



For Immediate Release

## **Ontario Nature Furthers Snake Conservation Rare Alvar Habitat to Be Restored**

**APRIL 25, 2024, PELEE ISLAND, ONTARIO** – Ontario Nature is pleased to announce that our conservation work on Pelee Island will continue through 2026. A multi-partner collaborative with land trusts and researchers will focus on monitoring and restoring important habitat for at-risk snakes on conservation lands across Pelee Island – including Ontario Nature’s [Stone Road Alvar Nature Reserve](#).

Alvars are globally rare habitats that are naturally open and are home to a high number of at-risk plants and animals, many of which are not found elsewhere. The collaboration will undertake habitat restoration as a response to woody shrub encroachment, which threatens to change alvar habitats by increasing shade and outcompeting alvar species. This work will improve existing alvars and create new habitat for at-risk snakes and other rare species that are found on alvars including broad-banded forestsnail, snail-nesting bees and climbing prairie rose.

The collaboration will employ various habitat restoration techniques including mechanical shrub removal at several locations across Pelee Island and a prescribed burn at Stone Road Nature Reserve in late summer 2024, pending suitable wind and weather conditions. Following habitat restoration, partners will monitor conservation lands to determine the impact on species at risk. Using this information, a best management practices brochure will be made available for the public who want to maintain or improve snake habitat on their properties.

Partners will monitor for the presence of snakes across Pelee Island in addition to monitoring known hibernation and nesting sites, collecting population data, and survey roads for mortality. This will help us produce up-to-date information on population size and threats, which will inform future conservation work. Pelee Island landowners will be provided with opportunities to connect with project partners through a community event and feedback provided to the mayor and council.

This project is being undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Habitat Stewardship Program and the Government of Ontario through the Species at Risk Stewardship Program. This project is delivered in partnership with Natural Resource Solutions Inc., Nature Conservancy of Canada, 8Trees Inc., and Scales Nature Park.

### **QUOTES:**

“Every day, dedicated local and community organizations like Ontario Nature do incredible work to protect and recover plants, insects, animals and their habitats – and our government is proud to support them,” said Andrea Khanjin, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks.

“By helping make this conservation project on Pelee Island possible, we’re building on Ontario’s strong track record of environmental stewardship, preserving our province’s rich biodiversity for future generations.”

## FACTS:

- Pelee Island is home to several at-risk snakes, including the endangered Blue Racer (*Coluber constrictor foxii*) and threatened Eastern Foxsnake (*Pantherophis vulpinis*).
- Ontario Nature's Stone Road Alvar Nature Reserve is a 43-hectare (103 acre) property that protects some of Ontario's rarest habitat. It provides habitat for 44 provincially rare and 33 regionally rare plant species. The nature reserve is part of the larger Stone Road Alvar Complex, owned and managed by Nature Conservancy of Canada and Essex Region Conservation Authority.

## ABOUT:

Through the Species at Risk Stewardship Program, Ontario is providing up to \$4.5 million to communities, organizations, academics, and Indigenous peoples for on-the-ground activities that benefit species at risk and their habitats in 2023-24.

The Government of Canada established the Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk in 2000 as part of Canada's national strategy for the protection of species at risk. Environment and Climate Change Canada administers Habitat Stewardship Program funds for terrestrial stewardship projects that contribute directly to the recovery objectives and population goals of species at risk listed on Schedule 1 of the Species at Risk Act and that prevent others from becoming a conservation concern.

Ontario Nature protects wild species and wild spaces through conservation, education and public engagement. A charitable organization, Ontario Nature represents more than 30,000 members and supporters, and 150 member groups across Ontario. For more information, visit [ontarionature.org](https://ontarionature.org).

## LEARN MORE:

- Webpage: [Stone Road Alvar Nature Reserve](#)
- Twitter: [Ontario Nature](#)
- Facebook: [Ontario Nature](#)
- [2019 Stone Road Alvar Prescribed Burn](#) ON Nature Magazine Article

## VIDEO AND IMAGES:

- [Pelee Island Conservation and Research Webinar](#)
- [2019 Stone Road Alvar Prescribed Burning Video](#)

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