



Conservancy NEWS

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

Seasonal Highlights from The Couchiching Conservancy

MAY 2007



June 15-17 a Carden nature weekend

Some people make a very sensible resolution to try something new at least once each year. For those “newbies” with even a passing interest in the natural world, the Carden Nature Festival on the weekend of June 15 to 17 is the place to be!

Ever wanted to try fly-fishing? A session with renowned artist and fly-fisher Richard Vandermeer will satisfy that urge, and he'll even rent you a fly rod for the day. Getting bored with watching birds? Field trips with all-round naturalist Bob Bowles will turn you on to butterflies or dragonflies instead. Fascinated by rocks? Join fossil expert Brian Mould to find fossils in the field, or see a different side of rock culture on a tour of the Dufferin Quarry.

The Carden Alvar, located mid-way between Orillia and Lindsay just east of Lake Dalrymple, has been a focal area for recent conservation efforts because of its globally significant alvar and grassland bird habitats. Over the past decade, more than 6,000 acres have been secured for conservation. The Carden Nature Festival provides access into many of these protected areas with expert guides as a way of showing supporters what has been achieved. Equally important are the economic benefits to local businesses and organizations from visitors who stay for the weekend.

Over 30 activity options

The range of field trips and activities is staggering – over 30 options in all. On Friday evening, for example, you can choose to experience the Voices of the Night – the whippoorwills, frogs, coyotes and other critters that use their voices to communicate. Or you can drop in to the Carden Recreation Centre for a ceilidh with the Carden fiddlers.

On Saturday and Sunday, from 6 a.m. onwards, you can choose from field workshops on grassland birds, wildflower photography, a wetland tour, gardening for butterflies, a bus tour of historical sites, and even a ghost walk in the village of Kirkfield. For most events, group sizes are kept small so that everyone can participate fully.



Carden volunteer birders will be welcoming Nature Festival participants to their favourite natural areas.

A complete roster of events and registration details is available online at www.CardenGuide.com/Festival, or you can call 326-1620 to ask for a program brochure. Some activities are suitable for children accompanied by an adult.

You must pre-register, but you can minimize your costs by purchasing a single or family pass for the weekend or the day. Financial support from Invenergy Canada and Casino Rama, plus hundred of hours of volunteer work, has helped to keep registration costs reasonable.

So pick up on that resolution and try something new. There is guaranteed to be something for nature lovers of all skill levels at the Carden Nature Festival. ∞

Honouring Mother Earth: a successful event

The concept of Earth as a mother figure has been around for centuries in many cultures. Likewise, for many years a special day in mid-May has been set aside to honour mothers. So the idea of marrying those two concepts, to celebrate “Mother Earth Day” on the Saturday of Mother’s Day weekend, just came naturally.

This year, on Saturday, May 12, over 35 Mother Earth Day activities took place at Grant’s Woods. Well over 500 people participated, including hundreds of excited children, and the reviews from nearly everyone were very positive.

Mother Earth Day is all about introducing families to nature in a hands-on and fun way. Most of the activities we offered appeal to kids of all ages, and their parents enjoy them too. One trend we have noticed over the past several years is grandparents bringing their grandchildren for a family outing.

One of the advantages of celebrating in mid-May is the abundance of wildflowers in bloom. Grant’s Woods was a carpet of trilliums, leeks, wild ginger, marsh marigolds, blue cohosh and other native flowers.

Some of our most popular activities gave children the chance to create something special to take home – a bird nesting box, a hand-crafted forest fairy, or an original watercolour created through the Look See Paint program. For many of the kids, handling a snake or turtle was a highlight. So was taking a taste of cedar tea or bannock cooked over an open fire, and participating in the very special smudge ceremony with Bidaanakwad (Cloud Approaching) Maang Doodem (Loon Clan), also known as Mark Douglas from Mnjikaning First Nation.

Youth groups Woodwind and Regga String Trio provided musical entertainment along with the traditional folk group ALEX. Liz Antochin had her husky dogs on site to show how their wool is carded and woven. Pat Tryon introduced visitors to vermiculture – the art of using earthworms to compost kitchen scraps.

