



Conservancy NEWS

Protecting the special natural features of the Couchiching region for future generations.

Seasonal Highlights from The Couchiching Conservancy

FEBRUARY 2007

Looking forward to another great year

About 125 Conservancy members and supporters gathered at the Mariposa Inn on January 27 to review our accomplishments in 2006, recognize some of the people who have been especially helpful, and look ahead to 2007. As an added bonus, they were treated to a multi-media show of the stunning wildlife photos of Larry Kirtley, with production by David Homer. Their presentation earned a standing ovation.

One of the highlights of the afternoon was the presentation of appreciation plaques to members of the O'Brien family, community volunteers from Shanty Bay, and Oro-Medonte mayor Harry Hughes for their roles in protecting The Church Woods. This project has drawn nearly \$600,000 in donations, mostly from the local community, and the land transfer is scheduled for February 19. A bridge loan from the township had been arranged to cover any shortfall, but late news of several major contributions has put The Church Woods campaign well over the top, and creating a reserve of stewardship funds for the property.

The Conservancy received two other donated properties during 2006 — Elliott Woods and Jennett Woods — and has several major new projects on the Carden Alvar and in The Land Between under negotiation. Long-time volunteers Pearl Bennet, Doug Christie, Luke Irwin, Mary Mick and Nath Rockhill, together with land donor Karen Popp, were presented with Conservancy pins to honour their contributions.



Tim Crooks has been a central figure in saving Chuch Woods.

On the organizational front, Jane Ball was elected President to succeed Nathalie Rockhill, who was praised for her team-building skills during her two-year term. David Kennedy, a retired civil servant now living in Medonte, was elected to the Board. The Conservancy's audited financial statements show a small surplus for the year.



Joan Rosebush and Rosalie Pratt sell raffle tickets at the Annual General Meeting.

All in all, 2006 was a good year for the Conservancy, and 2007 promises to be even better. Copies of our Annual Report and financial statements are available on request from the Conservancy office. ☺

Carden Nature Festival June 15 – 17

(see inside)

Protecting the environment of Scout Valley

Scout Valley is a 220-acre block of hardwood forest in the southwest corner of Orillia, acquired by the city a decade ago when the assets of the Simcoe College Foundation were being disbursed. Since then, it has become a popular destination for trail users, and the Twin Lakes Conservation Club and others have worked on restoring the cold-water stream that crosses the property.



A city proposal to construct a sewer line through Scout Valley drew considerable public criticism during last fall's municipal election. Mayor Ron Stevens proposed to place a conservation easement on the property with "a local land trust conservancy" to ensure the sewer line would not lead to future development activities. Since we had been receiving enquiries from our members about our views on this proposal, we issued a brief public statement of our position in late January.

In short, we noted that we have not yet received any requests from the mayor or city staff, but that we are willing to discuss how a conservation easement could be developed for Scout Valley. We share the concerns about the potential impacts of constructing a sewer line through this sensitive natural environment, however, and suggested that the new city council review the sewer-line approval in a broader context before undertaking negotiations on a conservation easement. ∞

The Couchiching Conservancy Board

Jane Ball, President	835-2674
Paul Russell, Treasurer	paul.russell@rbc.com
Isabelle Thiess, Secretary	326-5547
Julie Cayley	julie_cayley@hotmail.com
David Kennedy	835-5131
Lou Probst	438-1324
Joan Rosebush	329-1448
Jane Sloley	689-1252
Bob Sullivan	325-8775
Ron Reid, Executive Director	326-1620

Rosalie Pratt, Outreach Coordinator
 Kyra Howes, Stewardship Coordinator



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Charitable Reg. No. 139725030RR0001

Reaching out to local schools

As is so often the case, timing is everything. Last fall, a group of Conservancy volunteers made contact with every school in our region to make them aware of the opportunity to bring their classes to Grant's Woods. Through our collaboration with Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre, children can take part in educational programs delivered by Wye Marsh staff.

While the initial response was disappointing, a January follow-up by Wye Marsh caught teachers in the midst of planning their field trips and resulted in a flood of bookings. During February and early March, over 1,000 children are scheduled to take part in Grant's Woods programs.

Our thanks to volunteers Jane Ball, Pat Bromley, Sandra Bushell, Gwen Drew, Heather Gaudie, Ron Hancock, Judy Munro, Mary-Diane Shook, Mary Mick and Adam Thomson for their help in contacting schools. ∞



UPDATES **from the Conservation front**

Investing in Windmill futures

An initial round of stewardship investment on Windmill Ranch has provided new fencing surrounding Sedge Wren Marsh to protect the wetland from cattle. A new well has also been drilled, and will be outfitted with a solar-power pump, to provide an environmentally friendly water source for cattle on the ranch. Cattle grazing is an important management tool to maintain the short grass conditions Loggerhead Shrikes prefer.



