

Black Tern

Chlidonias niger



Status: **Special Concern**

Threats:

- ◆ Wetland drainage and alteration
- ◆ Water pollution
- ◆ Disturbance of nesting colonies by boat traffic
- ◆ Fluctuating water levels



Photo: USFWS

Photo: Brian Hansen

Description:

- ◆ Small bird 25 cm long
- ◆ Body is grey with black head, chest, belly and wing tips
- ◆ Underside of tail is white
- ◆ Bill is black
- ◆ Legs are dark red
- ◆ Both sexes appear similar
- ◆ Flies gracefully
- ◆ Call sounds like “ka-sheek” or “kik-kik-kik”

Biology:

- ◆ Monogamous and breeds at 2 yrs of age
- ◆ Typically lays 3 eggs late May to late June
- ◆ Is social and usually breeds in loose colonies
- ◆ Builds its nests on floating reed debris, logs or boards, muskrat rafts or abandoned grebe nests, usually in shallow marshes among the cattails
- ◆ Migrates to the coast of northern South America for the winter
- ◆ Eats insects picked from the water’s surface while hovering above, as well as other aquatic invertebrates and small fish

Habitat:

- ◆ Preferred habitat includes shallow, freshwater cattail marshes, lake edges, and sewage ponds
- ◆ Breeds mainly in the marshes along Georgian Bay
- ◆ Prefers deep marshes (> 1 m) with a 50:50 open water:emergent vegetation ratio

Species at Risk
STEWARDS' GUIDE SERIES

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Black Tern on Your Property? *Here's What You Can Do:*

- ◆ **Don't disturb nests, young or adults.** Be respectful and observe from a distance.
- ◆ **Support the protection of wetlands.**
- ◆ **Avoid wetland areas with your motor boat.** If you must travel near wetlands, reduce speed so that no wake is produced.
- ◆ **Participate in the Great Lakes Marsh Monitoring Program.** For more information visit www.bsc-eoc.org/volunteer/glmp/index.jsp?targetpg=index&lang=EN
- ◆ **See a Black Tern?** Submit your sighting to the Natural Heritage Information Centre at nhic.mnr.gov.on.ca/MNR/nhic/species/species_report.cfm. Photographs with specific locations or mapping coordinates are always helpful.
- ◆ **Contact the Ministry of Natural Resources.** If you find a Black Tern or a nest on your property, you may be eligible for stewardship programs that support the protection and recovery of species at risk and their habitats. Contact the MNR for more information.
- ◆ **Learn More.** Check out the Species at Risk section on the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources website at www.mnr.gov.on.ca.



Photos: Omar Runolfsson



Did You Know?

The Black Tern is moderately area-sensitive.

Recent studies show that it generally requires permanent marshes that are at least 50 hectares in size.

Black Terns have disappeared from many marshes that have been reduced much below this threshold.

Ontario's *Endangered Species Act*

Ontario's *Endangered Species Act, 2007* came into force on June 30, 2008, making Ontario a North American leader in the protection of species at risk and their habitats.

Compared to Ontario's previous Act, written in 1971, the new ESA 2007 provides:

- ◆ Science-based assessment of species' status
- ◆ Automatic protection of a species and its habitat once it's listed as endangered or threatened
- ◆ Broader protection for species at risk and their habitats
- ◆ Greater support for volunteer stewardship efforts of private landowners, resource users, and conservation organizations
- ◆ A commitment to recovery of species through recovery planning
- ◆ Greater accountability, including government reporting requirements

Ontario is home to more than 30,000 species, most of which have stable populations.

However, more than 180 species in Ontario, 34 of which are found in Parry Sound-Muskoka, are currently considered "at risk" because of threats like:

- ◆ Habitat loss
- ◆ Global changes in insect populations
- ◆ Pollution
- ◆ Invasive species
- ◆ Climate change
- ◆ Over-harvesting
- ◆ Road mortality



Learn more about Species at Risk on the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources website at www.mnr.gov.on.ca.