



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH LAKE SIMCOE NATURALISTS

SLSN is an incorporated not-for-profit Member of Ontario Nature.

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Research Partner with The Zephyr Society of Lake Simcoe (www.zephyrsociety.ca)

Member: Rescue Lake Simcoe Coalition

Member: Ontario Greenbelt Alliance

Note: Please renew your membership to receive future Newsletters

Meetings and Outings

Notice: There is no June meeting scheduled.

Outings: All regular outings – Note: **Paid-up members may participate (for insurance compliance).**

2016 SPRING

Thursday June 23: Chimney Swift Bird Survey- South Sutton: Participants will explore South Sutton searching for evidence and roosts of this rare and unique Canadian breeding bird previously confirmed in this area by SLSN birding members in fieldwork for the Atlas of Ontario Breeding Birds, 2001-2005. Also, rare migrants and important breeding birds can sometimes turn up unexpectedly in these searches so be prepared. We will also document other breeding birds and other wildlife in the area of the proposed Ainslie Hill development, especially the significant Barn Swallow and Snapping turtles. Meet at 7:00 p.m. at the Sutton High School south/west Parking Lot. Dress for the weather. Bring binoculars etc.

2016-06-08, Ontario Greenbelt Alliance (OGA) Key Issue Submission, Review Greenbelt Proposed Plan 2016.

South Lake Simcoe Naturalists Key Issue:

“Growing the Greenbelt at Pefferlaw, South Lake Simcoe in northern York Region”. Report requested by the Ontario Greenbelt Alliance – Prepared by Paul Harpley SLSN.

Our organization sees natural habitat conservation of existing wildlands, wetlands and stream, rivers and lakes as the most important priority for the Ontario Greenbelt. Key natural heritage areas of **core and corridor natural heritage habitat** must be preserved and where these areas were not protected in the original Greenbelt in 2005, they must be included **now** by the Province of Ontario at this 10-year 2016 Review.

The Greenbelt must be expanded in Pefferlaw area of the Town of Georgina in the Region of York where the very large Secondary Plan area of the Georgina Official Plan includes significant parts of three public York Regional Forests (Pefferlaw Tract, Cronsberry and Godfrey Tracts) and on a Provincial Nature Reserve (Duclous Point P.N.R.). We (SLSN) opposed this

back in 2005 when the Greenbelt was established. **Specifically, Greenbelt Proposed Plan (2016) Sections 3.0 (pp.14), 3.2 (pp.20), 3.2.5 (pp.26-29) and 5.5.1 (pp. 57, 103) are affected.**

This ” **Ridiculously large” Pefferlaw Secondary Plan Area**, with very little growth possible there in the future, and the tremendous natural and agricultural farm areas needs Greenbelt protection. Consequently, the **“Where will the wild things go“ article ran in the Toronto Star on Saturday October the 11th, 2014** and although the reporter mixed up some growth numbers, the basic planning problem of the Pefferlaw Secondary Plan area was exposed.

The Town of Georgina Council Meeting (May 13, 2015) of the proposed report “2015 PROVINCIAL CO-ORDINATED LAND USE PLANNING REVIEW- Report No. PB-2015-0026, **recommending that the Pefferlaw Secondary Plan area be “Shrunk” (Growing the Greenbelt).** We concur with this, being our recommendation since 2005. **The Georgina Council unanimously supported the Report recommending, stating “The contraction of this (Pefferlaw) Settlement Area boundary would more accurately reflect growth forecasts, more effectively implement the Town’s Official Plan growth management policies, better protect natural heritage/hydrologic features and Prime Agricultural Lands, address an optics issue regarding the physical size of the Pefferlaw Settlement Area and assist the Province in their desire to grow the Greenbelt”.**

At its meeting held on May 21, 2015, the Council of The Regional Municipality of York the Town of Georgina Report No. PB-2015-0026 was endorsed by Regional Council. **The progreeion of the Shrinking of the Pefferlaw Secondary Plan** is seen in the three(3) **Figures** appended. **Amazingly, the Town of Georgina has not shrunk the Pefferlaw Secondary Plan area in its recent Official Plan Review, and proposed new Official Plan. And, the Province has not acted to “Grow the Greenbelt” at Pefferlaw either. It is not shown as a Proposed Addition of “Lands added to the Protected Coutryside” in Proposed Appendix II, in the Greenbelt Proposed Plan (2016) page 103.**

Review of final boundaries beyond what the current Town of Georgina Council Recommendation maps. We have calculated this to be almost a 60% size

reduction, resulting in thousands of acres of agricultural fields, and important forests and meadowlands now recommended to be in the Greenbelt. This is a great improvement to the biodiversity, and the long-term sustainability of Southern Ontario.

