Caring for Nature in Brant

and North Dumfries

Landowner Action in Carolinian Canada

What does this mean to landowners?

Rural landowners in Brant and North Dumfries are proud of their heritage and their ties to the land. Brant County is located in the heart of "Foodland Ontario". Many fruits, vegetables and culinary herbs found at local supermarkets are grown right here in Brant County. Farming contributes about $1.7M to the local economy. Farmers understand that their livelihood depends on healthy soils and clean water. These resources in turn are dependent on a healthy and diverse landscape with wetlands, woodlands, hedgerows and buffers around watercourses. Many Brant farmers work with the **Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association** to access financial incentives which help them convert to low or no-till cropping, manage their nutrient program for cleaner water, and create stream buffers to retain soil. Farmers and other rural landowners plant prairie and woodland habitats with help from the **Brant Resource Stewardship Network**, **Grand River Conservation Authority** or **Long Point Region Conservation Authority**. These projects help landowners care for their land and protect rare and beautiful wildlife with whom they share a common interest in a healthy landscape.



The Carolinian Life Zone of southwestern Ontario stands out as one of Canada's natural treasures. The Tulip Tree Leaf is a symbol of many unique wild plants and animals that live here and as far south as the US Carolinas.

Caring For Nature factsheet series is published by the Carolinian Canada Coalition
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The Unique Nature *of* Brant

The complex landforms of Brant County and North Dumfries Township, a legacy of the ebb and flow of glaciers across its landscape, support an amazing variety of Carolinian species and habitats. Although the Grand River may be considered the centrepiece of the area's network of natural places, it coexists with some of the largest remaining blocks of forest in the Carolinian Life Zone, provincially significant wetlands and globally rare patches of oak savanna and tallgrass prairie. Indeed, such rarity is a defining characteristic of many of the area's ecosystems. Within Brant County are more than 100 species at risk, including the Cerulean Warbler, the Black Redhorse, and the Dwarf Chinquapin Oak.

Although significant conservation challenges face Brant's unique nature, many individuals and community groups are dedicated to the protection of these special species and natural places. Local organizations, like the **Brant Woodlot Owners' Association**, the **Brant Rod and Gun Club** and **Tim Horton's Onondaga Farms**, are working together with government agencies and representatives of the **Six Nations of the Grand River** to preserve and restore Brant's natural heritage.



© N. Stevens

Brant Rod and Gun Club members prepare prairie seed

Conserving Fields and Streams

Trout habitat in Whiteman's Creek has been greatly enhanced by the **Brant Rod and Gun Club**. The Club has stewarded 22 ha (54 ac) of land since 1937 including a mature hickory woodland and an oak savanna remnant. Over the past few years, they have re-designed their fish hatchery, letting part of the land revert back to the original Carolinian forest. Volunteers from the Club work hundreds of hours with partner agencies. They planted 1.5 ha (4 ac) of prairie on the old trap range and replaced hundreds of metres of wooden walls along their stream banks with natural stone and riparian buffer plantings to protect the cold water stream and prevent erosion. The Club is continuing this work downstream for neighouring private properties to multiply the benefits and ensure that the creek and the fish populations stay healthy.



