

*To the Editor:*

*This is an article from Janet Sumner, Executive Director of the Wildlands League. It is available for publishing at no charge, provided Ms. Sumner is cited as the author. Word count is approximately 632 words. Select wildlife photos are available upon request. Ms. Sumner can be contacted at 416.971.9453 ext. 39 or janet@wildlandsleague.org. For more information, visit [www.wildlandsleague.org](http://www.wildlandsleague.org).*

## **Last gasp measures for species are fair and balanced**

Will the sky fall for the forest industry because of the new Endangered Species Act? NO.

The Act is designed with flexibility to prevent species from disappearing in Ontario.

Are we winning the over all battle on endangered species yet? No. More species are being listed as in peril every year, woodland caribou, hooded warbler, spotted turtle and others. Today, there are close to 200 species of plants and animals in Ontario that urgently need a lifeline.

Species preservation relies on a good failsafe act, one that is uncompromising in its purpose and seeks to remedy a failure in the system of prevention that didn't work in the first place. The strength of the Endangered Species Act is that it is scientifically based yet with the flexibility to solve problems.

This means that a group of scientists, through the Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario (COSSARO), using science, not economics or politics, determines whether a species is at risk under the act. Once that is done, then recovery plans use a combination of the best science, economic impacts and concepts like 'overall benefit to species' to create plans that will be a win-win-win for species, communities and industry. These plans are intended to be balanced and fair with the overall goal of halting the disappearance of and recovering the species. The Act is not meant to rubber stamp business as usual scenarios that contributed to the decline of the species in the first place. The Act would be rendered meaningless if that were the case.

In Ontario, all industries have environmental regulations and policies they must adhere to. Many of these are for health and safety reasons and some for protection of the environment. Permits and instruments such as for air emissions, water taking, forestry or new developments are designed to prevent loss of environmental integrity. However, there are situations where the environment is affected and species go into decline despite best efforts and intentions. That is when we need legislation, like the Endangered Species Act, to be the safety net and 'last gasp measure' to prevent a species from being extirpated in Ontario.

What is needed, therefore, is for all of us to work together for species protection and ecosystem health in Ontario.

This is what happened last year when many industries from across this province along with environmentalists, municipalities and government participated in the development of the new Endangered Species Act. The result was legislation considered the best in North America.

We know that progressive industries in Ontario care about the environment and want to see a biologically robust Ontario. We share this belief not just for the sake of species but because the ecosystems that species depend on are the same ecosystems that support life, all life, including our own.

So if the system of forest management plans and other requirements under the Crown Forest Sustainability Act adhered to by the forest industry are not enough to prevent species decline, then we need to know that and look at why and address it. The Endangered Species Act will make sure we do. The Act won't put people out of business, quite the opposite, it helps us all stay in business by putting measures in place to ensure the

ecosystems we all depend upon will still support our grand children and great grandchildren long after we are gone.

We hope that progressive forest companies will seek to get out ahead of the extinction curve and protect the ecosystems we all thrive on. They need not fear the Endangered Species Act. It is fair and balanced. And it is our only last gasp measure to do something for species when all else fails. Such legislation should be embraced.

**Janet Sumner**  
**Executive Director**  
**Wildlands League**  
**380-401 Richmond Street West**  
**Toronto ON**  
**416.971.9453 ext. 39**