



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH LAKE SIMCOE NATURALISTS

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

Telephone 905-722-8021

(www.slsnc.ca)

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

As we enter the season of mud, some might call it, snowshoeing comes to an abrupt halt, American robin sightings are more frequent, and despite an early spring snowstorm, the air temperature is see-sawing around freezing. Tundra swans were observed in vast numbers in plowed corn fields in at least two locations. On March 21 Lake Simcoe was still frozen over as far as the un-aided eye could see looking north from vantage points along Lake Drive.

Conditions have varied greatly with the changes in temperature and frequency of Alberta Clipper storms coming through south Lake Simcoe so trails have remained icy, muddy, and/or slushy with melting snow and hiking on them has been more hazardous and unpredictable compared to recent years. We haven't been able to plan winter outings for those reasons.

We are looking forward to an April meeting at the YRP meeting room where we'll all have a chance to relate adventures since our last meeting. It will be a "Members' meeting" with slides, winter bird stories, spring plans for nature explorations. Refreshments will be available.

Our organization was able to follow and support Ontario Nature on a number of provincial and regional conservation and advocacy issues including federal and provincial Bill C-5 and Bill 5, Wasaga Beach Provincial Park reduction of natural

beach area and Piping Plover concern, Ontario Conservation Authority amalgamation, among others, signing on to letters of concern. As detailed in our last SLSN Newsletter Bulletin we continue to be directly involved in the development of the new Lake Simcoe Conservation Preserve Park established by the Provincial Government and managed by the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority. I am on the Advisory committee and am happy that some of you got out to the recent public open house and commented on the development.

Our annual meeting, last meeting, included the election of officers resulting in myself continuing as president, Jeff Boylin as official vice president, and Norma Knowlton (who would like to work along side someone willing to take over) continuing in her role of treasurer/membership with support from Jeff and myself. It would be great to have a volunteer.

Remember to be “Bear Wise” while out in the bush or on trails this spring. Also, Wild turkey hunting season starts on April 25 and lasts for a month, so while hiking in forested areas including a few of the York Regional forests remember to stay on the trails and be aware of people hunting at that time.

Jeff Boylin and I attended the PAR meeting regarding local environmental issues we have been contributing to in last 5 years in the Pefferlaw area. The Pefferlaw (Baldwin) Aerodrome and GIFN Fixed-Linked bridge projects of great concern. The result is the current liberal Carney federal government will not stop or further review either project, irrespective of opposition, and science-based critique of both projects. They have been approved. You can read detailed review of this in recent issues of The Georgina Post news.



Paul Harpley, SLSN

Membership

If you are not already a member of the South Lake Simcoe Naturalists (SLSN) and would like to become a member of the SLSN, you are encouraged to phone 905-722-8021 to leave a message which will be answered and/or send an e-mail to southlakesimcoenaturalistsSLSN@gmail.com that you are interested in joining our organization. The SLSN are active in natural heritage conservation, public education, and research in the natural world. Our geographic area of this work and activities is focused in the south Lake Simcoe watershed of Ontario.

Key activities involve regular outdoor outings including hiking, birding, mammal tracking, identifying reptiles/amphibians, focused botanical-related and ecological study of natural areas. Geographically this important natural heritage area in the province is related to Lake Simcoe and its health and conservation. Occasionally outings are planned for farther afield for example, Presqu'ile Provincial Park, Wye Marsh, Algonquin Provincial Park.

We organize and undertake the Sutton annual Christmas Bird Count. Also, when weather permits in the winter, we engage in snowshoeing and cross-country ski outings. In the coming months we have planned a hike on a section of the Pefferlaw tract of the York Regional Forest, a more casual hike on the Holland River Trail in the Newmarket area, and more vigorous hiking in the Rouge National Urban Park. The skill level, interest and time involved vary with the location. Visitors are welcome to attend when contact has been previously made with club executive (see details in first paragraph).

