
Species at risk habitat
and
FIELD CROPS

Best Management Practices that

PROTECT

PROTECTING THE HABITAT AND ENVIRONMENT THAT EXISTS IS THE EASIEST, AND CHEAPEST WAY TO HELP SAR. MEDIATING HABITAT THREATS CAN RESULT IN SWIFT AND NOTABLE IMPROVEMENTS TO ENVIRONMENT AND HABITAT.

IMPROVED STREAM CROSSING

Maintaining safe, appropriate stream crossings for equipment is important to equipment maintenance and farm work safety. The cost of a proper crossing in many cases in far outweighed by the costs associated with repairs for equipment damaged or time lost navigating precarious crossings—or pulling your equipment out of the mud.

Species that depend on healthy waterways can be directly and indirectly harmed by farm machinery driving through waterways and distrupting habitat and natural cycles. Appropriate, dedicated crossings for equipment can significantly decrease or eliminate negative impacts on aquatic species at risk.

EROSION CONTROL STRUCTURES

Losing nutrients and soil to erosion is money down the drain! Utilizing erosion control structures to keep nutrients and soil in the field and to keep stream banks healthy contributes immensely to sustainability of a farm property. Don't let your fields disappear from under your feet!

Losing nutrients and soil from the field is a loss for the farmer, and those nutrients and soil gained in aquatic habitats can negatively impact important aquatic (water) habitat. Stream banks are just like crop fields; they like to be covered and a strong root structure from diverse plants plays an important role in keeping stream bank strong and intact.

Best Management Practices that

ENHANCE

SIMILAR TO PROTECTING HABITAT, THE VALUE OF ENHANCING EXISTING HABITAT IS HIGH AS IT HAS A GREATER ABILITY TO SUPPORT EXISTING POPULATIONS OF SAR, HELPING THEM TO MAINTAIN EXISTING POPULATIONS AND IN SOME CASES RECOVER LOST NUMBERS.

TREE PLANTING

Tree cover can serve many purposes on a farm. Appropriately sited, treed windbreaks or more substantial treed buffers can mediate wind erosion in fields and increase crop yields. Trees convert CO2 to oxygen and provide valuable shade as well as being visually appealing. A farm is a legacy and so is a tree – plant trees for your farm's successors and watch them take root.

Through planting a diversity of tree species, increasing the biodiversity on your farm can help to build resiliency and abundance of food sources for wildlife. Tree plantings as riparian buffers help protect valuable and vulnerable riparian habitat for species at risk. Tree cover is invaluable for creating corridors that connect larger tracts of wildlife habitat.

HABITAT STRUCTURES

(Bat boxes, pollinator nests and bird nests)

Farm productivity relies on an abundance of healthy pollinators. With pollinator populations declining, providing a hospitable environment that allows for pollinator populations to flourish will help support the pollination of field crops. Other species, like birds and bats, can provide valuable on-farm pest control benefits.

Installing habitat structures like nesting boxes on a farm property is a great way to support species at risk. With the changing farm landscapes and advancements in farm structures, some species are losing critical nesting spaces. The construction of dedicated nesting structures that are properly sited is critical to the success of the species and the value of services they offer to farmers.

Best Management Practices that

CREATE

CREATING HABITAT CAN BENEFIT SAR THAT HAVE SPECIALIZED HABITAT NEEDS, ESPECIALLY WHEN THEIR NEEDED HABITAT IS IN SHORT DEMAND. CREATING HABITAT IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT IN AREAS OF THE PROVINCE WHERE HABITAT HAS BEEN LOST DUE TO HUMAN SETTLEMENT.

HABITAT CORRIDORS

Maintaining some natural spaces on a farm is a great way to contribute to SAR recovery. Corridors that connect habitat can attract a wide variety of beneficial pollinators. Corridors can be composed of existing fencerows, field edges, and marginal lands. Building on existing buffers or planting new areas on marginal lands can create wildlife corridors. It is even possible to design a grassed waterway to serve as a wildlife corridor as well.

Habitat fragmentation is a leading issue for many SAR. There may not be space available on a single farm to create large blocks of habitat, however creating a habitat corridor (usually a wide, buffer strip of diverse trees, shrubs and plants) through a property that connects adjoining larger pieces of habitat like a forest can offer ample benefits. No one project will solve species declines in Ontario, it is the work of many that will make the difference.

NATIVE GRASSLAND PLANTING

Enriching grassland with the planting of native species can provide critical pollinator habitat on-farm. By supporting healthy pollinator populations, crops will benefit from the abundance of pollinators in the area. The planting of a diversity of native species helps to increase grassland resiliency when drought or flooding occurs.

Native grassland provides critical habitat to species at risk in Ontario. With a substantial decline in grassland acreage across the province, species like bobolink and eastern meadowlark rely on these tracts of native plantings for habitat. In addition, the diversity of flowering plants present in grasslands provides varying blooming periods, which is essential to providing food sources for native pollinators throughout the growing season.

With the changing landscape of Essex county, farmer David Ainsley sought to make his farm more resillient. The disappearing stands of Carolinian forest in the area has made the landscape very open, and his productive farmland prone to erosion.

Shelterbelts and tree planting that David undertook on his farm was the first step to protecting his farm from winds that were eroding his soil and his profits. David has seen the improvements from those plantings, and is now setting his sights on enriching his farm landscape even further.

"I've gotten to know the native plants and the spread of biology through the farm and forest; I've gotten to know and appreciate the biodiversity," says David. With decades of learning and seeing the value of his planting projects, he's now seeing the value in maintaining species at risk and their habitats. "It's just part of how I farm," he says.

Through creative planting and removal of invasive species projects, David has enriches his farm's biodiversity, and lends itself to supporting critical pollinators. By removing invasive species, David is making room for native species that attract and support healthy pollinator populations. While pollinators benefit from the abundance of plant species diversity, David's crops benefit from the abundance of pollinators nearby.

David knows that it's a symbiotic relationship, and knows that his farm is thriving because of it. "I'm a farmer and I make a living off the land, but I also make room for biodiversity, and my farm is more productive because of it."

Photos: Jen Hoesen

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