



*Canada's last defence
for endangered species.*

2025 IMPACT REPORT

Since 1985, Wildlife Preservation Canada has saved more endangered species across Canada through intensive hands-on conservation action than any other organization in the country.



OUR VISION

A land where Canada's wildlife is bountiful, diverse, and thriving, free from the threat of extinction.



Photo: A. Bowman

OUR MISSION

Wildlife Preservation Canada saves animals at risk from extinction in Canada by performing hands-on field work with species requiring direct action to recover, providing opportunities for Canadian conservation biologists to increase their expertise, and advancing conservation science by developing new methods for endangered species recovery.



Photo: J. Spero

OUR APPROACH

Wildlife Preservation Canada is Canada's leading and most experienced organization dedicated to breeding endangered species and reintroducing them to the wild — Giving Back Directly to Nature. We develop innovative techniques that are used in Canada and around the world to save species at risk. We build this country's conservation capacity by providing opportunities for young scientists to work with endangered species, both in Canada and abroad.

To maximize our impact, we choose species based on the urgency of their conservation needs, our unique expertise and the potential to collaborate with other organizations and strategic partners. We work closely with Indigenous Peoples and local communities, recognizing that they are critical to long-term conservation success.

For Wildlife Preservation Canada, extinction is not an option. Not on our watch.

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Dear Supporters and Friends of Wildlife Preservation Canada (WPC),

In 2025 we celebrated an incredible milestone: 40 years of saving the rarest of rare species. It is truly inspiring to see the difference we've made.

When only a few hundred — or a few dozen — individuals remain in the wild, it's easy to think nothing can be done. But that's not what WPC and our supporters believe.

Instead, we step in. Through hands-on conservation, innovative thinking and enduring commitment, we've proven that we can stop species from disappearing.

Just look at our accomplishments over the past year:

- We achieved more breeding successes, including remarkable hatching rates for western painted turtles and exceptional propagation of Taylor's checkerspot butterflies.
- We expanded the number of release sites for western painted turtles and - with our recovery partners - mottled duskywings.
- We extended our conservation efforts to a new species: the Blanding's turtle, in Ontario's Ojibway Prairie.
- We saw clear evidence of our impact in the wild, with triple the number of Oregon spotted frog egg masses at the Fraser Valley site where we've released tadpoles and froglets.
- We deepened powerful partnerships through the Burrowing Owl Alliance and the Conservation Planning Specialist Group.

These achievements fill me with hope. I'm even more hopeful when I see how many partners, donors and volunteers come forward to support this vital work.

You're keeping shrikes soaring, bees buzzing, owls hooting and snakes sunning themselves on warm rocks.

I couldn't be prouder to celebrate with you. And I can't wait to see what we can do in the years ahead.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Shripal Doshi
President
Wildlife Preservation Canada



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The Oregon spotted frog is Canada's most endangered amphibian. Due to pollution, runoff, climate change, invasive species and wetland destruction, they've disappeared from more than 90 per cent of their historic range. Today only a few hundred breeding individuals remain in the wild, restricted to a handful of fragmented areas in British Columbia's Lower Fraser Valley.

Since 2010, WPC has reversed this trend by breeding and reintroducing thousands of Oregon spotted tadpoles and froglets into restored wetlands. Our early progress was slow, but thanks to our groundbreaking "Love Tubs," we've greatly increased the number of tadpoles we produce for release.

Meanwhile, our novel treatment for the deadly chytrid fungus — developed after a major outbreak in 2022 — continues to keep our frogs safe.



Two hops forward, one hop back

This year, we continued to rebuild our conservation breeding program after a devastating chytrid outbreak in 2022. Our current breeding population of 70 males and 29 females produced approximately 3,000 tadpoles — about half the number expected based on the previous year.

There are several possible reasons for this drop: A few misidentified males were put in the female tub for overwintering, potentially affecting the water chemistry; our youngest females may not have been ready to reproduce; and the fertility of some of our older frogs may be declining.

But 2025 also saw encouraging developments. When we released tadpoles at restored wetlands along the Fraser Valley's Chaplin Road, we saw **nearly triple the number of wild egg masses we saw in 2024 — proof that our work is having an impact in recovering wild populations.**

We also headstarted some of our conservation-bred tadpoles to boost their chances of survival in the wild. This year we released 99 as metamorphs — tadpoles with legs — to keep building on that success.

Looking ahead, we'll be **expanding our breeding capacity** by developing the area next to our turtle lab for additional "Love Tubs" to allow us to release even more tadpoles each year and accelerate the recovery timeline for the Oregon spotted frog.

Program Location

Fraser River Valley, British Columbia

WPC Conservation Toolkit

Conservation Breeding & Headstarting
Outreach & Education
Reintroduction
Research

2025 Program Partners & Supporters

B.C. Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
B.C. Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
Campbell Valley Nature House
Employment & Social Development Canada - Canada Summer Jobs
Fraser Valley Conservancy
Greater Vancouver Zoo
J.S. Darville
Kwantlen First Nation
Laurentian University
Leq'amel First Nation
Metro Vancouver Regional Parks
Oregon Spotted Frog Recovery Team
Sq'ewqéyl First Nation
Simon Fraser University
Stó:lō First Nation
The Annual Foundation
Vancouver Aquarium

A special thank you to Jack S. Darville for his continued support through the Darville Frog Conservation Endowment Fund.



"Each year gives us an opportunity to learn more about these animals and increases our knowledge of how we can help this species and others continue on the landscape as part of our shared natural heritage."

- Andrea Gielens, Lead Biologist B.C. Projects

OREGON SPOTTED FROG

Rana pretiosa

The colourful western painted turtle is British Columbia's only native freshwater turtle. Unfortunately, urban development, road mortality and predation have pushed coastal populations to the brink of extinction. Today these turtles remain in just a few scattered sites.

