

SPECIES

AT RISK



In the Grand River watershed



The Grand River watershed

is home to an amazing variety of plants and animals. However, some species are threatened by pressure on their habitats and in some cases, diseases, collection or road mortality.

Historically, a total of 66 species at risk have been recorded within the watershed. Of these, 53 are dependent upon terrestrial or wetland habitats for their survival.

BIRDS



Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*)

The Bobolink is a medium-sized song bird that is found in grasslands and hayfields. During their summer breeding season, male Bobolinks are black with a white back and yellow collar. By late summer, males lose their breeding plumage to resemble the female's tan colour with black stripes. Bobolink populations have declined significantly as pastures and hayfields have become less common. Special practices adopted by some farmers accommodate nesting bobolinks in hayfields.

Watershed Range: Entire watershed where suitable habitat is found. A large population exists at Luther Marsh.



TURTLES

Blanding's Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*)

The Blanding's Turtle is a medium-size turtle that has a distinct yellow throat and chin, with a unique helmet-like domed shell. Habitat requirements include large, shallow wetlands or lakes with lots of plants. During the breeding season, you may find Blanding's Turtles more than a hundred metres from the nearest water body, while they are searching for a mate or nesting site. The most significant threats to Blanding's Turtle are loss of habitat, being hit by motor vehicles and nest predation by animals such as raccoons and foxes.

Watershed Range: Central and southern watershed.



Cerulean Warbler (*Dendroica cerulea*)

The Cerulean Warbler gets its name from the vivid blue coloration of the male warbler's back and cheeks. This bird is found in mature to semi-mature Carolinian deciduous interior forests, and usually in the tree tops. The primary threat to the Cerulean Warbler is loss of habitat and forest fragmentation. Additionally, winter grounds in South America are under a high degree of risk from logging.

Watershed Range: Southern watershed in the interior of Carolinian forests.



Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*)

The Snapping Turtle is Canada's largest freshwater turtle, reaching an average length of 20-30 cm and a weight of 4.5-16.0 kg. This species is at great risk from moving vehicles while crossing roads. The snapping turtle is very slow and is not able to avoid traffic. In many areas, and especially urban areas, snapping turtle eggs are often eaten by raccoons and skunks.

Watershed Range: Entire watershed, near and within marshes and water bodies.



Chimney Swift (*Chaetura pelagica*)

The Chimney Swift is a small bird, about 12-14 centimetres long with a sooty brown body, long lean wings and a light-coloured throat. It is most often identified by its unique tail-tale acrobatic and erratic flight pattern. The Chimney Swift received its name because it often uses old chimneys as roosting and nesting sites. Historically, it is believed that Chimney Swift numbers were low, but following European settlement and increased establishment of chimneys, their number increased. The direct cause of the current decline of Chimney Swift is not clear. It may be attributed to a decline in food, or the modernization of chimneys that often include capping or rounded chimneys.

Watershed Range: Urban areas. Known populations are found in the City of Guelph and the City of Cambridge.



SNAKES

Eastern Hog-nosed Snake (*Heterodon platirhinos*)

A non-venomous snake, the Eastern Hog-nosed Snake is thick, long (up to one metre), and has a distinctive upturned nose. It usually has attractive black and brown blotches, but sometimes it may appear dull as the blotches are not clear. Habitat requirements include sandy dry forests and beaches. A unique characteristic of this snake is that when it feels threatened it will coil up, flatten its head and neck and form a cobra-like hood. Occasionally when threatened it will strike, but always with its mouth closed. These defensive characteristics have caused the Eastern Hog-nosed Snake to be persecuted by people. In addition, it is threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation.

Watershed Range: Central and southern watershed.



Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*)

It is clear how the Red-headed Woodpecker received its name. It is one of the easiest birds to identify with its red head, white underside and black and white wings. Still, it is rarely seen. It prefers open woodlands, woodland edges and oak savannas. These habitats contain a higher density of dead trees which they commonly use for nesting and perching. The Red-headed Woodpecker has declined more than 60% in Ontario in the last twenty years, mostly due to less suitable habitat with fewer dead trees, but also because European Starlings compete for nesting sites.