Paid membership, and therefore members in good standing with insurance compliance, are permitted to attend outings and meetings for a period of a calendar year and renewed annually in the first quarter of the following year.

Meetings for SLSN occur regularly, approximately 5 per year September-June. Presentations by members and on occasion, guest speakers, are held in the Community meeting room at the York Region Police Station on Baseline Road in Georgina, from 4 – 5:30 pm. Meetings are advertised to paid members through the club e-newsletter. Some special meetings related to conservation topics, research, and planning etc. do occur and are added as needed.

Contact the SLSN for further information at 905-722-8021 and/or southlakesimcoenaturalistsSLSN@gmail.com .

Past Outings Report:

Thursday June 5, 2025: Exploring the forest behind Sobey's

This area is just west of the Sutton Sobey's. Members met at 4 p.m. in the area of the Dalton Road west wildlands and meadow/forest area. Dressed to repel bugs, especially ticks, the outing was timed principally to observe breeding birds, many of which would have already set up nests, as part of our members' contributions to the last year of the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas project.



The weather was seasonably warm and much of the wet meadows, small creeks, and ponding were negotiated around. Mosquitoes were buzzing but we were protected.

Because of some considerable damage done to the trails by ATV's and other motorized vehicles, accessing parts of the wildlands here was in some cases challenging and has been an on-going problem also of conservation concern in the Sutton area.

Noteworthy were some of the geomorphic features encountered. Known for some time, trails criss-cross on fine-sandy hills, clayey lowland fens, and mid to late successional forest glades.

Significant large deciduous trees were noted and of interest. Typical and expected breeding birds included: Blue jay, Black-capped chickadee, Northern cardinal, Red-eyed vireo (see list below).

Historically, Red-shouldered hawk had in past decades, been confirmed nesting in the more mature upland deciduous forest locations. A thorough search of those areas did not yield any evidence of Red-shouldered hawks this year. The recent surrounding commercial and subdivision development and heavy motorized vehicle etc. human impact here in recent



years has undoubtedly and unfortunately made this area unattractive to Red-shouldered hawks and other significant raptors.

All bird data observed and collected was entered into the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas database.



There has been considerable and damaging erosion from motorized vehicles.

Photographs contributed by Jeff Boylin, SLSN Vice-president

York Region Forest News

Members be aware of significant closures of Forest Tracts As of late March 2026, multiple **York Regional Forest Tracts** now and into the coming month. The Forests are undergoing sustainable

harvesting with closures expected through mid-April 2026. Currently, the Bendor and Graves Tract (18038 McCowan Road) and Clarke Tract (15015 McCowan Road) have specific trail restrictions, while 17689 Kennedy Road parking is closed. Marked trails are closed during these operations.

- **Bendor and Graves Tract (18038 McCowan Road):** Trails closed; parking lot and dog off-leash area remain open.
- **17689 Kennedy Road Parking Lot:** Closed.
- **Clarke Tract (15015 McCowan Road):** Closed from mid-March until the end of March.
- **Zephyr Tract (5748 Holborn Road):** Timing for closure to be confirmed.
- **Hall Tract (15681 McCowan Road):** Timing for closure to be confirmed.
- **Eldred King Woodlands (16232 Highway 48):** Harvesting complete.

Harvesting in each tract typically lasts three to four weeks. For the most up-to-date information, check the York Region Forest website.

Conservation Events and News

Laugh for Lake Simcoe

May 21, 2026, at Newmarket's Old Town Hall for our fifth annual Laugh For Lake Simcoe!

Featuring amazing Canadian talent, this year's show will be headlined by Mike Wilmot and accompanied by Rob Bebenek and Laurie Elliott.

Plan a night out with your friends, your sweetie, or your co-workers in the historic downtown Newmarket. Get connected to the Rescue Lake Simcoe community and our programs. Bid on a silent auction item, have a drink, and kick back to laugh.