Early-bird price for Breeding Bird Atlas

During the five-year period from 2001 to 2005, a multitude of volunteers spent over 150,000 hours in the field and collected 1.2 million individual records of Ontario breeding birds. This data has now been compiled in a 700-page atlas, which provides both a picture of the current status of bird populations and a comparison of changes from the earlier atlas of 20 years ago. Until the end of February, you can pre-order your copy at a special price: \$67 for participants and \$79 for others. For details, go to www.ontarionature.org/shop.

Winter workshops at Grant's Woods

Spaces are still available for several of the winter workshops sponsored by the Conservancy and the Orillia Naturalists Club:

Tuesday, February 20: *Practical tips on shoreline restoration* with Sandy Agnew

Thursday, March 8: *Turtles in trouble* with Bob Bowles

Thursday, March 22: *Think spring with 1,001 gardening secrets* from Glenda Bosley

Saturday, April 21: *Planting trees and shrubs* with Earl Dertinger

Saturday, April 28: *Native birds* with Morris Ilyniak.

All workshops are \$15; call 326-1620 to register. ☺

June 15 – 17

Carden Nature Festival takes shape

As we continue to work with our partners to acquire conservation lands on the Carden Alvar, we also want to build public awareness of the extraordinary natural value of those lands and to help the local community benefit economically. A nature festival, scheduled for the weekend of June 15–17, will help achieve both those goals.

The Carden Nature Festival is being organized with the assistance of nature clubs from Orillia, Carden and Kawartha, as well as the Carden Plain Important Bird Area committee, the City of Kawartha Lakes and local community groups. It will offer over 30 workshops and field tours on an array of nature-centred topics, such as identifying sparrows by their songs, dragonflies and butterflies, voices of the night, and even an introduction to fishing. Some of the events are geared to young families; others to experienced naturalists wanting to expand their skills.

A comprehensive program and registration package will be available by late February. You can call the Conservancy office at 326-1620 for a copy, or visit online at www.CardenGuide.com/Festival.

A related event, **The Carden Challenge**, has become a favourite spring ritual from the past two years, and will take place **June 22–23**. Teams of four are invited to compete to see the most species of birds in a 24-hour period, and to compete as well for the most pledges. Contact the Conservancy office for details. ☺

Volunteer voices – getting ready for Mother Earth Day

Mother Earth Day, on **Saturday, May 12**, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., is fast approaching. We plan to offer many of the same popular activities as last year, plus exciting new features to make this a memorable family outing. In 2007, we are pleased to welcome Meridian Credit Union as a sponsor of Mother Earth Day, together with Casino Rama.

This year, Lead Volunteers for each activity will recruit assistants and ensure that they have everything they need to make the event successful. If you can help, either for a morning or an afternoon shift, please contact the appropriate Lead Volunteer listed below.

For details, contact Rosalie at outreach@couchconservancy.ca or at 326-1620. Thank you to everyone who helps make this event a success.☺



Kathi Shropshire confirms Meridian Credit Union support.

Adrian Philpot	program@wyemarsh.com	Bannock & natural teas
Isabelle Thiess	thiga@rogers.com	BBQ & refreshments
Luke Irwin	c/o outreach@couchconservancy.ca	Beginner's birding
Ken Thomson	hamlet@csolve.net	Birdhouses & whirly-gigs
Jacqui Kerr	jacquikerr@hotmail.com	Cake serving, face painting, forest fairies crafts, planting seeds, Scienstational Ssnakes, volunteer serv.
Jane Sloley	jsloley@mail.scdsb.on.ca	Lottery ticket sales, survey team, meet/greet team, membership sales
Mary E. Mick	m.e.mick@sympatico.ca	Clean-up crew, trail walks
Peggy Foley	peggy.foley@meridiancu.ca	Dismantling crew, Look See Paint, popcorn
Liz Antochin	antochin@encode.com	Husky race dogs, carding & weaving Husky dog wool
Brian Mould	stonemanmould@hotmail.com	Fossil display
Sid & Dorothy Hadlington	sid.dot@sympatico.ca	Invasive-species display
Rosalie J. Pratt	outreach@couchconservancy.ca	Hoisting two 10 x 10 tents
Bob Sullivan	bsullivan@rogers.com	ODAS Park – collecting fees & directing buses
Jackie Hodge	custmar@scdsb.on.ca	Recycled crafts
Earl Dertinger	dert@csolve.net	Seedling sales
Sharon Jenkins	sjjenkins@sympatico.ca	T-shirt & note-card sales
Cathie Patterson	breck.design@encode.com	Kids for Turtles
Pat Tryon	p-tryon@care2.com	Vermiculture