Watershed Range: Entire watershed.



Milksnake (*Lampropeltis triangulum*)

The beautifully marked Milksnake, which can grow up to one metre, has red blotches with black borders over a milky coloured base. It is the only snake in Ontario that is reddish. This unique colouration and its defensive action of shaking its tail have often resulted in this snake being mistaken for a rattlesnake. Suitable habitat includes old fields and farm buildings. During the day it can be found hiding under objects and in tall grasses and plants. During the night it can be seen hunting. The species is not venomous and captures its prey with its teeth and then subdues them by constriction. It eats small mammals and ground nesting birds. Human persecution and collection have been its main threats.

Watershed Range: Entire watershed where suitable habitat is found.



PLANTS



Butternut (*Juglans cinerea*)

Butternut is a medium-sized deciduous tree that can reach up to 25 metres in height, with a diameter of 75 centimetres. This species grows on a variety of sites, including dry rocky soils, but grows best on well-drained fertile soils in shallow gradually sloped valleys. A single tree may grow among other species, or it can be found in small groups. Butternut is endangered in Ontario, primarily because of a fungal disease called Butternut Canker, which can spread through the tree quickly, killing it in a few years.

Watershed Range: Entire watershed.



MAMMAL

American Badger (*Taxidea taxus*)

The only badger that lives in North America, the American Badger is a short, sturdy member of the weasel family. The American Badger has very distinct and well-known black and white striping on its face. Habitat for the badger includes tallgrass prairie, sand barrens and farmland. The primary threat to this species is habitat loss, but occasionally they are hit by motor vehicles.

Watershed Range: Central and southern watershed.



Eastern Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*)

Eastern Flowering Dogwood is a small Carolinian tree often found along forest edges, or in the understory of mid-aged forests. It is easily identified by its large showy white leaved flower. The bark is brownish-grey and is separated into corky scales. Eastern Flowering Dogwood is endangered in Ontario because of a fungus called Dogwood Anthracnose that attacks the leaves and then spreads through the branches and then the trunk. About 25-75% of infected trees will eventually die.

Watershed Range: Norfolk and Haldimand counties (Carolinian forest zone).



