

Whip-poor-will

Caprimulgus vociferus



Status: **Threatened**

Threats:

- ◆ Decline in food source (flying insects)
- ◆ Reduction of habitat availability as open fields succeed to closed forests
- ◆ Vehicle mortality
- ◆ Nest predation



Photo: Algonquin Park Museum



Photo: NC Wildlife Resources Commission

Description:

- ◆ Medium-sized bird 22-26 cm long
- ◆ Cryptically coloured with mottled brown, black and grey body that is well camouflaged
- ◆ Long, rounded tail and wings; outside tail feathers are white
- ◆ Small beak with a large mouth fringed with long stiff bristles that aid in capturing insects
- ◆ Call is a three part “WHIP-poor-WILL” with rising last note and first and last syllables accented
- ◆ Only calls during breeding season at dusk on cloudless nights or during a full moon

Biology:

- ◆ More likely to be heard than seen
- ◆ Doesn't build a nest; eggs are laid on leaves on the forest floor, generally at the time of the full moon
- ◆ Young hide on the ground until they can fly (about 20 days after hatching)
- ◆ Sleeps on the ground, low branches of trees or within fallen debris
- ◆ Forages at dusk, dawn, and moonlit periods of the night
- ◆ Eats flying insects, especially moths and beetles

Habitat:

- ◆ Lives in deciduous or mixed open forests with little or no underbrush
- ◆ Forages in open areas and uses forested areas for roosting and nesting
- ◆ Overwinters from South Carolina and along the Gulf of Mexico to Guatemala. They return to central Ontario by mid May

Species at Risk
STEWARDS' GUIDE SERIES

Whip-poor-will

Caprimulgus vociferus

STEWARDS' GUIDE SERIES

Status: **Threatened**

Whip-poor-will on Your Property? Here's What You Can Do:

- ◆ **Don't disturb nests, young or adults.** Be respectful and observe from a distance.
- ◆ **Please keep your cats and dogs indoors.** Cats are particularly hard on ground nesting birds like the Whip-poor-will.
- ◆ **Don't eradicate flying insects.** Flying insects like moths and beetles are an important component of the ecosystem, becoming food for a wide variety of birds and other animals. Using pesticides will not only harm beneficial flying insects on your property, but also impact those species that feed upon them.
- ◆ **Support sustainable forestry practices when you purchase wood products.** Look for an FSC logo.
- ◆ **See or hear a Whip-poor-will close by?** 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 Whip-poor-will 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.



Chicks
Photo: NC Wildlife Resources Commission



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.