We pride ourselves on being independent, scientifically credible, relevant and accessible, transparent, and collaborative.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The ABMI respectfully acknowledges that our work takes place on the territories of Treaties 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, the Blackfoot Confederacy, and the Métis homeland, traditional and ancestral lands of First Nations and Métis Peoples, whose histories, languages, and cultures are directly linked to the biodiversity that we monitor. We acknowledge and honour the traditional teachings of the lands that we work on and benefit from, and that reciprocal, meaningful, and respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples make our work possible. We are deeply grateful for their stewardship of these lands, and we are committed to supporting Indigenous-led monitoring programs, while increasing our learning and understanding of Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing.





Funders and Collaborators

Alberta Grazing Leaseholders +

Alberta Innovates

Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Inc. +

Alberta Pork

Alberta Wilderness Association +

Athabasca Oil Corporation

Athabasca Landing Metis Community

Association

Blood Indian Reserve NO. 148 and 148A

Buffalo Lake Metis Settlement

Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission

Canadian Natural Resources Limited

Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society +

Cenovus Energy

CNOOC International Ltd.

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Ducks Unlimited

Forest Resource Improvement

Association of Alberta (FRIAA)

Fort McKay Métis Nation

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Government of Northwest Territories

Government of Saskatchewan

Imperial Oil

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Kikino Métis Settlement

MEG Energy

Nature Conservancy Canada +

NatureServe Canada

Oil Sands Monitoring Program

Ovintiv +

Pathways Alliance Inc.

Petroleum Technology Alliance Canada

(PTAC)

Pembina Institute +

Strathcona County

Suncor Energy +

Tolko Industries Ltd.

Alberta Northwest Species at Risk

Committee (NWSAR)

University of Alberta* +

University of Calgary*

University of Waterloo

West Fraser +

Western Stock Growers Association +

Ya'Thi Néné Lands and Resources

+ Member

* Delivery partner

+ The ABMI extends our gratitude to our Members for their ongoing support.

These organizations are integral to our success and the realization of our work.

* We also value the strong support provided by our Delivery Partners

at Innotech Alberta, the
University of Alberta, and the
University of Calgary. Without
their invaluable contributions,
many of the achievements we
showcase in this report would
not have been possible.

Thanks to our

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Message from the Executive Director

Each year, the Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute collects, manages, and shares a large volume of information on Alberta's species and their habitats. As I present the 2024–25 annual report, I am awed by both the breadth and depth of the data collected over the years and the advancements made in making this information more accessible. Highlights from this past year include the launch of the Online Reporting for Biodiversity (ORB) tool, the rollout of an updated abmi.ca website, and the establishment of the Imaging Centre, which expands our capacity to process and share high-resolution spatial data.

This year also marks the completion of baseline field data collection under the Ecosystem Health Program (EHP). We are now shifting and applying these data to monitor short-term changes in both terrestrial and wetland environments. Efforts also continue through various projects so that ground-based observations and remote sensing data can work together. It is rewarding to see how the work we have built over many years is guiding this next phase of monitoring.

None of this work is possible without collaboration.

I am grateful for the support and partnership of numerous organizations, and for the landholders across Alberta who generously allow us access to their land for monitoring and data collection. Their contributions make it possible for us to maintain and share a growing body of information about biodiversity and land use across this diverse and beautiful province.

As you read this annual report, I hope you see not only the breadth of the data and programs we manage, but also the collaborative efforts behind them. Together with our partners and collaborators, we are building and maintaining the knowledge needed to understand and respond to changes in Alberta's biodiversity.



Jim Herbers

Executive Director

Alberta Biodiversity

Monitoring Institute





The ABMI collects high-quality and wideranging data on Alberta's biodiversity and landscapes through a variety of monitoring programs and initiatives. These data span detailed records of individual species across eight taxonomic groups to large-scale airborne lidarand satellite-derived geospatial products such as

and Biodiversity

Collected from the ground, air, and even space, these datasets are publicly available to support research, planning, and decision-making. In 2024, we launched the Imaging Centre to coordinate and expand the acquisition and interpretation of airborne data.

the Human Footprint Inventory.

This year also marked the final year of data collection under the Ecosystem Health Program systematic design, along with a number of targeted and regional initiatives. These included work under the Oil Sands Monitoring Program, the second year of the Biodiversity Trajectories project, ongoing assessment of caribou habitat restoration through Alberta's Caribou Habitat Recovery Program, and vegetation mapping on human footprint features.

The following section provides detailed summaries of these and other monitoring programs and initiatives, along with a snapshot of the cumulative data the ABMI has made available over the past nearly two decades.

THE IMAGING CENTRE

The ABMI Imaging Centre was established in 2024 in response to growing demand for continuous high-resolution spatial data for scientific research, particularly lidar and aerial imagery. We recognized the opportunity to enhance biodiversity monitoring, ecological mapping, and habitat modelling by integrating artificial intelligence and remote sensing workflows while making lidar data accessible for research and monitoring.

The Centre focuses on high-resolution airborne data acquisition and interpretation and serves as a hub for cutting-edge aerial data collection, processing, and analysis, supporting environmental monitoring and land management across Alberta and beyond. It brings together a multidisciplinary team of remote sensing specialists, GIS analysts, computer scientists, and ecologists dedicated to producing consistent, high-resolution spatial data. This work informs land-use planning, biodiversity conservation, reclamation, and climate change adaptation, and underpins many of the ABMI's large-scale monitoring programs. The Imaging Centre also provides foundational data for a wide range of partners in government, industry, and academia. In 2024, the Imaging Centre released a number of lidar-derived products, such as bare earth digital elevation models and tree tops for the Christina Lake area. These can be accessed on the ABMI's Open Data Portal, with additional releases planned in 2025-26.

SPOTLIGHT

Data Collection Overview

Since 2007, the ABMI has been collecting data across the entire province of Alberta. Over the past 18 years, this effort has resulted in a massive and diverse dataset that is publicly available at abmi.ca.

SPECIES AND HABITAT DATA

Over two million rows of data have been collected from more than 2,000 locations dispersed across the entire province of Alberta (see map). This dataset includes:



615



803



~900 aquatic invertebrate species



276



1,465 vascular plant

Along with detailed habitat data that helps us understand the environments these species call home.