Cerulean Warbler

© John Cassady

Indian Grass in a Tallgrass Prairie Community

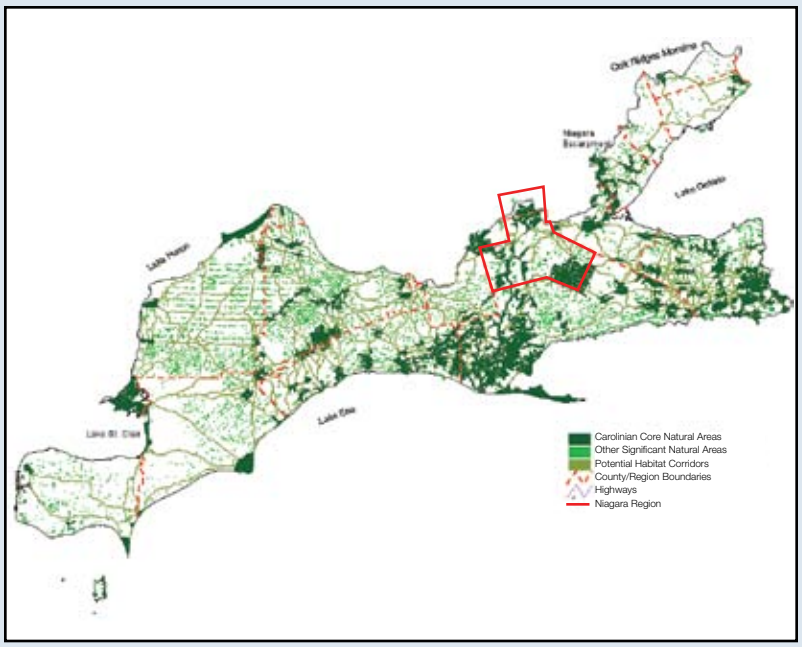
© K. Tupman, GRCA

The Big Picture in Brant

Healthy landscapes need large natural Core Habitats connected by Habitat Corridors. This type of natural system benefits both wild and human communities. Federal guidelines recommend that 20 -30% natural cover is needed for landscapes to stay healthy and sustainable. In Brant, natural cover is 23.5%, among the highest in the Carolinian Life Zone.

The *Big Picture* is the Carolinian Canada Coalition's vision of a network of green spread out across the Southwestern Ontario landscape. Existing natural areas, such as forests, wetlands and meadows, form the backbone of the network. These are connected by streams, rivers, drains, hedgerows, smaller woodlands and even backyard habitats. It shows how Brant natural areas can be conserved and linked across the landscape with the help of public and private stewards.

The *Big Picture* shows 140 core natural areas that act as important reservoirs of natural diversity across the zone. Only five are found in Brant County and North Dumfries but they are among the largest in the zone.



Visit www.carolinian.org to zoom in on any part of the Big Picture and find out more about habitat cores and corridors in your area.

Trees for Roads


Trees for Roads planting

© Brant Resources Stewardship Network

Trees planted in areas where we live, work and travel can play an important role in preserving the Carolinian nature of Brant County. The **County of Brant**'s *Grow Green program* was founded as a millennium project with the goal of planting one million trees throughout the county. Perhaps one of the most important objectives of the program is to replace the majestic shade trees that once graced the rural roads of Brant. The most spectacular of these roadside trees are the Sugar Maples whose distinctive shape and brilliant fall colours have long defined rural Brant County. Helping to bring the Sugar Maple back to the roadsides of Brant are Jim Ross, Hank Hedges and Gil Henderson. These Brant County residents have shown how individuals or small groups of citizens can make real differences in the conservation of unique nature of Brant County and the Carolinian Life Zone.