- **Old Town Hall**
460 Botsford St., Newmarket ON, L3Y 1T1 ([Open in Google Maps](#))
- **Event Date:** May 21, 2026



- Event Time: 7:00 pm - 10:00 pm
 - Event Cost: \$50
-

Highlight on Great Lakes Region Conservation Threats – like Lake Simcoe, a Lake in the Great Lakes system, needs to be considered in the context of Lake Ontario in the G.T.A., with future thinking.

Ontario Place for All Winter News

Ontario Place Protectors earn a Supreme Court hearing — what to know, and how to support

- Spiralling taxpayer costs of the Ontario Place redevelopment
 - New Ontario Science Centre announcement
 - A convention centre, Exhibition Place, airport expropriation ...
Ford's waterfront takeover
 - Winter light exhibit at Trillium Park
 - Keep taking action!
-

Ontario Place at the Supreme Court: what's happening and how to help

“Ontario Place Protectors believes that the legislative actions taken by Premier

Doug Ford to pave the way for private operators constitute a serious breach of public trust.”

Back at the start of the year, we received very surprising, but very welcome news.

The Supreme Court of Canada has granted leave to appeal to Ontario Place Protectors (OPP) on their challenge to the Ontario government’s Rebuilding Ontario Place Act (ROPA). Ontario Place for All welcomes the Supreme Court weighing in on this important issue!

The Protectors’ challenge was brought when the Ford Government rushed the Rebuilding Ontario Place Act (ROPA) into law in December 2023 to defeat a pending legal action by Ontario Place for All. ROPA exempted the Ontario Place Redevelopment Project from the Ontario Heritage Act, the Environmental Protection Act and extinguished all access to legal accountability mechanisms normally available to citizens seeking to ensure that the government is acting lawfully.

Ontario Place for All, along with our intervenor coalition, which included Toronto Field Naturalists, Democracy Watch, and the National Trust for Canada, argued before the Ontario Court of Appeal on this challenge. This challenge was unsuccessful. Last year, the Protectors submitted their leave to appeal application.

“What began as activism about a wonderful place that gave Ontarians access to Lake Ontario has now become a fight about democracy itself,” says Ann Elisabeth Samson, Co-Chair, Ontario Place for All. “The Ford government is so committed to this deeply unpopular project that they have used all the tools at their disposal, including passing a law to exempt themselves from the laws and accountability mechanisms in place.

“When democracy itself is at risk as Canada deals with the threats from the United States, building partnerships and coalitions to hold the line and ensure our democracy is healthy and strong is vital work.”

Read more:

Editorial: Ontario Place on trial, Elsa Lam, Canadian Architect, Feb 1, 2026

Ford asked for trouble with Ontario Place. The Supreme Court may give it to him, Alex Bozikovic, The Globe and Mail, Jan 10, 2026

Supreme Court to determine fate of Ontario Place redevelopment law, Charlie Pinkteron, The Trillium, Jan 9, 2026

Supreme Court to hear challenge to province's Ontario Place redevelopment, Jim Bronskill, CBC, Jan 8, 2026

Battle over Doug Ford's Ontario Place redevelopment heads to Supreme Court of Canada, David Rider, Toronto Star, Jan 8, 2026

'Crazy lefties': Ford denounces Supreme Court challenge of law allowing Ontario Place redevelopment, CityNew, Jan 8, 2026

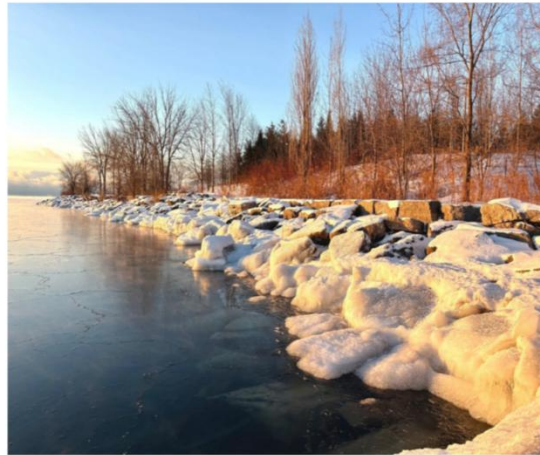
What's next and how to help:

