

2022-2023

Report to Donors



Mission, Vision and Goals

Protect and restore nature

Educate about the importance of nature

Advocate on behalf of nature

Connect people with nature

Ontario Nature is a charitable organization that protects wild species and wild spaces through conservation, education and public engagement. We represent more than 30,000 members and supporters, and 150 member groups from across Ontario. Our vision is an Ontario where nature inspires and sustains us for generations to come.



Matchedash Lake

Standing Guard, Together



Cara Gregory,
President



Caroline Schultz,
Executive Director

Ontario Nature stood on guard for nature and was there when it needed us most this past year. At this challenging time for the environment in Ontario, we are pleased to share some conservation highlights from this past year and want to offer a huge thanks for your unwavering support.

Last year was the first time we could work “normally” since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ramping up our field work allowed us to restore more habitat, manage more invasive species, monitor more species at risk and meet up with many of you.

We also hosted our 12th annual Youth Summit for Biodiversity, which offered opportunities for participants to meet up in person. We are nurturing and supporting young environmental leaders more than ever—to help them achieve a green future where nature and people thrive in harmony. Over the past year, our dedicated Youth Council restored habitats and advocated for habitat protection, and all are looking forward to the 2023 summit which will be in person, just like the good old days!

The past year brought major challenges as we defended nature from the onslaught of deregulation allowing development to pave over woodlands, wetlands and farmland. Every email, telephone call or visit to decision-makers has pushed back on the Government of Ontario for forging ahead to allow the destruction of the habitats that support wild species, provide solutions to climate change and sustain us all. With you, we continue to fight the erosion of the Greenbelt, to battle the province-wide abandonment of wetland protection policies and to staunch the wanton expansion of development into vital ecosystems.

Despite the challenges, we celebrated several hard-won successes, protecting endangered species and wetlands. This was also the year when the world formally agreed to the target of protecting 30 percent of the world’s terrestrial and inland water areas by 2030. We are pushing to ensure that Ontario meets the target by, for example, promoting the one million hectare opportunity with Forest Stewardship Designated Conservation Lands and making Other Effective Areas-based Conservation Measures count.

Ontario Nature is sustained and motivated by the people at our core—our members and donors. Each of you is an inspiration. Your passion, knowledge and generosity are the wind beneath our wings, allowing us to protect Ontario’s wild species and wild spaces and a greener future for all.

Cara Gregory *Caroline Schultz*

Protect

Protecting One Million Hectares

Ontario's northern forests and wetlands provide us with crucial ecosystem services, such as carbon storage and climate regulation. The permanent protection of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Designated Conservation Lands (DCLs) presents an important opportunity for increasing protected areas with the associated climate co-benefits.

Many forestry companies in Ontario manage forests that are certified by the FSC. One requirement is companies must work with Indigenous communities and stakeholders to identify and set aside at least 10 percent of their forest management units as DCLs. To date, 147 DCLs have been identified across Ontario, totaling more than one million hectares. However, these DCLs aren't yet permanently protected.

To build the case for their permanent protection, Ontario Nature has been measuring carbon stocks in DCLs. This project involved literature reviews, fieldwork, webinars and workshops, collaboration with carbon researchers, and field assessments. Through that work we estimate that these areas store over 400 million tonnes of carbon!

This year, we published our *Beginner's Guide on Measuring Carbon Stocks to Support Conservation*, a guide to help organizations and communities proceed with carbon storage assessments for conservation. This is building the climate change case for the permanent protection of the one million hectares of candidate protected areas identified through FSC certification.

Another way that we're building the case for protection is through a cost/benefit analysis by an environmental economics expert, which will be published in the summer of 2023. We are also working with a legal expert to identify short- and long-term legal and policy pathways for protection. We're looking forward to getting input on these options from industry, stakeholders and Indigenous communities.

Thank you for your support of this ambitious multi-year project to permanently protect one million hectares of northern Ontario's forests and wetlands!