WILDLIFE SENSOR DATA (SINCE 2015)

Nearly 30 million images collected from remote cameras, totaling $4.5\,\mathrm{TB}$ of data

- The most photographed species is Domestic Cows (~4 million images); to focus on wildlife, we've created an automatic cow-filter in WildTrax to hide these images
- White-tailed Deer are the second most photographed species (~550,000 images)

670 days of audio recordings captured by Autonomous Recording Units (ARUs), approximately 120TB of data

 The most frequently tagged birds include Whitethroated Sparrow, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Swainson's Thrush



LIDAR DATA (SINCE 2022)

Our lidar coverage now totals about 118,000 km² (220 TB), with data collected each year as follows:

- 2022: ~26,000 km² (50 TB)
- 2023: ~44,000 km² (80 TB)
- 2024: ~48,000 km2 (90 TB)

ADDITIONAL PRODUCTS

The ABMI also produces:

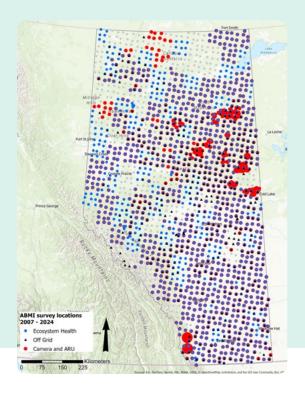
- Human footprint maps
- Species intactness indices
- · Reports and publications

Available on the ABMI website are:

- 83 GIS datasets (1.4 TB)
- Over 500 publications (4.6 GB)

TOTAL DATA COLLECTED

The ABMI has gathered nearly one petabyte of data over 18 years. This is equivalent to about 745 million floppy disks, 1.5 million CD-ROMs, or 250 million high-resolution photos—enough to take a photo every second for eight years straight.



ECOSYSTEM HEALTH MONITORING

The Ecosystem Health Program (EHP) is a long-term trend monitoring effort comprising a systematic grid of sites spaced every 20 km across the province. At each site, the ABMI records species across eight taxonomic groups and measures a wide range of habitat characteristics.

The 2024-25 year marked the final year of data collection under this design, which has provided a comprehensive understanding of the status of Alberta's biodiversity. Over nearly two decades, this program generated invaluable monitoring datasets that will continue to form the foundation for our work.

Beginning in 2025-26, monitoring will shift to a more focused and responsive program. Site locations will be chosen to monitor biodiversity responses in regions expected to experience short-term changes in both terrestrial and wetland environments. The objectives of this short-term change program are to understand where and how species and habitats are changing over time.

We took several preparatory steps in 2024–25 to support this transition. These included the development and initial testing of an ecosite protocol designed to strengthen linkages and applications to remote sensing approaches. We also continued previous work to refine protocols by testing the relationship between camera height deployment and the mammal species captured in images, and between habitat and the sensitivity of autonomous recording units (ARUs) in detecting vocalizing species such as birds and amphibians.



SUPPORTING THE OIL SANDS MONITORING PROGRAM

The ABMI supports the delivery of the Oil Sands Monitoring (OSM) program—a regional monitoring effort designed to detect environmental change as a result of oil sands stressors. We contributed to several program areas for OSM in 2024–25.

As part of the Terrestrial Biological Monitoring program we continued to work with an integrated team of collaborators to monitor how the terrestrial environment is changing. This included monitoring birds and mammals under a "before-after dose-response" (BADR) design—a large-scale, stratified monitoring program designed to improve understanding of how biodiversity is responding to oil sands activities (learn about the BADR study design in this newly completed fact sheet). The terrestrial program also includes partnerships with multiple Indigenous communities to develop and implement community-based wildlife monitoring programs using remote cameras.

We also worked on multiple geospatial initiatives within the Oil Sands Region, including an enhanced human footprint inventory, historical footprint inventories for the 1950s and 1980s, monitoring of habitat regeneration on oil sands disturbances using lidar, and groundwater-dependent ecosystem mapping.



MAPPING HUMAN FOOTPRINT

We updated the Human Footprint Inventory (HFI) to capture human disturbances visible in SPOT 6 satellite imagery circa 2022. The HFI extends back to 2000 and is updated annually to reflect changing human footprint conditions across Alberta. The current HFI contains 112 feature types and 20 individual sublayers including seismic lines, harvest areas, roads, and cultivation. The total human footprint in Alberta was 31.25% as of 2022. In addition to an online report, the HFI is available to view on the Mapping Portal and to download through the Open Data Portal on our website.

We also updated the Temporal Human Footprint (THF) dataset to include conditions in 2022. This dataset covers approximately 5% of the province and provides information from the years 1950, 1985, 2000, 2001, and annually from 2004 to 2022. It is spatially consistent with the larger HFI dataset and is designed to be consistent over time, meaning that features from earlier years are also included in later years. This makes the THF useful for accurate trend analysis.

MAPPING VEGETATION ON HUMAN FOOTPRINT FEATURES

We are advancing the mapping of vegetation on human footprint features through our Vegetation Regeneration Mapping (VRM) program. This multi-year program is designed to track and quantify forest regeneration across disturbed landscapes such as seismic lines, well sites, pipelines, and roads, with a particular focus on caribou ranges and the Oil Sands Region.

Leveraging high-resolution airborne lidar, aerial imagery, and artificial intelligence, the VRM program detects and measures vegetation structure, composition, and recovery trends at large scales. By the end of 2025, the program aims to complete vegetation mapping on human footprint features across all caribou ranges in the province and approximately 45% of the Oil Sands Region. These data enable more accurate, repeatable assessments of vegetation recovery on both linear and polygonal disturbances, providing critical insights for land managers, regulators, and restoration practitioners. Ultimately, the VRM program supports science-based decision-making for reclamation planning, species at risk recovery, and cumulative effects management across Alberta's landscapes.

BIODIVERSITY TRAJECTORIES: COMPARING FOREST RECOVERY AFTER FIRES AND HARVEST

Biodiversity Trajectories (BDT) is a multi-year, collaborative project between the ABMI and seven forestry companies in Alberta. The project is based on testing a key assumption of ecosystem-based forest management (EBM) practiced by the forest industry—that the biological communities in burned (i.e., naturally disturbed) and harvested areas will eventually converge over time. The BDT project will help understand how EBM techniques affect biodiversity in Alberta's regenerating boreal forest, and whether this convergence is occurring.

The first year of field work took place in summer 2024. Field crews established 30 survey sites across the Boreal Natural Region during July and August of 2024. Sites were revisited in February 2025 to deploy ARUs and remote cameras targeting songbird and mammal populations, respectively. The ABMI team also explored how the study design could be revised and applied to a future project targeting the Foothills Natural Region. The BDT project is funded through the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta's Forest Resource Improvement Program and will be implemented through 2028.

