

### WHAT IS NEEDED?

Only a concerted, long-term effort to conserve what remains of our Garry oak ecosystems can halt the ever-increasing threat to these endangered species. Participation on all levels is essential — from decision-makers incorporating conservation into planning processes, to concerned citizens removing invasive species from neighbourhood parks.

### WHAT IS THE GARRY OAK ECOSYSTEMS RECOVERY TEAM?

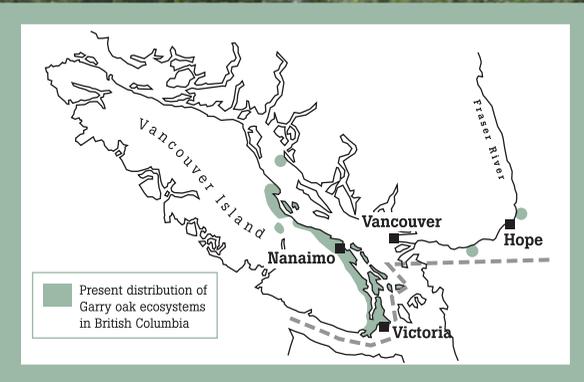
We are a partnership of dozens of agencies and individuals. Our members and partners include all levels of government, First Nations, academic institutions, land trusts, land managers, scientists, naturalists, and others.

### WHAT ARE WE DOING?

- We drafted a 5-year Recovery Strategy to save Garry oak and associated ecosystems, and help individual species at risk to survive and thrive
- We are filling information gaps about the ecosystems and species to determine how to save them
- We are taking active steps to protect and restore habitat for species at risk
- We are encouraging stewardship by private individuals and agencies to save endangered species and the habitat they need

### WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

- Learn more about GOERT's recovery program from our website: [www.goert.ca](http://www.goert.ca).
- Make a donation or consider leaving a bequest to GOERT in your will. Call us at 250-383-3427 for information.
- Encourage and support government initiatives to protect Garry oak ecosystems and species at risk.
- Support land conservancies in their efforts to acquire land for protection or sign a covenant to protect your patch of Garry oak ecosystem forever.
- Remove invasive species and plant nursery-propagated native plants in your yard.
- Treasure and respect our natural and wild areas in our yards, parks and all public and private lands.



MAP COURTESY OF THE PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA © 1993

Prior to European settlement, fire played an important role in Garry oak ecosystems. Lightning caused some fires, but many were set by First Peoples to enhance the growth and productivity of resources such as camas plants, a food source. These fires helped create and maintain the meadows vital to grassland plants and animals that need open habitats.

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In the rainshadow of the Vancouver Island Ranges, one of Canada's richest ecosystems is also one of its most endangered. British Columbia's Garry oak ecosystems harbour more than 100 species of plants and animals at risk. Several species have already been eliminated.

Today, less than 5% of Garry oak ecosystems remain in a near-natural condition. The **Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team** is working to save these endangered species and the habitats they need for survival.



