

# Re-Casting a Vision for a Biodiversity Strategy for Ontario

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Exploring Our Watersheds

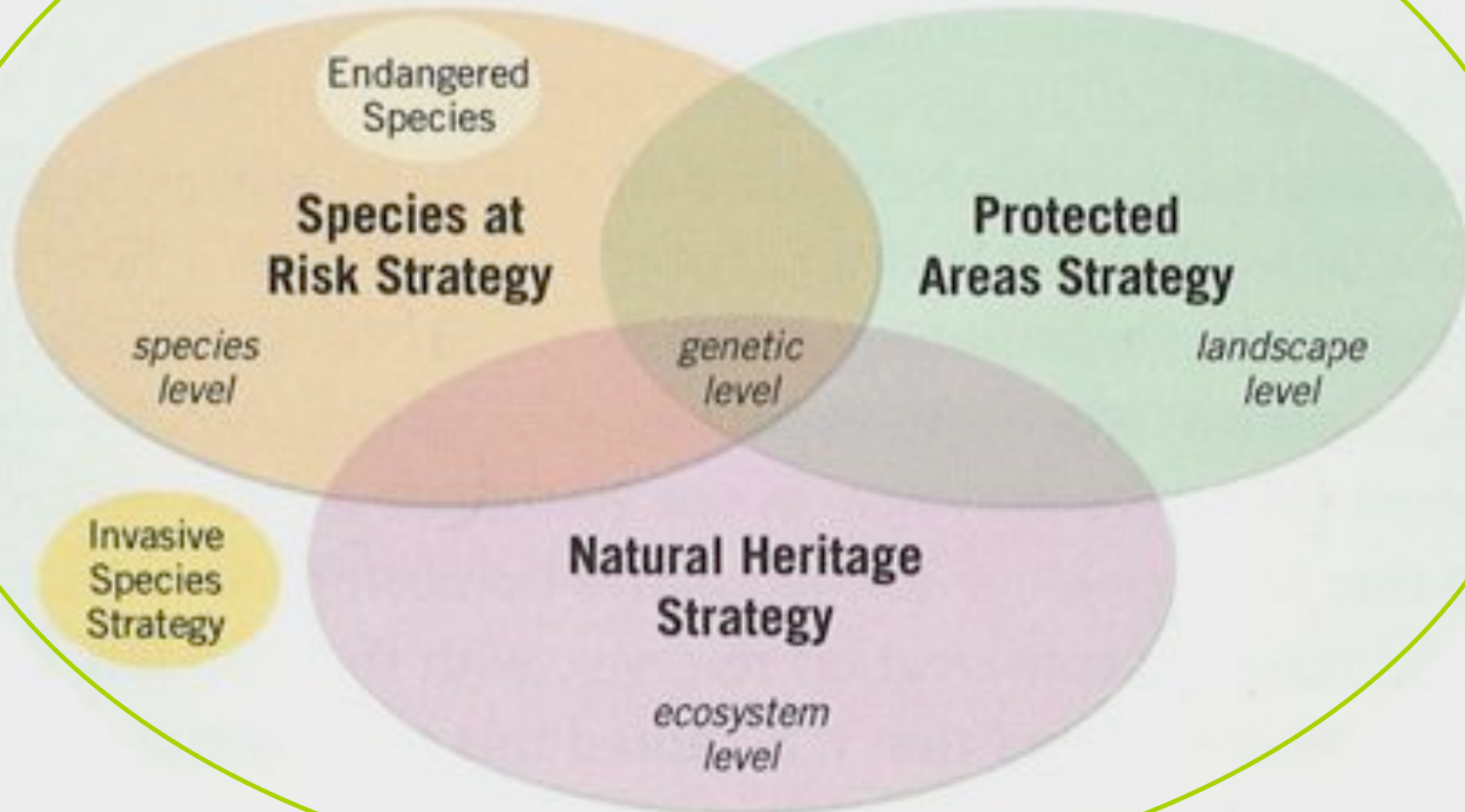
Lambton College & Inn, Sarnia, Ontario

May 28, 2010

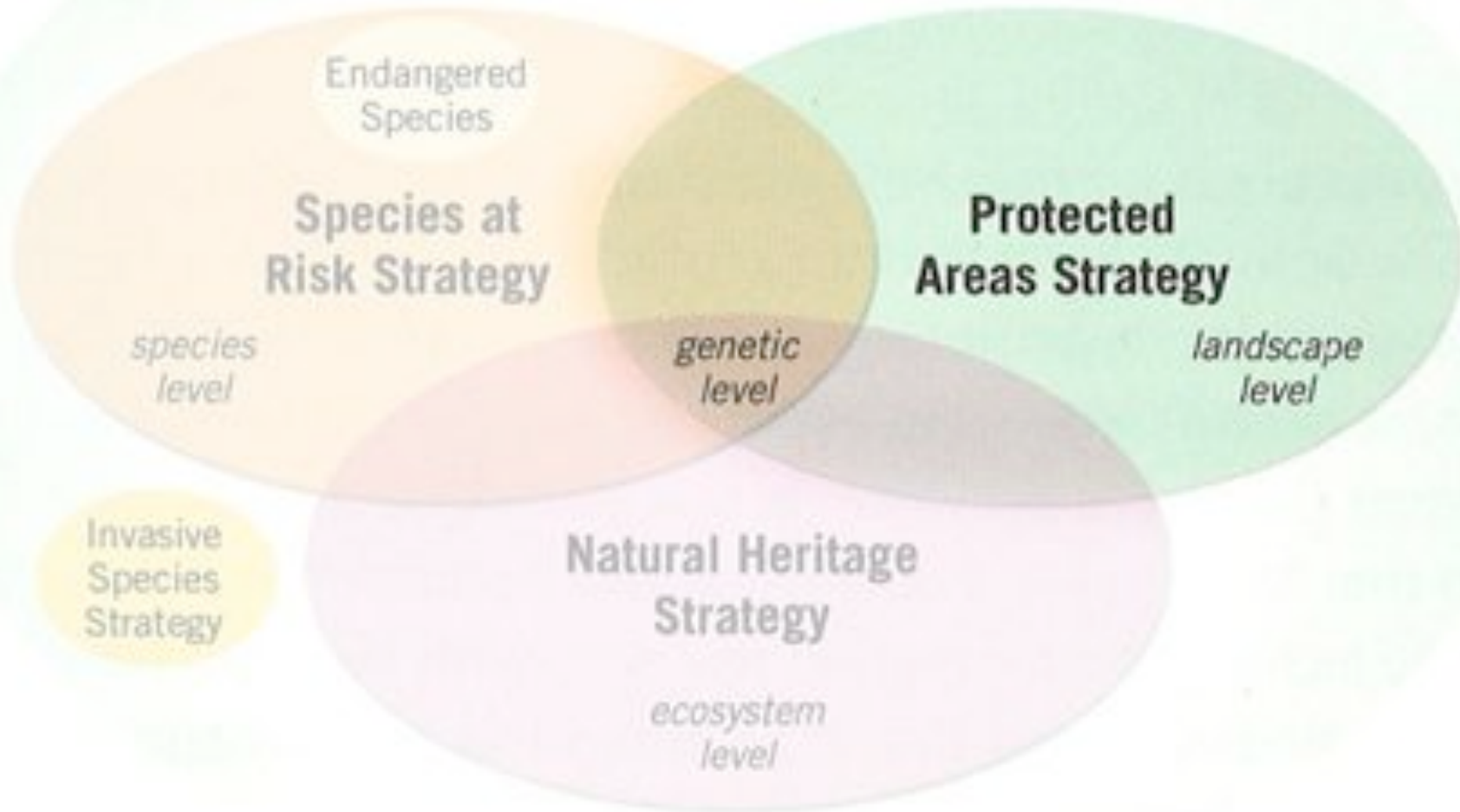
# A Brief History of Biodiversity Policy

- **1992 Canada signs Convention on Biological Diversity**
- **1995 Canada drafts strategy – 1996 all provinces sign on**
- **nothing happens**
- **2002 ECO calls for provincial strategy**
- **2003 ECO says here's how you do it**
- **2005 Ont. announces a strategy/council**

# BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY



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# Protected Areas

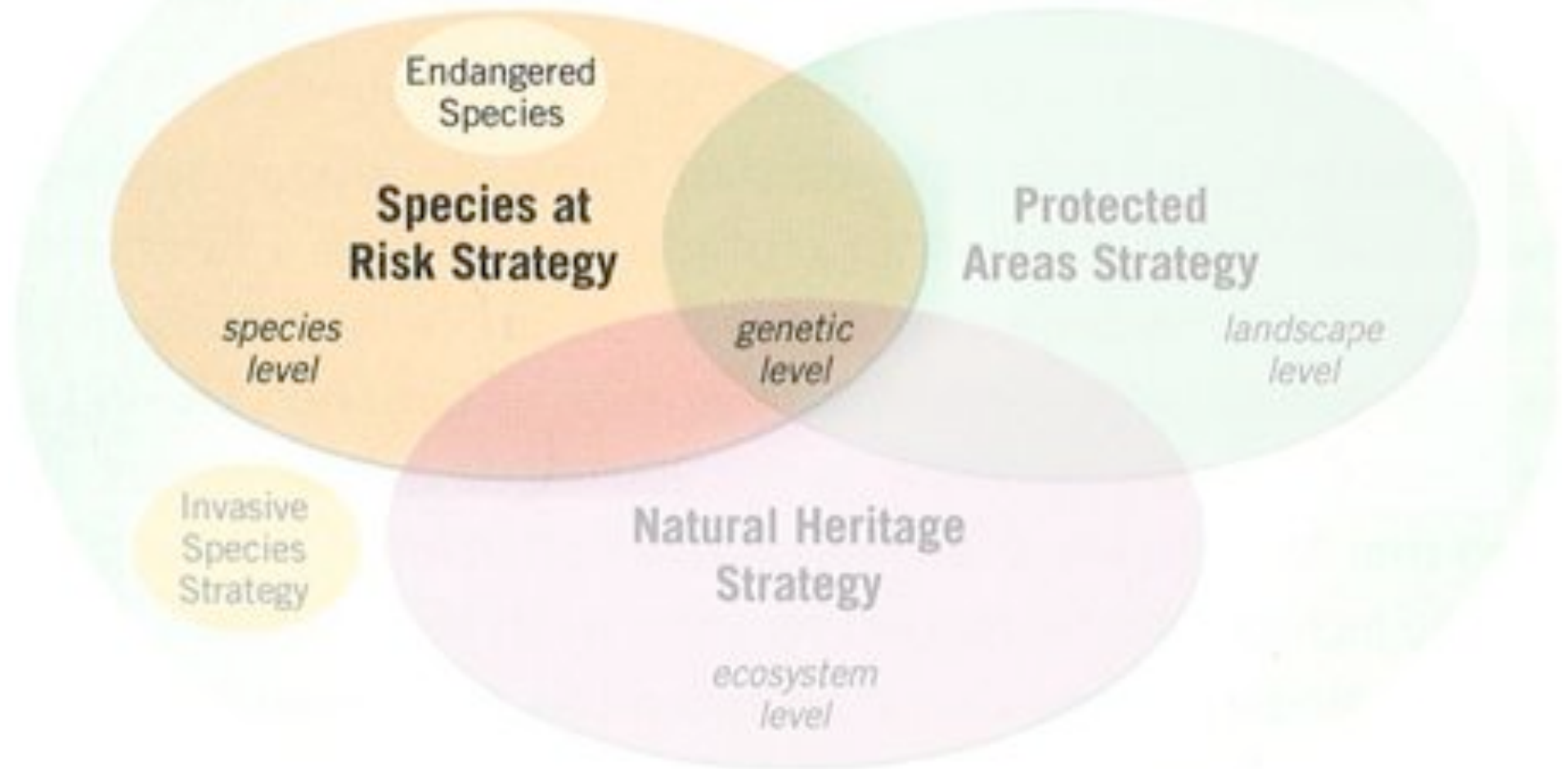
- **1995**

- **Provincial Parks Act**
- **Niagara Escarpment Act**

- **2010**

- **Living Legacy**
- **Prov. Parks and Conservation Reserves Act**
- **Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act**
- **Lake Simcoe Protection Act**

# BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY



# Species At Risk

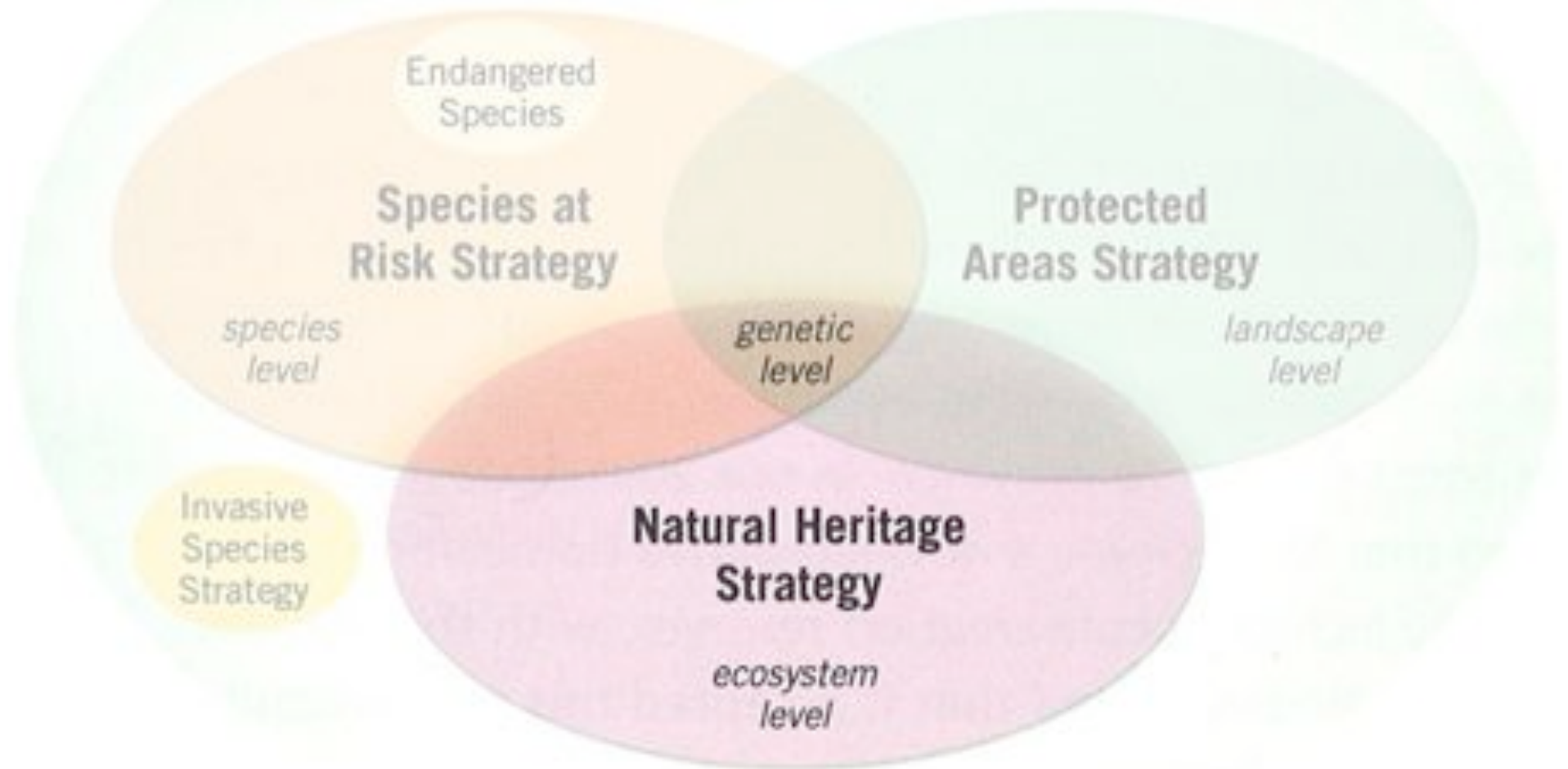
- **1995**

- **Endangered Species Act (ineffective)**
- **no species being listed / no screening**