CARIBOU HABITAT RESTORATION MONITORING

Caribou Habitat Restoration Monitoring is a multi-year, science-based program led by the ABMI in partnership with Alberta Environment and Protected Areas (EPA). Launched in 2024, it supports Alberta's Caribou Habitat Recovery Program by evaluating restoration treatments on legacy seismic lines across caribou ranges. This work addresses the

ongoing decline of Alberta's Woodland Caribou populations, driven primarily by predation as a result of habitat disturbance and climate change. Restoration treatments aim to accelerate forest regeneration, reduce predator efficiency, and limit human access, with an overarching goal of contributing to self-sustaining caribou populations.

Using ground-based sampling, remote cameras, and remote sensing, the program monitors forest regeneration, wildlife use, and human access. Surveys are repeated at the same sites over time to track ecological responses to restoration. There are three survey types:

- treatment quality surveys,
- monitoring site preparation and tree planting surveys,
- and survival assessment and establishment surveys, which track ecological response to treatments (2-5 years and 8-10 years post-treatment, respectively).

In 2024, we piloted treatment quality and survival assessment surveys across $782\,\mathrm{km}$ of treated seismic lines in the Little Smoky and À La Pêche ranges.

The program's scale is extensive and growing. Recognizing the cultural and ecological significance of caribou to Indigenous communities, active collaborations are being established with Indigenous partners to identify opportunities for meaningful partnerships in monitoring efforts. The monitoring framework is designed to be adaptive and will evolve as new knowledge, technology, and management priorities emerge. Results from this work will provide critical, site-specific insights to guide Alberta's caribou habitat recovery efforts and advance broader understanding of large-scale forest restoration across Canada.



Science Innovation

From harnessing artificial intelligence to advancing acoustic monitoring and wetland mapping, the ABMI continues to innovate in the field of biodiversity science. In 2024–25, we focused on applying emerging technologies and analytical methods to enhance how we monitor, understand, and share information about Alberta's species and landscapes. Whether developing scalable tools like the Online Reporting for Biodiversity (ORB) tool, piloting next-generation wetland inventories, or integrating diverse datasets to improve species models, our science innovation efforts make biodiversity data more accurate, accessible, and usable.

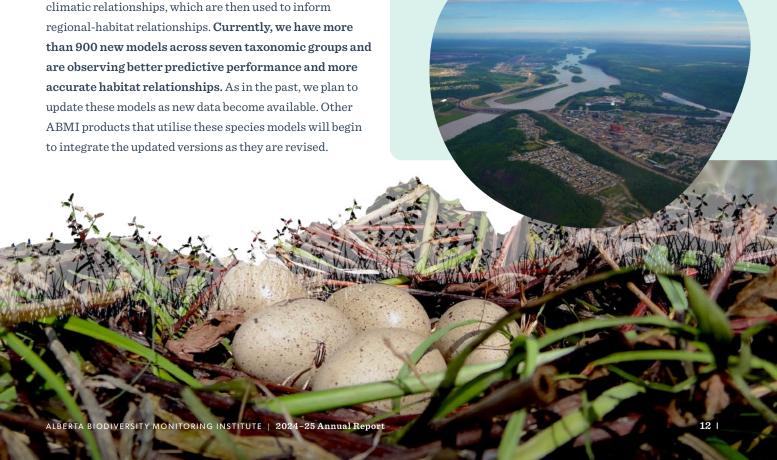
A NEW SPECIES-HABITAT MODELLING FRAMEWORK

In 2024-25, we reviewed and adopted a new hierarchical modelling framework for our species-habitat models, based on recent advancements in modelling species-habitat relationships. This framework first assesses provincial-

SPOTLIGHT

Sharing Biodiversity Data through the ORB Tool

We launched the ORB Tool in 2024-25, a powerful, userfriendly platform for accessing biodiversity and land cover data across Alberta. Users can instantly generate tailored, interactive reports for selected areas—such as natural regions, watersheds, or municipalities. Each report includes dynamic graphs, maps, and tables summarizing human footprint, wetland areas, and biodiversity intactness for birds, mammals, and vascular plants. The tool continues to evolve, with planned updates that include additional indicators, expanded geographic coverage, and PDF export options.



HYDROPATTERNS

HydroPatterns is a dataset that maps open surface water dynamics (the size of flooded areas and how often they flood) over time and space at a monthly scale. While conceptually similar to hydroperiod—which describes the length of time that an area of land is wet or submerged in water—HydroPatterns is broader in scope, with a focus on non-flowing water bodies, such as lakes, reservoirs, ponds, dugouts, and wetlands.

In 2024-2025, we successfully developed an automated and easy-to-repeat approach for generating HydroPatterns products. The approach integrates open-access Sentinel imagery from the European Space Agency, cloud computing via Google Earth Engine, and machine learning techniques. The workflow was tested in two pilot areas, each covering approximately 5,000 km² and located in Alberta's Boreal and Parkland Natural Regions. Monthly open surface water presence was mapped at a 10m spatial resolution during the 2020-2023 growing seasons (May to October), achieving over 90% overall accuracy in open water detection across both sites.

Compared to existing Alberta-wide surface water dynamics products, HydroPatterns offers improved edge delineation and identifies a greater number of small water features (<1 ha in size). It shows how often places flood during the year and from year to year, plus how water areas change month-to-month. This helps us better find temporary water bodies.

The HydroPatterns dataset is anticipated to play a key role in future wetland monitoring efforts and has the potential to significantly improve species-habitat modelling, particularly for amphibians and migratory birds.





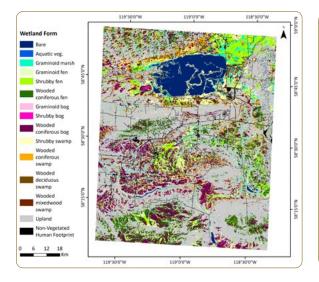


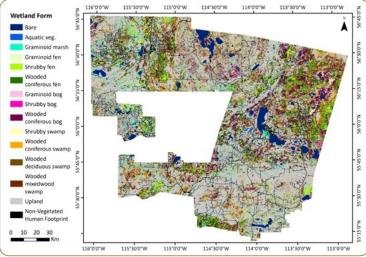
PILOTING NEXT-GENERATION WETLAND MAPPING

Up-to-date wetland maps provide valuable information on wetland habitats, status, and trends. In 2024, we finalized the delivery of next-generation, detailed wetland mapping that was developed and produced under contract from EPA, and completed in collaboration with Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC). The ABMI and DUC worked together to create improved mapping techniques that leverage artificial intelligence, lidar, and satellite imagery. The new technique successfully maps wetlands to the form level, which is the level below wetland class, such as graminoid fen or shrubby swamp, according to the Alberta Wetland Classification System provincial wetland mapping standards.