Wolf Lake

Restoring Sydenham River Nature Reserve

We completed year four of our habitat restoration project at Sydenham River Nature Reserve! The project is converting dis-used agricultural fields into Carolinian forest through natural succession. Our ecological restorations included planting tallgrass prairie to provide native, functional habitat for pollinators and grassland birds.

Volunteer stewards—Lambton Wildlife and Sydenham Field Naturalists—conducted breeding bird, salamander, snake and vernal pool surveys to evaluate the impact of our restoration activities. Additionally, butterfly surveys were conducted in restored fields.

More than 100 Ontario Nature members and volunteers planted 745 native trees and shrubs in two restored fields. The acquisition and restoration of this nature reserve is only possible thanks to the generosity of our members. We hope that you can join us this fall for another planting event to see firsthand the impact of your support!



Upgrading Willoughby Nature Reserve

Working with Credit Valley Conservation, we hosted a planting event with youth from a local school, planting 75 native shrubs along Silver Creek, a cold-water stream that runs through the nature reserve.

We installed a new boardwalk along with new trail signage for visitors. We hope you can visit this picturesque location and are able to spot some resident species including great-horned owls, pileated woodpeckers and eastern bluebirds!



Pileated woodpecker



Willoughby Nature Reserve



Indigo bunting

CLOCKWISE: ADOBE STOCK; BILL MCDONALD; CAMILLE TREMBLAY BEAULIEU; PAUL JANOSI

Educate



Birding Backpacks

Our Nature Guardians Youth Program members have told us that many youth want to learn about birding but aren't sure where to start. So, we launched our Birding Backpacks project, to reduce barriers youth face to birding, such as lack of equipment, educational resources and mentors.

The Birding Backpacks, available in the Greater Toronto Area and Thunder Bay, have proven popular, especially on birding hikes led by members of Ontario Nature's Youth Council. By giving youth the necessary tools to experience hands-on birding, the program helps young people create connections to birds and inspire curiosity about the natural world.

"I had never used binoculars before, so using them made a big difference for me as a beginner birder," said Danielle, a youth who borrowed a Birding Backpack while participating in a guided hike at our Cawthra Mulock Nature Reserve.

Youth Council

Ontario Nature's Youth Council continued its impressive legacy of contributing to lasting, positive change through conservation action.

- Spokepoke with over 240 visitors at the Southern Ontario Orchid Society Annual Show and Sale at the TorontoBotanical Gardens, where they raised awareness about the importance of wetlands and the unique species that rely on them.
- Planted herbaceous plants for a riparian restoration along Harper Creek to benefit brook trout downstream.
- Joined Nature Canada at the Toronto Zoo to raise awareness about COP15 conservation targets and species at risk.
- Worked with volunteers to plant 153 native plants at the York Region Food Network's compost hub and community garden.



TOP BAND: ADOBE STOCK; TOP: MELINA DAMIAN; BOTTOM: BENEDICTO SAN JUAN



“I’m proud of our conservation impact for species at risk this year. One example is our work on Pelee Island. Blue racer conservation was at a standstill since the 1990s. By collaborating with amazing partners and getting the local community involved, we’ve started restoring rare alvar habitat and raising awareness about this endangered snake.”

**—Smera Sukumar,
Conservation Science and Stewardship Director**

Blue racer

Snake Conservation on Pelee Island

A truly outstanding array of rare habitats are found on Pelee Island, including wetlands, sand dunes, savannahs and alvars. The Carolinian population of eastern foxsnakes and blue racers depend on these unique habitats for their survival.

We are continuing to restore habitat for these endangered snakes. In the fall, our team installed hibernacula (underground chambers that snakes use as refuges through the winter to protect them from the cold). These artificial nesting structures are innovatively designed and installed to be self-contained, protected from flooding, and to provide different levels for snakes to move up and down during their hibernation according to the temperature.

We are also working to improve nesting habitat for blue racers. They like alvars, grasslands and savannahs, so we’re restoring these habitats, monitoring populations and researching threats. Continued monitoring of the artificial nests and habitat restoration will help to determine how effective these methods are for conserving at-risk species.

