

Cootes Paradise Provincially Significant Wetland Complex is home to multiple turtle species and the west end has been identified as a hot spot for breeding turtles. The wetland is divided by Cootes Drive in the Town of Dundas which leaves wildlife at risk of being killed in collisions with vehicles. Turtles are at the highest risk of road mortality in spring when females are moving out of the wetland to nesting sites and in early fall when newly hatched turtles are moving back to the wetland. Female turtles take 15-25 years to mature to breeding age and the loss of a mature female turtle can be devastating for the local population.



Snapping Turtle



Snapping Turtle Hatchling

Monitoring

Dundas Turtle Watch have been monitoring road mortality since 2009 and more recently Hamilton Conservation Authority (HCA) has joined this monitoring effort. The mortality surveys have determined that many turtles (approximately 60 annually) are being struck by vehicles on a 700 metre stretch along Cootes Drive. Preferred nesting sites have been recorded along Spencer Creek trail and the road side shoulder. In 2014 and 2015, HCA, with the help of volunteers, installed a temporary silt fence on its property along the south side of Cootes Drive to divert wildlife from the roadway.

Wildlife Directional Fence

In 2016, HCA received funding through Sustain our Great Lakes and Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry COA to install a permanent fence. HCA hired Animex Fencing to install ~700 metres of fencing on the south side of Cootes Drive east of Olympic Drive. The fence was installed in September 2016 along the section of Cootes Drive where the highest numbers of road mortalities were observed. The fence was buried a few inches below the soil and there is lip along the top to prevent wildlife from climbing the fence. The fence directs turtles and other wildlife such as snakes to a large culvert or Lower Spencer Creek allowing them to safely cross under Cootes Drive. Small ramps of natural materials were placed along the road side of the fence to allow wildlife that has crossed the road to safely enter the Lower Spencer Creek wetland area instead of returning to the road.

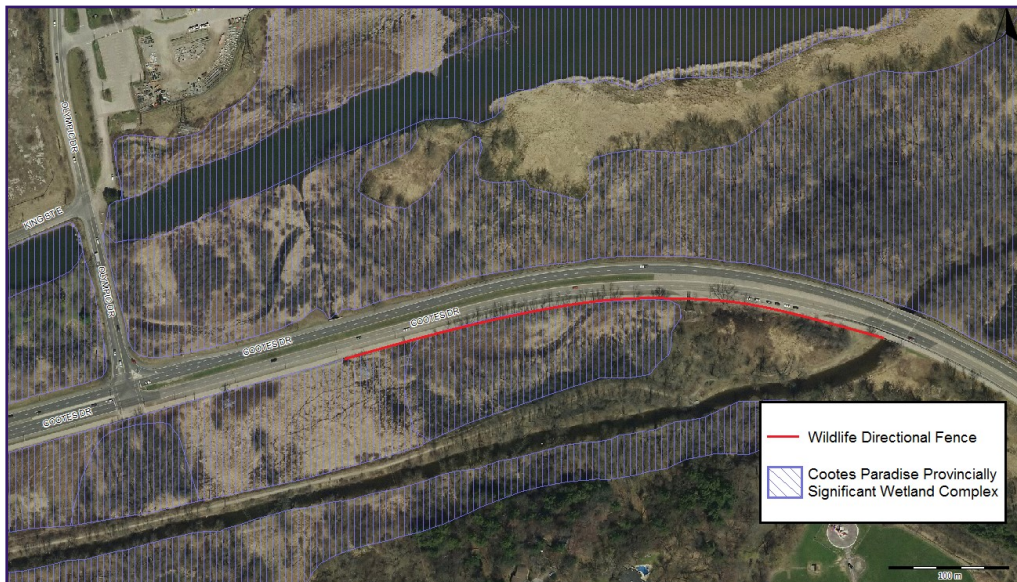
The goal of the fence is to reduce road mortality of turtles and other wildlife along Cootes Drive which will conserve the local wildlife populations of Lower Spencer Creek area. HCA will continue road mortality surveys in the coming years to monitor the success of the fence. HCA continues to work with others in the community to protect the wildlife of the Cootes Paradise wetland complex throughout their habitat and life cycle.



Beginning stages of fence installation



Completed wildlife directional fence



The wildlife directional fence runs from a culvert on the west end to Lower Spencer Creek at the east end.

This Hamilton Conservation Authority project was made possible by the generous financial support of:

