

As an artist, my journey has been deeply influenced by my early experiences in drafting and mechanical design, which instilled in me a passion for precision and detail. I strive to bring these qualities into my artwork, creating highly realistic and detailed pieces that capture the essence of my subjects. My childhood drawing lessons taught me the importance of observation and patience, skills that have remained central to my artistic practice

Despite life's demands, including marriage and raising children, my dedication to art never waned. While unable to pursue full time education at institutions like OCAD, I continued to refine my skills through Continuing Education Courses, eventually earning an Advanced Visual Arts Certificate with Honours from Mohawk College. Throughout this journey, I've explored various mediums, from charcoal and coloured pencils to watercolor and Chinese Brush Painting, continually seeking new ways to express myself and evoke different emotions through my art.

In 2019, I was granted a 3-month art residency, a milestone that marked a significant shift in my career. Retirement soon followed so I finally had the time and freedom to fully immerse myself in my art practice. Yet, challenges persisted – from finding exhibition opportunities to promoting my work. Recognizing the struggles common to many artists, I've become actively involved in several arts organizations, offering support and guidance to fellow creatives navigating similar obstacles.

For me, art is not just about creating visually striking pieces but also about connecting with others and sharing stories through my work. It's about continuously learning and evolving as an artist, exploring new techniques, and pushing the boundaries of my creativity. Through my dedication to precision, passion for experimentation, and commitment to supporting fellow artists, I hope to leave a lasting impact on the art community and inspire others to pursue their creative dreams.

Following a proposal for action by over 70 countries from all latitudes, the UN proclaimed the decade from 2021 through 2030 as the Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. The UN sees this decade as a rallying call for the protection and revival of ecosystems all around the world for the benefit of people and nature. By halting the degradation of ecosystems and restoring them it will help us achieve global goals. Creating healthy ecosystems will enhance people's livelihoods, counteract climate change and stop the collapse of biodiversity.

In 2021 Hamilton's General Issues Committee approved a Biodiversity Action Plan Feasibility Framework (BAP). A key element of this BAP is to educate the public and local leaders about the importance of safeguarding the City's biodiversity for future generations.

I love to hike and explore nature – always seeking to find the next unique specimen to paint. My love of nature influenced my appreciation for the abundance of life around me and helped make me aware of the fragile beauty of the ecosystem that exists in Hamilton.

This city is often described as the waterfall capital but Hamilton's diverse biodiversity is rarely, if ever, highlighted yet I believe it should be considered one of its greatest strengths. Geographically Hamilton is located at the northern most part of the Carolinian Forest and the escarpment that surrounds the lower city helps to further protect – and enhance the huge biodiversity that it houses. As a result, Hamilton is home to more species than probably anywhere else in Canada providing me unlimited opportunities and subject matter for my art.

I also truly believe in the teachings of our Indigenous leaders. They tell us we need to respect the land, air and water and warn that whatever happens to the animals will happen to us. I believe it is important to encourage others to learn about, and appreciate, Hamilton's indigenous species and have set out to record the beauty and diversity of as many of these species as I can in my art.

After reading the books *Gathering Moss* and *Braiding Sweetgrass* I have developed an even greater respect for the biodiversity that surrounds us. Not just for the vast numbers but for their relationship to each other and to us. Some of my paintings illustrate these partnerships – how one species depends on another for its existence. What I haven't been able to demonstrate however is how everything else is connected – how all species depend on every other for their very existence or, more importantly, what happens when even just one is lost.

Through exhibitions of my work, public talks and an e-book I want to bring nature to those who may not be able to experience these species first hand, emphasizing that action is needed to help protect nature or we risk losing what we have.

Using the Hamilton Natural Areas Inventory from 2014 as a template I have been developing an e-book that will help Hamilton residents better understand and appreciate the biodiversity we have. This 295-page document, lists 1,470 species of vascular plants of which 962 are native and 508 are introduced or invasive. Of the native species listed 350 are rare, 117 are uncommon and 76 are identified as provincially rare. The Butterflies list indicates 95 species were found, 77 were classified as resident species including 11 rare, 19 uncommon and 6 provincially significant species. The Odonate list identifies 86 permanent species – 35 Damselflies and 51 Dragonflies with another 11 temporary residents. The fish checklist contains 100 distinct species and of the 71 existing native fishes 30 species are considered highly significant or rare, 17 are uncommon and 5 are considered nationally significant. The herpetofauna list indicates 32 native species – 5 are abundant, 6 are common, 3 are uncommon and 16 are rare. It also identifies that 2 species have been extirpated from the Hamilton area. The list of breeding birds in Hamilton indicates a total of 164 species – 50 are rare, 49 are uncommon, 33 are common and 23 are abundant. Finally, there are 44 mammals existing in Hamilton, 3 of those are identified on the SARAS or nationally significant list, 4 are listed as ESA provincially significant, 3 are on the NHIC provincially significant list, 8 are considered highly significant and 3 are moderately significant in Hamilton. There are an additional 12 species that were listed as extirpated

My project, "Our Fragile Environment", aims to contribute to both the UN's Decade of Ecosystem Restoration and Hamilton's BAP by raising awareness of Hamilton's biodiversity through art. Building on the existing series of 80 paintings, first exhibited in 2023, I hope to showcase at risk and endangered native species in the Hamilton area to highlight the need for ecosystem protection and restoration.

To create additional artworks, I am reaching out to members from the Hamilton Naturalist Club as well as the Hamilton Conservation Authority and others to acquire appropriate reference photographs of these specific species of interest. These new images, along with short informational data will be added to the existing works in a digital book to serve as an educational tool for schools and the general public, fostering understanding and appreciation for Hamilton's biodiversity.

If you have any clear photographs of unique species found in the Hamilton region and are willing to allow me to use them as reference for this project, I would be truly grateful.