Follow the latest updates and get all the background information from Ontario Place Protectors here: ontarioplaceprotectors.com

DONATE to the legal fund here: ontarioplaceprotectors.com/donate

Over the next few months, we'll be sharing any and all updates and ways to support

the court challenge across our social media accounts, and via this newsletter!



Winter scenes around Trillium Park. Dramatic ice formations and stunning light.

The high cost of the Ontario Place redevelopment

In 2019 the provincial government estimated that the Ontario Place redevelopment would cost somewhere between \$335-424 million. Then came the Auditor General's (AG) report in 2024 which found that a more realistic cost was actually in the range of \$2.237 billion — an increase of \$1.8 billion. Now, we have found the costs have risen

again.

The AG's estimate for the relocation and building of the Ontario Science Centre was \$700 million. The new estimate is now \$1.04 billion — an increase of \$340 million.

The parking garage was pegged at \$280 million in the AG report. The new price tag, according to Doug Ford, is \$400 million. That's an additional \$120 million.

And then there are expenses that weren't accounted for in the \$2.237 billion total that the AG reached. The report didn't include the \$1.7 million that the province has spent on advertising the project to ... us. This amount was acquired through a freedom of information request. As well, the report didn't include the cost of setting up and renting space for several years for the temporary home of the Ontario Science Centre. *Canadian Architect* magazine estimated that cost to be between \$25 million and \$83 million.

That means that already, before actually even building anything, the expense of this project has increased by more than half a billion dollars — between \$521,700 to \$579,700,000.

Anyone who has done a renovation of any kind knows about cost creep and most home renovators are warned to prepare to be 20% over budget. What are we to think of a project that has already surpassed that and is now more than 23% past the estimated cost and has yet to build anything?

There is so much wrong with this redevelopment — a tenant, the Therme spa, which lied about its assets; the lease with Therme, which binds the province to provide 1600 parking spaces within 650m of the spa's entrance, which, in turn, is saddling

Ontarians with a five-storey parking garage on our waterfront; the passing of the Rebuilding Ontario Place Act (ROPA) which exempts “any undertaking ... carried out on the site” or “any undertaking ... [which] furthers the Ontario Place redevelopment project that is not at the Ontario Place site” from the Environmental Assessment Act and the Environmental Bill of Rights, 1993; and exemption from the Ontario Heritage Act.

And now we can add the stupefying and ever-increasing rise in the cost of this redevelopment.

Earlier in the year, a piece in the [Hamilton Spectator by Mark Chamberlain](#) eloquently articulated the bigger picture of the Ontario Place saga, outlining the destructive waste of public spending:

“...[The] conversation around Ontario Place has been framed as if this is simply about waterfront redevelopment. It is not. It is about whether Ontario continues to invest in projects that concentrate benefits while socializing costs — or finally aligns its spending with what it says it values: health, safety, and fiscal responsibility.

“One path delivers a spa, a garage, and long-term public operating liabilities. The other delivers thousands housed, hundreds of millions of dollars saved annually, and a public-health asset for generations.”



The sheltered bays around Trillium Park continue to provide an excellent spot for birdwatching, particularly waterfowl, in winter. Want to learn more about the 190+ species which have been recorded at Ontario Place (to date!)? Check out [the eBird hotspot page](#).

New Ontario Science Centre announcement

At the end of February, Premier Ford, alongside Stan Cho (Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming), announced their updated plans for an Ontario Science Centre at Ontario Place.