Great Spangled Fritillary

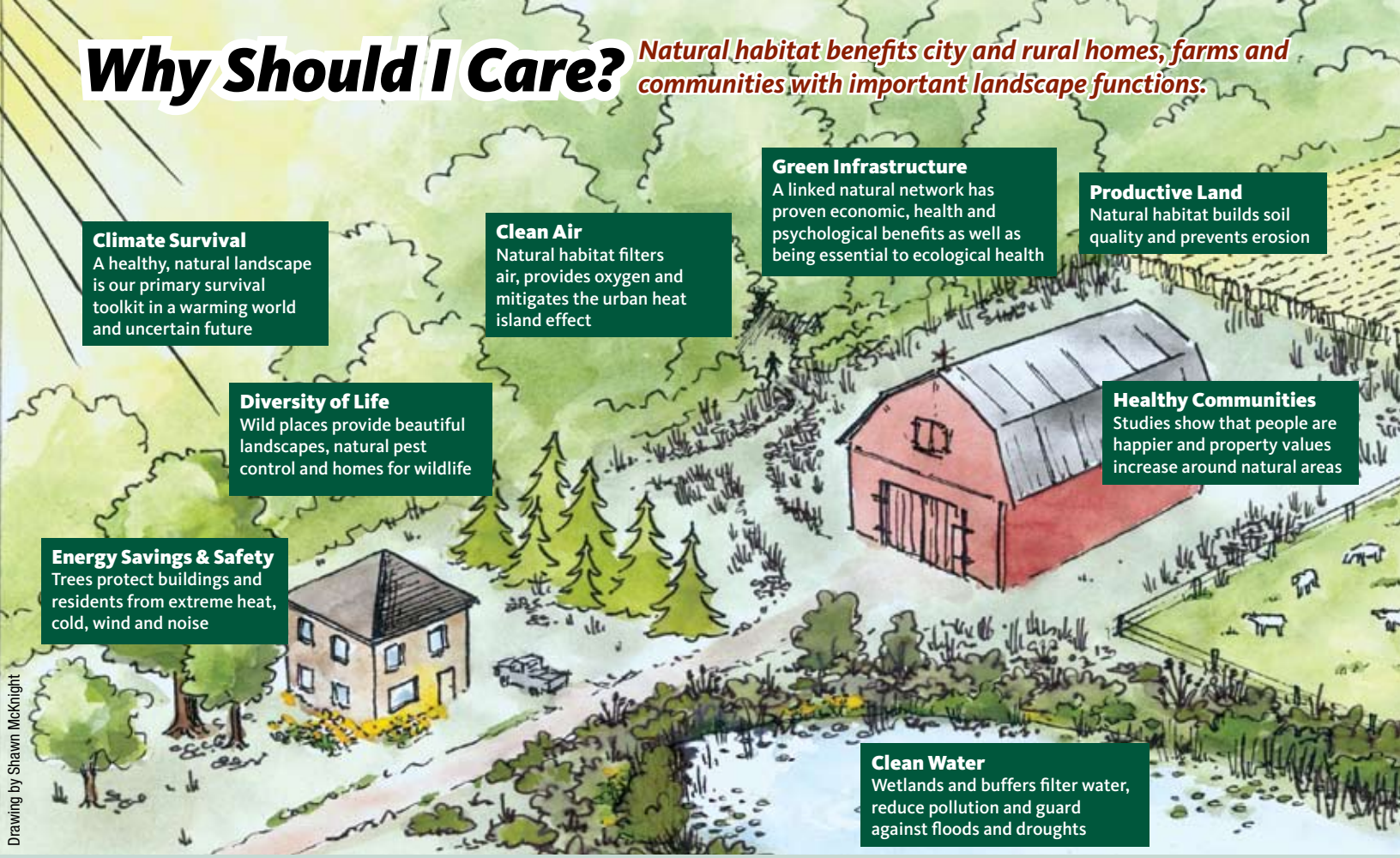
© Carolinian Canada

Connecting Lands and Communities

*The **Six Nations of the Grand River** have stewarded their land in Brant and Haldimand for centuries, retaining much of the natural cover that provided them with abundant resources. Today, they continue that tradition in the modern world, while working to foster partnerships with their neighbours along the Grand River. Through the Six Nations Eco-Centre, they coordinate tree planting programs on First Nations lands, while supplying tree stock to other organizations in Brant and Haldimand. They partner with groups like the **Brant Resource Stewardship Network**, the **Grand River Conservation Authority**, and **Carolinian Woodland Recovery Team** to conserve woodlands, wetlands and associated species at risk on their own land and across the Carolinian Life Zone. Six Nations lead or partner with many other groups in habitat monitoring and restoration projects in the region.*

Why Should I Care?

Natural habitat benefits city and rural homes, farms and communities with important landscape functions.