Figures:

Showing the progression of the Shrinking of the Pefferlaw Secondary Plan, and thereby the Growing of the Greenbelt.

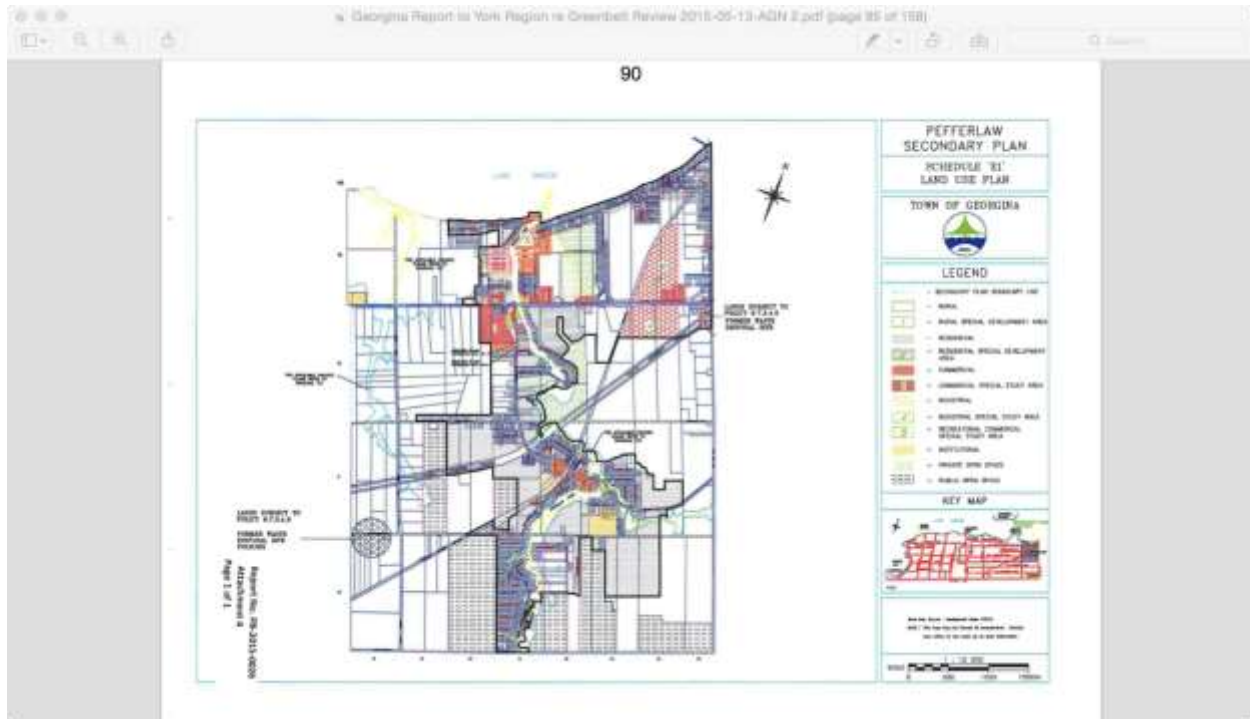
Original Pefferlaw Secondary Plan Area (2005)



Aerial View of Reduced (shrunk) Pefferlaw Secondary Plan Area (proposed 2015-05). Town of Georgina Report No. PB-2015-0026



Plan Map View of Reduced (shrunk) Pefferlaw Secondary Plan Area (proposed 2015-05)



Provincial Greenbelt Review News

On Tuesday, along the banks of the Credit River, the government of Ontario announced its intention to add the Credit River, along with 20 other Urban River Valleys, to the Greater Golden Horseshoe's Greenbelt. While it's a commendable first step, this leaves scores of highly vulnerable water sources that have been identified, as part of a larger bluebelt in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, without Greenbelt protection.

Ontario Nature's members and supporters have been a strong voice for nature in southern Ontario for 85 years. Together we have advocated for strong land-use policy since 1931. The Province's announcement is a significant milestone – thank you for standing with us. We will continue to hold the government to account with implementation of these good intentions and push for added protection in the region's most vulnerable source water and natural lands.