Elsa Lam dives into the details for *Canadian Architect*: The original projected cost by the province of the new building was \$322M. The new price tag is \$1.04B (this includes \$5.8M annual maintenance for 30 years which brings the building cost to \$866M — a \$544M increase).

She also noted that the cost to repair the existing Moriyama Teshima-designed buildings, the government said, was \$478M, which they claimed would be more than the cost of a new building. The new building will cost \$388M more than repairs to the existing building.

Other facts:

- The new building will be 220,000 square feet.
- The existing building is 568,000 square feet.
- The existing building had workshops to build exhibitions, a planetarium and a tropical rain forest.
- The new building will have none of these according to the Premier's spokesperson.
- The existing building had 134,000 square feet of exhibition space.
- The new building will have 120,000 square feet, according to Stan Cho, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Gaming.

Remember, the Ford government's own business case, which they commissioned at a taxpayer cost of \$1M, stated that "securing a publicly owned cultural anchor, such as the OSC, could be an important addition to counter negative perceptions of the commercialization and privatization of this unique waterfront public asset". Moving the Science Centre to the deeply unpopular Ontario Place development in an attempt to make the project more palatable.



Alex Bozikovic at the Globe and Mail has continued to cover the Ontario Place/Ontario Science Centre saga extensively, penning a piece titled Ontario Science Centre's new home is smaller, worse and probably pricier, provides the critical details and context lacking from the shiny announcements made earlier this week regarding Ford's vanity project on the Toronto waterfront.

“We could ask, too, what it means to dismantle a public institution rather than repair it. The original centre was conceived as an instrument for discovery. Its terraces, bridges and ravine setting turned science into a spatial experience. The new building promises a different kind of education: It is a maze of spin and broken promises.”

For the Toronto Star, Matt Elliott expresses the profound loss which will be experienced by a generation of children, stemming from Ford's manufactured and political decision to shut down the Ontario Science Centre: What Doug Ford's ritzy new Science Centre is really costing us and our kids.

“The public shouldn't let itself be blinded by the Science Centre designs Ford's showing off. The new facility will be smaller than the old one. And for many people

access will be worse.

And the part that really adds insult to injury is that it's now clear that none of this was ever necessary.

For parents like me, there's no getting that lost time back. My son was two when Ford closed the Science Centre. He'll be at least seven if the new project opens on time - and that's a big if. That's five years gone. All for a Science Centre that'll cost more and deliver less. There's no science that could ever make sense of this.”

Reopening the visionary centre created by Raymond Moriyama, reimagined and renewed for continued public enjoyment is a priority for [Save OSC](#).

A Canadian centennial project, 770 Don Mills Road is built to last for 250 years and will always remain an important public gathering space for education, recreation, and in the lives of Ontarians, locally and across the province.

On April 1st, Councillor Josh Matlow, Councillor Jon Burnside, Save Ontario Science Centre, and Moriyama and Teshima Architects are holding a public consultation series to engage Torontonians on their vision for the future of the Science Centre building.

[Find the details HERE!](#)

“It’s actually insane. I don’t know, I can’t find other adjectives. It’s nuts. It really makes no sense at all.” Fadi Masoud, the director of the Centre for Landscape Research at the University of Toronto.

As if the provincial government's obsession with Toronto's waterfront hadn't reached peak absurdity, Premier Ford announced that he was considering the creation a huge new artificial island for a new multibillion-dollar convention centre off Lake Ontario. As reported in *The Globe and Mail*, “A new island, potentially somewhere between the city’s Humber Bay Park and Ontario Place, is one of a handful of locations the Premier and his officials believe has the capacity to house such a massive facility.”



Josh Matlow

@joshmatlow.bsky.social

Doug Ford is handing tax dollars out to his friends while blowing \$billions on an unnecessary convention centre on a magical island and his 401 tunnel vision. We need to focus on actual priorities, including healthcare, education, jobs, housing affordability and transit.

