



# Conservancy NEWS

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

Seasonal Highlights from The Couchiching Conservancy

February 2005

## Let's make Earth Day a celebration!

by Rosalie Pratt

**W**e still haven't figured out quite how it all happened....

We were going to celebrate Earth Day at Grant's Woods with the sale of wildflowers and tree seedlings. But, somehow, this seemed totally inadequate for such an important day.

And, before we knew it, we were planning a festival, a true celebration of Earth Day with lots of fun and educational activities.

The activities will be offered from noon to 4 p.m. on April 23 (rain date April 24). It's a reasonably priced event – a single passport ticket is \$7.50 and a family/group passport is \$20 for a group of three or more. Parking is off-site at ODAS Park by the Roller Rink on Fairgrounds Road; you can catch the free continuous shuttle service there to Grant's Woods.

You can choose to take guided trail walks, try your hand at watercolour painting, build a birdhouse or salamander shelter, learn about the Purple Invader, handle live snakes and turtles, take a beginner's birding workshop, buy native tree seedlings, wildflowers and aquatic plants, or learn about organic gardening and lawn care. We have arranged for non-stop live entertainment in our Eco-Gazebo. Bring your lawn chairs and an appetite because there will be a barbecue as well (separate cost).

It goes without saying that we have a number of dedicated people who have volunteered their time, expertise and talents for this event. We have done everything possible to make this event a success – from a planning point of view.

Now we are counting on your support. Our functions are truly successful when our members, volunteers,

The Couchiching Conservancy

Orillia's First Community Earth Day Celebration

Dig in—it's

# Earth Day!

April 23, 2005  
(rain date: April 24)

12 noon - 4 pm

**Lots of activities...**

- TRY Watercolour Painting
- BUILD a Birdhouse... BUILD a Salamander Shelter
- Beginner's BIRDING and Guided TRAIL WALKS
- Handle SNAKES and TURTLES
- Live ENTERTAINMENT and BARBEQUE
- SALE of tree seedlings and wildflowers

**Tickets**  
Single: \$7.50 • Family Pass: \$20.00 (3 or more)  
Pre-order your ticket! Call 326-1620  
(VISA accepted)  
Questions? Call us at 326-1620

**Grant's Woods**  
(Division Road, just east of Fairgrounds Road)

Park by Roller Rink at ODAS Park. FREE SHUTTLE SERVICE to Grant's Woods

friends and family join in to participate, and encourage others to do so as well.

We all have neighbours and friends who would enjoy this afternoon – can you spread the word to at least three or four of them to promote it? Why not treat someone with a gift passport for a birthday, anniversary or other special occasion?

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## Earth Day

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Please come by the Conservancy office and pick up your passport tickets for yourself and at least another family pass or two. We accept cash, or you can use your Visa card. Tickets may also be purchased at The Bird House Nature Company at 108 Mississaga St. E.; please call Janet or Greta at 329-3939.

Our membership and volunteer list tops 300 people. Can you imagine what a wonderful write-up the media could provide if most of us attend this afternoon and bring along even one other person? But you don't want to read afterwards about how wonderful the afternoon was; you will want to be there to experience it firsthand.

Oops, almost forgot...each passport holder will get a special Eco-Gift from the Conservancy. It's our way to thank you for joining us.

If you have any questions, please call us at 326-1620 – we look forward to hearing from you! ☺



## New President elected

Nearly 100 people attended the Conservancy's annual meeting in late January, and they were treated to a delightful presentation on the perils of canoe trips by author Kevin Callan. After two busy years at the helm, retiring President Bob Sullivan handed over control to Nathalie Rockhill, who has been on the Board for the past two years. Two new Board members were also elected – Julie Cayley and Lou Probst. Retiring Board members Kim Gavine and Renee Good were thanked for their fine service and commitment to the Conservancy.

A 2004 annual report, which summarizes a busy year of activities and recognizes our supporters, was presented at the annual meeting and is available from the Conservancy office. Financially, we ended the year with a small operating surplus, and we continue to seek ways to expand and diversify our financial base. Detailed financial statements are also available to any Conservancy member on request. ☺



## Lots of opportunities to participate in Conservancy events

A large part of Rosalie Pratt's role at the Conservancy is outreach to the community, to make people aware of our activities and to encourage their support. With the help of many volunteers, she has set up a series of events in the coming months:

**February 26 and 27:** The Conservancy teams up once again with Sciensational Ssnakes at the Orillia Square Mall to provide opportunities to handle live snakes and have your photo taken for a \$5 contribution.

