

Our Ontario Species At Risk – An Artist’s Cause and Commitment

by SHERRY HAYES

There is no denying that the past two-plus years have been a roller-coaster for many. However, one thing is certain. This pandemic has definitely changed life in general and it has certainly afforded more time to think. For many of us, it has been a time to delve into issues that might not have previously taken priority in a busy daily life. Through all of the unanticipated ups and downs, it has become crucial to take a breath, think outside the box and find a better purpose that surpasses this unpleasant event that was bestowed on us.

Personally, it has intensified my efforts regarding a special project that I initiated only months before covid surfaced in this country. Nonetheless, it is a cause that I became and continue to be committed to and one that I am sure HNC and all wildlife organization members would understand. That is, bringing awareness to and subsequently, doing something about the issue regarding our Ontario Species At Risk.

Nature and wildlife have always been important to me, particularly as I grew up many decades ago on fifteen acres of pristine wetland forests that teemed with hundreds of species of flora and fauna. However, it has been in recent years that the extent of at-risk species and spaces has risen to the forefront of my mind. Watching the devastation of natural areas and ultimately, its inhabitants, due to climate change, weather events and human interference through destruction and development – it just seems too much to bear.

As a wildlife artist, to recognize the latter is to consider the necessity for change. For myself, it was the need to pick up a brush and create a narrative. Thus, art has become my chosen vehicle. The need to hold a brush once again. To sweep bold colours across the canvas. This pause brought on by the pandemic afforded me time to listen to the world. And listen to Nature. This is what I have learned.

There is, without doubt, a strong and urgent call from Nature. As members of HNC, I am sure all are aware that, according to many reports, there are over 230 species at risk in Ontario. Those numbers are staggering and should not be tolerated. And so, my brushstrokes now tell a story. Their story.

My at-risk species paintings have taken on an edge unlike any of my past works. In its own haunting way, my ‘Darkness’ series casts shadows on the ongoing perils of Nature yet shines with hope for our fragile wild species and spaces in Ontario’s own backyard. This series is created for the greater good. While bold in fashion, they are designed to bring awareness to this critical situation while offering hope for a better future.

To that and with great humility, I note that my efforts have not gone unnoticed. Dr. David Suzuki, Host of CBC TV’s *The Nature of Things*, in viewing my wildlife art and cause, responded with a personal letter to me in which he thanked me for ‘being part of a movement to find a different relationship with Nature founded on love, respect, gratitude and responsibility’ and, ‘in our own way and through our own expertise, make a difference.’

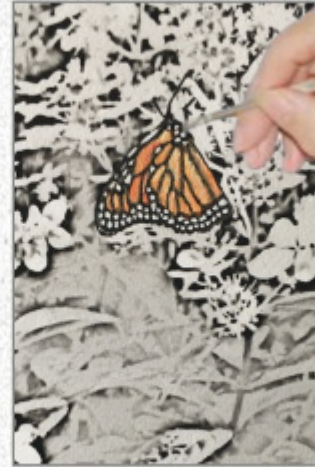
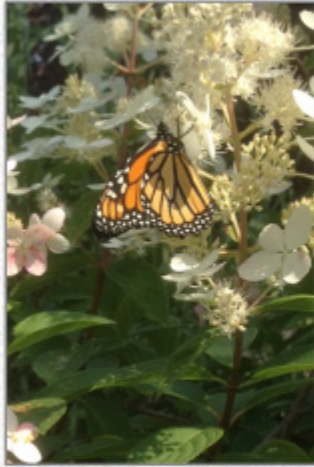
And so, with Dr. Suzuki’s kind words of encouragement, my journey continues. With hope that all in Nature will become right again and having chosen this important cause, my art has become my voice for Wild Ontario. Most importantly, my art gives back - to organizations that work tirelessly to save our wildlife. Were it not for the selfless efforts of these wildlife, nature and environmental organizations, the situation might be worse than the frightening statistics indicate.

To that, and with this personal cause that I have purposefully taken on, I am pleased to announce that it is my intention to add The Hamilton Naturalists’ Club as one of my chosen organizations to be a recipient of the net proceeds of a future dedicated



Wildlife Artist Sherry Hayes with some of her dedicated Species at Risk paintings. (Shown in part) From bottom left clockwise: 'Fallen' - Shumard's Oak & Five-Lined Skink (In progress); 'Fractured North' - Melting Iceflows & Beluga (In progress); 'Flight Into Darkness' - Karner Blue Butterfly & Lupines (Completed & available to purchase); 'Ethereal Beauty' - Drooping Trillium (Completed & available to purchase); 'Winged Warrior' - Monarch Butterfly on Hydrangea (Completed & available to purchase)

Metamorphosis...



*With The
Stroke Of
A Brush...*

Artscapes By Sherry®

Close up of a Monarch Butterfly. Photo captured by Sherry and her dramatic interpretation through her photo-painting technique.

painting for support-specific HNC conservation projects. This particular artwork will highlight a specific species at risk within the Hamilton area. I look forward to providing further details at a later time.

On a final note... Some time ago I heard a comment to the effect of: 'Take the gift that you were given and do

the best that you can with it.' My art seems to be a gift that I have been given. Thus, I will strive to do the best I can with it - For the Love of All Things Nature... For further details regarding my endangered species art, visit www.artscapesbysherry.ca (Links at the bottom of my Homepage provide direction to various information and coverage).

