



# Restoring Habitat for the Prothonotary Warbler



**Endangered Species  
Habitat Enhancement  
Project**

**Improving Nesting  
Habitat for the  
Prothonotary Warbler**

A Partnership of:



Essex Region  
Conservation  
Authority

Canada



**Nesting Season**  
Please **DO NOT** Enter

# Restoring Habitat for the Prothonotary Warbler

The prothonotary warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*) is one of Canada's rarest birds. It is a very attractive small songbird with a bright golden-yellow head and under parts, dark blue-gray wings and rump, and large white tail spots. The prothonotary warbler is the only cavity-nesting warbler in North America. This warbler requires a unique combination of habitat characteristics to successfully nest – a source of moss for nest building, a mature tree canopy with fully shaded understorey and standing water below.

As with most cavity-nesters, the availability of suitable nesting cavities is the most critical habitat requirement for breeding prothonotaries. These specific habitat requirements are typically found in a flooded woodland or deciduous swamp forest – habitat that is being lost throughout Ontario. This loss of habitat is impacting the species' distribution, making the prothonotary warbler a critically endangered species in Canada.

Nestled within the Holiday Beach Conservation Area, on the Big Creek Marsh Complex in Essex County, is one of only three prothonotary warbler populations in Canada. This population accounts for nearly one quarter of the entire Canadian population of this bird!

To enhance this special population, the Essex Region Conservation Authority, working with the Holiday Beach Migration Observatory, recently restored nesting habitat for the warbler by removing roads and excavating nesting habitat. In Phase 1, approximately 1 hectare (2 acres) of wetland habitat was restored through the removal of an existing road alignment. Trees were planted and several nest boxes were erected. Phase 2 of the project saw the enhancement of .5 hectares (1 acre) of nesting habitat through hydrological controls, and restoration of .3 hectares (0.7 acres) of nesting habitat through road removals. Both phases included riparian (streamside) planting with native trees and shrubs, and the construction and installation of nest boxes with poles and predator guards.



For more information:  
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