TAXONOMY	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME	STATUS
Birds	Acadian Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax virens</i>	Endangered
	Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	Special Concern
	Barn Owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	Endangered
	Black Tern	<i>Chlidonias niger</i>	Special Concern
	Bobolink	<i>Dolichonyx oryzivorus</i>	Threatened
	Canada warbler	<i>Wilsonia canadensis</i>	Special Concern
	Cerulean Warbler	<i>Dendroica cerulea</i>	Special Concern
	Chimney swift	<i>Chaetura pelagica</i>	Threatened
	Common nighthawk	<i>Chordeiles minor</i>	Special Concern
	Golden-winged Warbler	<i>Vermivora chrysoptera</i>	Special Concern
	Henslow's Sparrow	<i>Ammodramus henslowii</i>	Endangered
	Hooded Warbler	<i>Wilsonia cirina</i>	Special Concern
	King Rail	<i>Rallus elegans</i>	Endangered
	Least Bittern	<i>Ixobrychus exilis</i>	Threatened
	Loggerhead Shrike	<i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	Endangered
	Louisiana Waterthrush	<i>Seiurus motacilla</i>	Special Concern
	Northern Bobwhite	<i>Colinus virginianus</i>	Endangered
	Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	Threatened
	Red-headed Woodpecker	<i>Melanerpes erythrocephalus</i>	Special Concern
	Short-eared Owl	<i>Asio flammeus</i>	Special Concern
	Whip-poor-will	<i>Caprimulgus vociferus</i>	Threatened
	Yellow-breasted Chat	<i>Icteria virens</i>	Special Concern
	American Badger	<i>Taxidea taxus</i>	Endangered
	Grey Fox	<i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>	Threatened
	Woodland Vole	<i>Microtus pinetorum</i>	Special Concern
American Chestnut	<i>Castanea dentata</i>	Endangered	
American Columbo	<i>Fraxera carolinensis</i>	Endangered	
American Ginseng	<i>Panax quinquefolius</i>	Endangered	
Bird's-foot Violet	<i>Viola pedata</i>	Endangered	
Broad Beech Fern	<i>Phegopteris hexagonoptera</i>	Special Concern	
Butternut	<i>Juglans cinerea</i>	Endangered	
Common Hopbree	<i>Ptelea trifoliata</i>	Threatened	
Eastern Flowering Dogwood	<i>Cornus florida</i>	Endangered	
Goldenseal	<i>Hydrastis canadensis</i>	Threatened	
Green Dragon	<i>Arisaema dracontium</i>	Special Concern	
Hill's Pondweed	<i>Potamogeton hillii</i>	Special Concern	
Large Whorled Pogonia	<i>Isotria verticillata</i>	Endangered	
Virginia Mallow	<i>Sida hermaphrodita</i>	Endangered	
Blanding's Turtle	<i>Emydoidea blandingii</i>	Threatened	
Butler's Gartersnake	<i>Thamnophis butleri</i>	Threatened	
Central Ratsnake (Carolinian population)	<i>Pantherophis spiloides</i>	Endangered	
Eastern Hog-nosed Snake	<i>Heterodon platirhinos</i>	Threatened	
Eastern Ribbonsnake	<i>Thamnophis sauritus</i>	Special Concern	
Milksnake	<i>Lampropeltis triangulum</i>	Special Concern	
Northern Map Turtle	<i>Graptemys geographica</i>	Special Concern	
Queensnake	<i>Regina septemvittata</i>	Endangered	
Snapping turtle	<i>Chelydra serpentina</i>	Special Concern	
Spiny Softshell	<i>Apalone spinifera</i>	Threatened	
Spotted Turtle	<i>Clemmys guttata</i>	Endangered	
Wood Turtle	<i>Glyptemys insculpta</i>	Endangered	
Fowler's Toad	<i>Anaxyrus fowleri</i>	Endangered	
Jefferson Salamander	<i>Ambystoma jeffersonianum</i>	Threatened	
Insect	Monarch	<i>Danaus plexippus</i>	Special Concern

This checklist does not include non-breeding species such as American White Pelican (Endangered) and vagrant species such as Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, which have also been recorded in the watershed.

Conservation and Management – Habitat Protection and Regulation

Protection is afforded to species and/or their habitat through municipal, provincial and federal regulations. In 2010, Species at Risk Habitat Regulations were created under the Ontario Endangered Species Act. Regulated habitat may include areas where the species is found, has been found in the past, as well as areas that may be important to a species' recovery.

Habitat loss is the biggest threat to most vulnerable species. Therefore, protection, restoration and expansion of forests, wetlands, prairies and other habitats is essential.

What is a species at risk?

Any naturally-occurring plant or animal in danger of extinction or of disappearing from the province.

Species are periodically assessed and classified as "at risk" by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. This fact sheet is based on OMNR's Species at Risk in Ontario list, which was last updated June 2011, and other information sources.

What you can do:

- Plant trees and native plants
- Restore a prairie and support prescribed burning for habitat restoration
- Restore and plant natural buffers around wetlands
- Do not collect any native plants or animals from the wild
- Be aware of amphibian and bird breeding seasons (April-early July)

For more information on species at risk:

- The GRCA Watershed Forest Plan
- The Grand River Fisheries Management Plan
- The Grand River Recovery Plan

Provincial website:
www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/Species

Royal Ontario Museum:
www.rom.on.ca/ontario

Non-profit conservation organization:
www.natureserve.org

Report sightings to the GRCA or MNR:

Grand River Conservation Authority:
www.grandriver.ca • (519) 621-2761

Ministry of Natural Resources:
nhic.gov.on.ca • (519) 826-4955