The Province's announcement included draft amendments to the plans that protect the Greenbelt, Oak Ridges Moraine, and Niagara Escarpment, and guide growth in the Greater Golden

Horseshoe.

The Province has committed to leading the critically important work of mapping the natural heritage system of the entire Greater Golden Horseshoe. This is a significant step towards protecting wild species and wild spaces, and enhancing our communities' ecological resilience in the face of climate change.

Over the coming weeks Ontario Nature will be closely analyzing the proposed amendments to better understand how these changes will impact water, nature and communities across the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Moving forward, we will be working vigilantly to provide input during this process. We will be back in touch shortly with ways for you to take action during this final stage of the Coordinated Land Use Planning Review, which runs from now until September 30th.

In the meantime, if you would like to see the proposed changes to the four plans, you can visit the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing's website.

Joshua Wise,
Greenway Program Manager,
Ontario Nature

Ainslie Hill Proposed Development: Chimney Swifts, Barn swallows and Snapping Turtles

As was advertised in the May SLSN Newsletter the Public Information Meeting for the proposed Ainslie Hill development took place in Sutton at the LINK facility on the evening of April 28, 2016. Many community members attended including some SLSN members. Many comments, criticisms, information and design suggestions were related to the Town of Georgina and consultants. Key among our concerns of loss of natural habitat, past records of threatened and endangered species in the area including Chimney Swifts were made. Although other concerns were raised environmental concerns were foremost, including protection of environmental features and attributes, impact on significant species Barn Swallow and Snapping turtles, retention of the important cedar stand on Catering Road and grassland prairie habitat, and widths of natural area buffers.

With regard to Chimney Swifts, their decline historically is well known as Chimney Swifts nested and roosted in large, hollow trees found in old-growth forests throughout eastern North America. As early European settlers arrived,

forest management techniques reduced the availability of these large hollow trees and swifts adapted to using chimneys in houses, churches, schools and industrial buildings. However, as these buildings age and modern heating methods replace wood and coal burning fireplaces, many chimneys are being capped, steel-lined, or demolished altogether. The resulting loss of both natural and man-made habitat has contributed to a 95% decline in the Chimney Swift population in Canada over the last 40 years. The Chimney Swift was listed as nationally threatened under the federal Species at Risk Act in 2007 and provincially under the Endangered Species Act, 2007 in 2009.

Our organization can make significant contributions to improvements to this development and to conservation and eventually to the restoration of Lake Simcoe. I urge SLSN members to become familiar and knowledgeable of this area and contribute to conservation of natural habitat here.

Paul Harpley

SLSN Carden Alvar Birding Outing Report

This Birding Outing at Carden took place on a beautiful sunny warm day in May. Club members met and drove north to the Bolsover area on the afternoon of Saturday May 28. The Carden Alvar is designated an Important Bird Area (IBA) by Birdlife International. Carden is nationally significant as one of the last strongholds of the International. Carden is nationally significant as one of the last strongholds of the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike in Canada and it has high populations of grassland and scrubland birds such as Upland Sandpipers, American Kestrels, Common Nighthawks, Whip-poor-wills, Eastern Bluebirds, Brown Thrashers, Golden-winged Warblers, Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, Eastern Towhees, Clay-colored Sparrows, Vesper Sparrows and Grasshopper Sparrows.

The trip group documented 28 bird species. Highlights were Bald Eagle, Marsh wren, Clay-coloured Sparrow, Brown Thrasher and Bobolink. The data can be seen below. Also, some important plants were seen most, noteworthy being bright orange sites of Indian Paint-brush wild flowers.

Species:	No.	Participants
Great Blue Heron	2	Norma Knowlton, Geoff Sinton, Sue Poff, Mark Calhoun, Paul Harpley
Turkey Vulture	7	
Osprey	1	
Bald Eagle	1	
Downy Woodpecker	1	
Eastern Phoebe	3	
Eastern Kingbird	5	
Blue Jay	2	
Northern Rough-winged Swallow	1	
Tree Swallow	6	
Barn Swallow	3	
Black-capped Chickadee	3	
House Wren	2	
Marsh Wren	1	
Eastern Bluebird	6	
American Robin	4	
Gray Catbird	1	
Brown Thrasher	1	
Ovenbird	3	
Clay-colored Sparrow	1	
Savannah Sparrow	3	
Vesper Sparrow	1	
Song Sparrow	3	
Bobolink	5	
Red-winged Blackbird	5	
Eastern Meadowlark	6	
American Goldfinch	5	
Common Yellowthroat	3	

New report shows alarming state of North-American birds

By Irene Lorenzo, 2 Jun 2016



Greater Sage Grouse has a high concern score in the new report © May Haga

Since the seventies, millions of North American birds have disappeared and a third of species are now of high regional conservation concern, a new report reveals. Experts agree that their long-term conservation will only be achieved by building transnational partnerships and involving local communities in citizen science projects.