Piloted wetland inventories were generated for a series of boreal, grassland, and parkland pilot areas across Alberta. Project outcomes are available through the <u>Government of Alberta website</u>.

The ABMI also contributed to EPA-led external engagement efforts over the 2024-25 year, which focused on capturing the current state of wetland mapping knowledge and science at an international scale. These efforts helped inform final EPA workshop outcomes, which indicated strong support for the project's modelling approaches and results—and encouragement to scale up the approach to develop a new, updated province-wide wetland inventory.





MAMMAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

A major focus of our mammal research has been integrating remote camera data from a diverse array of partner organizations and sources. Using previously developed calibration factors to account for differences in deployment protocols (e.g., different camera models, deployment heights), we were able to make use of existing camera projects deployed by industry for regulatory monitoring in the Oil Sands Region, research partners such as Innotech Alberta in the southern foothills region, as well as from the Government of Alberta for invasive species monitoring.

The images from these external projects—which are available through the WildTrax platform—were carefully assessed to ensure that the image tagging and metadata met ABMI protocol requirements. This supplemental image data expands provincial coverage, increases sample size for rarer species and habitats, and improves confidence in species distribution models.

Our full dataset for mammal modelling in the province now includes images from over 7,000 camera deployments across 22 distinct projects, 2,000 of which come from these external projects. By leveraging the effort of multiple organizations, we are improving monitoring of the mammal taxa across Alberta.

ACOUSTIC RESEARCH

We advanced multiple research and development projects in 2024-25 to make the best use of the numerous acoustic recordings collected by the ABMI's ARUs.

Our first area of focus was ensuring that data collected by ARUs were properly incorporated into our existing models and methods. We continued to co-host an international working group on detection probability—the likelihood of finding a species if it's present—and, with that group, organized a special feature in the journal Ornithological Applications. We also contributed to three peer-reviewed publications about how well species can be detected in sound recordings and collected several datasets to study and improve the use of acoustic data.

Extracting more information from the acoustic recordings was our second area of focus. We continued to support the development of and encourage the use of HawkEars, an artificial intelligence model that can automatically detect bird species by sound. This work included a peer-reviewed publication of model performance. We developed methods for incorporating data from HawkEars into speciesabundance models, explored its use for predicting breeding status of songbirds, and studied its application to other acoustic species, including amphibians. Finally, we worked with a global group of experts on a horizon scan of emerging challenges and opportunities in the field of bioacoustics.



Working Collaboratively

We're proud to work with a diverse range of collaborators and partners to support a wide array of environmental planning and management needs. In this section, we highlight several partnerships and initiatives that showcase how the ABMI's collaborative approach strengthens biodiversity monitoring across scales and sectors.

COMMUNITY BASED MONITORING AND ENGAGEMENT UNIT

The ABMI's Community Based Monitoring and Engagement (CBME) unit, formally established in 2018, continues to support Indigenous-led monitoring programs. Indigenous communities are partners in biodiversity monitoring and lead unique programs that monitor the overall health of their traditional territories. We strive to share our knowledge and skills to support each partner community to build a meaningful monitoring approach, while striving to learn from and respect each community's deeply rooted connections to the land

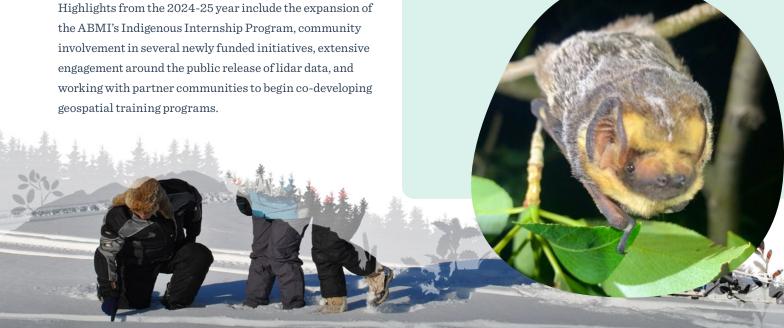
The CBME has grown over the past year and is proud to include four team members who identify as Indigenous scholars. The team has worked internally and externally in partnership with over 10 communities to develop a strategic vision for ABMI's work with Indigenous communities.

Building the Bat Network

The North by Northwest (NNW) Bat Hub launched in 2023 as a cross-border collaboration led by the governments of Alaska, Alberta, and British Columbia. Our national affiliate Biodiversity Pathways leads the hub, with the ABMI providing crucial leadership during its formation and ongoing guidance and analytical support.

The NNW Bat Hub supports the North American Bat Monitoring Program (NABat) by coordinating regional long-term monitoring efforts using the standardized methodology set by NABat. This coming year, three new grids have been added to the network: one in Alaska, two in Alberta, and one previously inactive site in British Columbia that was reactivated.

Looking ahead, the hub continues to support expansion of the monitoring network, with key support from the ABMI. Ongoing efforts to add new sampling locations will help improve our ability to detect long-term trends and inform bat conservation planning across the region.





Wildland Foundations: Building Foundational Knowledge on the Impacts of Wildfire on Species, Forests, and People

We are working with our national affiliate, Biodiversity
Pathways, on a new three-year project to better understand the
impacts of wildfire on species, forests, and people. As climates
continue to warm, the intensity, size, and frequency of extreme
fires impacting forests and communities across Canada
will increase. Extreme fires have catastrophic and lasting
socioeconomic and environmental impacts to Indigenous
communities and their lands, affecting livelihoods, food
security, and cultural and spiritual practices.

The Wildland Foundations project aims to understand the impact of fire on wildlife, habitat, and forest structure; cultural sites; and Indigenous use of traditional lands. We are working with Indigenous communities in western Canada to co-develop data collection programs and describe Indigenous fire mitigation practices in four demonstration sites. Demonstration sites are a Natural Resources Canada initiative: place-based partnerships to test and showcase innovative adaptive vegetation management and forestry practices in an operational context.