Since 2012, WPC has been protecting nests, collecting eggs and partnering with the Greater Vancouver Zoo to incubate and raise hatchlings. What began in 2011 as a single nest of 11 turtle eggs has grown into one of our most successful recovery programs.

By headstarting young turtles before we release them, we dramatically improve juvenile survival rates. Today, these efforts are yielding measurable results, with a growing number of the turtles we've released now reaching maturity and laying nests in the wild.

WESTERN PAINTED TURTLE

Chrysemys picta bellii

Program Location
Fraser River Valley, British Columbia

WPC Conservation Toolkit
Headstarting & Reintroduction
Land Steward Engagement
Nest Protection
Outreach & Education

2025 Program Partners & Supporters

- Aitchelitz First Nation
- Athene Ecological
- B.C. Institute of Technology
- B.C. Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy
- B.C. Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
- Biodiversity Conservation Department of City of Surrey
- City of Chilliwack
- Coastal Painted Turtle Project
- Coastal Partners in Conservation
- Dewdney Animal Hospital
- Employment & Social Development Canada - Canada Summer Jobs
- Fraser Valley Conservancy
- Greater Vancouver Zoo
- Kwantlen First Nation
- Lafarge Aggregates
- Langley Field Naturalists
- Leq'a:mel First Nation
- Metro Vancouver Regional Parks
- Private landowners of Nicomen Slough and Murchie Lake
- Sq'ewqéyl First Nation
- The Annual Foundation
- The Hagen Family Foundation
- University of the Fraser Valley
- Vancouver Island University
- Western Painted Turtle Recovery Team
- Yakweakwioose First Nation

Record-breaking results and expanded reach

What a year! In 2025 we **incubated a record-breaking 698 eggs** and achieved a **hatching success rate of 84 per cent** — well above the rates in 2023 and 2024.

To boost wild populations, we released 349 hatchlings after a month. The rest we kept until they reached 30 grams to maximize their survival. This year, we released 173 of these “headstarted” turtles. Another 259 were overwintered for release in 2026.

Treating our turtles regularly to prevent *Cryptosporidium* — a potentially lethal parasite — has **decreased mortality rates and increased growth rates**. This means we're able to release headstarted turtles earlier, creating room for more hatchlings in our facility.

We **expanded our nest monitoring program to the Sunshine Coast**, hiring two full-time staff and 12 summer students. Together, they monitored a total of 14 nesting sites to see how our headstarted turtles fared, along with their wild-hatched counterparts.

These teams found 224 nests in total. Incredibly, 99 of these nests were from released females, proof that our recovery work is bringing western painted turtles back to B.C.'s wetlands!

Finally, with the closing of a government run facility near Vancouver, WPC now operates the province's only **rescue and rehabilitation program** for injured and surrendered painted turtles. This year we treated eight adult turtles before releasing them in regions best matching their genetics. Another 10 are slated for release in 2026.

“Expanding our reach to the Sunshine Coast as well as using the additional conservation tool of hatch and release has allowed us to expand our reach on the landscape as well as the scope of our work.”



- Andrea Gielens, Lead Biologist B.C. Projects

Program Location
Ontario

WPC Conservation Toolkit
Research
Population Monitoring

2025 Program Partners & Supporters
Title

Essex Region Conservation Area - Collavino Conservation Area
Essex County Field Naturalists' Turtle Committee
Ojibway Prairie Reptile Recovery Working Group
Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks Species at Risk Stewardship Program

Answering critical questions about our newest species

In 2025, WPC's Ojibway Prairie Reptile Recovery Team **expanded recovery efforts to include our first semi-aquatic turtle: the Blanding's turtle.** It's easy to spot, thanks to its domed shell and bright yellow chin. However, there are fewer and fewer to see in Ontario due to habitat loss and road mortality. Today, Blanding's turtles are provincially threatened and federally endangered.

These turtles can take up to 25 years to reach sexual maturity and are known to travel many kilometres to reach their preferred nesting spots, so conservation requires extensive long-term planning and commitment.

Our first step is to answer some key questions: What habitats do they prefer? Where are they nesting? What threats do local populations face?

During the summer, we completed dozens of visual encounter surveys across 13 sites, observing a total of 25 Blanding's turtles. At Collavino Conservation Area, our team also used radio-transmitters to track 12 turtles from June to the end of September. This allowed us to identify where they nested, the size of their home range and how they used their habitat — whether they crossed any roads, for example.

We'll use those data to plan habitat enhancements, mitigate threats and better manage populations through activities like nest protection and population augmentation.

“Over their travels, these turtles risk life and limb crossing roads, railways, and ducking under fences all with the goal of reaching their preferred nesting site. With any luck, our work will make these journeys less arduous and will allow us to create habitat fitting for a host of Blanding's turtles.”



– Remo Boscarino-Gaetano, Project Biologist, Ojibway Prairie Reptile Recovery Program

BLANDING'S TURTLE

Emydoidea blandingii

Program Location
British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba

WPC Conservation Toolkit
Creating Partnerships
Land Steward Engagement
Outreach & Education

2025 Program Partners & Supporters

Alberta Wildlife Federation
Burrowing Owl Conservation Society of B.C.
Environment & Climate Change Canada
Manitoba Burrowing Owl Recovery Program
Nature Saskatchewan
Operation Grassland Community
Wilder Institute / Calgary Zoo

Launching an online hub for owl recovery

Burrowing owls once thrived across Canada's prairie grasslands. But for several decades, this small ground-dwelling raptor has teetered dangerously close to extinction due to habitat loss, agricultural intensification and declining prey. With just a few hundred individuals left, active intervention has been critical.