9:36 AM · Mar 6, 2026 Everybody can reply

In a recent edition of *The Globe and Mail*, architecture critic Alex Bozicovic called out the lack of action from the City of Toronto regarding Exhibition Place and a holistic vision for its future - leading to a vacuum which is allowing Ford to building on increasingly ludicrous plans for Toronto's waterfront: "[If Toronto can't imagine its future, Doug Ford will.](#)"

Presently, there is a [Western Beaches Public Realm Plan](#) in development by the City of Toronto. What happens then to years of community engagement and design work, should Ford impose his way?

No formal proposal on the future of the current convention centre has been received yet by the city, but we will continue to share all information as we become aware of it, and continue to call out the absurd priorities of this provincial government.

Last week, a further announcement declared Ford's intention to expand the runway at Billy Bishop Airport on Toronto Islands to accommodate jets — and a willingness to expropriate the land to ensure it happens.

Pushing through special bill to take over Ontario Place, seizing control of Exhibition Place, lying about the original Ontario Science Centre to build a smaller version on the waterfront, claiming to building a new island to house a multi-billion dollar Convention Centre, forcing Ontarians to pay \$400million for a parking garage for Therme — this airport announcement slots into a pattern of by-passing public input, accountability, and democratic process!

The future of Toronto's waterfront is for all of us to have a say. We'll be following the actions of Toronto City Council and Toronto MPs closely.

READERS' LETTERS

Opinion | Ontario Place is Doug Ford's legacy project? Some legacy

March 7, 2026 | 3 min read



A rendering of Hariri Pontarini Architects' proposed design for a new Ontario Science Centre. Infrastructure Ontario

[Doug Ford unveils design for new Science Centre at Ontario Place, Feb. 26](#)

We're writing to say thank you for this article by Robert Benzie and Rob Ferguson. When we saw the rendering of this new proposed Ontario Science Centre, we found it had not to cry. How could Premier Doug Ford spend so much money on this project when there are Ontarians living on the street for lack of affordable housing, when hallway medicine is rife in our hospitals and when our public schools are in disrepair and lacking sufficient staff?

Ford is clearly rebuilding Ontario Place for his own legacy and in doing so is ruining the location's natural beauty. It should be more like Central Park in New York City, with trails and green spaces and minimal commercial activity. People who live in Toronto want a place they can go to relax without having to pay money — to relax amid nature, that not waterslides most Ontarians will never use.

Please continue to inform the people of Ontario as Ford spends our tax dollars on the one per cent.

ARTICLE CONTINUES BELOW

Sandra & Jim Hill, Guelph, Ont.

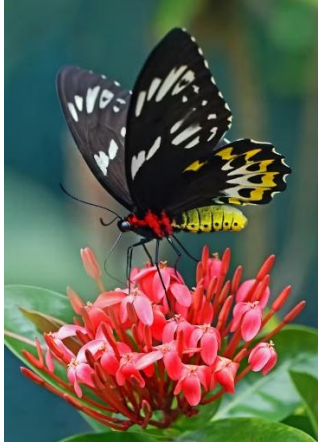
We always appreciate reading published opinions from across the Ontario in the paper! We've [created a list of local publications and their contact information](#) if you'd like to do the same!

Global Conservation News

A global butterfly index could advance insect conservation worldwide

Published: April 1, 2026 9:51am EDT

About 70 per cent of the species on Earth are insects. They are fundamental components of most ecosystems: they comprise half of the biomass on the planet, pollinate flowers, decompose dead organic matter and play multiple roles in food webs. They are quite literally everywhere, including in and around our homes, but they have also been declining at alarming rates in many places.



Recording the presence of a species in an area is important work. However, equally fundamental are efforts that capture changes in insect populations over time. (Unsplash/David Clode)

The societal implications of this potential “[insectageddon](#)” could be catastrophic, including [losses in human food production](#). However, confirming suspicions of global declines is difficult because we lack reliable data on insect populations in many parts of the world.