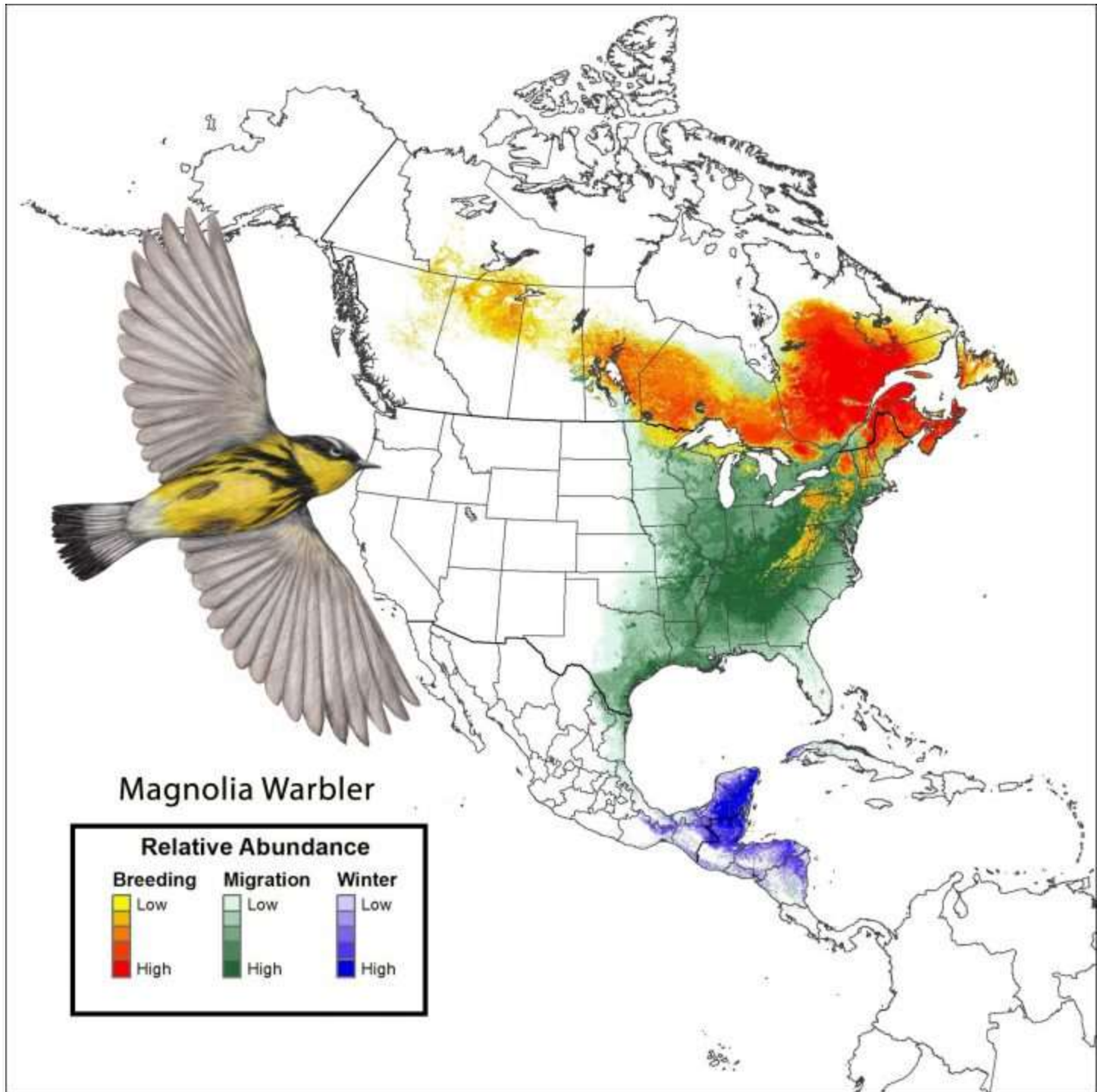
Migratory birds connect the North American continent as millions of birds move across the US, Canada and Mexico every year. An estimated 350 North American bird species share their distribution across more than 2 countries, underlining the importance of coordinated action to protect them.

