

# ANNUAL REPORT 2014



Wildlife Preservation Canada

RECOVERY • CONSERVATION • KNOWLEDGE



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**Charitable Registration Number 89171 0535 RR0001**

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## Letter from the Executive Director

Back in the spring of 2010, Wildlife Preservation Canada decided to pursue an audacious strategy of nearly doubling in size in just five years. Why? We felt we had to. Over 40 Canadian animal species were documented as requiring the sort of hands-on intervention we specialize in, and we were working with only a handful of them. While a few other organizations meet the needs of individual species, we were - and still are - the only NGO in Canada performing hands-on recovery work with multiple species in multiple projects across the country.

In 2014, we surpassed the financial targets we set for ourselves back in 2010, and were able to deliver “911 emergency care” to 22 species (up from 8 in 2010!) in recovery projects located everywhere from Nova Scotia to BC’s Gulf Islands. If you played a role in this success by providing financial or other support, stand up and take a bow!

You will see that we posted a deficit in 2014 representing approximately 4% of our revenues. This was our second deficit in the last six years. Overall during this period, we have generated a modest surplus. Although we are in the business of spending money on effective conservation work rather than accumulating cash, it is important for an operating organization such as ourselves to maintain a prudent level of reserves for special circumstances and “rainy days”.

So, where do we go from here? Although we’ve succeeded

in greatly reducing our “waiting list”, we’re still providing care to only half the species which need it, and new species are being added to our list every year. The ever-increasing human footprint on the planet’s natural ecosystems has many leading experts concerned that Earth may be on the brink of a sixth mass extinction event. Canada, despite its vast size and relatively low population density, isn’t immune to this: virtually every corner of our country is affected by factors such as invasive species, pollution, or climate change. Conservation in the twenty-first century is going to require more than habitat protection. Wildlife Preservation Canada must continue to grow, and increase its impact, in order to save not just individual species, but ecosystems.

The good news is that our experience shows it’s not a hopeless cause. As you browse this report and read about the fascinating species and the wonderful achievements of the people who are helping them to recover, a pattern should emerge: Wildlife Preservation Canada’s science-led, species-driven approach works. With your continued support, we pledge to continue building Canada’s conservation capacity by providing invaluable training and experience to Canada’s young conservation scientists, and to increasing our tangible impact on Canada’s most vulnerable wildlife populations.

Randal Heide

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Established in 1985, Wildlife Preservation Canada is a non-profit organisation (Reg. #89171 0535 RR0001) dedicated to saving critically endangered animal species from extinction.

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## Who We Are and What We Do

Wildlife Preservation Canada works to save endangered animals from disappearing from the wild forever. For species whose numbers in the wild are so low they are in imminent danger of extinction, Wildlife Preservation Canada is Canada’s acknowledged expert in direct intervention to preserve animal species.

We care for all animals, even the “little guys”, the overlooked species that are just as vital to the ecology of the planet. We are involved in captive breeding and release, reintroduction, nest protection, and other beneficial hands-on recovery of multiple species in multiple projects across the country. We always work in partnership with other organizations, and in collaboration with expert recovery teams.

Wildlife Preservation Canada (WPC) integrates many different, yet critically important, components of an effective conservation program. Four key characteristics set us apart from other national and international conservation groups:

### Species-led conservation

Species recovery is the only proven tool to protect the most endangered animals. Simply protecting a species’ habitat may not be enough to save a species on the brink of extinction. The success of our approach has been proven around the world, both to save species at risk, and to give an identity or focus to habitat preservation efforts.

### High quality, hands-on science

It takes well-designed scientific research to protect and save species. Our scientists collect high-quality field data so they can plan effective strategies to better manage wild populations and improve habitat.



*Juvenile Blanding's turtle*

### Hands-on intervention

We have proven skills in captive breeding, wildlife management, re-introductions and translocations to boost dwindling populations or reestablish them in historic habitat.