Drawing by Shawn McKnight

What Can I Do? *Stewardship Tips for Rural and Urban Landowners*

Whether your land is large or small, contains natural features or is currently manicured, you can contribute to natural heritage protection. As you get to know your property, rural or urban, in all seasons, you will know best what it needs to stay healthy.

AROUND THE HOME

Carolinian Canada In My Back Yard

Attract butterflies, hummingbirds and song birds to your garden by growing low-maintenance native plants. Mix it up with a variety of species and structures – a key Carolinian characteristic is high natural diversity.

Nature at Home

Nurture that towering tree or protect a habitat corner from disturbance. Resist the desire to 'clean it up'– leaf litter, gnarled branches, old logs, tall grass and winter gardens are important for diverse and interesting wildlife. Join a wildlife monitoring program to learn more about your property and contribute to science.

Eliminate Toxins & Save your Money

Grow a lawn safe for kids and wildlife. Use organic fertilizers such as compost, lawn clippings and leaves. Pesticide alternatives are less expensive too. Reduce water use and maintenance by replacing lawn with native ground covers.

Nature Knows Best

Avoid planting or dumping in natural areas. Although often well intended, introduced plants, compost and clippings can smother, invade or otherwise damage natural ecosystems. Avoid exotic plantings near natural areas.

AROUND THE COUNTRYSIDE

Balance the Landscape

Plant native species next to existing natural areas to multiply their benefits. Create undisturbed interior forest or tallgrass prairie habitats, both rare in Carolinian Canada.

Make Connections

Work with neighbours to grow habitat linkages along fences, roads, watercourses and drains. Locate new trails strategically to restore green corridors in rural or urban communities, rather than impacting existing natural areas.

Water is Life

Plant natural buffers on slopes and shorelines to protect water quality and aquatic ecosystems. The wider the buffer, the greater the benefits.

Manage for Sustainable Income

Work with your local community or association to adopt Best Management Practices (BMP's) for timber, tourism, agriculture, recreation and other industries. BMP's help wildlife and also protect long term economic value.

Plan it Right for Love and Money

Consult a habitat specialist to develop a plan for your backyard or back 40. With a plan, you may be eligible for a variety of conservation grants and incentives.

Natural Wonders of Brant & North Dumfries

Carolinian Neighbours in North Dumfries

In some ways, the natural character of **North Dumfries**, a neighbouring township within the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, closely mirrors that of parts of Brant with a complex landscape where wetlands, prairies and upland forests intermingle. Some rare Carolinian species, such as Hill's Oak and Pignut Hickory, are unusually abundant here. The special nature of **North Dumfries** reflects its location at the northern edge of the Carolinian Life Zone. Pockets of distinctive southern and northern habitats coexist here. For example, the Sudden Bog, a Carolinian Canada Signature Site, contains a large Carolinian oak-hickory forest surrounding a black spruce-tamarack bog more typical of northern Ontario. Such a unique assortment of species and natural communities highlights the incredible diversity that defines both **North Dumfries** and **Carolinian Canada**.

Making a Splash on the Landscape


Creeden Wetland Dedication © L. Mader

John and Sadie Creeden shared a vision with **Ducks Unlimited Canada**: to restore a wetland on their property near Paris that had dried up due to landscape alteration. With assistance from the **Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources**, **Wetland Habitat Fund**, **TD Friends of the Environment**, **Brant Waterways Foundation**, the **Shell Environmental Fund**, **Grand River Conservation Authority**, **Brant Rural Water Quality Program**, and the **Brant Resource Stewardship Network**, 8 ha (20 ac) of wetland and the adjacent upland was restored to natural habitat. Wetlands are a key component of healthy landscapes, efficiently filtering water, protecting water supplies and preventing floods, a role becoming more critical in a shifting climate. Mallard, Wood Duck, Green Wing, Shoveler, Ringneck Duck and Blue Wing Teal have all returned to the site, which has been in the Creeden family for 150 years.