In 1995, WPC led national recovery efforts, pioneering a soft-release technique that significantly improved survival rates when conservation-bred birds were introduced into the wild.

Today, we're helping to facilitate the Burrowing Owl Alliance: an initiative that unites burrowing owl conservation efforts across Canada. It brings together eight key organizations working to recover the species: WPC, Burrowing Owl Conservation Society of B.C., Wilder Institute, Operation Grassland Community, Nature Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Burrowing Owl Interpretive Centre, and Manitoba Burrowing Owl Recovery Program.

In 2025 we **funded and launched the Alliance's website**, www.burrowingowlalliance.ca. It provides a wealth of information about the species' habitat and range, land management best practices, landowner incentives and scientific reports. It also provides an online form where people can report owl sightings.

Going forward, we aim to increase awareness of burrowing owls throughout their range, identify knowledge gaps, develop research priorities, share challenges and successes, and contribute to conservation action plans and recovery strategies in Canada and across North America.

“Though it's been two decades since we've worked with the species, we never forgot about this charming little owl. It's been a great privilege to work alongside these other amazing conservation organizations dedicated to recovering burrowing owls, and a reminder that we are not alone in the fight against species extinction. Together we will work towards a brighter future for burrowing owls in North America.”



– Hazel Wheeler, Conservation Programs Director

BURROWING OWL

Athene cunicularia



Eastern loggerhead shrikes were once a common site in open grasslands and pastures from Manitoba to New Brunswick. Today, these feisty songbirds have been reduced to just two isolated breeding populations in Ontario, due largely to habitat loss and fragmentation.

After their wild numbers dipped perilously low in the late 1990s, Environment Canada launched a multi-partner recovery effort focused on conservation breeding and release, habitat stewardship, research and monitoring. When WPC was asked to lead this effort in 2003, we pioneered the use of large field enclosures where conservation-bred fledglings could learn natural survival skills before release.

To date, more than 1,500 young birds have been bred and released, with many returning to boost the wild population. Without those efforts, Canada's eastern loggerhead shrike would have gone extinct.

EASTERN LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE

Lanius ludovicianus migrans

Program Location

Southern Ontario

WPC Conservation Toolkit

- Breeding & Reintroduction
- Creating Partnerships
- Habitat Restoration
- Land Steward Engagement
- Outreach & Education
- Population Monitoring
- Research
- Threat Mitigation

2025 Program Partners & Supporters

- African Lion Safari
- Bird Genoscape Project at Colorado State University
- Birds Canada Community Grant
- Carden Forum
- Couchiching Conservancy
- Dufferin Aggregates
- Environment & Climate Change Canada - ECO Canada Science Horizons Internship
- Employment & Social Development Canada - Canada Summer Jobs
- Hodgson Family Foundation
- Kingston Solar LP
- K.M. Hunter Charitable Foundation
- Napanee Plains Joint Initiative
- Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks
- Nashville Zoo at Grassmere
- Natural Resources Canada - Clean Tech Internship Program
- Nature Canada - Work to Grow Program
- Ontario Parks - Carden Alvar Provincial Park
- Parc Omega
- Partners in Flight Eastern Grasslands Working Group
- Queen's University
- Smithsonian's National Zoo & Conservation Biology Institute
- Takla Foundation
- The Land Between
- The National Aviary
- The Nature Conservancy of Canada
- The North American Loggerhead Shrike Working Group
- Toronto Zoo
- University of Guelph's Master of Wildlife Biology Program

Preventing an extinction vortex

The wild shrike population has reached record lows over the past decade. In 2025, we sighted just 10 wild pairs — three in Carden and seven in Napanee — which fledged 20 young. Numbers this low can quickly spiral into an “extinction vortex,” where surviving individuals can't find each other to mate.

That's why our conservation breeding and release program is so essential — indeed, 20 per cent of the 2025 wild breeding population were conservation-bred shrikes we released the previous year. This year, 13 conservation-bred pairs successfully produced offspring, allowing us to release 47 fledglings into the wild and keep seven with valuable genetics for future breeding.

As part of our new Species Conservation Plan, one of the partner breeding facilities, African Lion Safari, became a central pairing site to eliminate mid-season transfers between facilities, reducing stress on the birds.

While two of the partner facilities — Parc Omega in Quebec and National Aviary in Pennsylvania — did not see breeding success this season, the proven breeding pairs transferred to these sites in fall 2025 will hopefully improve their results next year.

Meanwhile, we continued to use radio tags to track a portion of the birds we released. In 2026, we'll switch to new Bluetooth-enabled Cellular Tracking Tags that can be detected by smartphones as well as radio towers, giving us significantly more data on shrike migration and winter survival.

“This program is incredibly complex and multi-faceted; its longevity and consistent success are testaments to the hard work that has been poured into the program over the years.”



- Helmi Hess, Lead Biologist, Eastern Loggerhead Shrike Recovery Program

Native bumble bees are essential for biodiversity, pollinating the vast majority of flowering plants that sustain wildlife and people alike. Sadly, many species have plummeted in recent decades, leaving large gaps in the ecosystem. To prevent further losses, we're leading an innovative recovery effort centred on conservation breeding and reintroduction.

Since 2013, WPC has been pioneering and refining methods to raise endangered bees in order to release them and rebuild wild populations. At WPC's Ontario lab, our team currently focuses on two species: at-risk yellow-banded bumble bees and the more common tri-coloured bumble bees.

This work lays the foundation to restore other native pollinators — including the rusty-patched bumble bee, which hasn't been seen in Canada since 2009 — and keep vital ecosystems buzzing.