Advocate

Advocacy in Action

There was a wave of damaging law and policy changes that swept over Ontario in late 2022. The Government of Ontario moved swiftly to diminish the powers of conservation authorities, cut lands out of the Greenbelt, weaken protections for wetlands, undermine the democratic process, and much more.

Ontario Nature members and supporters mobilized to oppose and debunk the false and misleading information used to as cover for the deregulation. Concerned Ontarians sent more than 44,000 emails to our elected representatives through Ontario Nature's Action Alerts alone.

We continue to work with our partners to minimize the negative impacts of these short-sighted moves and push for them to be repealed. That includes leading joint submissions to government endorsed by dozens of organizations and engaging thousands of Ontarians through webinars, action alerts, blogs, media releases and social media.



INSET: PAUL HEAVEN; BOTTOM: BOB HATCHER

Piping plover



Despite the challenging year, with your help we still triumphed in significant battles in our efforts to protect Ontario's wild species and wild spaces.

Thanks to your support, we won an important legal victory with our partners when the Court of Appeal upheld the conviction against the Town of South Bruce Peninsula for destroying piping plover habitat. This precedent-setting decision will help ensure that endangered plovers will find safe haven in Ontario to raise their young.

Another important win for nature was when we successfully opposed a proposed development on the Great Cataraqui Marsh in Kingston. Many people and groups—including Ontario Nature and our member group the Kingston Field Naturalists—fought the clearcutting of a past industrial site on the waterfront and destruction of part of the Provincially Significant Wetland proposed under the guise of remediation. The battle to save the trees, turtles and other wildlife had been going on for years. On September 6th, Kingston City Council voted to deny zoning changes and a needed application for a Minister's Zoning Order, ensuring this Provincially Significant Wetlands remains off limits to development.

Connect

Nature Network

Our coalition of conservation groups across Ontario are united in their dedication to conservation. Nature Network member groups steward our nature reserves, speak up for local environmental issues and are critical allies in our conservation campaigns.

More than 80 Nature Network groups signed joint letters, held rallies, met with decision-makers and wrote op-eds opposing environmental deregulation.

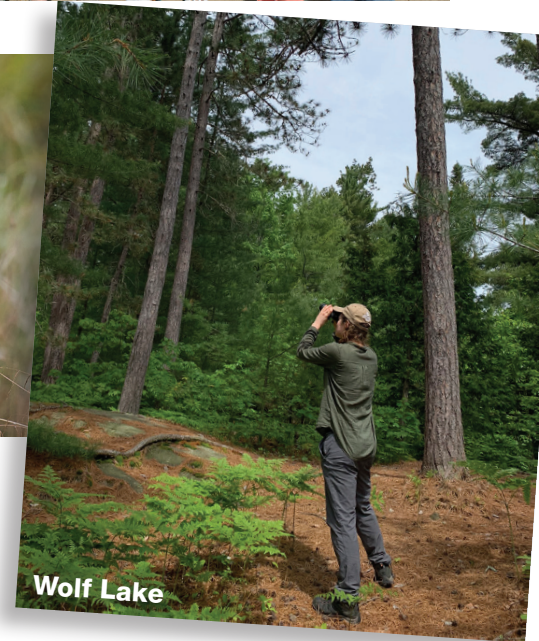
Thanks to the Nature Network for helping us to act as a strong collective voice for nature in Ontario!



Algoma Highlands



Bald eagle



Wolf Lake

Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas

We've been hard at work collecting data for the third *Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas* (Atlas-3). A five-year project involving many hundreds of volunteers surveying birds across the province. Atlas-3 harnesses community science to determine the distributions and populations of breeding birds and changes over time.

Our team surveyed across northern Ontario—including Sudbury, Algoma and Farabout Peninsula. Their days began long before dawn and with mornings spent searching for evidence of breeding birds. Collaborating with Nature Network groups and local partners, they conducted standardized point count surveys often by canoeing and camping in remote forests and wetlands.