An American Colombo in Paris


American Columbo © Daniel Reed / 2bnthewild.com


Graham Buck with American Columbo © D. Morris

Landowners near Paris have been working with the **Brant Resource Stewardship Network** to revitalize prairie and savanna habitat on their farms. A high quality white oak savanna with numerous rare plants, including the endangered American Columbo, is found on a local farm. Since 2005, the family has removed invasive species and completed two controlled burns, an important part of managing healthy grasslands. One family member even completed a weekend of training to become a certified burn worker. The result after only 3 years is an 80% increase in the population of American Columbo and a healthier habitat for numerous other plants and animals. The family is currently contemplating creating a new oak savanna to connect two isolated remnants. Now another American Columbo population has been found next door and their neighbours are getting involved.

Multi-dimensional Sustainable Farming on the MacKenzie


The Davis Family © P. Hammond

The Davis family has been farming near Scotland at the headwaters of MacKenzie Creek since 1927. Their farm includes a 40 ha (100 ac) woodlot that has provided recreation and a sustainable supply of timber and firewood for the family for 80 years. In their fields, wind breaks and minimum tillage on the fine sand soils reduce erosion by retaining organic matter at the surface and keeping the soil porous. In their dairy operation, water is used 4 times before being returned via a liquid manure system to the field crops. These activities and many others keep the Davis farm a healthy habitat for Pileated Woodpeckers and Milk Snakes. Even Beaver have moved back to the farm.

These folks and other neighbours too numerous to mention are quietly helping to restore our landscape, to protect rare wildlife, and to make your home a safer place to live by keeping the air and water clean. You can help too, in many ways.



Farmer Opts for Clean Water, Healthy Landscapes

Gord Vellenga has been working hard since 1991 to keep the water running through his land in Brantford Township clean. He partnered with the **Grand River Conservation Authority** and the **Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association** to establish a stream buffer demonstration project through the National Soil Conservation Program. A mix of grasses, trees and shrubs were planted in a 20 m buffer. Starting in 2003, he also completed a number of projects through the **Brant Rural Water Quality Program**. He has fenced his cattle from the creek, directed clean rainwater from his roofs to the creek, taken steps to control the runoff from his livestock yard, retired steep slopes from agricultural production and planted 3 ha (8 ac) of hardwoods, White Pine and White Spruce on his land. "It has been good to be able to work with partners like the **Grand River Conservation Authority**," says Gord.

Bald Eagles and Pignut Hickory in the City

The **City of Brantford Parks and Recreation Department** has worked with many landowners and other partners to plant thousands of trees through annual naturalization programs and to preserve fascinating and unique ecological habitats. From oak savanna and prairie remnants to perched fens, Brantford has specialized habitats that are rarely seen elsewhere. Rare Carolinian species such as Pignut Hickory, Virginia Mountain Mint, and Bald Eagles are found in the City's protected places. Protection of these unique habitats is a major priority during industrial and infrastructure growth. The City understands the link between natural areas and the health, well-being and economic success of urban and near-urban residents.

Citizens Protect Brantford 'Volcanoes'

Established in 1999, the **Northwest Gateway Steering Committee** had a goal to research and protect unique natural areas in an industrial development north of Brantford. Members included local residents, city staff, **Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources**, **Grand River Conservation Authority** and other stakeholders. They identified a globally rare 'perched prairie fen', a triple aquifer, Hackberry woods and Tallgrass Prairie, with species like False Gromwell, Sundew, Rigid Goldenrod, and Seneca Snakeroot. Although the official Committee was disbanded in 2006, the citizen's group continues to actively monitor this area. Some of the rare features of this Earth Science Area of Natural and Scientific Interest include 3 m high waterspouts and 1.2 m high pressure cones or mud volcanoes called Tufa Mounds which are formed due to extremely high underground water pressure.