Program Location

Southern and Central Ontario

WPC Conservation Toolkit

- Capacity Building
- Creating Partnerships
- Breeding & Reintroduction
- Outreach & Education
- Population Monitoring & Assessments
- Research
- Threat Mitigation

2025 Program Partners & Supporters

- African Lion Safari
- Allen-Vercoe Lab, University of Guelph
- BumbleBeeWatch.org
- Centre de la science de la biodiversité du Québec
- Centre national de la recherche scientifique - CNRS
- Claremont Nature Centre
- Environment & Climate Change Canada – ECO
- Canada Science Horizons Internship
- Employment and Social Development Canada - Canada Summer Jobs
- Esgenoôpetitj Watershed Association
- Field Research in Ecology and Evolution Diversified
- Friends of Pinery
- Gordon and Patricia Gray Animal Welfare Foundation
- Humble Bee
- Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg of the Algonquin First Nation
- K.M. Hunter Charitable Fund
- MacGregor Point Provincial Park
- MacIvor Lab, University of Toronto Scarborough
- Maitland Valley Conservation Authority
- Malagash Salt Mine Museum
- McMaster University
- Ontario Conservation Authorities
- Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks
- Ontario Parks
- Ontario Power Generation – Darlington & Pickering
- Parks Canada
- Pinery Provincial Park
- Pollination Guelph
- rare Charitable Research Reserve
- RBC Community Investment Tech for Nature Fund
- Rouge National Urban Park
- Schroeder Lab, University of Minnesota
- Science North
- Sunset Community Foundation
- Takla Foundation
- TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
- The Catherine and Maxwell Meighen Foundation
- The Hagen Family Foundation
- The Xerces Society
- Toronto and Region Conservation Authority
- Toronto Botanical Gardens
- Université du Québec à Montréal
- Fournier Lab, Université Laval
- University of Guelph & Arboretum
- University of Guelph's Master of Wildlife Biology Program

Deepening our bumble bee knowledge

Despite collecting fewer queens from the wild than expected for our research lab colonies, 2025 proved a fruitful year. We were able to rear our bees through their entire life cycle and overwinter the queens, and by refining mating methods, we achieved a higher percentage of gynes (new queens) that successfully mated.

In total, **17 yellow-banded colonies produced 71 workers, 155 males and five gynes.** Meanwhile, **21 tri-coloured colonies produced 372 workers, 1,450 males and 45 gynes.**

This year we compared three different pollen diets for our queens before overwintering — in each case using a diet that varied across the season, simulating wild conditions. We also began collaborating with University of Guelph researchers to develop probiotic supplements to further boost the health and performance of our lab colonies.

Meanwhile, our ongoing ground-breaking work on parasite detection is helping us better understand bee health and improve breeding outcomes.

Beyond the lab, our community science and outreach programs continued to grow through workshops, training events and public engagement activities. Volunteers contributed hundreds of bee observations, expanding our understanding of where different at-risk bumble bee species are still found.

Looking ahead to 2026, we'll continue refining breeding techniques, expand our research partnerships and our community science programs — including a new program at MacGregor Point Provincial Park — and begin planning for the next big phase: releasing conservation-bred bees into the wild.

“2025 highlighted the resilience of our Bumble Bee Recovery Program. Despite difficulties collecting wild queens for our Conservation Breeding Lab and the turnover of our team mid-season, we made strides in mating practices and parasite research and had an astounding year of community science. With perseverance, we are excited to continue in 2026!”



- Cole Blair, Lead Biologist, Native Pollinator Initiative

NATIVE BUMBLE BEES

Bombus sp.

Taylor's checkerspot is a grassland butterfly native to the Pacific Northwest, where it depends on wildflower-rich meadows to complete its life cycle. Not long ago, biologists thought it had disappeared from Canada. But when a tiny remnant population was found on one of B.C.'s Gulf Islands in 2005, a local naturalist, Dr. Peter Karsten, set up a conservation breeding initiative that is helping this species make a comeback.

WPC joined the effort in 2013, and by 2015 we were producing enough caterpillars to begin reintroducing them into restored habitats on Denman Island — a critical early step in their recovery. Today WPC's refined husbandry techniques allow us to produce thousands of caterpillars each year to re-establish wild populations on Hornby Island, where they hadn't been seen since 1996.



Program Location

Vancouver Island and Gulf Islands, British Columbia

WPC Conservation Toolkit

Breeding & Reintroduction
Land Steward Engagement
Population Monitoring & Assessments
Research

2025 Program Partners & Supporters

The Annual Foundation
B.C. Ministry of Environment and Parks
B.C. Ministry of Water, Land and Resource Stewardship
B.C. Parks - Denman Island Provincial Park & Helliwell Provincial Park
Denman Conservancy Association
Denman Island landowners & community members
Denman Island Park Butterfly Reserve
Employment & Social Development Canada - Canada Summer Jobs
Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team
Greater Vancouver Zoo
Hornby Island landowners & community members
Hornby Island Natural History Centre
K'ómoks First Nation
Oregon Zoo
Taylor's Checkerspot Butterfly Recovery Implementation Group
Taylor's Checkerspot Community Working Group
University of British Columbia

Achieving full-cycle success, from larvae to release

The 2025 season was a strategic building year for the Taylor's checkerspot conservation program. While weather and funding challenges limited some activities, we made important strides toward our ultimate goal of releasing 5,000 caterpillars each year. These included **exceptional conservation breeding results, setting a new benchmark for success.**

Our conservation breeding program achieved a 70 per cent survival rate from field collection to adulthood — much higher than the roughly five per cent survival typically seen in the wild. Our overwintering methods were especially successful, with **more than 95 per cent of larvae surviving through the winter.**

Of our 33 breeding females, 25 laid about 4,000 eggs, allowing us to raise roughly 2,500 healthy larvae for release near Helliwell Provincial Park on Hornby Island in spring 2026.