### Building conservation capacity

We work with people for whom conservation is not just a phase in their lives, but their whole lives. Our staff scientists are dedicated and recognized experts in their field. We provide hands-on training and field experience in endangered species conservation and management to young Canadian scientists through the Canada’s New Noah program. We support the applied field research of Canadian graduate students working with species at risk, ensuring that crucial knowledge is collected while supporting the conservation career path of dedicated Canadian scientists. Finally, through field assistant positions with our recovery programs, we provide opportunities for young scientists to gain practical hands-on experience with species at risk in Canada.



## British Columbia Wetlands Oregon Spotted Frog & Western Painted Turtle



Freshwater ecosystems of the lower mainland of British Columbia have been severely impacted by pollution, increased sedimentary runoff, climate change, invasive species and overpopulation of predators such as raccoons. At least one species, the northern Pacific pond turtle has already been extirpated from Canada, while populations of others have dropped to such low numbers that their only hope of surviving rests on direct, hands-on conservation.

Under the leadership of Andrea Gielens, Wildlife Preservation Canada has been coordinating a multi-partner recovery effort for two at-risk species in this fragile ecosystem - the Oregon spotted frog and western painted turtle. The Oregon spotted frog is Canada's most endangered amphibian, with fewer than 300 breeding individuals remaining in the wild in small, widely scattered populations. The western painted turtle is B.C.'s only remaining native pond turtle, and faces imminent risk of extirpation without intervention. It grows faster and bigger, matures slower, reproduces less often but makes more eggs than painted turtles in other regions.

This was a year of firsts for the project.

- Oregon spotted frog egg masses were observed for the first time at a restored site

where releases have taken place over the last three years. An additional 126 head-started juvenile frogs were released at this site again this year.

- A few frogs grew larger than 9g, which is a record and is likely to dramatically increase survival in the wild.
- Breeding of the frogs also occurred in naturalized enclosures at the Vancouver zoo allowing natural mate selection, greatly improving hatching success over previous breeding methods.
- We released 58 headstarted turtles, keeping 130 hatchlings over winter to be released in 2015, with the hopes that we can more than double the capacity of the headstarting program by 2018. A captive breeding component was included, founded with 16 individuals rescued from small, isolated populations at high risk sites.
- Turtles released this year received PIT tags, a lifetime barcode inserted under the skin which is easily read with a scanner. In addition, a few turtles were affixed with radio transmitters to monitor survival, growth and habitat use.

*Follow the blog at [wildlifepreservation.ca](http://wildlifepreservation.ca)*



## Eastern Loggerhead Shrike

In 1997, there were only 18 breeding pairs of wild shrike remaining in Canada in a handful of isolated pockets. In 2001, Wildlife Preservation Canada began breeding this endangered bird in field aviaries to augment the wild population, to ensure it did not disappear before the issues threatening it could be addressed.

Captive breeding in Ontario involved 33 pairings and produced 110 young, 91 of which were released to the wild - the highest number released since 2009. That brings the total number of birds released since the start of the program to over 800.

We have learned our birds are successful in the wild, with over 40 of our released birds having returned to areas we are monitoring, the majority of which bred with wild birds. Four of our released birds were confirmed returning



to Ontario breeding grounds in 2014, one of which was carrying a geolocator.

We thank our newest partner, Little Ray's Reptile Zoo and Nature Centre, where some of the captive birds will be overwintered. One of the captive birds has been retired from the breeding population is now on public display there and doing wonderfully. Thanks also to our other partner facilities, dedicated and enthusiastic field interns, birders, volunteers and private landowners, whose support has made this possible.

## Burrowing Owl

Wildlife Preservation Canada first became involved in burrowing owl recovery in 1995, making this our longest running species recovery program. This little owl is one of the smallest owl species, getting its name from nesting in burrows dug by animals such as ground squirrels, badgers and prairie dogs. Fewer than 1,000 pairs are thought to exist in western Canada.

