

Protecting Endangered Species

By Bob Barnett

Photos courtesy Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy except where noted

As spring arrives, the birds return and we begin to think again how fragile their habitat is here in southern Ontario. With 300 acres of land being developed every day and only 4.3 per cent protected as a park or a nature reserve, it is increasingly likely that they return to a parking lot, a cottage or a road, not their usual nesting place.

I've just finished reading Jane Goodall's *Hope for Animals and their World, How Endangered Species are being Rescued from the Brink* which recounts how

is to protect the habitat of these species before they become more rare. EBC has been opportunistic. We acquire parcels of land which become available with the greatest amount of habitat while watching for rare species to ensure we are also protecting the greatest number of tracked species for the lowest cost. Often we work with the landowner who becomes a land donor to secure 100 acres of habitat for only \$5,000 or only \$50 per acre.

Saving Species

Our latest figures show that, on the 11,000 acres EBC has conserved so far, we are protecting six **Endangered** species on 11 reserves

rare species as well. Overall there are 65 such notable species found on 110 of our reserves. Recently, I found there were 42 NHIC-tracked species recorded on the 15 properties we have in the process of acquisition during 2015. Sometimes these species are hard to find on a one-day visit. Sometimes the birds or snakes just don't appear that day. Our progress certainly shows that we are targeting the right areas. It helps that NHIC has an inventory of species found on each square km.

Minor Miracles

It takes a bit of luck to see them too. We found a Queensnake on our Alvar Bay Reserve. Fortunately an expert from the

has a snail which was known only from fossils, but was found alive in the crevices of this alvar.

Will you join us as we work to conserve more habitat and more species? Visit our website to find our reserves and see a list of our rare species. Donating is easy. At only \$50 an acre, **or only five per cent of its value**, we accept land donations and offer you the best land protection bargain available. It costs us only about \$300 a year to steward a property including taxes, signage, mileage and a bit of fencing. We appreciate stewards helping us keep an eye out for species not yet on our list. You can help us understand our impact on the biodiversity of Ontario.

► (Left) From the Fedy property on Bruce Peninsula, the rare Dwarf Iris.

► (Centre) At Freer Point on Manitoulin Island, a fledgling Bald Eagle, a species of Special Concern.

► (Right) Blanding's Turtle, a Threatened Species, also at Freer Point. PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS



31 species have been saved by the heroic work of biologists. They have used captive breeding in rescue centres to bring back the species from as few as half a dozen individuals to hundreds and sometimes thousands.

Here in Ontario, the Natural Heritage Information Centre (NHIC) in Peterborough tracks about 700 "rare" plants and about 75 "rare" birds including Endangered, Threatened, of Special Concern or "just" Rare. Southern Ontario is a hotbed of rare species. They occur right here, not just on Pacific Islands or in the Amazon.

Our effort at Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy (EBC)

including the Little Brown Bat, Queensnake, Gattinger's Agilinis (a foxglove) and our increasingly rare Butternut tree. Ten **threatened** species are protected on 24 of our reserves. Some you may know are the Red-headed Woodpecker, Massassauga Rattlesnake, Lakeside Daisy, Hill's Thistle, Chimney Swift, Canada Warbler, Bobolink and Blanding's Turtle (which was seen and photographed by Gloria and Mike of *Niagara Escarpment Views*).

We have 18 species of **Special Concern** on 33 reserves, another 13 of provincial rarity (less than 100 occurrences), and 18 regionally

U.S. Nature Conservancy was with us that day who could positively identify it. Until we found one, everyone thought the Queensnake had been extirpated from the northern Bruce Peninsula. Despite creating safe habitat for them to nest, we never saw another on that reserve. However, the National Park staff have now found several more, proving it wasn't extirpated after all. A minor miracle, just like the discoveries Jane Goodall documents of a half dozen species that had been lost for decades or like the Coelacanth which was known only from a 65-million-year-old fossil. Our Bailey reserve on Manitoulin

You can help us raise the percentage of southern Ontario protected as a park or nature reserve. You can help protect your own community so your grandchildren can appreciate the land you loved as a child.

Consider adopting/ sponsoring a species for \$600 a year or \$50 a month. You pick the species, you get a certificate and we'll publish your name in the newsletter. Make it a Valentine gift. You could be a steward to help ensure your chosen species is safe. **NEV**

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