By breeding checkerspots from all nine family lines in our care, rather than just the strongest lines, we're maintaining maximum genetic variation. This will be especially important when we release butterflies to more distant sites where conditions are different. The greater the genetic variation among those butterflies, the greater the chances the population will thrive in their new environment.

Field work also brought encouraging news: **a strong wild population is thriving near the Campbell River Airport.** We collected 117 larvae from seven different family lines of this new source population, which will help sustain the program into 2026 and support future research.

“My work with the Taylor's checkerspot butterflies has been the most rewarding conservation work I've had the privilege to be a part of. Caring for and understanding the needs of this species — being there from caterpillar collection, through winter diapause, and even mate selection — makes you feel deeply invested in their survival.”



- Jag Athwal, B.C. Projects Assistant Biologist

TAYLOR'S CHECKERSPOT
Euphydryas editha taylori

The mottled duskywing was once commonly found fluttering across Ontario's tallgrass prairies. But as these habitats gave way to agriculture, development and invasive plants, the duskywing has largely disappeared. In response, WPC partnered with the Ontario Butterfly Species at Risk Recovery Team: a collaborative, multidisciplinary group returning the species to the wild.

Through conservation breeding by the Cambridge Butterfly Conservatory and carefully planned releases at Pinery Provincial Park and more recently across Norfolk County, the team has reintroduced almost 2,600 mottled duskywings since 2021.

Today, these small, stocky butterflies are reproducing on their own — a milestone that marks Ontario's first successful butterfly reintroduction and a hopeful step toward bringing vibrant prairie landscapes back to life.



MOTTLED DUSKYWING

Erynnis martialis

Program Location:
Southern Ontario

WPC Conservation Toolkit
Population Assessments
Reintroduction & Post-Release Monitoring
Research

2025 Program Partners & Supporters
Cambridge Butterfly Conservatory
Employment & Social Development Canada -
Canada Summer Jobs
Long Point Basin Land Trust
Natural Resources Solutions Inc.
Nature Conservancy of Canada
Norris Lab, University of Guelph
Ontario Butterfly Species At Risk Recovery Team
Ontario Parks - Pinery Provincial Park
St. Williams Conservation Reserve

Strengthening budding butterfly communities

Following big wins at Pinery Provincial Park on the shores of Lake Huron, the goal of the mottled duskywing recovery program is to now reintroduce this endangered butterfly to Norfolk County, on the north shore of Lake Erie.

In 2025 — the second year of reintroduction work in the region — the duskywing team focused on refining release methods and monitoring how these butterflies are faring in the wild.

Although only half the butterflies that were overwintered emerged from their pupae, the team was still able to release more than double the number of duskywings in Norfolk County compared to 2024. In total, **987 butterflies were released at four sites:** 777 butterflies during the first generation in early summer and a further 210 during the second generation.

Population surveys documented encouraging signs of activity in the field, with 201 duskywings spotted across the Norfolk sites. This is likely an underestimate, because monitoring didn't begin until after the first flight season.

Field teams also monitored habitat, measuring leaf litter cover, bare soil and litter depth at release sites and installing temperature loggers to better understand environmental conditions. In addition, 32 DNA samples were collected to help track the genetic diversity of the reintroduced population.

Meanwhile, at the Cambridge Butterfly Conservatory, experiments suggested that light exposure during overwintering doesn't seem to affect the timing of butterfly development.

“As we reflect on this past summer’s work, there’s a growing sense of excitement for what comes next. Each sighting is a reminder that these reintroductions are laying the groundwork for a self-sustaining population, and the mottled duskywing is beginning to reclaim its place in Norfolk County.”



– Owen Tapia Daly, Mottled Duskywing Field Assistant for the Norfolk Reintroduction

Many of Ontario's snake species — including Massasauga rattlesnakes and Butler's gartersnakes — are threatened with extinction due to habitat loss, road mortality and persecution by humans.

Since 2016, WPC has been preparing for Canada's first snake reintroductions, in the threatened grasslands of the Ojibway Prairie. Our team has assessed potential release sites, developed best release methods and innovative artificial hibernacula — underground chambers that replicate natural crayfish burrows used by overwintering snakes to survive harsh northern winters.

After successfully overwintering and releasing Butler's gartersnakes in 2022, we achieved the same milestone for Massasaugas in 2024, releasing 21 into the Ojibway Prairie Complex in Windsor. By tackling the unique challenges of reintroducing snakes in cold climates, we're returning these remarkable reptiles to the landscapes where they belong.

MASSASAUGA RATTLESNAKE & BUTLER'S GARTERSNAKE

Sistrurus catenatus & Thamnophis butleri

Program Location

Ontario

WPC Conservation Toolkit

- Breeding & Reintroduction
- Habitat Restoration & Stewardship
- Invasive Species Control
- Outreach & Education
- Population Monitoring & Assessments
- Research
- Threat Mitigation

2025 Program Partners & Supporters

- 8Trees Inc.
- Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Canada
- Caldwell First Nation
- Canadian Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake Recovery Implementation Group
- Canadian Herpetological Society
- City of Windsor
- Eastern Georgian Bay Initiative
- Environment & Climate Change Canada - ECO
- Canada Science Horizons Internship
- Environment & Climate Change Canada - Priority Places for Species at Risk
- Employment & Social Development Canada - Canada Summer Jobs
- Essex Region Conservation Authority
- Friends of Ojibway Prairie
- Georgian Bay Biosphere
- Huron Stewardship Council
- Hydro One
- Laurentian University
- Magnetawan First Nation
- Nature Conservancy of Canada
- Ojibway Nature Centre
- Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks - Species at Risk Stewardship
- Ontario Nature
- Ontario Parks
- Queen's University
- Scales Nature Park
- Shawanaga First Nation
- The Westaway Charitable Foundation
- Toronto Zoo
- Town of LaSalle
- University of Waterloo
- University of Windsor
- Wiikwemkoong First Nation

A special thank you to Peter & Brigitte Westaway and the Westaway Charitable Foundation for their continued support through the Westaway Snake Conservation Fund.

