



Conservancy NEWS

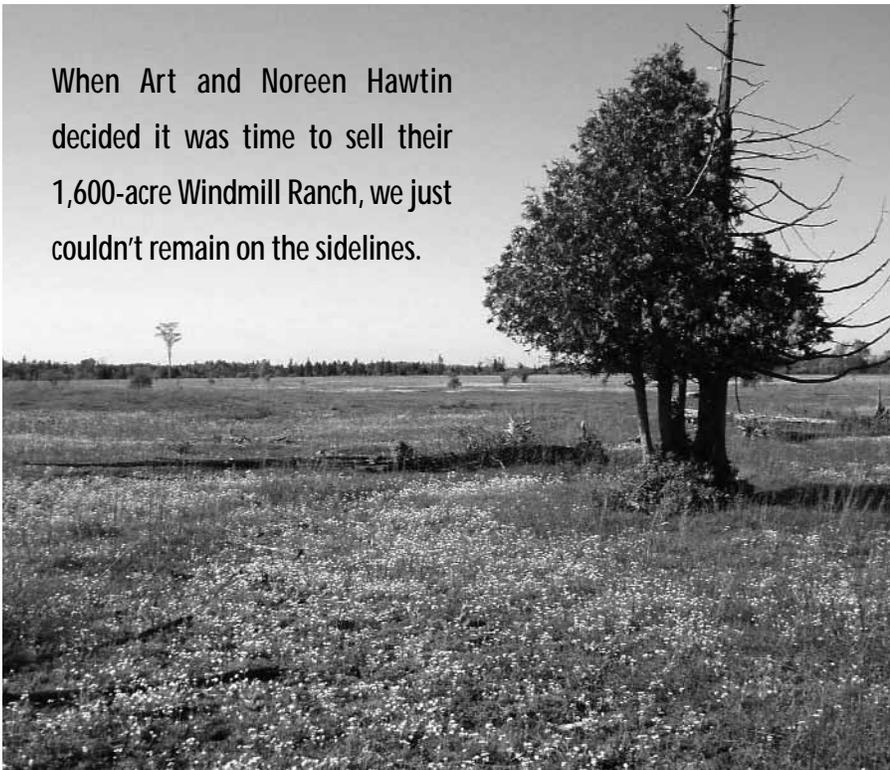
Protecting the special natural features of the Couchiching region for future generations.

Seasonal Highlights from The Couchiching Conservancy

August 2004

An opportunity too important to miss

When Art and Noreen Hawtin decided it was time to sell their 1,600-acre Windmill Ranch, we just couldn't remain on the sidelines.



Fresh from our success at securing Cameron Ranch Alvar, we would have preferred a breather before launching into another major campaign. But when Art and Noreen Hawtin decided it was time to sell their 1,600-acre Windmill Ranch, we just couldn't remain on the sidelines.

Windmill Ranch is well known to birders and other nature lovers, since it stretches over four kilometres along Wylie Road in the heart of the Carden Alvar. It backs onto Cameron Ranch, and shares many

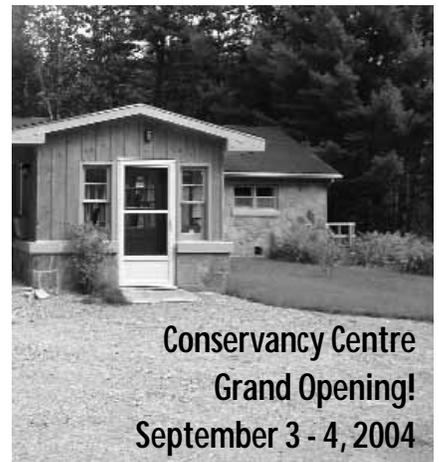
of the same significant features – nesting Loggerhead Shrikes, good-quality alvar grassland and shrubland communities, and many other grassland species including Upland Sandpipers, Grasshopper Sparrows, and Golden-winged Warblers. It also includes a central band of provincially significant wetland.

