

## Species at Risk and the Rt. Hon. Herb Gray Parkway

Protecting species at risk is an important part of this project and we are committed to protecting, creating, and restoring habitat in the corridor. Construction of the Rt. Hon. Herb Gray Parkway (the Parkway) will affect nine species that are protected under the *Endangered Species Act, 2007* (ESA) including two reptiles—Butler's Gartersnake and Eastern Foxsnake (Carolinian Population)—and seven plants—Colicroot, Common Hoptree, Dense Blazing Star, Dwarf Hackberry, Kentucky Coffee-Tree, Willowleaf Aster, and Eastern Prairie Fringed-orchid.

The Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO) is proceeding in accordance with the provisions of the ESA to protect species at risk impacted by construction of the Parkway. Since permits were issued in 2010, MTO has been working to relocate species and protect areas for construction activities.

Prior to commencing full construction of the Parkway, MTO worked with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) to establish the proper measures to protect existing habitat, create new restoration areas, and to move species at risk away from areas where they would otherwise be harmed. In accordance with the approved permits, MTO prepared species-specific management plans, providing detailed information about goals, methods and techniques for activities related to the protected species.

### Black Snake Fencing

The black fencing installed along the Parkway corridor is temporary snake fence barrier. It is a requirement of a Permit issued by MNR under the ESA. The total length being installed is 13 kilometres and it is six feet high. The fencing is installed in strategic locations to exclude snakes from active construction sites and will be maintained throughout construction.

It is made out of a flat/smooth geotextile fabric specifically designed to prevent Eastern Foxsnake (a climbing snake) from entering the construction site. The prefabricated fence pieces are placed in a trench with additional geotextile fabric lining the trench and then backfilled with earth. The snakes are prevented from going underneath the fence.



### Plant Species Relocation

MTO has been working with consultants who have conducted extensive studies of plant species and who are experts in the field of ecological restoration. Representatives from Walpole Island First Nation have been working with MTO in the transplanting work to date and a Species at Risk Coordinating Committee that includes representatives from the City of Windsor and Environment Canada has been brought together. MNR provided expert guidance in the development of the protection measures.

Our ESA permit requires us to salvage significant plants from the Parkway footprint and transplant them in restoration sites where they will receive long-term protection. Up to 23 restoration sites have been identified to take these species. Restoration Sites have been selected for long term ecological protection because they are former Tallgrass Prairie habitat that can be restored, with careful management and the introduction of prairie species such as the Willowleaf Aster and Dense Blazing Star. MTO has committed to active management and long-term protection of all sites.

Preparation of these sites was conducted over several weeks in fall 2010. This preparation included brush cutting and herbicide spraying to control invasive plant species. Application of the herbicides was strictly controlled to ensure that only the invasive plants were treated. The intent of the restoration work and transplanting to these sites is to restore prairie conditions which are native to the area.

In March 2011, workers began moving prairie plants which would be impacted by the construction of the Parkway, to protected sites which will be monitored and actively managed. As the plants have protection under the ESA, all transplanting is being done in accordance with the conditions of a Permit issued by MNRF. The recipient sites will be managed to restore/create Tallgrass Prairie habitat where a variety of prairie species will flourish.



During the spring relocation work, the plants were removed in square blocks and included associated prairie species. The crews placed them in grey bins and the bins were held in refrigerated trucks for storage until the weather was warmer. All work was conducted in accordance with the conditions of the permit.

## **The Rt. Hon. Herb Gray Parkway**

Species at risk were the focus of hundreds of hours of field work and extensive study during the Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) study. We will continue to work with MNRF to focus on protection, creation and restoration of habitat for all species at risk. Once completed, the Parkway will provide wildlife connections, acres of new habitat, and restoration of the Carolinian landscape.