In 2014, 187 young were banded at the British Columbia sites. The numbers bounced back after a disappointing 2013 season, due mainly to poor weather conditions, especially in the first month post release of the owls. Though the weather was more favourable in 2014, some sites in the Nicola Valley experienced high levels of predation by larger raptors. Fifteen return owls were sighted, with two being unbanded.



For 10 to 14 days following release, breeding pairs are confined to soft-released cages and monitored and fed by field workers. This soft-release, pioneered by Wildlife Preservation Canada in Saskatchewan, is credited as being a key factor in increasing the site fidelity of paired owls, improving post-release survival and increasing the number of juveniles.



## Freshwater Turtles

In Ontario, Christina Davy and the Lake Erie team protected 63 nests, and released 636 marked hatchling turtles to the wild, while the Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre team tracked 50 Blanding's turtles via telemetry at 5 different sites where they were headstarted and released in 2013/12. In Quebec, spiny softshell eggs were collected, 149 were released to the wild and 31 retained for headstarting. In B.C. our Wetlands Program released 58 western painted turtles to the wild, 18 of them wearing radio transmitters to facilitate tracking, and retained 13 turtles for headstarting.

Seven of Canada's eight native freshwater turtles are currently at risk, including the spiny softshell, above. Over the last 10 years, our program has expanded from Ontario to B.C. to Quebec.

The teams are continuing to investigate head-starting - keeping the hatchlings warm, fed and safe for an extra year to give them an advantage when they are released to the wild.

Protecting nests from predators by removing the eggs and incubating them in a lab setting ensures that a large percentage of eggs hatch, while mark-recapture surveying allows the team to monitor the long-term success of the turtles in the wild.

## Ord's Kangaroo Rat

The Ord's kangaroo rat is one of Alberta's most endangered animals. Their habitat in open arid landscapes such as the Sand Hill's undeveloped dunes, is becoming fragmented and the small populations remaining are isolated and not sustainable.

In this final year of a three year study to test translocations, Dr. Darren Bender of the University of Calgary and his team discovered the pregnant offspring of a rat translocated in 2013. Breeding by first generation offspring of a translocated animal is a benchmark of high translocation success.. The 2014 translocated animals appeared to occupy the artificial nests at the release site, and one was found to have estab-



lished an extensive burrow system and was in excellent health.

Results of the study suggest that there may be potential for translocation and soft release of Ord's kangaroo rats to be used as a management tool where alternatives do not exist.



## Massasauga Rattlesnake

The massasauga exists in Canada solely in Ontario in isolated populations. Ontario's only remaining venomous reptile, it is threatened by habitat loss, road mortality and persecution by humans.

Jonathan Choquette led the Ojibway population team in the south-western Carolinian region of Ontario with the goal of augmenting the population and repatriating extirpated sub-populations within core protected areas. As small mammals are the predominant prey species of eastern massasaugas, the team conducted surveys in the area to assess the quality of foraging habitat.

Ron Black and his team investigated the Georgian Bay population along the eastern shoreline to determine site fidelity of massasaugas to hibernacula and whether translocations to alternate hibernacula might be effective. They moni-



tored 29 radio-tagged massasaugas and marked 28 new individuals, increasing the total marked to 348. Monitoring results indicate that properly timed translocations to high quality hibernacula near their range may be an effective short term rescue strategy in emergency situations.



## Maritime Swallows

barn swallows have been designated as threatened.

Tara Imlay and her team monitored nests at 18 sites in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, checking for timing and success of breeding. Checking swallow nests entails precarious balancing on ladders in old barns and cliff areas, sometimes using a dental mirror to peer inside the nest.

The team banded 696 swallows and retrieved 11 geolocators from returning birds, which will be analysed at Dalhousie University to identify overwintering locations and migration routes.

The data gained from this research will provide a foundation upon which to build a conservation strategy for maritime swallows.