There was no question that the quarries were interested in this property – they had already made offers to the Hawtins. But to their credit, this long-time ranching family decided to accept a lower

offer from the Nature Conservancy of Canada, based on the same price per acre as Cameron Ranch. Ontario Parks will again provide part of the \$700,000 purchase price. The Couchiching Conservancy has promised to raise about \$110,000 from our community by next summer.

Already we have nearly \$40,000 received or pledged for this project, and we are hoping many of our supporters will once again dig deep to make sure this purchase is successful. One unique fundraiser was dreamt up by Janet Grand, who asked for donations to the campaign in honour of her 50th birthday – we received nearly \$4,000 as a result. Leslie Dymont also arranged for memorial donations when her father died, adding another \$1,000 in his memory.

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**Conservancy Centre
Grand Opening!
September 3 - 4, 2004**



A grand opening for the new Conservancy Centre

After thousands of hours of volunteer labour, and an amazing array of donated materials and services, the new Conservancy Centre is finally ready for unveiling. An official opening ceremony has been scheduled for **Friday, September 3**, at 4 p.m. so we can

introduce the Centre to local dignitaries and publicly thank our supporters. On **Saturday, September 4**, we are inviting Conservancy volunteers to come at 10 a.m., and then the public and other interested groups in the afternoon.

We will have volunteers available to guide visitors around the trail system, and light refreshments on hand. On-site parking will be

limited, but we hope it will be dry enough to park in the field across from the gate, or otherwise along the roadside. Everyone is welcome – please come out and help us celebrate a major step forward in the Conservancy's progress.

To reach Grant's Woods, take Burnside Line 2.0 km north from Hwy 11, turn left onto Division Road, and follow for 2.4 km to our entrance (#1485) on the left. ∞

A big "Thank You!" to all those involved

The Conservancy Centre has been a true community project, and we are immensely grateful to everyone involved:

- **Mr. William Grant**, who donated both the house and the surrounding 52 acres of woodland in memory of his late brother Jack.
- **Over 60 volunteers** from The Couchiching Conservancy and the Orillia Naturalists Club, who donated thousands of hours of labour. While it's difficult to name only a few, we especially want to recognize the efforts of **Ken Thomson, John Jenkins, Gary Thiess, Don Scott** and **Janet Grand** over the past two years, as well as the guidance provided by Executive Director **Ron Reid**.
- The **Ontario Trillium Foundation**, an agency of the Ministry of Culture, which receives \$100 million of government funding, generated through Ontario's charity casino initiative, annually, and which provided a capital grant toward renovation costs.
- **The following community-minded businesses** for the full or partial donation of their services to this project:

*A Touch of Class Auctioneers
Allan Drywall
Better Value Plumbing and Heating
Bird House Nature Company
Bluegrass Landscaping
Chrisandra Firth Law Office
Chuck Strongman Surveying Ltd.
Comer Electric
Dubeau Auctions
Ed Carey Construction
FM Recycling
Home Depot Orillia
Housser's Paint and Wallpaper
Jim Wares Aluminum
John Harris Energy Audit*

*Just Fix It
Kristi McKechnie Architectural Design
Mid-Ontario Disposal
Norm Langman and Bob Mackay Septic Installation
Nor-Weld Ltd
ODAS Park
Orillia Precast Concrete Ltd.
Orillia Trim and Door Ltd.
Peter Gill Landscape Consultant
Polar Bear Windows
Raney's Fuels & Building Supplies
Reed's Excavating
Sarjeant Co. Ltd.
Scott Inc. Construction*

*Security and Electronic Solutions
Severn Lighting Supply
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Simcoe Legal Services
Stewart Construction Inc.
Switzer Tim-br Mart
The Tree Man
The Water Market
Traditional Wood Floors
Vankuik Masonry
Vincent Well Drilling
Wagg's Linen Supply
Wainright Antiques
Washago Home Hardware
Washago Tim-Br Mart*