At three demonstration sites, we will bring together western science and Indigenous knowledge on the impacts of extreme wildfire, and understand how Indigenous fire practices can enhance post-fire landscapes and mitigate the risk of future fires. We will co-create foundational knowledge to support the implementation and measurement of future restoration practices. At a fourth site, Biodiversity Pathways will support research and adaptive management practices to restore culturally important habitat and reduce the risk of highseverity wildfire.

 $Visit \, \underline{biodiversity pathways.ca} \, to \, learn \, more \, about \, this \, and \, other \, programs.$

WILDTRAX: AN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL SENSOR NETWORK

Developed by the ABMI and the U of A, WildTrax has emerged as Canada's leading platform for storing, processing, and sharing environmental sensor data from ARUs and remote cameras as well as avian point counts. As of March 2025, 400 organizations now use the platform-from academic institutions and industry partners to environmental non-government organizations and local communities around the world. With millions of recordings and images resulting in even millions more species detections, WildTrax empowers thousands of users through its powerful tools, intuitive user interface, and an evergrowing network of collaborators.

Dozens of publicly available projects hosted on the platform are helping to build the momentum of the $\underline{\operatorname{CanAvian}}$ network, fostering national-scale ecological insights for researchers.

Looking ahead, WildTrax will be expanding its capacity with the launch of a new Canadian-based, high-capacity data server in partnership with the U of A; a redesigned user interface, upgraded artificial intelligence, and enhanced analytical tools through the wildtraxRpackage—enabling even more robust downstream data analysis. Whether focused on birds, bats, carnivores, or other taxa monitored by environmental sensors, WildTrax has become a critical tool in managing and sharing big data. Without WildTrax, many researchers and decision-makers would not have the data they need to answer multi-taxa biodiversity questions.

In collaboration with the SENSR unit at Biodiversity
Pathways, we've implemented a more streamlined
onboarding and services process, resulting in timely
data processing workflows, faster turnaround times and
improved results—supporting a growing user base from coast
to coast, and beyond.



ALGAL BLOOM MONITORING IN ALBERTA LAKES

During the summer and fall, nutrient-rich lakes can develop large blooms of phytoplankton—an increasingly common occurrence in Alberta. Some types of phytoplankton, like blue-green algae, can produce toxins that are harmful to humans and animals. Knowing when, where, and why harmful blooms occur is important to scientists, policy makers, stewards, and lake enthusiasts. The ABMI continues to collaborate with Dr. Rolf Vinebrooke at the University of Alberta, the Alberta Lake Management Society, Alberta Health, Alberta Health Services, Alberta Environment and Protected Areas, Environment and Climate Change Canada, Associated Environmental Consultants Inc., the Pigeon Lake Watershed Association, Lac La Biche County, and the Wabamun Watershed Management Council to better understand these blooms.

Six Alberta lakes were monitored in the summers of 2023 and 2024. Lake water samples were collected by volunteers and staff, while the Sentinel-2 satellite flew overhead collecting imagery used to estimate chlorophyll-a concentrations (a green pigment found in algae). Water samples from the lakes were analyzed at the University of Alberta to identify types and concentrations of algae or cyanobacteria present, and to test water quality. Together these data track algal blooms appearing on the lakes. By combining these data with archival satellite imagery, we are developing models of current and historical blooms —looking back several decades to better understand past trends—and working toward predicting future blooms.

The models will be integrated into a website and online app where anyone can visualize and track blooms on lakes of interest, and explore historical bloom data. The first version of the website and app is expected to launch in 2025, with plans to expand the project to include more lakes in Alberta in the future. This project is funded by Alberta Innovates and Alberta Health.

ALBERTA AND DUCKS UNLIMITED CANADA

revolutionizing biodiversity science and the way we think about species-level monitoring. In 2024, we completed the second year of a multi-year collaboration with InnoTech Alberta and DUC to better understand the effects of agriculture and climate change on wetland water quality, food-web dynamics, and waterfowl productivity across the Prairie Pothole Region.

In addition to measuring pesticides and other water chemistry parameters, the project integrates high-tech solutions such as drone-mounted thermal imagery, ARUs, and remote cameras for conducting wildlife surveys. It also combines conventional and genomics-based approachessuch as environmental DNA (eDNA) and metabarcoding-to monitor aquatic invertebrates.

To date, we have surveyed 70 prairie pothole wetlands in both high- and low-intensity agricultural areas across Alberta. The team has recorded 532 breeding duck pairs, nearly 1,000 ducklings, and identified more than 100,000 aquatic invertebrates. We have also detected 31 different herbicides, fungicides, and insecticides. Genetic analyses are currently underway with the ABMI's team of taxonomic specialists, InnoTech Alberta's molecular biologists, and DUC's expertise in waterfowl field research. This collaboration offers a rare opportunity to directly compare conventional, high-tech, and genomics-based methods for assessing wetland food-web dynamics.

With core support from the three partner agencies and an Alberta Innovates Water Innovation Program grant, early success has helped attract new resources from DUC, Genome Canada, and Genome Alberta to expand the study within Alberta and into Saskatchewan and Manitoba. This work offers a comprehensive and scalable approach to understanding waterfowl and wetland ecology across the prairies and is helping to move environmental genomics beyond simple species detection (presence-absence) toward biomass-based estimates (relative abundance) that can feed directly into the ABMI's wider speciesmonitoring programs.

CAN-PEAT: CANADA'S PEATLANDS AS NATURE-BASED CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

The ABMI is a proud project partner within Can-Peat, a national initiative that brings together peatland experts across Canada to better understand and advance the role of peatlands as natural climate solutions. Led by Dr. Maria Strack at the University of Waterloo, Can-Peat aims to improve estimates of greenhouse gas emission reductions from peatland management actions. By evaluating policy instruments, they are also supporting solutions development. To date, Can-Peat has hired 17 graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to lead various research activities, and established a network of over 165 peatland experts who actively share information about peatlands as nature-based solutions, responsible use, and peatland restoration.

As part of Can-Peat's mandate, the project takes a braided approach to science and research, and presents opportunities for all researchers, students, and staff to work with the project's Indigenous Advisory Council, Indigenous peoples, and communities to ethically braid Indigenous knowledge and western science. To support this work, Can-Peat and the ABMI have an Indigenous liaison who coordinates and supports the ongoing work of the Indigenous Advisory Council. This council works towards empowering Indigenous data sovereignty through establishing a resource platform to support Canadian peatland research across Canada. This work requires both an iterative and interactive process of knowledge-sharing between the Indigenous Advisory Council, members of the Science Advisory and Policy Board, and the Can-Peat team throughout the duration of the project.

