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Protecting 17 Per Cent by 2020

By Bob Barnett

Ontario has 244 of Canada's 521 species at risk. Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy (EBC) has proposed to protect the habitat of 28 of these species on 17 new reserves, in an ambitious new effort. Those properties have 63 occurrences of those species, with some, like the threatened Massasauga Rattlesnake, recurring four times. Perhaps more "popular" are the endangered Spotted Turtle or threatened Eastern Whip-poor-will. EBC is certainly working in an ecological hot spot. Virtually all of those potential reserves are adjacent to an existing EBC reserve or one protected by a government or another conservation organization. Each expansion of habitat is a major step forward in staving off extinctions.

Historically, funding to protect species has been targeted toward research and restoration. Now, with 2020 speeding toward us, the International Biodiversity goal of protecting 17 per cent of our land is, wisely, becoming the favoured approach to preventing extinctions. E.O Wilson and other ecologists make it clear that it is not just increasingly rare species that need room, but our society must set aside half the land to protect our ability to live on this planet. When I complained to David Suzuki that the government wasn't helping us get to their goal of 17 per cent, he pointed me to Wilson's seminal book *Half Earth*. The latest federal budget sets out \$1.3 billion over the next few years to reach the 17 per cent goal.

The Canadian government, through its Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP), has announced funding and set out priority areas for protection. EBC

doesn't work near Long Point, but the Bruce Peninsula and northern Grey County, the government's second-highest priority area, has always been a major focus for our work. We've applied to HSP and two other federal funds to protect 2,365 acres in this ecological hotspot.

New Reserves

The 17 new reserves we propose cover almost 10 sq. km. Given the high cost of private land, we estimate the total value at \$5.4 million, including appraisals and legal fees. It looks like the owners will donate \$3.5 million. We have asked HSP for \$1.2 million. That leaves only \$700,000 for us to raise to make all this a reality. In case that sounds daunting, we have had five donors step forward to match our contributions and we've already raised over \$100,000 for Willisville Mountain, one of our suggested projects. That leaves us only \$150,000 to raise.

Each dollar will be matched five times by our donors, 10 times by HSP and 23 times by landowners. Altogether each dollar we receive would be matched 36 times, so \$3 becomes more than \$100.

A \$100-dollar donation protects 1.6 acres of land after all that matching!

Species at Risk

EBC already protects the habitat of 54 species at risk. This new initiative would add seven species to that list, including American Ginseng, Cerulean Warbler, Eastern Whip-poor-will and Least Bittern. EBC is Ontario's second largest land trust with 13,170 acres or 53 sq. km. protected. Our "business" is accepting land donations from families that want to see their land protected, not developed.

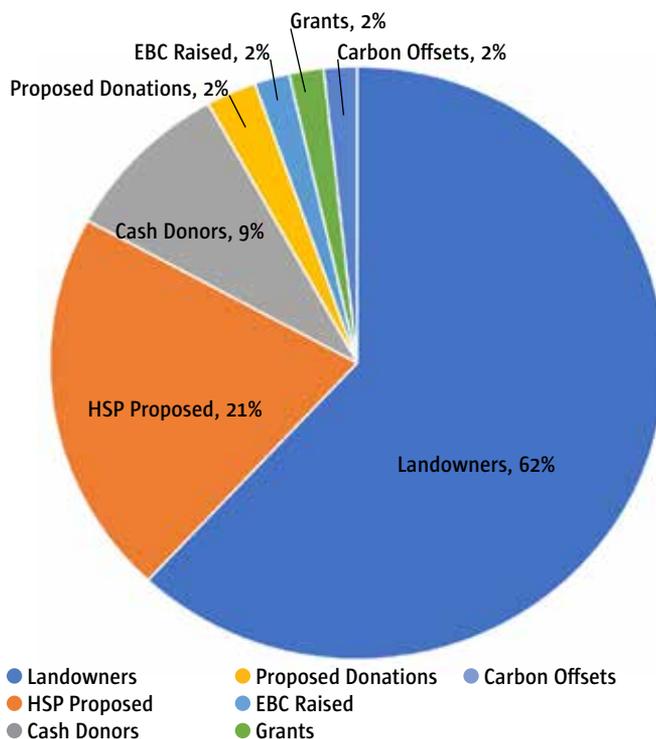
We often forget the "other" economy through which nature brings us so many benefits. An Ontario government study shows that every acre of

forested land brings us \$1,800 of benefits while wetlands bring \$6,400 EVERY year. Ontario south of the Canadian Shield receives \$84 billion a year from nature. This is for flood protection, air and water purification, pollinators AND biodiversity. Why is biodiversity, including species at risk, worth money? First, people say they "would" pay to protect rare species. Second, nature brings us new medicines and scientific development. Third, nature brings us almost \$2 BILLION a year worth of outdoor activities including hiking, birding, cycling and hunting in the Greenbelt alone.

Helping to protect nature is not just an act of altruism. It's a sound financial investment. Extinctions aren't something that happen far away.....these species are in danger right here in southern Ontario. By contributing three per cent, you can achieve 100 per cent of the benefit. Even if we don't get support from the federal programs, we'll achieve that 97 per cent matching.....just on fewer new reserves. Stay tuned....we keep our donors informed as new reserves are acquired.

Bob Barnett welcomes cheques payable to Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy, 503 Davenport Rd., Toronto ON M4V 1B8. For online options and more info, see www.escarpment.ca or call 888.815.9575.

Sources of Species Funding



◀ This chart shows the sources of funding for the 17 new properties that would help species at risk. Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy (EBC) is looking for only two per cent from new supporters. The rest of the funding would come from the property owners, federal programs, EBC and its supporters, and grants. Are you able to donate even a small amount? Through matching donations, \$3 becomes more than \$100!