



Common Hoptree

Photo: © Gary Allen



Scientific name

Ptelea trifoliata

Taxon

Vascular Plants

COSEWIC Status

Special Concern

Canadian range

Ontario

Reason for Designation

In Canada, this small, short-lived tree occurs in southwestern Ontario, colonizing sandy shoreline habitats. A long-term decline in habitat quality and extent is predicted due to the effects of shoreline hardening, and historical sand mining in Lake Erie. One subpopulation depends on continuing management efforts. Improved survey effort has significantly increased the number of mature individuals, which reduces the overall risk to this species.

Wildlife Species Description and Significance

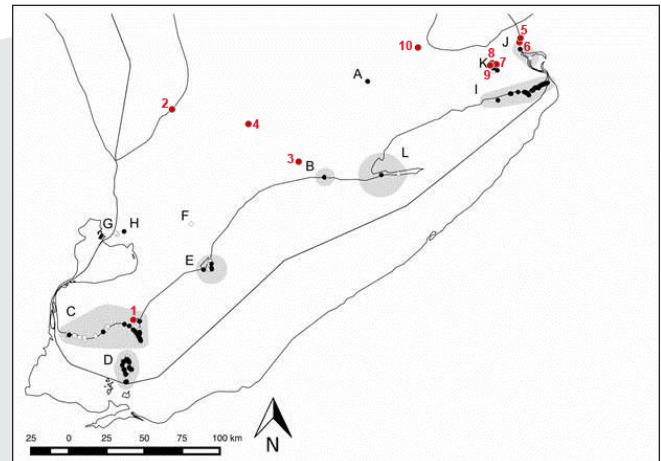
Common Hoptree (*Ptelea trifoliata*) is a small tree in the rue family (Rutaceae). It has alternate trifoliate leaves which are aromatic; flowers bloom in early summer; they are borne in terminal clusters, cream coloured with 4-5 petals. Fruit, which matures in late

summer, is dry, disk-shaped, and bears 2-3 seeds.

Common Hoptree is often a component of the stabilizing vegetation along sections of the Lake Erie shoreline. It has had a long history of medicinal and economic usage, including use by First Nations. It is one of two native Canadian species on which the larvae of the Giant Swallowtail butterfly feeds and is the primary nectar source for early adults of Juniper Hairstreak. It is also the sole host for larvae of the Hop-tree Borer. Hoptree Leaf-roller Moth and the Hoptree Barkbeetle are also specialist herbivores of the Common Hoptree.

Distribution

The typical subspecies (*P. trifoliata* ssp. *trifoliata*) occurs naturally from the lower Great Lakes to Texas, eastward from eastern Pennsylvania and southern New England to northern Florida. Other subspecies occur further south and west into Mexico.



Distribution of Common Hoptree (*Ptelea trifoliata*) in Canada, showing observations prior to 2002 (open circles), and observations made between 2002 and 2014 (closed circles). The species distribution is limited to extreme southern Ontario, namely the Lake Erie shoreline and a few inland sites.

Habitat

In Ontario, Common Hoptree occurs almost entirely along or near the Lake Erie shoreline. It is often found in areas of natural disturbance where it forms part of the outer edge of shoreline woody vegetation.

Biology

Common Hoptree is dioecious (male and female flowers on separate trees) with insect-pollinated flowers. The fruit is primarily wind-dispersed and may occasionally raft on lake ice or debris. Seedlings readily establish in open or disturbed sites.



Photo: © Gary Allen

Common Hoptree fruit

Population Sizes and Trends

The trend in the Canadian population is unknown; however, within sites where subpopulation data are available the number of mature individuals appears to have increased by approximately 200% since the last report in 2002. Numbers at nine sites are increasing; three small sites were extirpated due to development and 34 lack comparable data to ascertain a trend. Eleven previously undocumented sites were recorded and two of the three sites identified as extirpated in 2002 were rediscovered. In total, an estimated 12,000 mature individuals occur in Canada.

Threats and Limiting Factors

In Canada, Common Hoptree rarely colonizes open inland habitats, being mostly limited to shoreline sites. The main threats to the species are loss of habitat resulting from altered coastal process, habitat succession and shoreline development.

Protection, Status and Ranks

In Canada, Common Hoptree is listed as Threatened at both the federal (Schedule 1, Threatened) and provincial level and is protected by both the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA) and the Ontario *Endangered Species Act* (2007). A recovery strategy for the species was published in 2012 and several of the key objectives have been addressed. COSEWIC assessed this species as Special Concern in November 2015.

Common Hoptree has been given a global rank of demonstrably secure (G5) by NatureServe; however, it is listed as critically imperiled (S1) in New Jersey and New York, apparently secure (S4) in Virginia and vulnerable (S3) in Ontario. Common Hoptree has not been assessed for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species.

Source: COSEWIC. 2015. COSEWIC assessment and status report on the Common Hoptree *Ptelea trifoliata* in Canada. Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada. Ottawa. xi + 33 pp.

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