Some key actions from the past year include the development of the Local Contexts Guide, which contains information geared towards researchers who have already completed data collection or have access to historically gathered data. Can-Peat also created two series of trading cards: the first series features key studies from various Canadian peatlands while the second series showcases various methods used in peatland research across Canada and acknowledges Indigenous territories. In addition, Can-Peat held its 2025 annual meeting in Kananaskis, Alberta, which included the Peatland Science Symposium and committee meetings with members of both the Indigenous Advisory Council and the Science Advisory and Policy Board. The meeting underscored the importance of bridging science with policy, conservation, and public awareness. Finally, following discussion with Dr. Strack, the ABMI has re-introduced peat depth sampling using an improved protocol. This protocol was piloted in 2024 with implementation in 2025.

SUPPORTING THE PROVINCIAL BIODIVERSITY SCIENCE COMMITTEE

The ABMI is represented on the Government of Alberta EPA Biodiversity Science Committee, contributing to a range of working groups, including those focused on footprint recovery, spatial data layers, monitoring and reporting, and indicator development. Over the past year, efforts were focused on developing a new indicator (invasive vascular plants) and updating and refining a previous indicator (stream connectivity). The invasive vascular plant indicator focuses on developing species distribution models for prohibited noxious weeds and noxious weeds listed under the Alberta Weed Control Act. These models are built using a variety of weed surveys provided by our collaborators along with Landsat remote sensing products. Originally released in 2022, the stream connectivity indicator was updated to improve integration with the data collected by the Alberta Watercourse Crossing Program.



Knowledge Translation and Engagement

Making data openly available and easy to access is central to how we work. We strive to understand the needs of those who use our data and have developed tools and platforms that make accessing and interpreting that data easier. In 2024–25, this included everything from a redesigned abmi.ca website, to updates to the Wetland Atlas of Alberta, to the release of reports covering the Oil Sands Region as well as Tolko Industries Ltd.'s northern and southern operating areas.

We continue to share our work through our quarterly webinar series and, this year, participated in several local and international conferences—a highlight being COP16, the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, held in Cali, Colombia.

LOCAL RESULTS, GLOBAL IMPACT

In 2024–25, many ABMI staff presented our monitoring and scientific work at over 20 conferences covering topics such as ecology, wildlife, geomatics, remote sensing, and conservation science. These included the National Geomatics Expo, the Alberta Chapter of the Wildlife Society annual meeting, the Canadian Society for Remote Sensing conference, and Biospace25.

Notably, the ABMI participated in COP16—the 16th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity—held in Cali, Colombia, in fall 2024. Representing the Academia and Research sector, we connected with leaders from across Canada and around the world, raising awareness of the high-quality biodiversity monitoring work taking place in western Canada. The event also highlighted the ongoing challenge of translating the Global Biodiversity Framework into effective local management and conservation actions, such as those needed in Alberta.

NEW CHAPTERS IN THE WETLAND ATLAS OF ALBERTA

In 2024–25, two sections of the Wetland Atlas were updated. The "Human Footprint Surrounding Wetland Health Monitoring Sites" section was revised with human footprint data up to 2021 and expanded to include changes from 2010 to 2021, including the addition of the extent of impervious surfaces around shallow open water wetlands. The "Status of Wetland-associated Mosses" section was updated to incorporate additional moss data, refreshed species models, and updated human footprint information.

The ABMI remains committed to continually updating the Wetland Atlas to ensure it provides current and relevant information for researchers, policymakers, and the public.



SPOTLIGHT

Launch of the Redesigned ABMLCA Website

In 2024, we launched a redesigned website to better showcase our diverse work, projects, and partnerships. With a streamlined design and user-friendly navigation, the site highlights expanded areas of the ABMI's operations such as Airborne Data Collection, the ORB Tool, and Biodiversity Pathways.

The heart of our website is the Open Data Portal, home to over 80 biodiversity-related datasets. It provides open access to a wide range of filterable data and metadata, including species and habitat models, human footprint inventories, lidar derivatives, and land cover data.

The Media and Story Hub is a one-stop shop for ABMI news, events, webinars, and blogs. This searchable repository also features media coverage of our work and stories by our collaborators across Alberta and beyond.

Projects and Collaborations are now searchable, with detailed information on their breadth, impacts, collaborators, and current status. The "What We Do" section highlights ABMI's work within each monitored taxonomic group—amphibians, aquatic invertebrates, birds, bryophytes, lichens, mammals, soil mites, and vascular plants. Some examples of key website sections include Publications and Protocols, Species Monitoring, Oil Sands Monitoring, Land Cover and Land Use Mapping, Community-based Monitoring and Engagement, and a new functional staff directory. The site also clearly outlines our vision, mission, principles and strategic direction, and offers easy access to online biodiversity status reports including the popular Wetland Atlas of Alberta.

The website is continually updated with new content, tools, and features based on user needs and emerging information. Upcoming additions include new datasets, updated status reports, and an expanded FAQ.



CLIENT REPORTS: LAND COVER AND BIODIVERSITY IN TOLKO'S OPERATING AREAS

As data providers, we support land use and resource decision-making through client reporting, delivering insights tailored to specific areas of interest. In December 2024, we released two companion reports summarizing the status of land cover and biodiversity in Tolko Industries Ltd.'s northern and southern operating areas in Albertatogether covering over 56,000 km². Each report includes chapters on land cover trends, biodiversity status, species of management interest, and key findings.

The reports provide a regional overview of forest types, wetland coverage, and human footprint from 1950 to 2021, including recent disturbances such as forestry activity and the 2023 wildfires. Biodiversity is assessed using species-habitat models that show how land-use change-including both human footprint and natural disturbances-affects the habitat suitability of species in these operating areas. Spotlights on Moose, Woodland Caribou, Arctic Grayling, and non-native plants offer insights into specific management concerns.

Together these reports establish baseline conditions for several indicators of land cover and biodiversity, which can be used to measure long-term forest health and can help identify opportunities for improvement.

IT'S OUR NATURE TO KNOW WEBINARS

In 2024-25, we continued our "It's Our Nature to Know" webinar series, aimed at sharing and highlighting relevant biodiversity information, methods, tools, projects and collaborations.