Data collected will guide environmental policies and conservation strategies well into the future. This enormous undertaking is a superb example of what our community can accomplish when we collaborate. We look forward to continuing this exciting and ambitious project, bringing nature lovers like you together through a love of birding.

TOP BAND: DAVID COULSON;
TOP: BILL MACDONALD; INSET: KRISTEN SETALA;
LEFT: MISSY MANDEL; RIGHT: DON JOHNSTON

Thank You

To our members, donors and supporters! We are grateful for your generosity.

These listings include donors who contributed between March 1, 2022 and February 28, 2023.

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Estate of Wilfrid Crozier
Estate of Carolyn Joyce Keen (Fredenburg)
Estate of Margaret Gingerich
Estate of Janette Johnston
Estate of Shirley Elizabeth Kirby
Estate of Betty Marguerite Marwood
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Champions for Nature

With gratitude, we are pleased to recognise our this committed group of members who renew their support annually with contributions of \$1,000 or more to Ontario Nature's general fund. Their leadership support means that we can undertake long-term programs and respond to threats to nature as soon as they emerge.

\$10,000+

Ann H. Atkinson
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Lenore Walters
Harriet Waterman
Bruce & Betty Webster
Bob & Karen Yukich
And 4 Anonymous Donors

A Legacy for Nature

This year, Ontario Nature received a number of bequests from generous donors. These legacy gifts have tremendous impact on our work and help to ensure that this province’s spectacular natural heritage is protected for generations to come.

We spoke with the family of some of these donors to learn more about their lives and celebrate their love of nature.

Shirley’s Story



Shirley led a very active, independent and creative life. She attended University of Toronto when there were very few female students, and went on to work in advertising, where she met her husband, Fred. Her family called her the ‘family connector’ and that at 99 years old, said she still had ‘so much to do.’

An Ontario Nature member for over 40 years, she was very supportive of our efforts to get youth involved in conservation. She enjoyed nature by spending her time hiking, birdwatching and taking photos of wildlife, especially on the Bruce Trail. Her nephew, Doug, shared with us that even after a second broken hip, she bounced back and continued to walk the Humber Trail near her home daily.

Shirley’s gift is helping to connect the next generation with nature, through projects like our Birding Backpacks for youth, which we think would be close to Shirley’s heart.

Carolyn’s Story



Carolyn felt a strong sense of community responsibility, and with that sentiment came a desire to give back. She was an active volunteer with many organizations and charities—including Ontario Nature, which she supported as a member for several decades. When she died at the age of 89, she left Ontario Nature a generous bequest.

“Mom had such a love for Ontario’s natural beauty, and its power to uplift our souls! Since our Mom was 6 years of age, she spent most of her summers at our family cottage in Muskoka. It felt like heaven on earth for Mom, and the natural beauty renewed her spirit. She also enjoyed numerous other outdoor activities in Ontario and around Canada, such as cross-country skiing, canoeing, camping, hiking in the mountains, and walking along country roads.”

At our home in Etobicoke, Mom delighted in caring for our gardens. She kept a birdbath and a couple of birdfeeders in the backyard, and she happily watched birds coming to them throughout the year. Mom loved to be surrounded by nature’s beauty wherever she was, and she wanted to encourage other people to share in this love of nature.”

—Shared by her sons, John, Paul, Scott and Doug

“Mom had such a love for Ontario’s natural beauty, and its power to uplift our souls!”

For Nature Forever Circle

This is a special community of supporters who have committed to leave a legacy for nature by including Ontario Nature in their Will or estate plans. By looking to the future, this dedicated group will keep our voice for nature strong for years to come. Ontario Nature is incredibly indebted to all these members who have let us know about their decision, and to those who choose to remain anonymous.