Nearly 150 volunteers worked to make Mother Earth Day a success, and valuable financial support was provided by Casino Rama and Meridian Credit Union. A special note for all those volunteers: **Thank you!** ∞



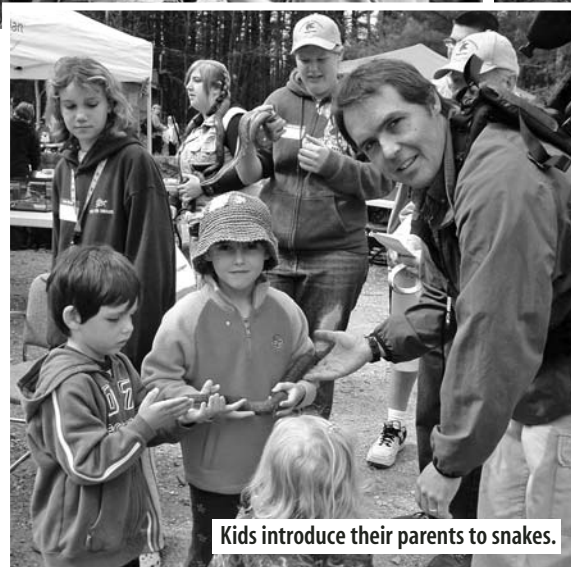
Over 700 visitors took in Mother Earth Day.



Jordan Keetch from Mnjikaning helps with smudge ceremony.



A young artist shows off his Look See Paint.



Kids introduce their parents to snakes.



UPDATES **from the Conservation front**

New Guide to Properties available

With over 20 properties now under Conservancy management, we have been intending for several years to produce an up-to-date guide for those who want to visit them, or just to know more about them. But we have been victims of our own success: every time we were about to finish the guide, several more properties were in the process of being added, so we would delay the guide to include them.

A trio of talented young women from Georgian College – Kate Plantz, Agnes Li and Kathleen Walker – solved that problem by designing a folder with separate sheets for each property, so we can easily add new sheets as needed. With the help of special pricing from Rose Printing and financial support from Casino Rama's Community Wellness Program, the resulting full-colour guide is a very attractive product.

One final job – sorting and stuffing 12,500 property sheets into the folders – fell to an energetic volunteer crew of Pat Tryon, Jacqui Kerr, Nicole Oliver, Kayla Koch, Jane Sloley, Sharon Jenkins, Alison Talbot and Mary E. Mick. Thanks to all!

Copies of the *Guide to Conservancy Properties* are available for \$5 each at Conservancy events or by calling Rose at 326-1620. ☺

Upcoming Events

On Sunday, May 27, a clean-up and dedication ceremony will take place at Jennett Woods near Waverley. The property was donated last year by

Rhonda Cowen. A week later, on **June 3**, a volunteer clean-up day will take place at Elliott Woods near Craighurst. If you would like to volunteer for either of these stewardship events, call Kyra Howes at 326-4643 for details.

A few spaces are left on the annual bus tour of Conservancy properties, which takes place on **Saturday, June 2**. This year, we will be visiting four properties in the Oro-Medonte area, with lunch at Abbots of Craighurst. Participation is free; call Rose Pratt at 326-1620 to reserve a spot. ☺

Land Stewardship policy will guide future management

As the Conservancy takes on responsibility for more properties, it has become more important for us to have clear policies in place to guide how the properties will be managed and what public uses will be permitted. At its April meeting, the Conservancy Board adopted a new policy developed after four months of consultations.

The policy sets out a series of goals and principles – for example, that our properties will generally be open to the public for passive uses, but that protecting their ecological integrity is our most important goal; this will take precedence if there is a conflict. It then goes on to list uses, such as paintball, ATV trails, and hunting, that are generally prohibited, and uses, such as walking and nature photography, that are generally permitted. A third category, to be decided on a case-by-case basis through management plans, includes such uses as research, dogs on leash, and continuation of existing snowmobile trails.



Grant Wetland turtles.