Creating the playbook for successful snake translocations

The early stages of a reintroduction are periods of intense learning. The 2025 snake releases at Ojibway were no exception.

Eight conservation-bred Massasaugas released in 2024 successfully overwintered and emerged the following spring. **Six of those chose to use our WPC designed artificial hibernacula.** Unfortunately, high levels of raccoon predation led us to act decisively and bring the surviving snakes into captivity while we regrouped and adapted 2025 release methods.

We released these along with three others in the summer. To improve survival, we acclimated these older snakes for much longer in the release pens (4 weeks in 2025 compared to 30 hours in 2024) before opening pens, allowing snakes to explore the wide world and establish home ranges.

Those modifications paid off, producing a **higher active-season survival rate** (80 per cent in 2025 versus 71 per cent in 2024). We also observed important behavioural changes that enhanced survival. Most released Massasaugas dispersed together and were recorded together later in the season. Most encouragingly, all snakes had mated before leaving the release pens.

2025 also marked **the single largest translocation in the program's history** with 27!! Butler's gartersnakes placed in artificial hibernacula for release in spring 2026.

Each year we learn and adapt as we build a working playbook for successful snake translocations in Canada.

"This year we incorporated knowledge gained in 2024 to refine our release tactics and successfully completed our second experimental conservation translocation with eastern Massasaugas at Ojibway Prairie. This marks the beginning of a long-term ground-breaking reintroduction program, alongside dedicated partners to bring this fascinating reptile back to its homeland."



Photo: K. Pastushyn

– Jonathan Choquette, PhD., OPRREC Lead Biologist

Photo: G. Tompkins

Program Location

Jersey, Channel Islands, UK (Durrell Conservation Academy)
Mauritius, Indian Ocean (Mauritian Wildlife Foundation)

WPC Conservation Toolkit

Capacity Building
Leadership

2025 Program Partners & Supporters

Alan and Patricia Koval Foundation
Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust
Mauritian Wildlife Foundation

Equipping tomorrow's conservation leaders

For nearly four decades, WPC's Canada's New Noah program has launched the careers of emerging conservation leaders. Since 1988, the program has selected one promising Canadian biologist each year to receive advanced training and international field experience saving endangered species.

In 2025, Mariel Terebiznik became our 34th New Noah. Her first stop was the Durrell Conservation Academy on the island of Jersey. Here she completed three months of intensive training in topics like conservation planning, conservation breeding and GIS, as well as honing the communication, community engagement and leadership skills required to run species recovery programs.

Next, she spent six months in Mauritius, an island nation off the coast of Madagascar, learning from global conservation leaders and contributing directly to conservation fieldwork with the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation.

She cared for giant tortoises and searched for rare geckos. She monitored skinks making a comeback after a disastrous oil spill in 2020. She surveyed tiny endemic snails the size of your fingernail. She even honed her chocolate-making skills creating "chew cubes" used to detect invasive species like rats and shrews. All while learning firsthand what it takes to bring species back from the brink from extinction.

By bringing this hands-on training and experience back home, Mariel — like her fellow New Noah alumni — joins a growing community of conservation leaders safeguarding wildlife and **leading Canada's ability to protect species at risk** for generations to come.

"For 271 days I had one job and that was to learn ... Those nine months were full of great adventures where I met some of the world's rarest species, made lifelong friends, gained new skills, and had a whole lot of fun."

– Mariel Terebiznik, Canada's 34th New Noah

A special thank you to Alan and Patricia Koval for their continued support of the Canada's New Noah Program.



CANADA'S NEW NOAH

Taking the Canadian lead

As a member of the Conservation Planning Specialist Group (CPSG), WPC is part of a global network of experts. Working under the International Union for Conservation of Nature, this network helps conservation teams around the world design practical plans to prevent species extinctions.

In 2025, **WPC became the host of CPSG's Regional Resource Centre in Canada.** Our job is to provide local knowledge of conservation needs and connections to key partners, using the One Plan Approach to coordinate conservation efforts in the wild with hands-on techniques like ex situ breeding and headstarting.

Over the past year we focused on two major conservation planning projects, working in collaboration with scientists, governments and conservation organizations.

One project — led and facilitated by African Lion Safari — culminated in a Conservation **Action Plan for the protection and recovery of endangered gray ratsnakes in Ontario.** This will be published in early 2026. The other assessed **conservation options for the endangered short-tailed chinchilla in Chile.**

Our team also shared our expertise at national conferences, training courses and working groups.

Looking ahead, we plan to expand this work through new conservation planning workshops for freshwater fish and bumble bees and assessing the feasibility of reintroducing the western chorus frog — strengthening and coordinating conservation action for Canada's species at risk.

"Being part of this global approach means WPC isn't just working in isolation — we're contributing to a coordinated, science-backed strategy to prevent extinction."

