



WILDLIFE AND BIRDS PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY

Issued February 2025



The Community Access Road has the potential to impact wildlife species and important migratory and non-migratory birds, including species at risk that have been evaluated. Changes to wildlife, and bird populations and distributions can affect the resources that Indigenous communities and other communities depend on.

The wildlife and bird assessments included the following species:

- Bats (little brown myotis / gaa'osaawisich obikwaanaachiis and northern myotis / gaaginogitawagech obikwaanaachiis;
- Furbearers (wolverine / wishkobish, wiingwa'waake, American marten / wabizheshih, wabashtan, and beaver / amik);
- Amphibians and reptiles / ginebigo ya'haag omakakiwiiya'haag;
- Pollinating insects / manichooshaga;
- Red-eyed vireo / Misko-binechiinch gaanitaanigamoch;
- Ovenbird / binechiinch ganitanigamoch;
- Dark-eyed junco / binechiinch gaanitaanigamoch;
- Osprey / saagwadamo;
- Boreal owl / Aegolius funereus;
- Wilson's snipe / nibiikaang gaa'ayaach binechiinch;
- Mallard / Anas platyrhynchos;
- Palm warbler / binechiinch gaanitaanigamoch;
- Common yellowthroat / binechiinch gaanitaanigamoch;
- Northern waterthrush / nibiikaang gaa'ayaach binechiinch; and
- Sora / Gaagweshkoshiich binechiinch;

Species at Risk:

- Bald eagle / mikisi;
- Bank swallow / gaa'osaaw bebeshi aakiganech binechiinchechench;
- Barn swallow / aanawachwebamaach manichooshan binechiinch;
- Black tern / gichisaga'iiganing gaadaashiyayaach binechiinch;
- Canada warbler / gaamakatew bebeshisich binechiinch;
- Chimney swift / gondaaganaabikoong gaadashiyayaach binechiinch;
- Common nighthawk / dibiki binechii;
- Eastern whip-poor-will / gaamajaachimoch binechinch;
- Eastern wood-pewee / gaagigiweshkitwech binechiinch;
- Evening grosbeak Olive-sided flycatcher / Gaagweshkoshiich binechiinch;
- Lesser yellowlegs / gaa'osaaw gaatech binechiinch;
- Peregrine falcon / gaagishiyaashich migiziiw binechiinch;
- Rusty blackbird / makadew binechiinch;
- Short-eared owl / gaayaagaachitawaagech kookookohoo; and
- Yellow rail / egaawiikaa gaanagosich binechiinch.



Existing Conditions

Wildlife field studies (completed between 2019 and 2023), bird field studies (completed between 2018 and 2022), Indigenous Knowledge and publicly available data sources helped inform the assessments.

The following information was collected on the wildlife and bird species studied below:

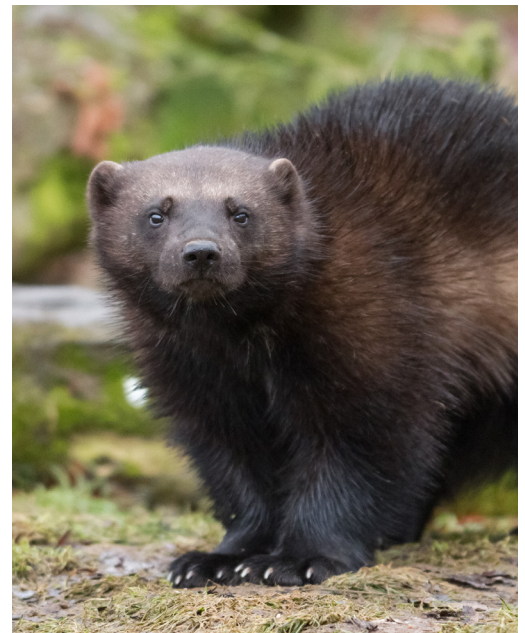
Bats (little brown myotis / gaa'osaawisich obikwaanaachiis and northern myotis / gaaginogitawagech obikwaanaachiis)

- Suitable places for female bats to raise their young are rare and spread out unevenly in the Local Study Area;
- The lack of suitable resting / sleeping habitats limits how many bats can live in the Local Study Area;
- Most resting / sleeping habitats are in the south of the Local Study Area and along the Albany and Ogoki rivers;
- There are no abandoned mines or natural places for bats to hibernate in the Regional Study Area and Local Study Area, which limits bat hibernation habitat availability in the winter;
- Little brown myotis bats were found at more survey stations than Northern myotis bats, in the Local Study Area; and
- Overall, there are low levels of bat activity in the Local Study Area, but more activity was found near large rivers.