Until now, the vulnerability score of over a thousand native North-American bird species was incomplete. “The State of North America’s Birds” fills the gaps. Published on the 100th anniversary of the Convention for the Protection of Migratory Birds between the US and Canada, it is the first assessment of its kind.

The report reveals that of the 1154 native bird species that occur in continental North America, one third require urgent conservation action. The species in need of most urgent action are those that depend on oceans and tropical forests.

Specifically, the most regionally endangered group are seabirds – more than half of them are of high conservation concern and affected by a mix of pollution, overfishing, impacts from energy extraction, predation by invasive species in islands and climate change. The seabirds with the highest concern score are the Black-capped Petrel *Pterodroma hasitata*, Black Petrel *Procellaria parkinsoni* and Townsend's Shearwater *Puffinus auricularis*.

The situation is not much better for tropical birds. Canada's migratory songbirds winter in Mexico's tropical forests and stopover in the US, which is why the impact of deforestation in Mexico has such a huge impact throughout the continent. Other tropical birds with high concern scores are Azure-rumped Tanager *Tangara cabanisi*, Bearded Wood-Partridge *Dendrortyx barbatus* and Belted Flycatcher *Xenotriccus callizonus*.



Magnolia Warblers rely on an area of tropical forest in Mexico for the winter. The map is based on complex computer models, making use of millions of Citizen Science records contributed to eBird. Infographic by BSC Andrew Couturier

This unprecedented continent-wide analysis also reveals how grassland birds are facing some of the steepest population regional declines of any group because of changes in land use. In recent

years the vast prairies of North America have mostly been turned into agricultural land or developed. Only a few islands of original land remain, making it very difficult for wildlife to survive. Some of the grassland species with the highest concern score include Sierra Madre Sparrow *Xenospiza baileyi*, Worthen's Sparrow *Spizella wortheni* and Lesser Prairie-chicken *Tympanuchus pallidicinctus*.

To find out more about the cause of declining bird populations in North America, watch the interview of Bird Studies Canada (BirdLife Partner in Canada) President Steven Price.

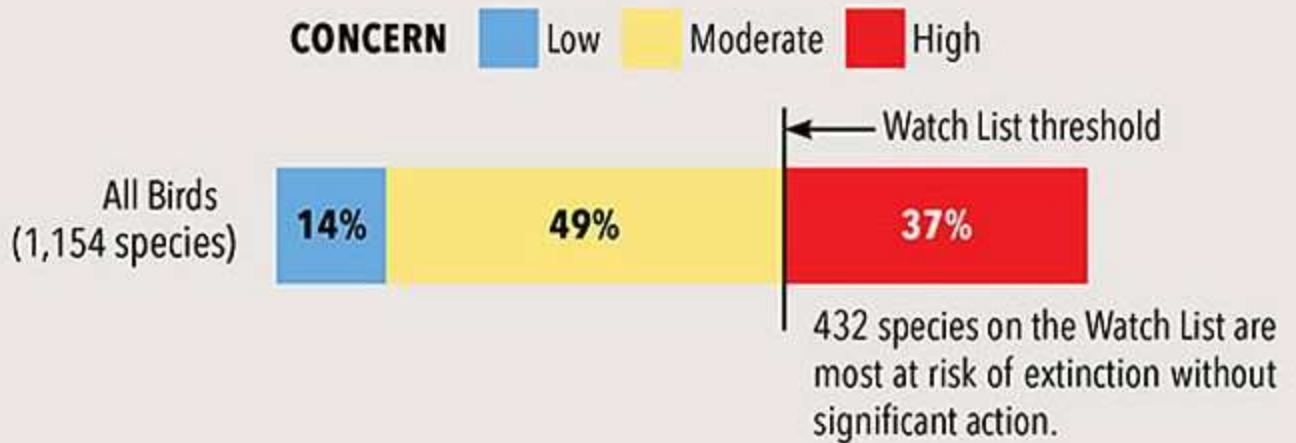
The report was put together by the North American Conservation Initiative and was built using data collected by volunteers and citizen scientists across the continent. Despite the alarming findings, the report demonstrates how the power of many can help us understand conservation needs and drive positive change. The results are a call to action to public and private sectors to come together to save migratory birds.

