

# At-risk species, including Jefferson Salamander, focus of artist Sherry Hayes' work

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Mar 18, 2024 4:16 PM



NEWS RELEASE

SHERRY HAYES

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As a previous resident of Halton region, artist Sherry Hayes is making a compelling statement regarding our endangered wildlife through her bold, edgy artwork that highlights our at-risk species and spaces throughout Ontario including our local Jefferson Salamander. "The alarm bells are ringing," Hayes asserts. "The number of species at-risk in this province is staggering. Clearly nature is calling and the reasons behind it can't be denied."

A recent CMS (Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species) report indicates that one in five migratory species is at risk of extinction and 44 percent are decreasing in numbers. The current King Road closure in Burlington is another stark reminder of the need to be aware of our vulnerable wildlife.

“Over 230 species are listed as at-risk in Ontario,” Hayes points out. “As a nature lover, to recognize these critical issues is to recognize the need for change. We have a choice. Either ignore the crisis or fix it. I listened to nature and ultimately chose to pick up a brush and create a narrative. I unapologetically paint daring themes to tell their story.”

With the decline of healthy ecosystems across this country, Hayes has determinedly taken on this crusade for endangered species. Her art and campaign have not gone unnoticed by several renowned Canadian wildlife and environmental advocates.

The artist emphatically states, “There is beauty but also a fragility that needs to be addressed and protected in Canada. Locally, that includes the escarpment region.”

The Niagara escarpment, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, is richly diverse. Varying habitats along its corridor collectively boast the highest level of species diversity among Canadian biosphere reserves. The endangered Jefferson Salamander is found only in the southern regions of Ontario mostly along the Niagara escarpment.

While Burlington does their part with [temporary road closures](#) to protect this amphibian’s annual breeding migration, to further raise awareness, Ms. Hayes created a unique painting featuring the Jefferson and other local at-risk species. ‘Within The Darkened Forest’ showcases both the beauty and vulnerability of the escarpment and its inhabitants. The scene depicts birch and butternut trees, ancient cedars and the elusive salamander. Transitioning from light to dark, the painting poignantly shows what could be if the pendulum swings too far in the wrong direction.

And this artist hasn’t stopped there. A children’s storybook highlighting the Jefferson is in the works and expected to go to print soon. Designed to teach young readers about the endangered amphibian’s habitat, it also encourages new generations to be part of the movement to help protect and preserve our at-risk species and spaces. And in true spirit of giving back to nature, Hayes donates a percentage from all proceeds of her endangered species art series to wildlife and environmental organizations to support their initiatives in protecting and preserving our wild spaces and species.

This artist is on a mission to paint as many at-risk species as possible. Several pieces have already been completed and more are in the works. With slightly exaggerated realism and bold, provocative colours, the intention of her paintings cannot be missed. Her captivating works, including ‘Within The Darkened Forest’, have hung in several public exhibitions over the past two years with one piece currently in a group exhibition at the Legislative Assembly of Toronto. To read more about the artist’s Endangered Species, ‘Darkness’ series, visit her website at [www.artscapesbyscherry.ca](http://www.artscapesbyscherry.ca)