Wolverines / wishkobish, wiingwa'waake

- Over a two-year period, wolverines were found at 39 of 54 unique survey stations. In 2022 they were found at 28 stations, and in 2023 they were found at 30 stations;
- 17 different wolverines were identified: four females, two males and 11 whose sex was not determined. Given the difficulty to obtain clear photos and hair samples, there are likely more than the 17 wolverines that have been identified;
- In 2022, there were about 1.21 wolverines per 1,000 km², and 0.60 in 2023;
- The study estimated that 43 wolverines have home ranges that overlap with the Local Study Area in 2022, and 21 in 2023; and
- Wolverine habitats are plentiful and spread out in the Local Study Area.



American Marten / wabizheshih, wabashtan

- Suitable habitats for American martens are widespread and plentiful, throughout the study areas; and
- The population of American martens depends on the availability of prey and suitable habitats, both of which are present in the study areas. habitats for species like Walleye.



Beaver / amik

- Beaver habitats are common and spread out in the Local Study Area;
- There are more beaver lodges, dams and signs of beavers in the southern part of the Local Study Area, and fewer around the Marten Falls First Nation area; and
- Suitable habitats for beavers, where they can build lodges and find food, cover 56,025 hectares, which is about 37.64% of the Local Study Area.



Reptiles and Amphibians / ginebigo ya'haag omakakiiwiiya'haag

- The Regional Study Area has six types of frogs and toads: spring peeper, boreal chorus frog, wood frog, northern leopard frog, mink frog and American toad. All were found in the Local Study Area during field surveys;
- The only reptile species observed during field surveys was the eastern garter snake; and
- There are suitable habitats for amphibians to breed, like bogs, fens, marshes, and swamps, and these habitats cover 72.44% of the Local Study Area.



Pollinating Insects / manichooshaga

- There are three types of bumble bees, and two types of lady beetles considered species at risk that might be found in the Local Study Area and Regional Study Area. These include, Ashton cuckoo bumble bee, Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee, yellow-banded bumble bee, nine-spotted lady beetle and transverse lady beetle.



Non Species At Risk Birds

- Moderate and highly ideal nesting areas range from about 20% to 85% of the Regional Study Area;
- Supportive habitats were common and widespread within the Local Study Area, with the exception of osprey habitat;
- Red-eyed vireo, ovenbird, dark-eyed junco, boreal owl, Wilson's snipe, mallard, palm warbler, common yellowthroat and northern waterthrush were commonly found during surveys, however, sora and osprey were not; and
- Given the current conditions, it was assumed non species at risk birds likely have stable populations in the Regional Study Area.



Species at Risk Birds

- Ideal nesting areas in the Regional Study Area was different for each species at risk bird, ranging between low abundance (<0.1%) to high abundance (60%);
- The species commonly found during the studies included common nighthawk, bald eagle, olive-sided flycatcher and rusty blackbird; the rest of the species at risk birds were rarely detected; and
- Given the current conditions, it was assumed that species at risk birds are likely to support stable populations in the Regional Study Area based on current habitat conditions.



Potential Effects and Mitigations

A study was done to see how the Community Access Road might affect wildlife and their habitats. The study looked at three things: how much habitat is available, where the habitat is and how well wildlife can survive and reproduce. The Community Access Road is expected to cause habitat loss, disturbances and dust, with a potential increase in vehicle collisions.