- **2010**

- **new Endangered Species Act**
- **independent science based screening**
- **development pressure persists**
- **climate change impacting**

# BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY



# Natural Heritage Strategy

- **1995**
  - Provincial Policy Statement with conflicting priorities and no means to resolve them
- **2010**
  - same PPS
  - Greenbelt Act
  - Far North Act

# Natural Heritage Strategy

- **Problems in the South**

- significant wetlands policy failing
- significant woodlands undefined
- aggregate extraction trumps
- no natural systems linkages mechanism
- highways also trump
- growth planning does recognize landscape capacity limits
- agricultural drainage trumps

# Natural Heritage Strategy

- **Problems in the North**
  - woodland caribou problem not solved
  - negotiations with 1<sup>st</sup> Nations not finished
  - industrial pressure for corridors and hydro
  - the “Ring of Fire” is in full swing
  - climate change is impacting
- **the Far North Act is 4 years late**























# State of Ontario's Biodiversity 2010

A Report of the Ontario Biodiversity Council



	INDICATOR	STATUS	TREND	DATA
State of Ontario's Biodiversity	Forests—extent of forest cover and disturbance	amount of forested land remained stable between 1998 and 2002		
	Forests—fragmentation in Mixedwood Plains Ecozone	4 of 5 zones have >30% forest cover, but largest zone (SW) has only 17% with limited habitat for forest-interior birds		
	Wetlands—losses in southern Ontario	from 1982-2002, wetland losses continued in the Mixedwood Plains at a rate of 0.17% per year.		
	Rare Ecosystems—extent and protection	54% of prairie/savannah habitat legally protected, 92% of dune habitat protected, only 21% of alvar protected		
	Great Lakes—Great Lakes shoreline hardening	> 30% of Lake Erie shoreline and 25% of GL connecting channels have high proportion of hardened shoreline		
	Great Lakes— <i>Diporeia</i> abundance in Great Lakes	drastic declines in abundance in all Great Lakes except Lake Superior over the last 10-20 years		
	Inland Waters—alterations to stream flow	not assessed		
	Inland Waters—fragmentation by dams	not assessed		
	Species Diversity—changes in General Status rankings	919 of 1,063 species had same ranks in 2000 and 2005. 10 species moved to higher ranks because of increased risks		
	Species Diversity—trends in Ontario's breeding birds	most species increasing or stable (especially forest birds and northern birds), aerial foragers and grassland birds declining		

## Pressures on Ontario's Biodiversity

INDICATOR	STATUS	TREND	DATA
Ecological Footprint	high per capita footprint and limited biocapacity		
Habitat Loss—land cover	significant habitat loss in Mixedwood Plains, but limited habitat loss in the Ontario Shield and Hudson Bay Lowlands		
Habitat Loss—road density in southern Ontario	67% increase in total length of road from 1935-1995, length of paved road increased almost 5-fold over this period		
Habitat Loss—corridors in the Ontario Shield	low road densities except southern portion and near urban centres, small increase in road area 2001-2005 (0.02%)		
Habitat Loss—aquatic stress index	high stress index values in Mixedwood Plains and southern Ontario Shield, low values in Hudson Bay Lowlands		
Invasive Alien Species—Great Lakes	large number of alien species present in Great Lakes (186) and invasion rate has increased		
Pollution—ground-level ozone	increasing background levels and increasing 8-hour peak levels during the summer		
Pollution—freshwater quality index	58% of sites with good or excellent ratings, but 41% with fair, marginal or poor ratings mostly in southwestern Ontario		
Climate Change—Great Lakes ice cover	decline in percentage of ice cover on all five Great Lakes between 1970-2008		
Climate Change—condition and survival of Polar Bears	reduced condition and survival rates for male and female Polar Bears in all age classes		

# In Summary ...

- We have come as far as we can within the current administrative model
- We need further legislative amendments to oblige other key ministries to incorporate biodiversity initiatives into their programs and activities ... especially MMAH
- We need to place a statutory obligation on MNR to monitor and report on the state of Ontario's biodiversity **and resource them accordingly**

# Thank You For Your Attention

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The ultimate test of a moral society is the kind of world that it leaves to its children.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, theologian (1906-1945)