We simply don’t have the infrastructure around the planet that would allow us to track insect populations altogether. That means we don’t know how insect populations are responding to different global changes, and we might be failing to design effective conservation policies and track whether current actions are working.

Efforts to rapidly generate global indicators of insect population trends are therefore crucial. [In our recently published paper](#), colleagues and I explain how a global butterfly index could help track butterfly populations worldwide — and how we can reach this important objective.

Governments are expected to set measurable biodiversity targets in line with their commitments under international agreements such as the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#). However, [insects remain largely overlooked](#) in these targets, and it’s impossible to set meaningful targets without robust indicators.

Developing a robust butterfly index is therefore fundamental to help guide conservation and to better understand the scale of the biodiversity crisis, as well as to communicate it to the public.

Butterflies carry a strong emotional value. That can help build support for conservation in a way that less appreciated insects cannot achieve.

Our consortium is helping to create such momentum: this year, members of our team are kick-starting a [Global Butterfly Week](#) and conversations around formalizing an international organization are under way.

We are hoping that colleagues interested will join us for the next iterations of these projects. Please reach out.

Read More: [A global butterfly index could advance insect conservation worldwide-](#)

The desert is getting too hot for Joshua trees. Can we just ... move them?

To protect the southwest's iconic Joshua trees, scientists are tinkering with their genetics and searching for climate havens in—and sometimes outside of—their existing habitat.

By Callie Radke Stevens

Published February 12, 2026



**Joshua Tree National Park, California, U.S.A.
(Google image)**

Six years ago, Jeremiah Joseph was driving through a thick stand of Joshua trees during the early morning hours. The arms of the trees stretched out of the darkness and into the light cast by his car's headlights, and for a split second, he thought they were people trying to flag him down.

Joseph, a member of the Lone Pine Paiute-Shoshone tribe in California, had spent his whole life surrounded by Joshua trees, but he says that morning was the first time he took a serious interest in them. That same year, the tribe had received 38 Joshua trees that were dug up to make room for a highway expansion project. Joseph was part of the group tasked with replanting them, and he began to learn more about the dire fate facing this species: Without human intervention, both the eastern and western subspecies of Joshua trees face a perilous future...

Why Joshua trees face an uncertain future

Joshua trees are ancient; they began growing in the southwest around 12,000 years ago, when Ice Age glaciers receded. And while their average lifespan spans about 150 years, some are estimated to have been alive for 500 years or more.

Despite their names, Joshua trees are a type of succulent, a member of the agave family. And saving them means saving entire desert ecosystems. They are essential habitats for dozens of birds like the western screech owl and Scott's orioles, as well as native reptiles and insects.

Currently, they are so ubiquitous it might be hard to believe they are at risk.

A 2022 review estimated there could be anywhere from 4.3 million and 9.8 million western Joshua trees in California. This relative abundance led to grievances from homeowners and developers who, as a result of California's conservation plan, must pay fees ranging from around over a hundred to several thousand dollars to remove any Joshua trees from their land.

But it's the climate of the future, rather than current conditions, that has scientists and officials worried. Climate change will supercharge the desert's already intensely hot and dry climate, says Jeremy Yoder, a biologist at California State University, Northridge...

More resilient trees growing in more resilient habitat

Scientists and conservationists say Joshua trees' best chance of survival lies in their climate refugia.

These areas typically sit at higher elevations, though certain weather patterns and water availability are also factors for certain trees. Scientists like Yoder who study these arid landscapes have been working to identify refugia for years. Pinpointing these habitats requires a complex combination of scientific models, on-the-ground observations, and, more recently, satellite data. Last summer's study modeling their habitat loss predicted promising news: more areas might qualify as a refuge than previously thought.

However, these regions aren't necessarily on protected land, which might leave future habitat vulnerable to development.

Read More: [The desert is getting too hot for Joshua trees. Can we just ... move them? | National Geographic](#)