In May 2024, in collaboration with Biodiversity Pathways, we hosted two webinars featuring recent research: one on southern mountain Caribou recovery, and another on the drivers of White-tailed Deer expansion in the boreal forest. In September 2024, Branko Hricko, ABMI's senior remote sensing and photogrammetry coordinator, shared insights into remote sensing techniques for mapping vegetation regeneration on human footprint. Finally, in February 2025, we hosted the ABMI's Field Season Wrapped webinar, where the Monitoring Centre shared an overview of the 2024 field season.

These webinars are accessible on our <u>YouTube channel</u> and will continue next fiscal, with regularly scheduled webinars to foster continuous learning and knowledge-sharing opportunities.

REGIONAL SUMMARY FOR LAND COVER AND BIODIVERSITY IN THE OIL SANDS REGION

In December 2024, the ABMI released its first regional report in 10 years focused on the Oil Sands Region, titled Status of Land Cover and Biodiversity in the Oil Sands Region, Alberta, Canada. The report includes the three oil sands administrative areas—the Athabasca, Cold Lake, and Peace Oil Sands Areas—and includes results for several landscape-level indicators that align with the monitoring framework for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework established at COP15. Indicators include quantifications of native cover (areas of upland and lowland habitat not disturbed by human footprint), interior habitat (habitat areas at several minimum distances from edges of human footprint), and biodiversity intactness (change in habitat suitability for a variety of taxa due to human footprint). The report also assessed human footprint within the region by industrial sector and quantified change in those relative footprints over 20 years, between 2000 and 2021.



Operational Excellence

Much of the ABMI's success as an organization stems from consistent attention to the processes that support operational excellence: strategic and operational planning; recruitment and retention of talented employees; strong policies and procedures; engagement with our voting members, Board of Directors, partners, collaborators, and stakeholders; and overall continuous improvement (including finding and implementing efficiencies).

MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

The diverse perspectives of the ABMI's Members help to shape our organization. Engaging with our Members involves listening to their ideas and valuing their contributions; ultimately, engaging with Members strengthens us. By appointing Board Directors, and voting as per our bylaws, our Members maintain an important seat at our strategic and operational planning table.

Throughout 2024-25, our Executive Director provided a number of updates on ABMI's work, and some of our Members participated in a wetlands survey and workshop, where they had an opportunity to help guide the future of our wetlands collaborations.

In 2025-26, we look forward to engaging with our Members as we develop our 2026-2029 strategic plan. The perspectives from their respective sectors will continue to benefit our organization's future direction.

ACCESSIBILITY

As part of the ABMI 2023–2026 Strategic Plan, an accessibility audit of 13 digital products was conducted to assess compliance with Web Content Accessibility

Guidelines 2 O Level AA standards. Accessibility is one of the

ABMI's operating principles and this commitment promotes inclusivity, broadens the organization's audience, and helps avoid legal risks associated with non-compliance. Using WAVE and Google Lighthouse tools, the audit identified common issues such as missing alternative text, missing form labels, empty buttons and links, and contrast errors. WAVE results showed an average of 11 errors per product, while Lighthouse scores averaged 77%, indicating a "Good" rating with room for improvement. The report emphasizes that many accessibility improvements can be made with minimal technical input, while others require strategic collaboration with developers. Recommendations include prioritizing high-traffic platforms like the ABMI website and Biodiversity Browser, engaging with internal teams and external developers, and developing a standard operating procedure to guide future compliance. The ultimate goal is for all ABMI digital tools to achieve at least 90% accessibility compliance, ensuring inclusive, user-friendly experiences for all.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY TO SPONSORS

The ABMI's funding comes from a variety of public and private sector sources, and our commitment to manage those funds responsibly and transparently is core to our operations. We adhere to best practices of financial accountability.

Careful financial stewardship also includes supporting our funding agreements via comprehensive engagement and reporting systems that assess and manage progress against deliverables. Our Board of Directors (via its audit committee) maintains careful oversight of our overall financial results.



ABMI staff members publish peer-reviewed research and technical reports on a wide range of topics each year, as both primary investigators and as supporting members of collaborative teams.

We make all our publications available via our

publication archive.

Peer-Reviewed Publications

Adams, C.A., Cassady St. Clair, C., Knight, E.C., & Bayne E.M. (2024). Behaviour and landscape contexts determine the effects of artificial light on two crepuscular bird species. Landscape Ecology, 39, 83.

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Haughland, D.L., Maloles, J.R., Selva, S.B., Thauvette, D., McMullin, R.T., Porter, E., Bull, R.D., Williston, P., & Lane, C. (2025). Calicioids of Alberta, Canada, with descriptions of 3 new genera and 13 new Sphinctrinaceae species to science. The Bryologist, (In press).

Hessami, M., Serrouya, R., Lamb, C.T., Dickie, M., A.T. Ford. (2025). Density-dependent response of moose to hunting and landscape change. Ecological Solutions and Evidence, 6 (1),

Knight, E.C., Rhinehart, T., de Zwaan, D.R., Weldy, M.J., Cartwright, M., Hawley, S.H., Larkin, J.L., Lesmesiter, D., Bayne, E.M., & Kitzes, J. (2024). Individual identification in acoustic recordings. Trends in Ecology and Evolution, 39(10), 947-960.

Lamb, C.T., Williams, S., Boutin, S. et al. (2025). Effectiveness of population-based recovery actions for threatened southern mountain caribou. Ecological Applications, 34(4), e2965.

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Li S, Dong X, Humez P, Borecki J, Birks J, McClain CN, Mayer B, Strous M, Diao M, (2025) Proteomic evidence for aerobic methane production in groundwater by methylotrophic Methylotenera. The ISME Journal, 19(1). Liggett, J.E., Pooley, K.E., Atkinson, N., Humez, P., Thistle, S., Smerdon, B.D., Babhakani, M., McClain, C.N., & Mayer, B. (2024) Controls on regional sulphate distribution in shallow groundwater in the western Canadian Interior Plains. Science of the Total Environment, 956, 175969.

MacPhail, A.G., Yip, D.A., Knight, E.C., Hedley, R., Knaggs, M., Shonfield, J., Upham-Mills, E., & Bayne, E.M. (2024). Audio data compression affects acoustic indices and reduces detections of birds by human listening and automated recognisers. Bioacoustics, 33(1), 74–90.