Partnerships Enhance Waynco Prairie

Located on the Galt Moraine south of Cambridge is one of Ontario's largest prairie remnants, first recognized in 1817. Waynco Gravel, the principal landowner, has worked with the **Waterloo Stewardship Network, Brant Resource Stewardship Network**, **University of Waterloo** and **Tallgrass Ontario** to enhance the site. Controlled burns in April 2007 and 2008 were likely the first deliberately set fires since Anisnabek peoples left the area over two centuries ago. Fortunately fires started by sparks from steam locomotives and manual brush clearing along the tracks kept this prairie from being invaded by trees and shrubs. Larger burns and invasive species control are planned to help species like Upland White Aster, Butterfly Milkweed, Whorled Milkwort, Round-headed Bush-clover and Tick Trefoil. With its size and diversity this may be a prime site to reintroduce endangered species like the Northern Bobwhite Quail.

Explore more habitat projects and ideas in Carolinian Canada's Big Picture Network at www.carolinian.org

Map Copyright: Grand River Conservation Authority: Produced using information provided by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. Copyright Queen's Printer, 2008.

Partners in Conservation

These are just a few of the many groups working to protect habitat in your region. See the back page for more Conservation Partners.

Growing Healthy Landscapes

For over 65 years, private landowners have worked with the **Grand River Conservation Authority** and its predecessor to improve water quality and natural habitat along the Grand River. The 'Exceptional Waters' of the Middle Grand exemplify this stewardship. **Long Point Region Conservation Authority** is similarly dedicated to serving landowners in southwest Brant County. The Authorities offer on-site visits, financial incentives and technical advice. Through initiatives, such as the *Private Land Tree Planting Program*, the *Ontario Power Generation/Forest Corridor Project*, and the *Brant Rural Water Quality Program*, they partner with landowners in tree planting projects. Assistance is available for buffer plantings, cattle fencing, sediment basins, and stream and gully erosion control.



Controlled Burn at Brant Park to maintain Prairie Habitat

Good Relationships – Caring Communities

The **Brant Resource Stewardship Network** supports a wide diversity of landowner-driven projects, including restoration of tallgrass prairie and oak savanna habitats, coldwater stream rehabilitation, ecological forestry, tree planting, education and youth outreach. The Network is composed of volunteer representatives of land management groups and together they promote the care of natural resources for a profitable and sustainable environment. Each member brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the network, and a willingness to support initiatives to meet stewardship needs in the community. The Network is supported by the **Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources**, community partnerships and resource-based agencies. The key is relationships: bringing people and organizations together to work towards common goals.



Burford Tree Nursery

Landowners Conserving Woodlands

Most of Brant County's woodlands are privately owned. The **Brant Woodlot Owner's Association**, a group of landowners helping landowners, plays an essential role in assisting woodlot owners protect the health and productivity of their private forests. Through education and communications programs, the Association works to ensure not only a sustainable supply of forest products, but the creation and preservation of wildlife habitat and the conservation of rare species in Brant County.

Prairie Partnerships

Brant is one of the last strongholds of Ontario's original rare grassland habitats. The highest priority of **Tallgrass Ontario** is to protect what remains of these fire-dependent plant communities that occur across southern Ontario as sunny tallgrass prairies, sun dappled oak savannas and oak woodlands. These are the most endangered ecological communities in southern Ontario with only 3% of their original extent remaining mostly as small, isolated patches. Even so, they continue to disappear, often through lack of awareness. Within these threatened natural communities are many rare and endangered plant and animal species that can live nowhere else. **Tallgrass Ontario** works with landowners one-on-one, through workshops, publications and research to encourage and guide protection and restoration of these rare and beautiful Carolinian habitats. The Brant Prairie on the SC Johnson Trail in west Brantford is easily accessible.

Landowner Stewardship in Brant is Grand

Brant's landowners care for some of the largest and best natural areas in the region. The 790 ha (1952 ac) Grand River Forest stretches 18 km between Cambridge and Paris. Connected by the waterway, the 137 ha (339 acres) Spottiswood Lakes site, near Glen Morris, is an outstanding site of steeply sloping kame moraine ridges and kettle lakes. Over 70 landowners steward these Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest, with the help of many conservation partners. They care for a high diversity of habitats, concentrations of rare species, freshwater fauna and specialized habitats such as bogs, open seepage slopes, prairie remnants, and significant wintering habitat for song birds, waterfowl and Bald Eagles. Thanks to the stewardship of landowners, past and present, these large, connected natural systems will protect the health and prosperity of Brant landscapes into the future.