– Stephanie Winton, Conservation Planning Coordinator and CPSG Canada Convener



Program Location

Canada-wide

WPC Conservation Toolkit

Capacity Building
Creating Partnerships
Enhanced Conservation Planning
Facilitating Best Practices
Leadership
Conservation Needs Assessment

2025 Program Partners & Supporters

African Lion Safari
Canada's Accredited Zoos and Aquariums (CAZA)
International Union for the Conservation of Nature Conservation Planning Specialist Group
Natural Resource Solutions Inc.
New Brunswick Department of Natural Resources and Energy Development
Wildlife Institute/Calgary Zoo



Photo: F. M. Ortiz

2025 HIGHLIGHTS



4,611

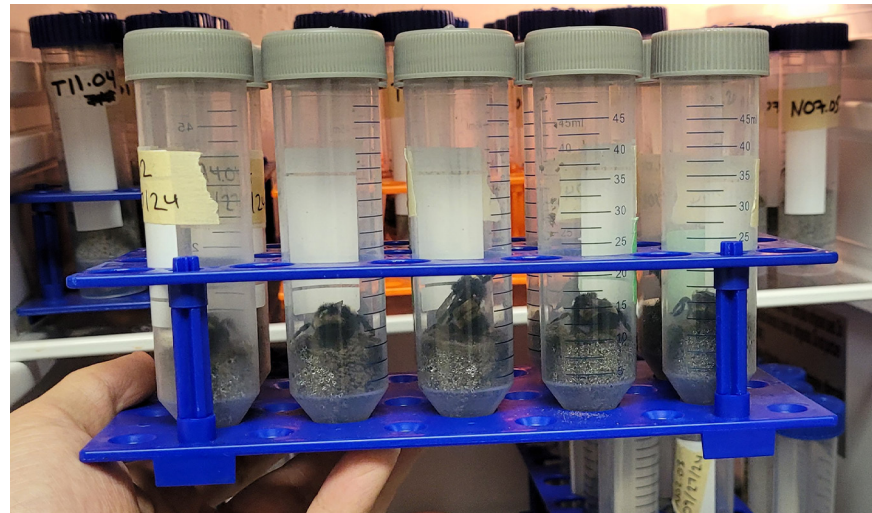
Animals released to the wild. That includes western painted turtles in Fraser Valley wetlands, shrikes hunting on Ontario alvars and checkerspot caterpillars transforming into butterflies on Hornby Island.

Photo: Ray Maichin Photography

2,955

Animals overwintered and cared for in our facilities, ready to return to their natural habitats in the spring or to join our conservation breeding programs.

(Right: bumble bee gynes/queens in their overwintering tubes. Photo by C. Blair.)



8,852

Animals bred through our world-class conservation programs. From tadpoles to bumble bees, our efforts increased the number of individuals ready for release to the wild.

(Left: Oregon spotted frog tadpole. Photo by J. Kissel.)

9,818
Hours monitoring and conducting surveys. Our dedicated field teams trekked through wetlands, prairies and wildflower meadows to better understand the endangered species we work with.
(Below: Ontario Programs Coordinator for WPC's Bumble Bee Recovery Program, Annika, holds a bumble bee caught during a survey. Photo by A. Bowman.)



4,302
Animals from WPC focal species found in the wild during surveys as we track the status of Canada's most imperiled creatures.

11,874
Members of the public engaged at outreach events— including hands-on workshops, wildlife webinars and citizen-science training sessions.

110
Incredible volunteers who supported our recovery programs. They cared for conservation-bred butterflies, conducted field surveys, retrofitted shrike enclosures and so much more.

174
Committed partners and collaborators: zoos, universities, First Nations, landowners and other conservation organizations working with us to save Canada's rarest species.

SUPPORTERS

Thank you to our 2025 corporate, foundation and individual donors who believe in our work and are willing to invest in the future survival of Canada's wildlife. Your generosity is saving species from extinction.

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We gratefully acknowledge those who support our work through payroll giving. Together, your ongoing contributions create a meaningful and lasting impact.

Wildlife Guardians are a special group of dedicated individuals who support our work through recurring monthly donations. Wildlife Guardians make it possible for our conservation teams to help endangered animals throughout the year by providing steady funding.