Three BirdLife Partners, Bird Studies Canada, Nature Canada and the Audubon Society, were among the North American Bird Conservation Initiative partners who collaborated on the new report. View the report online at www.stateofthebirds.org

State of North American Birds

Main Results

ONE-THIRD OF ALL NORTH AMERICAN BIRD SPECIES NEED URGENT CONSERVATION ACTION

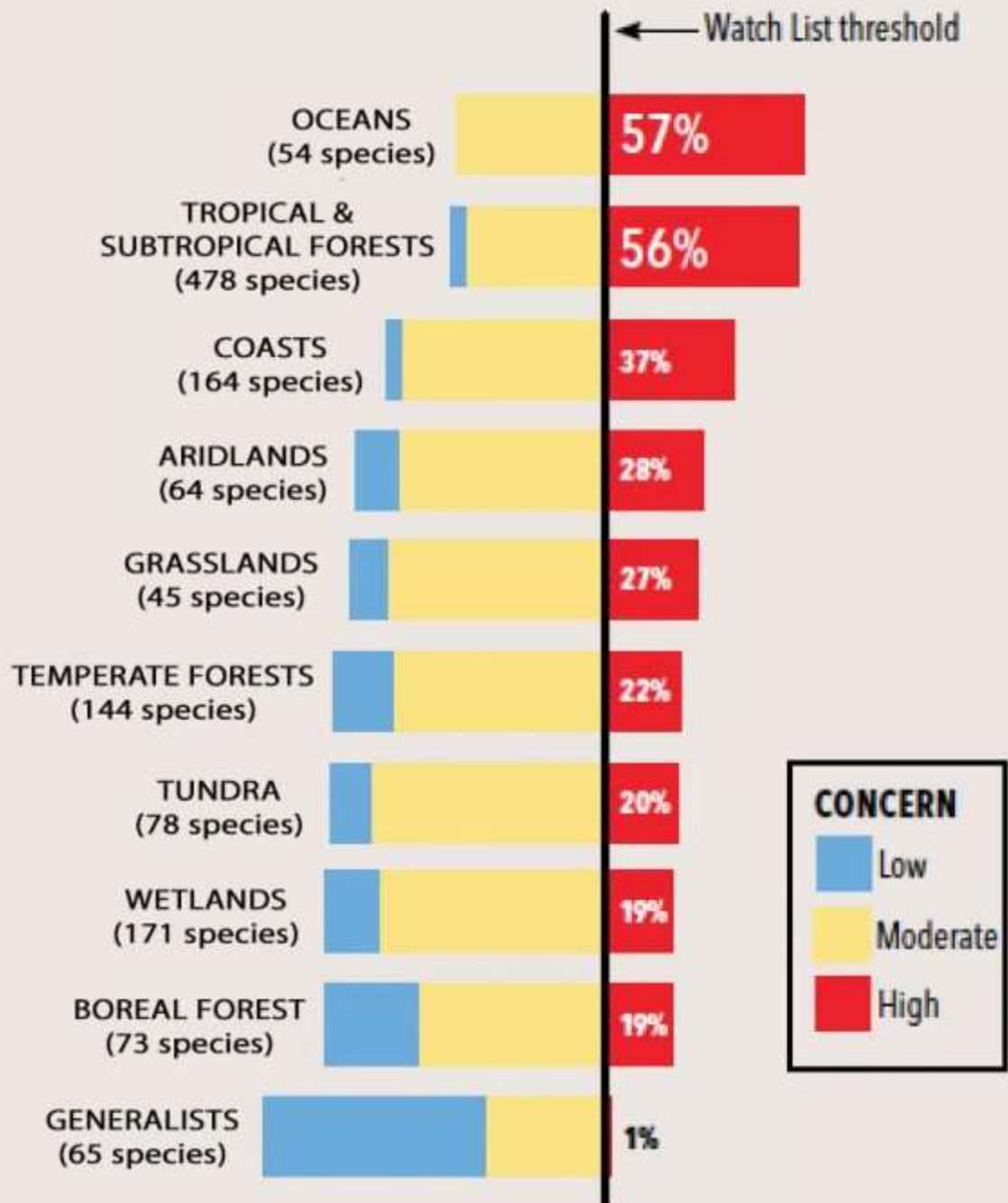


The analysis of all 1,154 bird species in Canada, the U.S., and Mexico identified 432 species that meet the criteria for the Watch List.

