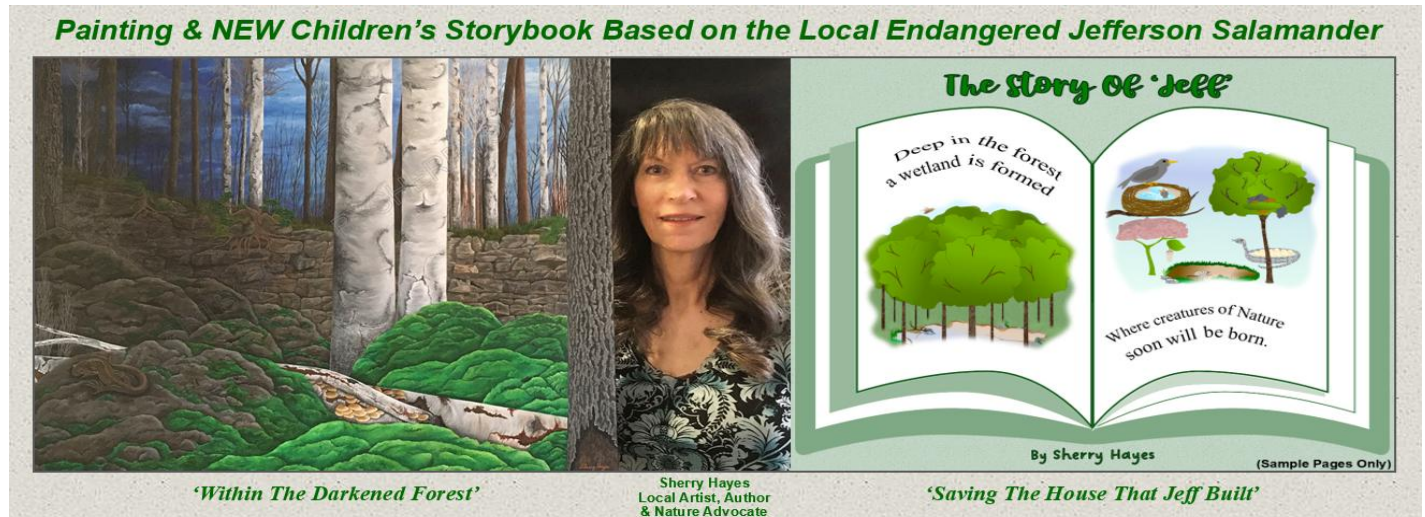


Local author pens special project in honour of Jefferson salamander

Elusive endangered amphibian begins its annual spring breeding migration

BurlingtonToday Staff / FlamboroughToday Staff
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Sherry Hayes, who spent her childhood close to that region, is known for her dedicated wildlife paintings. / Sherry Hayes

NEWS RELEASE
SHERRY HAYES

It's that time of year again when the Jefferson salamander begins its annual spring breeding migration in our region and it is the perfect time for local artist turned author, Sherry Hayes to launch a special project in honour of this elusive endangered amphibian.

King Road from North Service Road to Mountain Brow Road is currently closed to provide the species safe passage for their annual migration. The Jefferson salamander is protected at both the provincial and national levels and was added to Ontario's endangered species list in 2011.

Hayes, who spent her childhood close to that region, is known for her dedicated wildlife paintings. Now the Nature artist has taken on another important task. The Jefferson salamander and its fragile habitat are the focus of a new children's storybook, written and illustrated by Hayes, a stalwart advocate and supporter of Canada's species at risk, particularly in her home province of Ontario.

This colourful, fully illustrated book came to life through inspiration from the artist's previous painting, 'Within The Darkened Forest'. The piece depicts a scene representing the north Burlington area of the Niagara Escarpment, a region known for the Jefferson.

"Saving The House That Jeff Built is perfect for our younger generation," said Hayes. The story, designed in rhyming fashion, introduces children to the many facets of Nature. Through graphically illustrated pictures and easy-to-read format, this storybook tells the tale of the Jefferson salamander, its awakening in the spring, followed by its treacherous journey to reach its breeding grounds so that this little creature can ensure another generation will be born.

In true fashion, this artist and nature advocate will be donating a portion of the net proceeds from sales of this book to her chosen organization to support ongoing efforts to study the Jefferson and their habitat in and surrounding the Burlington region.

As a special incentive, Hayes will be signing and numbering the first one hundred books that are pre-ordered and will also add a personalized note on the inside that will be addressed to the recipient of this new storybook.

Hayes believes that Canadians of all ages should be engaged in ongoing efforts to care for and respect the environment and ecosystems, whether local or countrywide. "If we take time to think about it, surely everyone will discover that we truly have a symbiotic relationship with Nature. We need and depend on it just as much as it needs and depends on us."

She is clearly unapologetic in her determination to get the word out. "It is why I paint these bold scenes. And why I have now chosen to engage children", Hayes states. "I created this book to enlighten and embolden our youth. To help them understand that everyone, no matter their age, need to work together to protect Nature. Clearly, our children are this planet's future."

Hayes' plan is to develop a series of children's storybooks that address a variety of species at risk throughout the province and eventually across Canada. *Saving The House That Jeff Built* is book one in this series. "It's time to allow our children to become part of the solution", says the artist and author.

When it comes to her own conservation efforts, Hayes is quick to credit those who step forward to fight for species that cannot fight for themselves. "I greatly appreciate individuals who choose to help me in my support of our endangered species through their acquisitions of my dedicated product line", she notes. "My motto is, 'Together - We Can. For Them. For Us. And for the love of all things Nature! I truly believe we can make a difference.'"

Hayes' endangered species art, along with her efforts to raise awareness and her special donation program have been recognized by several well-known Canadian wildlife and environmental advocates including David Suzuki, who recently received a dedicated print from the artist for his decades long work, bringing Canada's Nature stories to the world. The painting features several endangered species in British Columbia. Feedback from Suzuki helped the artist choose her subject matter.

Many of Hayes' originals have been on display in juried art exhibitions, including a piece recently returned from a group display at the Legislative Assembly in Toronto. It is currently on exhibition at McMaster AWP Atrium on Longwood Road in Hamilton.

For more details on the artist's endangered species art series and her latest endeavour, visit her website at www.artscapesbyserry.ca.