The decline of the four species of swallow found in maritime Canada is greater than any other group of birds in North America, and the exact causes of the declines are unknown. The bank, cliff, tree and barn (shown above) swallows have declined up to 98%. The bank and



## Native Pollinators



Native pollinators - butterflies, flies, moths, beetles and bees - are essential to flowering plants and cultivated crops, yet some species are suffering declines of up to 90% since the 1980s. Of the 40 Canadian bumblebee species, one third are found to be in decline.

The rusty-patched bumblebee is the first pollinator to be listed as endangered in Canada. Despite targeted surveys across southern Ontario by our team for the third year in a row, no individuals were found. Conservation breeding of yellow-banded bumblebees, which are also in decline, was begun in Ontario and Quebec to ensure persistence of the species in Canada and perfect rearing techniques which may be applied to the rusty-patched as well.

Conservation breeding for another pollinator continued on B.C.'s Gulf Islands. The Taylor's checkerspot butterfly (above centre) was thought to have disappeared from Canada, until it was rediscovered on Denman Island in 2005. The results at our facility was above average compared to a similar rearing facility at the Oregon Zoo. Additional larvae were collected in February and May and 465 larvae were held over the winter to be released in 2015.

Habitat in southern Ontario was being evaluated for the Karner blue butterfly (above right). Extirpated from Canada, this butterfly depends upon wild lupine for survival. The assessment will guide habitat restoration underway in hopes of future reintroductions.



## Fox Snake

human activity threatens many snakes, particularly in southern Ontario.

A radio-tracking study of foxsnakes is being conducted at Rondeau Provincial Park to study their movements and hibernation sites in a part of the park modified by human activity. Four snakes (named Salazar, Sullivan, Katniss and Khaleesi by the team) were tracked this season and showed significantly different use of habitat types and home range sizes, which will provide useful information to support future management decisions.

Reaching lengths of up to 1.7 metres, the eastern foxsnake is the second largest snake in Ontario, behind only the gray ratsnake, and was listed as endangered in 2008. Habitat loss due to intensive



## Canada's New Noahs

Martin Kastner of Montreal was selected to participate in Wildlife Preservation Canada's unique post-grad training opportunity in applied species conservation on the island of Mauritius, home to some of the most endangered birds in the world. As the 25th New Noah, Martin has joined the graduates of the program who have returned to Canada, bringing their passion as well as the skills and techniques they acquire to the benefit of Canadian species at risk.

## Fowler's Toad

Facing a severe threat of extirpation from Canada, Fowler's toad is found only on the shores of Lake Erie, Ontario, where invasive reeds are destroying its breeding habitat. Dr. David Green and his team continued to rescue egg masses from temporary beach pools and relocate them to artificial ponds where they hatch and head back to the wild. The abundance of adult toads in the study area, though still low, showed a slight increase over 2013.



## Swift Fox

in reintroducing the little fox to the wild which helped establish a small but apparently self-sustaining population in Saskatchewan and southern Alberta. Wildlife Preservation Canada continues to support monitoring of the health of the returned population of the foxes.

In Calgary, Cynthia Moehrensclager who participated in the reintroductions, coordinated field crews collecting data using live trapping and camera trapping. We want to determine if the population will be able to sustain its status, or if there have been any significant changes in abundance, distribution or composition.

Once common from Manitoba through Alberta, the swift fox vanished from the prairies in the 1930's. Wildlife Preservation Canada participated



# Thank You!

Wildlife Preservation Canada is pleased and honoured to recognise the following donors whose outstanding generosity has made our critical conservation activities possible. We are grateful to the thousands of other donors and volunteers who contributed throughout the year. We apologise if we have inadvertently omitted your name.

