

Carolinian Canada Coalition

Collaborating for a Healthy Ecoregion

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Environment, Community

Team Rallies for Rare Habitat in Essex

Ball's Falls, Ontario – June 5, 2009 – Today, the successes achieved by a group of community partners from across Essex Region, are being shared with other groups in southwestern Ontario. The Essex Forests and Wetlands Conservation Action Planning team is participating in a Carolinian Canada Coalition workshop at Ball's Falls in the Niagara Peninsula to outline how they are working together to improve habitat in Essex, as part of a world-wide effort in landscape recovery.

The team includes Essex County Stewardship Network, Parks Canada, Canada South Land Trust, Essex Region Conservation Authority and the Nature Conservancy of Canada. With advice and input from a wide range of other local stakeholders, it developed a draft Conservation Action Plan (CAP) focused on 8 targets including: Ecological Services on Farms, Beaches and Shorelines, Reptiles and Amphibians, Upland Deciduous Forests, Rivers, and other habitats characteristic of Essex. The CAP process has been used around the world to develop coordinated actions on complex landscapes. The Essex CAP is part of a pilot project launched in southwestern Ontario by the Carolinian Canada Coalition Ecosystem Recovery Program.

The Essex Forests and Wetlands is a 1099.6 km² biodiversity hotspot for Ontario with forests, wetlands, prairies and beaches stretching along the Detroit River and Lake Erie shore. The area supports plants and animals characteristic of the Carolinian Life Zone, many of which are provincially, nationally and globally rare, including over 50 species at risk. This valuable piece of Carolinian Canada contains the greatest number of rare species in Ontario. Within this area are thousands of conservation-minded landowners, dozens of greening communities, a number of Provincially Significant Wetlands and Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest, as well as a National Park, a Provincial Park and a Ramsar Site. It is also designated by the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a RAMSAR Wetland of international significance.

The team's vision is to build on current momentum to voluntarily restore an interconnected habitat network on a landscape where local wildlife can thrive and local residents can live and work productively. They hope that local communities will gain greater enjoyment, benefit and pride as the natural landscape is enhanced. Their aim is that people from all sectors and heritage participate in habitat conservation in a strong and connected way.

Implementation of the plan will ensure populations of rare plants such as the Kentucky Coffee-tree and Round-leaved Greenbrier remain locally viable. At the same time, their habitats will be enhanced for long-term sustainability and local communities will benefit from healthy habitats which are critical for climate change survival, clean air and water, and productive soils, and which protect against extreme floods and droughts. The team has an ambitious vision to achieve 12% natural cover in Essex region through using native plants and an active network of landowners, parks and community projects.

To hear more about the Essex CAP, provide input or to get involved, interested people can attend workshops, receive a free Wild Neighbours Kit or take a virtual Carolinian Canada Safari by visiting www.carolinian.org or calling 519-433-7077.

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BACKGROUND

Greening the Future for Species at Risk in Carolinian Canada

Carolinian Canada

Stretching from Toronto to Windsor, the Carolinian Life Zone of southwestern Ontario is among North America's most vibrant and fragile ecoregions, with more plants and animals than most other places in Canada. Carolinian Canada Coalition (CCC) brings together diverse sectors, people and governments to collaboratively steward southwestern Ontario's unique habitat network, green infrastructure to support thriving wild and human communities in harmony for generations.

Ecosystem Recovery Program

In 2008, the Carolinian Canada Coalition launched an ambitious ecosystem recovery program in collaboration with a wide range of partners to develop a strong support network for species at risk and the people helping them. The Carolinian Canada region of southwestern Ontario is marked by one of the highest concentration of rare species in Canada with over 130 listed species and 500 provincially rare species and habitats. This highly settled landscape offers an opportunity to local communities to work together for cooperative, voluntary habitat stewardship.

Biodiversity Hotspots

A 2007 Analysis by the Carolinian Canada Coalition, the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Environment Canada and the Department of Fisheries and Oceans identified 15 priority areas of high concentrations of terrestrial and aquatic species at risk in Carolinian Canada. These priority areas or biodiversity hotspots present an opportunity to work collaboratively with stakeholders to address multiple methods of enhancing and restoring our most precious natural resources.

Recovery in Action

The Coalition is the recipient of a grant from the Ministry of Natural Resources Species at Risk Stewardship Fund. This is matched by financial and in-kind contributions from Environment Canada, Parks Canada, Ontario Stewardship Rangers, University of Waterloo, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Parks Research Forum of Ontario, Tallgrass Ontario and many others. The program takes a comprehensive and community-based approach to species at risk stewardship through Community Conservation Action Plans, Landowner Workshops, Youth Helping Species at Risk, Social Marketing and the Carolinian Ecosystem Recovery Network.

Partner Team Links

Essex County Stewardship Network: <http://www.ontariostewardship.org/councils/essex/>

Essex Region Conservation Authority: <http://www.erca.org/>

Canada South Land Trust: <http://canadasouthlandtrust.org/>

Nature Conservancy of Canada: <http://www.natureconservancy.ca/>

Parks Canada: <http://www.pc.gc.ca/>

Explore Carolinian Canada www.carolinian.org 519-433-7077