



AMERICAN BADGER

Credit: Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources/J.D. Taylor

## SPECIES AT RISK



BIRD'S-FOOT VIOLET

Credit: OMNR Wasyli D. Balonisky - NHIC Archives

### CONTENTS

#### SPECIES AT RISK:

- Introduction
- The *Ontario Endangered Species Act, 2007*
  - What's New?
  - How Will the Act Be Implemented?
- Implications to the Business Community
- Other Applicable Policies and Legislation
- Interesting Facts
- Recent Ontario SAR Stories
- Recent Global SAR Stories
- Converting Challenges into Opportunities

#### SAVANTA INC.

- Current News
  - New Staff
  - Recent Presentations

Significant attention is being paid to the decline in biodiversity on our planet, and this is highlighted by an increased number of plants and animals being declared endangered, or at risk of extinction. These organisms are becoming widely referred to locally and globally as Species at Risk.

At a global scale, the International World Conservation Union (IUCN) conservatively estimates that there are more than 16,000 species threatened with extinction. This includes 25% of all mammals, 12% of all bird species and half of the world's freshwater turtle species. Amphibian Ark reports that half of the globally known amphibian species are threatened with extinction (32% are known to be threatened; another 23% are data deficient but believed threatened). Hence the Ark's global campaign, "2008 Year of the Frog"; the Ark is related to the IUCN Amphibian Specialist Group Conservation Division.

With over 570 species designated at some level of risk in Canada, over 200 of which are found in Ontario, it isn't surprising that we have federal legislation in place (Species at Risk Act) as well as new provincial legislation, *Endangered Species Act, 2007*. Both of these Acts are targeted towards reducing threats against species at risk and towards ensuring that other species do not become at risk themselves.



These Acts were developed in part, in response to Canada's ratification of the Convention on Biological Diversity. The Convention was signed by 150 countries at the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED) or the 'Earth Summit' in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 1992. Subsequently, the Canadian Biodiversity Strategy and the Ontario Biodiversity Strategy were developed to provide national and provincial frameworks to the international goals set out in the Convention.

### SPECIES AT RISK:

#### Ontario's New Act

The new provincial *Endangered Species Act, 2007* (ESA) received Royal Assent in May, 2007 and will take full effect on June 30th, 2008.

#### Ontario's Endangered Species Act – What's New?

Ontario's *Endangered Species Act, 2007* is quite different and much more progressive than Ontario's original 1971 Act. Much reduced is the rigidity associated with the 1971 Act. Key features of the new Act include:

- The establishment of a Species at Risk in Ontario Stewardship Program aimed at promoting the preservation and restoration of habitat for species at risk; outreach and education; and, the implementation of recovery strategies and management plans.

Continued on page 2.

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