McAdams, B.N., Quideau, S.A., Swallow, M.J.B., Lejoly, J., & Lumley, L.M. (2025). The influence of nonnative earthworms (Annelida: Crassiclitellata: Lumbricidae) on oribatid mite communities in a boreal forest stand. The Canadian Entomologist (In press).

Plata, I., Humez, P., McClain, C.N., & Mayer, B., (2025). Assessing nitrate distribution, source and fate in groundwater and irrigated areas of southern Alberta, Canada. Biogeochemistry, 168, 18.



Media and Guest Blogs

CARIBOU CBC FEATURE

In April 2024, Dr. Melanie Dickie, ABMI's Senior Caribou Ecologist, was interviewed by the CBC about how changes in habitat, including warming temperatures and industrial disturbances, are affecting deer populations.

Learn More

HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOM MONITORING

In December 2024, Fiona Gregory, one of the ABMI's remote sensing scientists, attended the Lac La Biche Watershed Management Plan open house, she participated in discussion about algal bloom management in Alberta lakes. Read about it in Lakeland Today's media coverage.

Learn More

GUEST BLOG WITH THE MIISTAKIS INSTITUTE

In January 2025, the ABMI invited the Miistakis Institute to provide an overview of the Bow River Regional Wetland Datasets. In this blog post, Nilo Sinnatamby guides us through historical wetland data to demonstrate the datasets' unique features and some suggestions for use through a case study.

Learn More

GUEST BLOG WITH NATURE CONSERVANCY OF CANADA (NCC)

In March 2025, the ABMI invited Tsogo Saikhan, a GIS Specialist with the NCC in Alberta, to write a guest blog feature on how the ABMI's datasets provide valuable information for data-driven land conservation decisions.

Learn More



Financial Statements

Year ended March 31, 2025

Independent Auditor's Report on the Summary Non-consolidated Financial Statements

To the Board of Directors of Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute

Opinion

The summary non-consolidated financial statements, which comprise the non-consolidated summary statement of financial position as at March 31, 2025, and the non-consolidated summary statements of revenues and expenditures and changes in net assets for the year ended March 31, 2025 and are derived from the audited non-consolidated financial statements of Alberta Biodiversity Monitoring Institute for the year ended March 31, 2025.

In our opinion, the accompanying non-consolidated summary financial statements are a fair summary of the audited non-consolidated financial statements, in accordance with Canadian Accounting Standards for Not-for-Profit Organizations.

Summary Financial Statements

The summary non-consolidated financial statements do not contain all the disclosures required by Canadian Accounting Standards for Not-for-Profit Organizations. Reading the summary non-consolidated financial statements and the auditor's report thereon, therefore, is not a substitute for reading the audited non-consolidated financial statements and the auditor's report thereon. The summary non-consolidated financial statements and the audited non-consolidated financial statements do not reflect the effects of events that occurred subsequent to the date of our report on the audited non-consolidated financial statements.

The Audited Financial Statements and Our Report Thereon

We expressed an unmodified audit opinion on the audited non-consolidated financial statements in our report dated September 11, 2025.

Management's Responsibility for the Summary Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation of the summary non-consolidated financial statements in accordance with Canadian Standards for Not-for-Profit Organizations.

Auditor's Responsibility

Our responsibility is to express an opinion on whether the summary non-consolidated financial statements are a fair summary of the audited non-consolidated financial statements based on our procedures, which were conducted in accordance with Canadian Auditing Standard (CAS) 810, Engagements to Report on Summary Financial Statements.

Edmonton, Alberta September 11, 2025 Cayle 9. Company CHARTERED PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS

ALBERTA BIODIVERSITY MONITORING INSTITUTE Non-consolidated Statement of Financial Position March 31, 2025

		2025	2024
ASSETS			
CURRENT			
Cash	\$	173,328	\$ 969,580
Short term investments		870,417	1,470,737
Accounts receivable		4,079,600	2,485,507
Goods and services tax recoverable		3,755	11,216
Prepaid expenses		128,533	60,071
Due from related parties	97	215,003	279,568
		5,470,636	5,276,679
CAPITAL ASSETS	<u></u>	431,468	957,731
	\$	5,902,104	\$ 6,234,410
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS			
CURRENT			
Accounts payable	\$	1,061,792	\$ 980,978
Deferred contributions		1,043,989	1,095,174
Due to related parties		62,491	-
Deferred capital contributions	9 	137,944	689,722
		2,306,216	2,765,874
NET ASSETS		3,595,888	3,468,536
	\$	5,902,104	\$ 6,234,410

ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD

Director

Director

ALBERTA BIODIVERSITY MONITORING INSTITUTE Non-consolidated Statement of Revenues and Expenditures Year Ended March 31, 2025

	2025	2	024
REVENUES			
Government of Alberta	\$ 8,620,557	•	,588,826
Government of Alberta Oil Sands Monitoring	4,470,425		,430,018
Private sector	1,387,668	2	,464,668
Application Centre	940,918		916,412
Government of Canada	827,165		454,528
Expense recoveries	348,691		277,010
Interest income	208,113		148,792
Other government funding	 82,500		146,500
	 16,886,037	15	,426,754
STAFFING EXPENSES			
Executive Office	495,560		619,226
Science Centre	923,345		812,733
Information Centre	1,359,446	1	,324,402
Monitoring Centre	2,164,747	2	,037,281
Lab Processing and Identification Centre	1,349,737	1	,363,233
Operations Centre	1,039,050		860,179
Application Centre	160,820		-
Geospatial Centre	1,328,832	2	,101,735
Imaging Centre	 1,508,303		-
	10,329,840	9	,118,789
OPERATING EXPENSES			
Executive Office	374,051		271,954
Science Centre	59,576		215,435
Information Centre	237,724		317,929
Monitoring Centre	1,889,572	1	,786,253
Lab Processing and Identification Centre	304,309		391,155
Operations Centre	320,317		270,465
Application Centre	707,150		900,529
Geospatial Centre	237,740	1	,955,211
Imaging Centre	 2,298,406		-
	 6,428,845	6	,108,931
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENDITURES FOR THE YEAR	\$ 127,352	\$	199,034

ALBERTA BIODIVERSITY MONITORING INSTITUTE Non-consolidated Statement of Changes in Net Assets Year Ended March 31, 2025

	2025	2024
NET ASSETS - BEGINNING OF YEAR EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENDITURES FOR THE YEAR	\$ 3,468,536 127,352	\$ 3,269,502 199,034
NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR	\$ 3,595,888	\$ 3,468,536



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