

# Saving Prothonotary Warbler:

## What you can do to help

The Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*) is a small migratory songbird. It is the only cavity-nesting warbler in Canada, and uses tree cavities that have been excavated by other species. Their nests can be up to 3 metres above open standing or slow-moving water. They will use artificial nest boxes placed in suitable habitat.

The Prothonotary Warbler is an indicator of high quality, forested wetlands, and has socio-economic importance due to the ecotourism opportunities associated with its popularity with bird watchers.

### Do you live near Prothonotary Warblers?

The Prothonotary Warbler's range in Canada is restricted to a limited number of sites along the north shore of Lake Erie.

They live in deciduous swamp forests dominated by silver maple, red maple, red ash, black ash, willow, buttonbush and alder.

They are only found in Ontario from May to August. They migrate to Central America where they spend the winter in coastal mangrove forests.

### What you can do to help

- ✓ **Learn to identify this bird.** If you are lucky enough to discover a new population of Prothonotary Warblers, be sure to report it to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources or the Natural Heritage Information Centre.
- ✓ **Report sightings of birds with leg bands.**
- ✓ **Don't drain swamps.** Not only will it protect Prothonotary Warbler habitat but it will help regulate water levels in your water table.
- ✓ **Stay at least 15 metres away from nest sites.** The birds are sensitive to human disturbance. Pay attention to their alarm calls.
- ✓ **Leave standing dead trees** which are critical for nesting sites.



Photo: A. Woodliffe

### Field check

Adult male:

- ✓ small songbird, 11-13 cm
- ✓ golden-yellow head and breast
- ✓ olive-green back
- ✓ blue-grey wing and tail
- ✓ prominent white tail spot

Adult female:

- ✓ similar to male but less brightly coloured

### Did you know?

Suitable nesting sites are rare in Ontario, and breeding pairs of Prothonotary Warblers will often return to the same nest cavity year after year.

- ✓ **Avoid logging in swamps.** Increased light in clearings can lead to the encroachment of invasive species, increased water evaporation, and competitors such as House Wrens that prefer fragmented habitats.
- ✓ **Consult with experts on installing nest boxes** in suitable habitat for the species
- ✓ **Avoid using pesticides in the forest** unless absolutely necessary, as they reduce food availability and may have residual effects on Prothonotary Warblers and other species.

## More Best Stewardship Practices

- ✓ **Keep your pets on a leash** when you walk them in natural areas, as pets can transport invasive plant seeds if they get stuck in the pet's hair.
- ✓ **Stay on designated trails** when you visit a natural area or use your off-road vehicle to avoid trampling plants and disturbing their sensitive habitat.
- ✓ **Learn to identify invasive species.** Your local Conservation Authority or Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Office can provide you with information on invasive species that occur in your area and what you can do to help prevent their spread.
- ✓ **Learn about stewardship activities** in your area and actively participate in protecting Species at Risk. To find more information about stewardship activities in your area, contact your local Stewardship Council or Conservation Authority.
- ✓ **Take advantage of the Environmental Farm Plan program.** To learn more contact the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources or the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.
- ✓ **If you have Species at Risk** on your property, you may be eligible for stewardship programs or financial incentives that support the protection and recovery of Species at Risk and their habitats. Contact the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources for more information.
- ✓ **Report any illegal activity** related to plants and wildlife to 1-877-TIPS-MNR (847-7667)

## Did you know?

Male Prothonotary Warblers will often build one or more incomplete 'dummy' nests that the female may select to complete, or she may build a new nest on her own.

## Status

The Prothonotary Warbler is Endangered nationally and provincially. It is also protected under the federal Migratory Birds Conservation Act.

Carolinian Canada Coalition is working with local Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Offices, Conservation Authorities and other Non-Governmental Organizations to recover the Prothonotary Warbler.

You can help the recovery efforts by protecting this species and its habitat.

## Good sources of information

### Carolinian Canada Coalition:

[www.carolinian.org](http://www.carolinian.org)

### Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources:

Includes information about Ontario Species at Risk  
[www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/](http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/)

### Natural Heritage Information Centre

<http://nhic.mnr.gov.on.ca/>

### Bird Studies Canada

[www.bsc-eoc.org](http://www.bsc-eoc.org)

### Find your local Conservation Authority Office:

[www.conservationontario.ca](http://www.conservationontario.ca)

### Government of Canada Species at Risk Public Registry:

[www.sararegistry.gc.ca](http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca)

### Find your local Stewardship Council:

[www.ontariostewardship.org](http://www.ontariostewardship.org)

### Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs

[www.omafra.gov.on.ca/](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/)

### Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association

Includes information about the Environmental Farm Plan  
[ontariosoilcrop.org](http://ontariosoilcrop.org)

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