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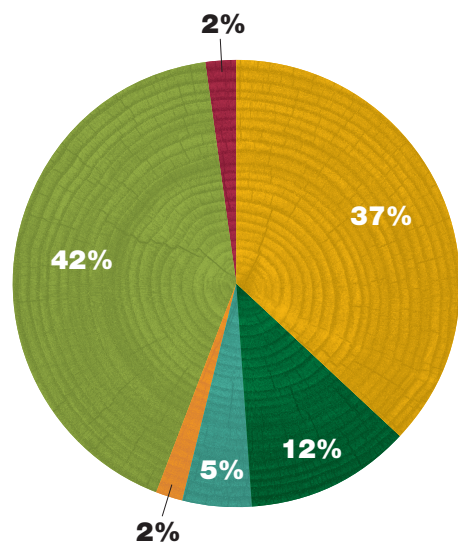
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TOP BAND: PIERRE CARDON; BOTTOM: KRISTEN SETALA

Financial Highlights

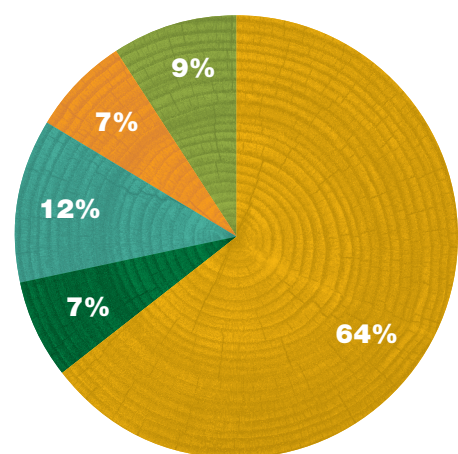
Year end February 28, 2023



Statement of Revenue

	2023	2022
Donations and memberships	1,467,100	1,356,332
Bequests	469,269	663,921
Publication (<i>ON Nature</i>)	206,696	226,052
Investment income	70,640	173,607
Program grants	1,665,072	886,279
Restricted for acquisition & stewardship	–	–
Other income	71,857	584,267
	3,950,634	3,890,458

- DONATIONS AND MEMBERSHIPS (37%)
- BEQUESTS (12%)
- PUBLICATION (*ON NATURE*) (5%)
- INVESTMENT INCOME (2%)
- PROGRAM GRANTS (42%)
- OTHER INCOME (2%)



Statement of Expenses

	2023	2022
Conservation and education programs	2,398,984	1,722,269
Publication (<i>ON Nature</i>)	272,718	278,962
Fundraising	452,452	409,560
Public relations and outreach	254,418	239,874
Administration	344,974	308,064
	3,723,546	2,958,729
Excess of revenue over expenses	227,088	931,729
Loss on change in fair market value of investments	(121,152)	–
	105,936	931,729

- CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS (64%)
- PUBLICATION (*ON NATURE*) (12%)
- FUNDRAISING (9%)
- PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS (7%)
- ADMINISTRATION COSTS (7%)

Financial Position as at February 28, 2023

	2023	2022
Capital Assets – Nature Reserves	6,162,933	6,162,933
Capital Assets – Easements	943,000	943,000
Capital Assets – Other	95,115	110,785
Investments	2,839,537	–
Other Assets	3,530,992	6,093,881
Total Liabilities	(2,326,132)	(2,171,090)
Total Net Assets	11,245,445	11,139,509

Notes

1. 55% of the total net assets is nature reserve and 8% of the total net assets is conservation easement lands.
2. 14% of the total net assets is restricted to generate income for long-term nature reserve stewardship.

Our Impact in 2022

- 7** youth-led events and workshops that engaged **304** participants
- 11** community science and Nature Reserve outreach events with **456** attendees
- 16** research projects on our nature reserves
- 22** volunteer Nature Reserve steward groups
- 26** Nature Reserves
- 47** Youth Council members
- 132** species at risk identified and protected on our nature reserves
- 147** candidate protected areas identified
- 150+** Nature Network member groups, including **3** new groups
- 176** community science volunteer hours spent monitoring snakes
- 2,515** volunteers participating in the third Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas
- 7,798** acres protected through nature reserves system
- 33,500+** readers of *ON Nature* magazine
- 145,000** people in our digital community
- 300 million** impressions for our conservation work



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