

News Release

Message in a bottle: new beer launched in support of species at risk

Spring this year is not silent... It brings us a new beer that comes to the rescue of imperiled wildlife. Launched today in Ottawa, Rescousse, also known as The SOS Beer, aims to raise consciousness over species endangerment, as well as funds to ease their recovery.

A refreshing Canadian Pilsner created by RJ Brewers, Rescousse is now on sale in Ontario at LCBO stores. For each bottle sold, both the brewer and its representative - Premier Brands - will contribute money in the form of royalties to Wildlife Habitat Canada (WHC) to preserve species at risk and their critical habitat in Ontario. WHC is a national, non-profit organization that has supported high quality habitat conservation and stewardship initiatives since 1984.

Development of this innovative project in Ontario was made possible through the financial support of Environment Canada (Canadian Wildlife Service). The Rescousse launch in Ontario is the second step of a larger scale plan initiated in 1998 by Projet Rescousse, a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection of biodiversity. Actually, The SOS Beer already has a twin sister in Quebec. The beer recipe and the flagship species on the label are not the same but people across Quebec also raise their glasses to raise funds for threatened wildlife. Achievements to date in this province are outstanding and go well beyond the total amount of money raised. As an example, Projet Rescousse played a key role in bringing together government authorities and other parties to initiate the building of a \$2.4 million fish ladder along the Richelieu River. This ladder is intended to mitigate the negative impacts of a man-made insurmountable obstacle on the migration of an endangered fish toward upstream spawning grounds.

The Rescousse label is a work of art by wildlife painter Ghislain Caron, that features the Eastern spiny softshell turtle. Once common in southern Ontario, this freshwater turtle is now rare throughout its Canadian range. Loss of habitat through urban development and recreation along shorelines, deterioration of riverbanks by agriculture and human disturbance are among the factors implicated in the decline of the species. In recent years however, research and conservation efforts, such as site rehabilitation and negotiations with individuals who own key spiny softshell turtle habitat, have been undertaken and the results so far are encouraging.

Once abundant long ago in Ontario, the passenger pigeon, the longjaw cisco and the blue walleye are now extinct and only remain as a name in our collective memory. With your support, threatened species like the spiny softshell turtle may resurface and never end up on the growing list of extinct wildlife.

Spring this year is not silent. Species at risk are sending out an SOS hoping that we will listen to their last call. Cheers !

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