**March 12 and 13:** Another Sciensational Ssnakes event, this time at Mountainview Mall in Midland.

**April 23:** Dig in for Earth Day at Grant's Woods.

**May 28 and 29:** The Conservancy will participate in Orillia's first Doors Open event, offering free tours of Grant's Woods.

**July 1:** Sciensational Ssnakes at the Orillia Canada Day celebrations, at Couchiching Beach Park.

**September 24:** The Conservancy has arranged to bring CBC Radio's Bob MacDonald to the Orillia Opera House for a major public event. Bob hosts Quirks and Quarks, a well-known science show, and will bring us his "Perspectives on a Planet."

If you would like to volunteer to help at any of these events, please call Gwen at 326-2988 or the Conservancy office at 326-1620. Please mark your own calendar to attend, and encourage others to do so, too. ☺

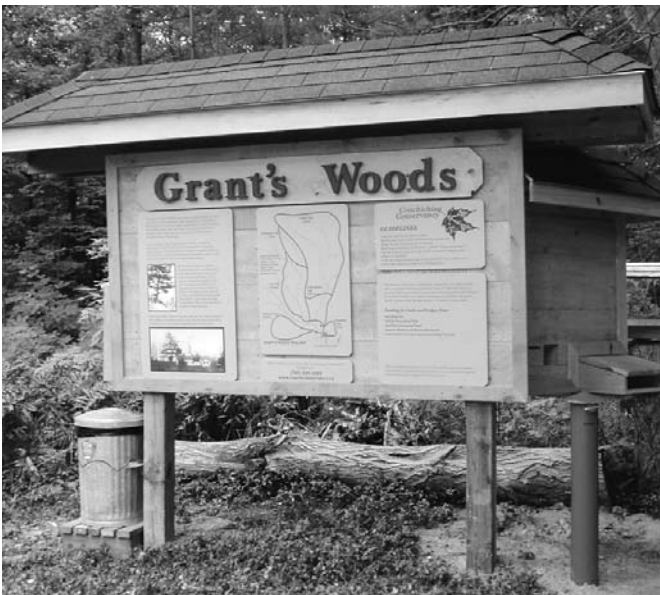
# UPDATES

## from the Conservation Front

### Support from local sources

Late in 2004, we were honoured to receive a grant for the first time from the Community Foundation of Orillia & Area. This support will allow us to produce a full-colour brochure about Grant's Woods to encourage visitors to experience our trails.

We have also received grants from the Orillia chapter of TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, the North Simcoe Private Land Stewardship Network, and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to cover the cost of materials for footbridges. We greatly appreciate the support of these organizations.



### The Province delivers tax relief

After six years of discussion and debate, the provincial Ministry of Finance finally enacted regulations to amend the Conservation Lands Tax Incentive Program to recognize the benefits provided by land trusts. In the past, this program has provided a property-tax exemption for all private owners of significant wetlands, Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest, and a few other categories of land. Now a new category – Community Conservation Lands – has been added to incorporate most of the natural lands owned by organizations like ours. This support eases the financial burden of holding natural lands in trust, and helps us proceed with confidence when lands are offered to us.

### Corporate-membership program on the way

Increasing our membership base has been an important goal for the Conservancy over the past two years, and we will be continuing that effort this year. As well, we will be offering opportunities for local businesses and corporations to join us. We have been fortunate to receive a Direct Management Assistance grant from the Sustainability Network, which allows us to work with marketing consultant Marian Parrott to develop this program. We hope that local businesses will see that protecting a healthy environment is good for both the economy of this area and its quality of life, and that they will choose to support the Conservancy's programs on an ongoing basis.

### Planning the future of the Carden Plain

Protecting the natural values of the Carden Plain, including both its alvar sites and breeding bird habitats, has been a major priority for the past decade. But this area of shallow limestone bedrock is also a priority for the quarry industry, so conflicts are not surprising. On September 21, the Conservancy and other partners are hosting a conference to exchange information and perspectives on that conflict. Representatives of the quarry industry as well as expert naturalists, municipal planners, and Ministry of Natural Resources staff will make presentations and discuss potential ways to find a workable resolution on this exceptional landscape. For information, call Lou Probst at 438-1324.

### Fundraising continues for Windmill Ranch

The alvar meadows of Windmill Ranch lie quiet beneath a blanket of snow, but fundraising to secure the future of this 1,600-acre natural jewel didn't go into hibernation for the winter. Our members have been incredibly generous – we have now nearly reached the \$85,000 mark and hope to be able to complete our \$110,000 local campaign this spring. If you would like to discuss a donation to this project, or to arrange a spring visit to Windmill Ranch, call Ron Reid at the Conservancy office at 326-1620. ∞





## The Couchiching Conservancy Board

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