Over 120 Conservancy members helped enormously by returning a survey with their views, and volunteers Nathalie Rockhill, Bob Sullivan, Gary Thiess, Doug Christie and Margo Holt worked closely with staff and other volunteers to develop this policy. Copies of the Land Stewardship policy are available by calling Kyra at 326-4643. ☺

Planned Giving offers options for everyone

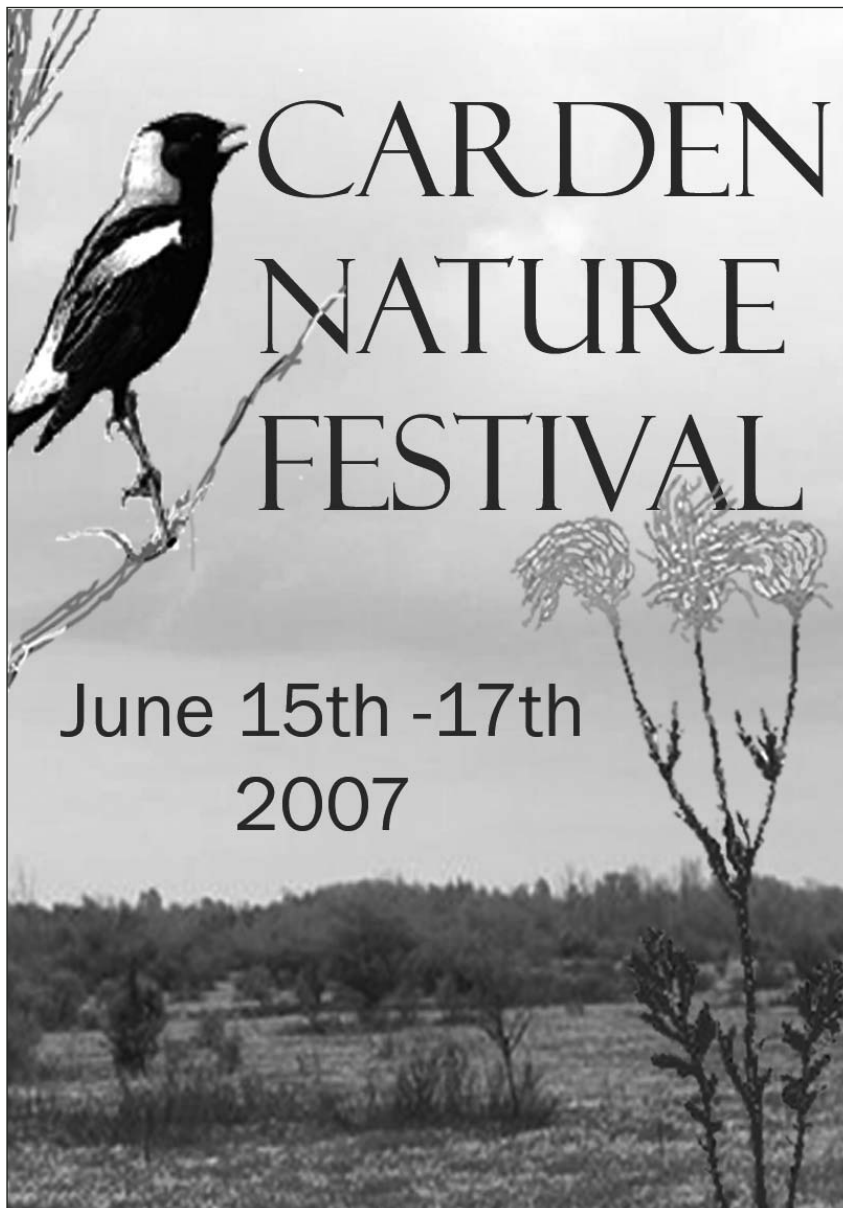
Over the next several issues of Conservancy News we will profile various ways you can make a difference in preserving your community's green spaces through planned giving. As a registered charity, certified under the Ecological Gifts program, The Couchiching Conservancy is well positioned to maximize the effectiveness of your gift of nature.

Gifting Idea #1: Have The Couchiching Conservancy named the beneficiary of your RRIF.

Any funds remaining in your RRIF accounts are fully taxable upon death unless you are able to roll them

over to a spouse or infirm child. By naming a registered charity as your beneficiary, you can avoid probate fees on the RRIF, and the charitable tax receipt generated by this donation can help negate the taxes due. This strategy enables you to benefit your charity of choice and minimize your tax burden.

We would be pleased to sit down with you and your advisors to explore your options for this gifting idea and others. Simply contact us at 326-1620 to arrange a personal appointment. Since everyone's tax situation is unique, it is important for you to obtain independent advice before deciding on any planned gift. ☺



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