THE PRIDE OF BRANT

Landowners Help Rare Species

Local landowners are taking pride in helping rare species, an important part of Brant's heritage. The endangered Eastern Spiny Softshell Turtle and the rare Green Dragon (a floodplain plant) are surviving thanks to voluntary private stewardship actions to save habitat.


Jefferson Salamander
© Ron Gould


Mapleleaf Mussel

What are They?

Species at risk are plants or animals in danger of disappearing from the wild. Over 25 Brant species are federally listed 'at risk' while over 100 are provincially rare, among the highest levels in the nation. Local recovery teams are working with experts and community members to protect critically rare species, habitats and the landscapes that support them.

Rare Gems of Nature Close at Hand

Many fascinating and rare wild neighbours are found across the County. Rare animals include the threatened Queen Snake and Jefferson Salamander. Fish with intriguing names like Greenside Darter live in Brant creeks and rivers along with the endangered Wavy-rayed Lampmussel. Side Oats Gramma, usually found in the far west, finds a home in Brant, as does the rare Dwarf Chinquapin Oak. Remember to stay on marked trails when visiting conservation lands to avoid damaging rare species or their habitats.

Eastern Sand Darter: Pest Controller and Clean Water Indicator


Eastern Sand Darter
© A. Dextrase

This small fish, no bigger than a finger, can be spotted in sandy and sparsely vegetated streams and rivers like the Grand River where it flows through Brant. Sand Darters often bury themselves completely in the sandy bottom and feast on favourite foods like Midge and Black Fly larvae, so they make great pest controllers! Siltation, sand bar removals, dams and pollution threaten their survival. Silt reduces available oxygen required for burying behaviour and egg survival. The Eastern Sand Darter needs clean water to survive so by protecting habitat for this rare species, local residents are protecting an important resource and creating healthy landscapes for wild and human communities.

Carolinian Canada has 1/3 of the country's species at risk, many of which live here in Brant. Mention this factsheet to get a free Wild Neighbours Kit from info@carolinian.org or 519-433-7077.

Wanted Alive in Brant!

You can help! Call if you see these species.

Free Downloads: NEW *Wanted Alive* posters for Carolinian Canada counties at www.carolinian.org

AMERICAN CHESTNUT

(Castanea dentata)
ENDANGERED


© D. Morris

Look for:

- Elongated leaves - dark green, shiny, and saw-toothed
- Nut covered by spiny, urchin-like husk

Did You Know?
The American Chestnut has all but disappeared from our landscape due to a fungal disease called Chestnut Blight
HELP! Conserve Carolinian forest habitat
REWARD: Enjoy the shade of a beautiful and majestic heritage tree. The nuts provide food for Wild Turkey and Grey Squirrels
IF YOU SEE THIS TREE CONTACT:
wildlife@carolinian.org or John Ambrose 519-821-8653 or Greg Boland 519-824-4120, Co-Chairs, American Chestnut Recovery Team

AMERICAN BADGER

(Taxidea taxus jacksoni)
ENDANGERED


© MNR

Look for:

- Grizzled gray with bold black and white stripes on the head and face
- Front claws extremely long

Did You Know?
The American Badger is a nocturnal carnivore – uses powerful claws to dig – Is at risk from habitat loss, road mortality and human persecution
HELP! Save grasslands – Leave grassy habitat on woodland edges undisturbed
REWARD: Rodent – and other pests-control
IF YOU SEE THIS ENDANGERED ANIMAL CONTACT:
wildlife@carolinian.org or Mary Gartshore, Badger Recovery Team 519-586-3985