Birds in ocean and tropical forest habitats are of highest conservation concern.

But species need our help in every habitat.

CONSERVATION CONCERN ACROSS HABITATS



Species were assigned to one breeding habitat, except for oceans and coasts (where species were also included if they occurred anytime during the year) and wetlands (where species were included in both wetlands and their terrestrial breeding habitat). Species that commonly occur in many different habitat types were classified as generalists.

Our Approach

This report is based on the first-ever conservation vulnerability assessment for all 1,154 native bird species that occur in Canada, the continental United States, and Mexico. The assessment was compiled by a team of experts from all three countries. The overall conservation status for each species takes into account its population trend, population size, extent of breeding and nonbreeding ranges, and severity of threats to populations. The Watch List identifies species of highest conservation concern based on high vulnerability scores across multiple factors. Year-round abundance maps from eBird data, in which intensity of color reflects seasonal abundance, are presented for selected species.



Map of major habitats of North America.

Habitat types fell into one of four levels of concern based on the percentage of species they contain that are on the Watch List:

In Crisis: Oceans and Tropical Forests

More than half of species from oceans and tropical forests are on the Watch List because of small and declining populations, small ranges, and severe threats to their habitats.

Steep Declines: Coasts, Aridlands, Grasslands

Many species in coastal, grassland, and aridland habitats are declining steeply. In particular, long-distance migratory shorebirds and species that migrate from the Great Plains to Mexico's Chihuahuan grasslands have lost, on average, almost 70% of their continental populations since 1970.

Mixed Status: Temperate Forests, Tundra, Wetlands, Boreal Forest

Most species in these habitats are of moderate or low concern, yet roughly 20% are on the Watch List. Waterfowl have benefited from careful harvest management and [wetland](#) conservation, but positive waterfowl trends may not last if wetlands loss continues.

Faring Well: Generalists

The generalist group—birds that are adaptable and can live in multiple habitats—are of lowest conservation concern.

Scanlon Creek Bioblitz

Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority

Saturday, June 18, 2016

5am - Dusk

Join us for a few hours or stay the whole day!

Come and share your expertise with others in a race against the clock to identify as many species of plants and animals as possible in one day!

If you have expertise, **we need you!**

If you just want to help out, **we need you too!**

Join us for:

- > Intense biological surveys, guided surveys and public activities
 - > Exciting exploration and activities for everyone
 - > Refreshments, snacks and light meals provided throughout the day
- It's **FREE** to participate! For more information, visit www.LSRCA.on.ca/bioblitz
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Ontario Nature News



As the citizen science coordinator overseeing the Ontario Reptile and Amphibian Atlas, I'm asking you to join me in calling for an end to the hunting of snapping turtles – a species at risk in Canada. The federal government is now accepting public input on its **draft Management Plan for the Snapping Turtle**. The deadline for comment is **May 29, 2016**.

While strong in many respects, the draft management **plan** fails to direct the relevant jurisdictions, including Ontario, to prohibit the hunting of snapping turtles. Rather, it calls for further evaluation and mitigation of impacts, providing an excuse for continued delay and avoidance. It is simply unacceptable for the right hand to be allowing snapping turtles to be killed as the left hand tries to protect them.

Threatened by habitat loss, road mortality, water pollution and much more, snapping turtles are on both federal and provincial species-at-risk lists. Even so, Ontario permits hunting of up to two snapping turtles per person per day.

This hunt is **not sustainable**. As explained in the draft management plan, “local populations are highly vulnerable to increases in adult mortality.” Research indicates that even a slight increase (+ 0.1 percent) in the annual mortality rate of adult turtles due to road kill or hunting would reduce the number of adults in a local population by half in less than 20 years.

Enough is enough. The hunt should be banned, period.

Most Canadian provinces where snapping turtles are found – Manitoba, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia – do not allow hunting of this species at risk. It continues only in Ontario and Saskatchewan.

Please help us put an end to the hunting of snapping turtles. Ask the department of Environment and Climate Change Canada to strengthen the plan and clearly direct all provinces to ban the hunt.

Thank you for helping protect snapping turtles! Let me know if you’d like to see a copy of Ontario Nature’s submission.

Emma Horrigan,
Citizen Science Coordinator

SLSN Members: Consider submitting an Article to the Newsletter, and/or suggesting a Topic for a Club Meeting that you could lead.