

Towards Conservation and Recovery of Species at Risk in Ontario: Progress on Recovery Planning and Implementation and an Overview of Key Research Needs

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Abstract : In Canada, the federal Species at Risk Act (SARA) provides protection for wildlife species at risk and a national legislative framework for the conservation or recovery of species that are listed as endangered, threatened, or special concern under Schedule 1 of SARA. Key aspects of the federal species at risk program include the development of recovery documents (recovery strategies, action plans, and management plans) outlining threats, objectives, and broad strategies or measures for conservation or recovery of the species; the identification and protection of critical habitat for threatened and endangered species; and working with groups and organizations to implement on-the-ground recovery actions. Environment Canada's progress on the development of recovery documents and on the identification and protection of critical habitat in Ontario will be presented, along with successes and challenges associated with on-the ground implementation of recovery actions. In Ontario, Environment Canada is currently involved in several recovery and monitoring programs for at-risk bird species such as the Loggerhead Shrike, Piping Plover, Golden-winged Warbler and Cerulean Warbler and has provided funding for a wide variety of recovery actions targeting priority species at risk and geographic areas each year through stewardship programs including the Habitat Stewardship Program, Aboriginal Fund for Species at Risk, and the Interdepartmental Recovery Fund. Key research needs relevant to the recovery of species at risk have been identified, and include: surveys and monitoring of population sizes and threats, population viability analyses, and addressing knowledge gaps identified for individual species (e.g., species biology and habitat needs). The engagement of all levels of government, the local and international conservation communities, and the scientific research community plays an important role in the conservation and recovery of species at risk in Ontario- through surveying and monitoring, filling knowledge gaps, conducting public outreach, and restoring, protecting, or managing habitat - and will be critical to the continued success of the federal species at risk program.

Keywords : conservation biology, habitat protection, species at risk, wildlife recovery

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