

Eleven ~~Ten~~ Things You Can Do to Help Reptile and Amphibian Conservation

1. **Don't let your cat or dog run loose;** keep them tied or indoors. Cats kill thousands of small animals every year.
2. **Allow an area of your yard to grow long grass and other plants,** preferably native Ontario species (but even naturalized exotics are preferable to Kentucky bluegrass). Mow it once a year, in the late fall, so that it doesn't get taken over by shrubby material.
3. **Make a leaf pile** in the fall and allow it to compost naturally. Add more leaves to it each year.
4. **Create shelters for toads** and other reptiles and amphibians by placing broken clay flowerpots, sections of clay pipe, and other objects in various locations—some in the sun, some in the shade.
5. **Create basking sites.** Pile rocks in a sunny area. Or, if you're really keen, extend the rock pile $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 metres below the ground, to create a basking and hibernation site in one space—though this generally requires heavy equipment or a strong back!
6. **Create a small pond** for amphibian breeding. Give it natural edges to help amphibians escape. Put in small fish to control mosquito larvae, but don't put in koi or larger fish: they'll eat the tadpoles. Don't introduce frogs or tadpoles; wait for them to colonize the pond on their own.
7. **Donate money** to conservation organizations that fund habitat protection through land acquisition, such as the Nature Conservancy of Canada, or reptile and amphibian research, such as the Canadian Reptile and Amphibian Conservation Network.
8. **Tell your neighbours** about the benefits of having wild reptiles and amphibians around, such as controlling rodents, insects and slugs. Make sure that they know that you like to see snakes and toads in your backyard; hopefully they will too!
9. **Prevent racoons, skunks, seagulls and other predators** from feeding on your garbage. Increased populations of these animals around human activity are a big problem, especially for turtles, whose nests they raid.
10. **Get involved** with volunteer conservation projects. Local groups are involved in amphibian monitoring, turtle crossings, and habitat restoration.
11. **Drive carefully!** Watch for small wildlife, especially on rainy spring nights (when amphibians are migrating), during turtle nesting season (late May to mid-June), around wetlands, and in areas known to have populations of threatened species (such as the Rideau Lakes and Black Rat Snakes, or the Highway 69 corridor and Massasaugas).



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