We still need help with the finishing touches

Even after our official opening, we hope to add a few finishing touches to the Conservancy Centre. If you would like to donate or sponsor any of the following items, we would be delighted to hear from you:

- Boardroom table and chairs
- Two Muskoka chairs
- Outdoor benches
- Picnic table (preferably octagonal) ∞

UPDATES **from the Conservation Front**

Take a walk in the woods

Tremendous changes have occurred at Grant's Woods over the last two years. There are now six accessible walking trails to take visitors through some of the most beautiful parts of the woods. Volunteers under the direction of Ken Thomson and John Jenkins have built eight new bridges across wet ravines, totalling over 350 feet in length.

Our summer students, Jacqui Kerr and Amanda Hooykaas, developed a new trail guide that links to interpretive stations along the main loop (Trillium Trail). These stations highlight interesting features of old-growth forest and provide interactive learning for visitors. Be sure to record sightings in the guest logbook at the new trailhead sign!

Benches have also been placed along the trails to give walkers a place to rest and contemplate the surrounding natural beauty. If we can find funding, we would love to eventually add a historical walk, with photographs showing the progression from farmstead to forest in the front part of the woods.

The Grant's Woods volunteer committee, with the



leadership of Mary and Omer Mick, has worked hard this year marking trails, building crossings in wet areas, and naming trail loops. Groups from Volunteers for Nature and the North Simcoe Stewardship Rangers also spent time here this summer, working on bridges and trails. The Shell Environmental Fund, Ministry of Natural Resources, and North Simcoe Private Land Stewardship Network have all provided funding for bridge materials, and Nor-Weld greatly assisted with its donation of steel trusses.

Trails are for public use and are open dawn to dusk. If you are coming out for a walk with your dog, please keep it leashed for safety, and remember to scoop the poop. All are welcome!

A regional gathering of land trusts

On Saturday, September 18, land trusts from south-central Ontario will gather at the Kempenfelt Centre near Barrie to share and learn from each other. This event, sponsored by the Ontario Land Trust Alliance, is open to anyone who would like to learn more about conservation easements and the work of local conservation organizations. Call Ron Reid at 326-1620 for details.

Conservancy recognized by funders

In a recent report prepared by the Canadian Environmental Grantmakers' Network, our capacity-building grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation was used as a case study of best practices in environmental grant making. The report, which provides guidelines for use by community foundations across Canada, describes this grant as a "particularly good example of a key element of capacity-building in individual organizations: assisting an environmental organization in the transition from volunteer-based to staff-based operations." For The Couchiching Conservancy, it is an honour to be recognized as part of such a study.

A new partnership with Home Depot

For the past decade, Home Depot has been one of the environmental leaders in the retail sector. One example is its commitment to move to certified sustainable forest products in its stores. Now the Orillia Home Depot has expressed its environmental support by agreeing to build an "Eco-gazebo" for the Conservancy just behind Grant House.

The Eco-gazebo will provide a sheltered space for outdoor training sessions or visiting groups who come to learn about old-growth forests. Its location overlooks a small wetland, and links directly to the walking trail system. It will complement the indoor meeting space at Grant House and become an integral part of the Conservancy Centre.

Home Depot provides most of the funding for materials as a corporate donation, and staff members from the Orillia store participate as volunteers to build the structure. The Eco-gazebo should be completed by the end of summer. Hats off to Gary Hansford and all the Orillia Home Depot staff for their support! ∞

An opportunity — continued from cover

It is no accident that NCC was so willing to once again take on a major project in our region, for their staff have been impressed by the outstanding support for conservation shown by our members and supporters. The Windmill Ranch project will preserve another huge piece of the exceptional natural habitats on the Carden Alvar, and help create a large, self-sustaining nature reserve for future generations. If you would like more information on this project or how you could support it, please contact Ron Reid at the Conservancy office at 326-1620 ☺



Friends from far and wide celebrated Janet's half-century by donating to the Windmill Ranch campaign.

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Janet Grand

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