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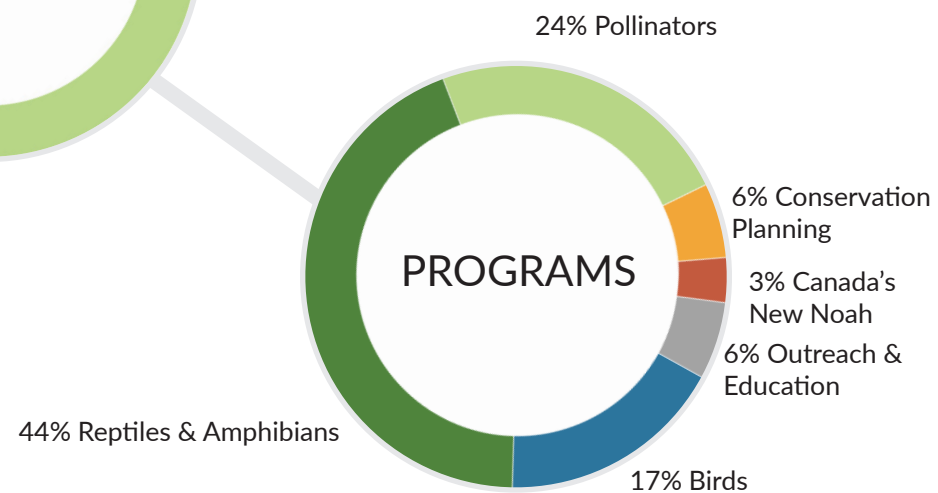
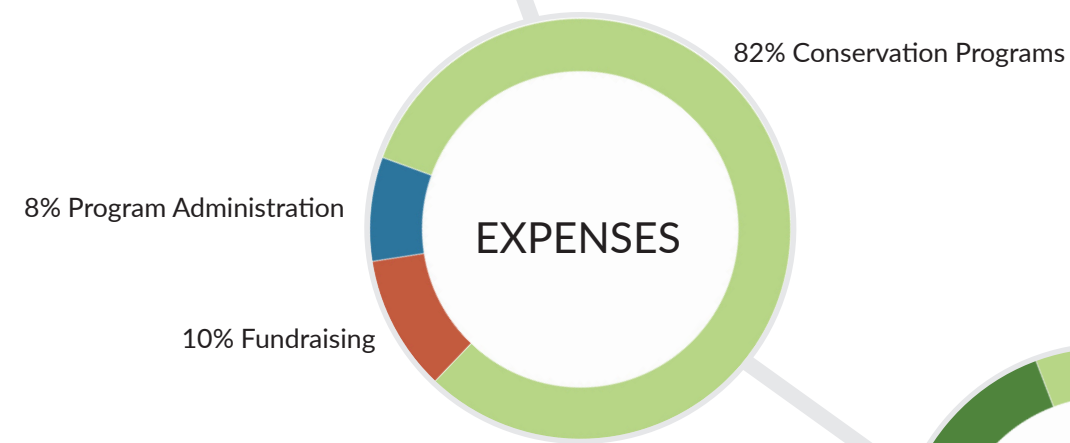
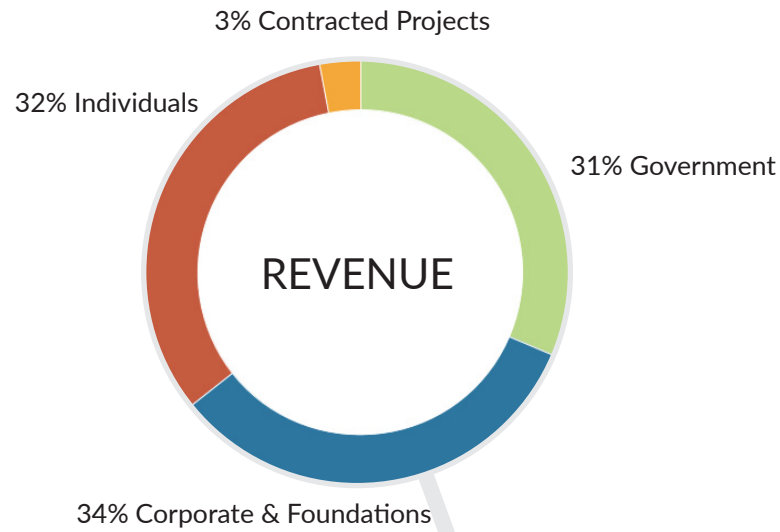
FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

A NOTE FROM OUR TREASURER

2025 marked Wildlife Preservation Canada's 40th anniversary — a milestone reached through fiscal discipline and the steadfast support of those who believe in our work. It was a year of significant financial challenge, both encouraging and difficult. Government funding for endangered species conservation continued its precipitous decline, challenging our ability to maintain and expand programs at the pace we would like. While we ended the year with a deficit, the support of our foundation and individual donors helped offset government gaps, allowing us to maintain momentum across our recovery programs from coast to coast. Generous bequests and corporate gifts further bolstered our efforts. As we look ahead to our 41st year, we do so with cautious optimism — confident in our commitment to release endangered species back to the wild, and ready to take on the saving of new species in need of our help.



- Stephen Brobyn, WPC Treasurer (2025)



Taylor's checkerspot caterpillar release, B.C.
Photo: J. Athwal

ON THE HORIZON

This year, Wildlife Preservation Canada reached 40 years of conservation! This longevity is no easy feat for any charity, and reflects something simple at our core: an unwavering focus on a single mission, putting animals back into the wild. There is a great deal of complex work behind the scenes, but this clarity of purpose has kept us steady through forty years of peaks and valleys.

How does one follow a 40-year legacy of releasing more than 112,000 animals across 21 different species? By leading Canada into a bold, brighter future, in which reintroduction is accepted across the country, used in every protected area to rewild our biodiversity, recover endangered species, and bring back those already lost. Reintroduction has become a common conservation tool globally, and because of WPC and our partners, I believe it will take root as an essential one here at home within the next 10 years. Decades of experience has WPC ready to lead that shift, to show, species by species, just how effective, and how full of hope a reintroduction can be.

We will never stop looking ahead, and in 2026 each of our core programs enters a bold new phase. For bumble bees, we move from breeding to release-ready, developing, with the University of Guelph, the first probiotic for a threatened bumble bee to ensure our released bees are healthy and strong. This is as innovative as it is urgent. Our recent research suggests that pesticide-driven depletion of gut bacteria in declining species may be a hidden driver of wild bee declines — making this type of method vital for the colonies we care for in captivity and the wild populations we are racing to protect.

New Cellular Tracking Technology (CTT) that taps into North America's cell phone network will rapidly complete the puzzle of where our released eastern loggerhead shrikes spend the winter, while a renewed landowner stewardship program reconnects us with the farmers and landholders at the heart of shrike recovery. Across our turtle, snake, and frog programs, we will deepen relationships with First Nations, weaving Traditional Ecological Knowledge together with Western science. And we are planning entirely new species work — from the iconic woodland caribou to the diminutive frosted elfin butterfly. No species is too big or too small to benefit from WPC's experience.

2026 will also see us chart the course from 2027 to 2031 as part of a new 5-year strategic plan. I'm looking ahead with great optimism. Our hands-on conservation works, our staff have devoted years — in some cases decades — to saving Canada's wildlife, and our community has never once given up. Thank you for standing with us, and for believing, as we do, that extinction is not an option.

Dr. Lance Woolaver Jr.
Executive Director



Wildlife Preservation Canada

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admin@wildlifepreservation.ca
Charitable Registration No.
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WPC is headquartered in Guelph, Ontario on the homelands of many nations, including the Anishinaabek, Neutral, Métis, Mississauga, and Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and on the treaty lands of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We work across Turtle Island, and have deep gratitude to all the Indigenous Peoples who have been, and continue to be, stewards and protectors of the land on which we rely.