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**And much gratitude to all our wonderful volunteers - we could not have done it without you!**

# Financial Highlights \*

## STATEMENT OF REVENUE AND EXPENSES AND CHANGES TO FUND BALANCES Year ended December 31, 2014

|                                       | General Fund 2014<br>\$ | Restricted Fund 2014<br>\$ | Internally Restricted<br>\$ | Total 2014<br>\$ | 2013<br>\$     |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| <b>REVENUE</b>                        |                         |                            |                             |                  |                |
| Individual Donations                  | 142,965                 | --                         | --                          | 142,965          | 140,315        |
| Foundation Donations                  | 70,385                  | 235,875                    | --                          | 306,260          | 153,12         |
| Special Event                         | 22,246                  | 319                        | --                          | 22,565           | 30,003         |
| Federal government grants             | 35,573                  | 317,775                    | --                          | 353,348          | 333,312        |
| Provincial government grants          | 24,055                  | 216,495                    | --                          | 240,550          | 325,985        |
| Other grants                          | 20,148                  | 18,750                     | --                          | 38,898           | 25,913         |
| Other Income                          | 11,140                  | --                         | --                          | 11,140           | 18,247         |
| Investment income                     | 2,845                   | --                         | --                          | 2,845            | 2,309          |
|                                       | 329,357                 | 789,214                    | --                          | 1,118,571        | 1,029,206      |
| <b>EXPENSES</b>                       |                         |                            |                             |                  |                |
| Project Implementation                | 120,779                 | 695,167                    | --                          | 815,946          | 784,666        |
| Conservation grants                   | 84,575                  | 71,034                     | --                          | 155,609          | 98,885         |
| Administrative and fund raising       | 95,028                  | 91,919                     | --                          | 186,947          | 131,532        |
| Special Event                         | 7,667                   | --                         | --                          | 7,667            | 11,048         |
| Web Development                       | 1,911                   | --                         | --                          | 1,911            | 1,383          |
|                                       | 309,960                 | 858,120                    | --                          | 1,168,080        | 1,027,514      |
| <b>Excess (Deficiency) of revenue</b> |                         |                            |                             |                  |                |
|                                       | 19,397                  | (68,906)                   | --                          | (49,509)         | 1,692          |
| <b>Fund balance</b>                   |                         |                            |                             |                  |                |
| beginning of year                     | 271,431                 | --                         | 117,556                     | 388,987          | 387,295        |
| Transfers between funds               | (41,495)                | 54,960                     | (27,411)                    | --               | --             |
| <b>Fund balances, year end</b>        | <b>249,333</b>          | <b>--</b>                  | <b>90,145</b>               | <b>339,478</b>   | <b>388,987</b> |

### Notes:

- The General Fund reports unrestricted revenue available for any purpose. The General Fund records all general revenues. This Fund records expenses that the Board has allocated from the General Fund to mission related activities such as species recovery programs, professional training and education, as well as administrative operating and fund raising expenditures associated with the general management and maintenance of the Organisation.
- The Restricted Fund consists of funds available for spending that are restricted by the donor.
- The Internally Restricted funds are to be used to assist with the cash flow requirements of the organization, as deemed appropriate by the Board. The Gerald Durrell Fund for Wildlife was created to continue the conservation work of Gerald Durrell, and can be allocated to projects which fulfil that mandate. The Futures Fund was created based on a decision by the Board to allocate 50% of any revenue surplus in excess of budget to the Futures Fund annually. The first funds were deposited in 1998. The Bequest Fund was created in order to allocate bequests in excess of \$10,000 to this fund, to be brought into the annual budget to fund conservation programs over a five year period. Fifty percent of bequests over \$100,000 will be permanently endowed.

\*For a complete set of the audited financial statements prepared by RLB LLP, please call (519) 836-9314 or e-mail us at admin@wildlifepreservation.ca or download from wildlifepreservation.ca.



***Wildlife Preservation Canada appreciates the commitment of all of our supporters to save endangered animals across Canada.***



Established in 1985, Wildlife Preservation Canada has been taking our expertise to the fields to save the rarest of the rare for 30 years.

The need is greater than ever. We believe even the smallest species is precious. Thank you for believing that too.

