



Graham Bryan

## NATURE RESERVE SYSTEM

From the rocky shores of Lake Huron to balmy Pelee Island, passionate Ontario Nature-Federation of Ontario Naturalists members and supporters have built Ontario's largest member-owned nature reserve system. A total of 21 properties encompass more than 2,000 hectares (5,050 acres), and protect some of the province's best remaining examples of imperiled and vulnerable habitats.

Between 1961 and the present, the system has grown to 21 reserves and two conservation easements protecting over 5,000 acres. Unique circumstances gave rise to each reserve. In 1962 Dorcas Bay was saved from cottage development with money raised during a province-wide campaign. This property was then sold to Parks Canada to become one of the significant sites within Bruce Peninsula National Park, and these revenues helped conserve Lyal Island in Lake Huron. St. Joseph's Island Nature Reserve was added to the fold in 1968, courtesy of the Sault Naturalists' Club of Ontario and Michigan. Bequests of land have resulted in Ontario Nature-Federation of Ontario Naturalists receiving title to several other properties.

### NATURE RESERVE VISION

Ontario Nature-Federation of Ontario Naturalists envisions an independent province-wide system of nature reserves that will:

- safeguard habitat for endangered plant and animal species;
- protect biological diversity;
- set benchmarks for scientific research;
- create opportunities for recreation and nature appreciation.

### PROTECTION PRIORITIES

The main focus of Ontario Nature-Federation of Ontario Naturalists' nature reserve system is to protect the province's best remaining examples of imperiled and vulnerable habitats. The staff and volunteers who manage the system pride themselves on seeking out lands that would otherwise not be protected. For example, Ontario Nature-Federation of Ontario Naturalists was a leader in promoting the protection of wetlands and helped develop provincial policies.

Today, Ontario Nature-Federation of Ontario Naturalists priority habitats are:

**Heritage Woodlands:** A world of cool green under a hundred-foot high forest canopy teems with birds of every colour. This scene was once

common in Ontario, but since European settlement, roughly 80 percent of the province's original woodland cover has been lost.

To conserve what once was southern Ontario's predominant ecosystem and combat declines in our migrant bird populations, Ontario Nature-Federation of Ontario Naturalists is targeting remaining large woodlots in southern Ontario for protection.

Experience the lush vegetation and majestic trees of a heritage woodland at the Kinghurst Forest Nature Reserve.

**Great Lakes Shorelines:** The shores of the Great Lakes with their forests, dunes, and wetlands are unique in the world. Plants such as the dwarf lake iris are dependent on the shoreline habitat conditions of the Great Lakes. However, cottages, industry, and residential housing are also common along Ontario's shorelines.

Having jump-started the Ontario Nature-Federation of Ontario Naturalists nature reserve system with the Dorcas Bay Nature Reserve, protecting a unique section of the Great Lakes' shoreline on the Bruce Peninsula,



Ontario Nature-Federation of Ontario Naturalists has continued to act on a keen interest in preserving this disappearing habitat. Some of the best examples of Great Lakes shoreline in the nature reserve system include Petrel Point, Lyal Island, Baptist Harbour and Hay Marsh Nature Reserves.

**Alvars:** North American scientists are just beginning to realize the ecological importance of these arid limestone plains. They contain an amazing diversity of life, many rare plant and invertebrate species largely confined to this habitat. Ontario has 80 to 90 percent of North America's alvars, and Ontario Nature-Federation of Ontario Naturalists has been proud to be in partnership with the Nature Conservancy of Canada, The Nature Conservancy (U.S.), and Ontario Parks to acquire approximately 15,000 acres of the alvar-rich south shore of Manitoulin Island. Ontario Nature-Federation of Ontario Naturalists' Quarry Bay Nature Reserve was formed as a result of this purchase.

Other nature reserves that protect alvar habitats include Bruce Alvar and Stone Road Alvar Nature Reserves.

**If you visit a nature reserve, please remember:**

- Stay on the marked trails;
- Motorized vehicles, bicycles, horses, and

Ontario Nature protects and restores woodlands, wetlands and wildlife, and preserves rare habitat through its nature reserves system. Ontario Nature is a charitable organization representing 25,000 members and over 135 member groups across the province, connecting individuals and communities to nature.

If you wish to support Ontario Nature-Federation of Ontario Naturalists or learn more about current conservation issues in Ontario visit [www.ontarionature.org](http://www.ontarionature.org)

other recreational activities other than nature appreciation are not permitted;

- Camping is not permitted;
- Take only photographs;
- Enjoy your visit.

### **CARING FOR NATURE RESERVES**

Gaining possession of the land is only the beginning. Every nature reserve needs a management plan and a dedicated community of volunteers to care for it. Members of Ontario Nature-Federation of Ontario Naturalists' Nature Network (volunteer community conservation groups) care for many nature reserves. Participants in the Ontario Nature Volunteers program help build boardwalks, restore habitats, and conduct biological inventories.

**You can help us build Ontario Nature-Federation of Ontario Naturalists' nature reserves system in a variety of ways:**

- Become a member and support efforts to care for nature;
- Make a bequest of ecologically significant land or the funds to purchase land;
- Protect your own lands through private stewardship options, e.g. conservation easements;
- Participate in hands-on projects to restore habitats and protect species-at-risk with the Ontario Nature Volunteers.



### **ONTARIO NATURE-FEDERATION OF ONTARIO NATURALISTS**

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