

Ontario Nature's 20/20 Vision

A Biodiversity Charter for Ontario

The United Nations has declared 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity to both celebrate the richness and diversity of nature and to challenge individuals, governments and corporations to help stop its decline. Join us in asking the provincial, federal and municipal governments to rise to this challenge to stop the loss of the plants, animals and ecosystems on which all of us depend.

The importance of biological diversity

WHEREAS plants, animals and natural systems have intrinsic value;

WHEREAS plants, animals and natural systems provide irreplaceable benefits for humankind including clean water and air, food, medicines, shelter, and protection from natural disasters such as flooding;

The biological diversity of Ontario

WHEREAS the Province of Ontario is blessed with a rich and diverse natural heritage, supporting, for example, four UNESCO Biosphere Reserves; eight Wetlands of International Importance; and 46 Globally-significant Important Bird Areas;



WHEREAS the northern boreal forest region is one of the world's largest and most intact ecological systems supporting spectacular wildlife and fish populations and providing ecosystem services far beyond its borders, including functioning as a globally significant carbon storehouse;

WHEREAS in southern Ontario the province has lost more than 70 percent of its wetland habitats since 1800, 98 percent of its original grasslands, and approximately 80 percent of its forests;

WHEREAS more than 200 plant and animal species are now classified as at-risk in Ontario;

WHEREAS habitat loss and degradation, invasive species, pollution and overconsumption of natural resources drive the decline of biodiversity;

WHEREAS climate change, which is predicted to lead to habitat loss and the intensification of natural disturbances such as fire, flood, drought and insect outbreaks, poses an additional threat to biodiversity; and

WHEREAS the planet may now be facing the largest mass extinction since the disappearance of the dinosaurs more than 65 million years ago;



What you can do

We, the undersigned, urge the provincial, federal and municipal governments to take the following actions to stop the loss of biodiversity by 2020:

1. Complete a system of protected areas that fully represent the biological diversity of Ontario's land and water ecosystems;
2. Support the establishment of a network of natural areas on both public and private land across southern and eastern Ontario, by creating incentives for farmers and landowners to conserve and restore important wildlife habitats;
3. Develop and fully implement effective, science-based plans to recover endangered species and ecosystems, and adopt a proactive approach to conserving plants and animals in decline so that common species remain common;
4. Prevent the introduction and spread of non-native species by controlling high-risk entry points such as ship ballast water and plant nurseries;
5. Drastically reduce the release of contaminants harmful to biodiversity through meaningful implementation of the Toxics Reduction Act and the Toxics Reduction Strategy;
6. Address habitat fragmentation and other negative impacts on the landscape caused by roads and highways by implementing the principles of smart growth and investing in public transit;
7. Allocate adequate funding, on an ongoing basis, for research, monitoring and reporting on the state of biodiversity in Ontario;
8. Support sustainable industrial development through policies, funding and other incentives, and ensure that government-purchased products and services come from sustainable, independently-certified producers;
9. Integrate biodiversity conservation policies into the mandates of all Government of Ontario ministries involved in land and water use and in environmental protection;
10. Develop a proactive plan for Ontario so that our landscapes can be more resilient to the anticipated impacts of climate change.