PHOTO: HANS ROEMER

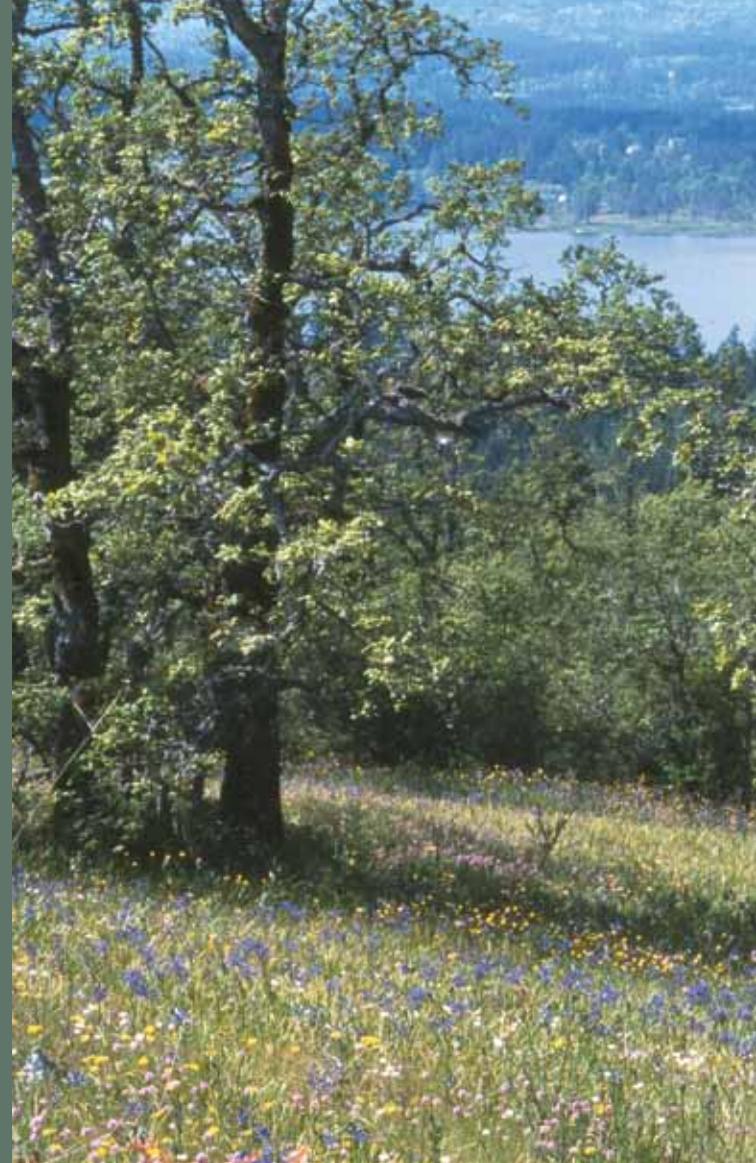


PHOTO: HANS ROEMER

### in the beginning

In Canada, Garry oak ecosystems occur **only in British Columbia** — almost exclusively within a narrow coastal strip of southeast Vancouver Island, in the nearby Gulf Islands, and in two small stands in the Fraser River Valley. Arising during a warm interval 7,000 to 10,000 years ago, Garry oak ecosystems once covered a much greater area than they do today.

## what is special about garry oak ecosystems?

Unsurpassed beauty and rich biological diversity are hallmarks of Garry oak ecosystems. Intense blue camas blossoms, stunning pink shooting stars, and blazing yellow western buttercups appear in spring. Golden grasses wave in summer breezes. In fall Garry oak trees shed their leathery leaves, revealing intricately gnarled branches cloaked with lichens, liverworts and mosses that brighten in winter rains.

Interspersed among Garry oak ecosystems are other

ecosystems that also support many of the same plant and animal species, but lack Garry oaks. These include grasslands, rocky habitats such as coastal bluffs, and former oak ecosystems that are now dominated by other tree species.

**Together, these ecosystems are home to more plant species than any other terrestrial ecosystem in coastal British Columbia.** Many of these species occur nowhere else in Canada.

more than  
**100** species  
at **risk**



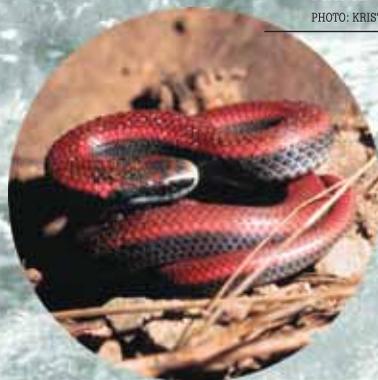
DELTOÏD  
BALSAMROOT  
PHOTO: HANS ROEMER



TOWNSEND'S  
BIG-EARED BAT  
PHOTO: BROCK FENTON



BEARDED  
OWL-CLOVER  
PHOTO: HANS ROEMER



SHARP-TAILED  
SNAKE  
PHOTO: KRISTINA OVASKA



WESTERN  
BLUEBIRD  
PHOTO: DON MCPHEE



TAYLOR'S  
CHECKERSPOT  
PHOTO: CRISPIN GUPPY



GOLDEN PAINTBRUSH  
PHOTO: LEAH RAMSAY

## what are invasive species?

Non-native (exotic or alien) plant and animal species, introduced into an ecosystem where they did not previously live, are considered **invasive** when they spread aggressively and impact native species. Whether introduced by well-intentioned gardeners or accidentally imported, biological invaders are a serious ecological problem. A few of the many invasive plant and animal species in Garry oak ecosystems include:

**INVASIVE PLANTS** Shrubs such as Scotch broom, gorse, English ivy and daphne pose serious threats to Garry oak ecosystems. Orchard-grass, sweet vernalgrass and other exotic grasses also dominate and degrade many Garry oak sites.

**INVASIVE INVERTEBRATES** Four invasive insects — the winter moth, jumping gall wasp, oak leaf phylloxera and gypsy moth — have caused, or have the potential to cause, serious damage to Garry oak trees. Exotic black slugs dine on native plants, including species at risk.

**INVASIVE VERTEBRATES** European starlings have been implicated in the decline of native cavity-nesting bird species such as western bluebirds. Eastern grey squirrels may compete with native animals for acorns.

Visit the GOERT website ([www.goert.ca](http://www.goert.ca)) for more information about managing invasive species.

ecosystem

...all the living things in  
an ecological community, together  
with the physical environment.

in the future

Garry oak and associated ecosystems may play an increasingly important role in Canada with the progression of global climate change. Species in these ecosystems are adapted to a warm climate with an extended summer drought. We need comprehensive conservation strategies to ensure that all of the resident species survive to spread into new sites if they become available. Garry oak ecosystems may well be part of the **landscape of the future.**

## now ... threatened

Over the past 160 years, most of the Garry oak woodlands have been cleared and converted for agricultural, residential and industrial development. **Now, less than 5% of the original Garry oak ecosystems remain in a near-natural condition, and these areas are also threatened.**

Threats include habitat loss, fragmentation of larger areas into smaller, more vulnerable patches, encroachment of woody species as a consequence of fire suppression, and invasion by exotic species that outcompete native species. As a result, more than 100 species of plants and animals that live in Garry oak ecosystems are designated by the BC government as "at risk."

COASTAL  
VESPER SPARROW  
PHOTO: SUZANNE BEAUCHESNE