Find a Habitat Partner

A Helping Hand for Landowners

A Good Place to Start for Property Assistance

Brant Resource Stewardship Network *ontariostewardship.org*
519-448-1714 Restoration and assistance with landowner stewardship

Grand River Conservation Authority *grandriver.ca*
519-621-2761 Habitat conservation & restoration

Long Point Region Conservation Authority *lprca.on.ca*
519-428-4623 Habitat restoration & tree planting assistance

Waterloo Stewardship Network *ontariostewardship.org*
519-826-4920 Financial, technical and educational resources for environmental stewardsip

Specialized Project Assistance or Funding

Ducks Unlimited Canada *ducksunlimited.org*
1-888-402-4444 Wetland protection and creation

Long Point Basin Land Trust *www.lpblt.on.ca*
519-586-8309 Land donations and conservation easements

Nature Conservancy of Canada *natureconservancy.ca* 1-866-281-5331
Land protection, conservation easements, conservation volunteers

Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association *ontariosoilcrop.org*
Laury Penders 519-863-2657 Environmental Farm Plan

Ontario Forestry Association *oforest.on.ca*
1-800-387-0790 Ontario Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources *mnr.gov.on.ca/mnr/speciesatrisk/*
519-826-4955 Species at Risk Stewardship Fund

Meet Your Neighbours ~ Learn, Volunteer, Network

Brant Rod and Gun Club *brantrodandgunclub.org*
519-449-2658 Education, Conservation of renewable natural resources

Brantford Parks and Recreation Department *Brantford.ca* 519-756-1500

Northwest Gateway Community Group
Ilse Kraemer 519-756-6634 or Lou Knechtel 519-759-5076

Six Nations Wildlife Eco-Centre *sixnations.ca*
519 445-0330 Education, monitoring, and information

Brant Federation of Agriculture janet.licskai@ofa.on.ca
1-866-823-8882

Brant Woodlot Owners' Association *northpine.ca*
519-647-2979 Information about woodlot management

Good Sources of Information

Association for Canadian Educational Resources
905-275-7685 Volunteer habitat monitoring *aceracre.org*

Canadian Wildlife Federation *wildaboutgardening.org*

Environment Canada 1-800-668-6767
Species at Risk *sararegistry.gc.ca*
Ecological Gifts Program *on.ec.gc.ca/wildlife/ecogifts*

Evergreen 1-888-426-3138 *evergreen.ca* Native Plant Database

Land Owner Resource Centre *lrconline.com*
- Management Options for Abandoned Farm Fields
- Extension Notes: forestry, tree planting, agroforestry, wildlife & more

Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters *invadingspecies.com*
1-800-563-7711 Invasive species hotline, Habitat enhancement

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs *omafra.gov.on.ca*
- Best Management Practices: Buffer Strips, Fish & Wildlife

Ontario Nature 1-800-440-2366 *ontarionature.org*
Volunteers for Nature, Birds on the Farm: A Stewardship Guide

Ontario Society for Ecological Restoration *serontario.org*
- Native Plant Resource Guide

Royal Ontario Museum *rom.on.ca*
- Online factsheets on Species at Risk

Tallgrass Ontario 519-674-1543 *tallgrassontario.org*
Tallgrass and savanna conservation



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Many thanks to our generous sponsors and stakeholders who were involved in the development of this factsheet.

Environment Canada EcoAction Community Funding Program provided major funding support for this project.

Duane Brown, Paul Gagnon, Brian Geerts, Paul General, Louise Heyming, Lou Knechtel, Ilse Kraemer, Jeff Krete, Lynette Mader, Maureen Sinclair

Special thanks go to: Graham Buck, Larry Davis, Ron Eddy, Donald Kirk, Stephen May, Nadja Stevens, Anthony Zammit

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Graphic Design: Over The Moon 519-586-8888
Printing: Annex Publishing 519-428-3471 - 100% post-consumer recycled paper; vegetable-based ink