Wildlife Species	Potential Effects
<p>All Birds and Wildlife</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chemical spills can harm soil, ecosystems and bird health. • Blasting may injure or kill birds. • Wildlife attractants can increase bird mortality and affect predator-prey relationships. • Vehicle collisions may injure or kill birds and wildlife. • Construction activities may destroy nests, eggs and birds. • Increased public access can lead to hunting and affect survival. • Groundwater changes can alter soils and vegetation, impacting habitats. • Surface water quality changes can harm habitats. • Surface water quantity alterations can affect soils and vegetation, impacting habitats. • Erosion and sedimentation can change water, soil, and vegetation quality, impacting habitats. • Dust emissions can alter soil and vegetation quality, impacting habitats. • Air emissions can change soil and vegetation quality, impacting bird habitats. • Invasive plants can change plant communities, impacting bird habitats. • Habitat loss and the direct removal of soil and vegetation impacts habitats and survival. • Sensory disturbance such as lights, noise and human activity can alter habitats and behavior.

Wildlife Species	Potential Effects
Furbearers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Community Access Road can increase predator access and decrease survival and reproduction. • An increase in public access can affect survival and reproduction because of trapping.
Ovenbird, Palm Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Common Nighthawk, Eastern Whip-poor-will, Short-eared Owl, Rusty Blackbird	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Community Access Road can increase edge habitat and lead to more bird nests being preyed upon.

Mitigation measures have been suggested to reduce, eliminate, or monitor the potential effects on birds and wildlife. These measures include:

- Developing an invasive species monitoring program;
- Environmental approval conditions, permits or authorizations issued for the Community Access Road, including those issued from Environment and Climate Change Canada, Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, will be followed during construction;
- Preparing an Environmental Monitoring Program and Environmental Protection Plan with mitigation measures for dust and air emissions;
- Limiting access of construction workers to the construction work zone and related sites;
- Banning firearms;
- Blocking temporary access routes and trails that are no longer required;
- Avoiding important areas for species at risk, where possible;
- Working in the fall and winter, whenever possible, to avoid bird nesting periods;
- Implement policies to protect wildlife, ensuring to train contractors and employees; and
- Checking for wildlife before removing vegetation.

Despite the implementation of these mitigation measures, the Community Access Road may still have an impact on wildlife and bird populations. The loss of suitable habitat within the Local and Regional Study Areas is expected to be minimal, however, sensory disturbances such as noise and lights are expected to be more disruptive. Once construction is complete, the distribution of habitat is not expected to be significantly affected. Overall, wildlife and bird populations and distribution are projected to remain stable and healthy upon the completion of the Community Access Road.

Residual Effects

The Project may cause habitat loss, disturbances, dust, and vehicle collisions, affecting wildlife such as little brown and northern bats, wolverines, American martens, beavers, reptiles, amphibians, and pollinating insects. Despite these impacts, the changes in habitat availability and populations of little brown and northern bats, wolverines, American martens, beavers, reptiles, amphibians, and pollinating insects are predicted to stay within their ability to adapt and survive. Overall, the impact on these species is expected to be small.

Similarly, bird populations may be affected despite mitigation measures. While the loss of suitable habitat in the area is expected to be small, noise and lights could be disruptive. After construction is complete, the habitat distribution (i.e., how habitats are spread out) is not expected to be significantly affected. Overall, bird populations and behaviors are anticipated to remain stable and healthy.

Cumulative Effects

The Cumulative Effects Assessment considered the residual effects (left over effects after a mitigation measure is applied) of the Community Access Road and other future developments, such as the Northern Road Link, Anaconda and Painter Lake Forestry Access Road Upgrades and Rapid Lynx Broadband projects, on wildlife and bird habitats through habitat loss, noise, dust, and changes at the edges of habitats. These effects are expected to be minimal. Due to the abundance of available habitat, birds can relocate their nesting areas away from the Community Access Road and other developments. The study indicates that wildlife and bird habitats and populations will be able to adapt to these changes, maintaining their health and effectiveness in the area.

Monitoring programs will be conducted throughout the various phases of the Community Access Road based on provincial and federal permits and through discussions with Indigenous communities and regulators. The purpose of these programs is to ensure that the measures put in place to protect wildlife and bird populations are effective, allowing measures to be updated if necessary. Additionally, a Terrestrial Biodiversity Offset Plan is being developed for the Community Access Road, which will create additional migratory bird habitat. If needed, adjustments will be made to improve outcomes

Want to learn more?

If you are interested in learning more about this topic, please review the technical report available in the appendix of the draft Environmental Assessment / Impact Statement.

Contact Info

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