



Conservancy NEWS

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

Seasonal Highlights from The Couchiching Conservancy

August 2005

Another Orillia-Boy-Makes-Good is Coming Home



Everyone knows that the Orillia area has produced some famous sons – a singer, a writer, even a provincial Premier. But did you know that we also raised a well-known radio and television personality?

To listeners of CBC Radio, Bob MacDonald is a familiar voice – the host of the weekly science program *Quirks and Quarks*. But he is also a regular on CBC television news, was host of the children's science television program *Wonderstruck* for seven years, has authored two books, and has produced more than 100 educational videos about science. Among other awards, he has received an Honorary Doctorate from University of Guelph. He also sits on the Board of Advisors for the Canadian Space Agency.

So where did all this talent start? In Orillia, of course, where Bob lived until he was ten. He started his academic career at Guardian Angels school, back when it was a large red brick schoolhouse. His home was only a few blocks from Couchiching Park, where he spent many summer days swimming in the lake and collecting pop bottles for penny candy.

According to Bob: "I was one of those skinny kids in a bathing suit who was everywhere at once. One of my fondest memories is running shivering from the water and climbing on top of one of the cannons beside the Champlain

Monument – the dark steel barrel was a wonderful source of heat to take the chill away."

That skinny kid is now Dr. Bob MacDonald, who readily agreed to return to Orillia for the evening of Saturday, September 24th. His presentation at the Opera House will feature his perspectives on our fragile blue planet and its future, with proceeds from the event helping to support the conservation work of The Couchiching Conservancy.

Don't miss this exciting event. Tickets are limited, so visit the Opera House or the Bird House Nature Company today to reserve your space. ♪

A Busy Schedule of Fall Events

September 10 - 11: The Conservancy will team up with **Sciensational Sssnakes at the Orillia Fall Fair**. Visitors can have their photo taken holding a live snake – a test of bravery for many, a great educational opportunity, and the \$5 fee supports the work of the Conservancy.

September 14: Go Buggy with Bob – a morning workshop at Grant's Woods on the secret lives of ladybugs, dragonflies, and fireflies with renowned local naturalist Bob Bowles. \$10 per person but kids can come free; meant for beginners.

September 21: Future of the Carden Alvar Natural Heritage Conference, a day-long session at the Carden Recreation Centre in Dalrymple; \$20 registration includes lunch. The conference will address the conflicts between quarrying and conservation on the Carden Plain by hearing from both sides, including a panel of quarry representatives.

To register for any of these events, or for more information, call the Conservancy office at 326-1620.

Carden Challenge adds \$10,000 to Windmill Ranch Campaign

A four-man team from Barrie took home the trophy at the first Carden Challenge held in late June. But the real winner was the campaign to purchase Windmill Ranch, which was boosted by just over \$10,000 in pledges to the eight participating teams.

The “Guttersnipes” team of Alex Mills, Rob Copeland, Dave Walsh and Ian Cook made the most of the 24-hour competition, sleeping for only a few hours on their way to a winning count of 114 bird species. Two other teams were close, with 112 species each found within the 24-kilometre count circle centered on Cameron Ranch.

This kind of competitive birdwatching event is becoming more common across North America, but the Carden Challenge may be the first to combine fundraising for a specific property with a team competition in a limited local area. “The number of different birds seen – a total of 136 species by all the teams combined – really highlights the significance of the Carden Alvar for breeding birds,” said local naturalist Bob Bowles, who donated the trophy for the event.

The individual with the highest amount of pledges – Nathalie



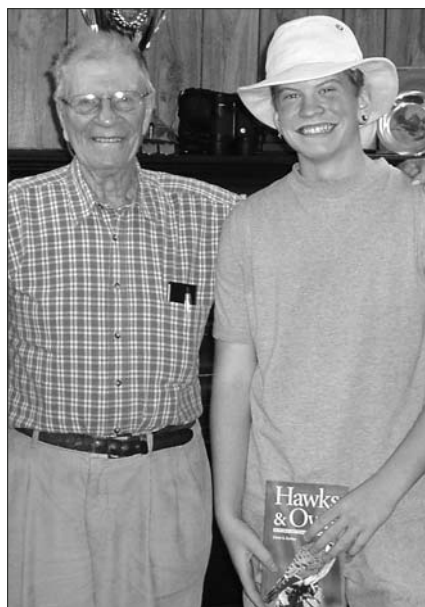
Birdwatchers flock to roadsides along Windmill Ranch to catch sight of Loggerhead Shrikes and many other birds.

Rockhill – won a pair of top-quality binoculars donated by the Bird House Nature Company. A spirited team called the Conservancy Cowgirls, complete with cowgirl hats, took home the prize for the highest team pledges. Participants in the Challenge ranged from 15-year-old Julia St. Antoine of Windsor, to 86-year-old Fred Bodsworth, the well-known author and naturalist.

With the proceeds from this event, The Couchiching Conservancy has gathered more than \$100,000 towards the Windmill Ranch project. The lead partner on this project, The Nature Conservancy of Canada, is continuing to raise funds to meet a November 2005 deadline.

With 1600 acres of globally-rare alvar habitats, regular nesting of the

endangered Loggerhead Shrikes, and an abundance of other grassland, shrubland, and wetland birds, Windmill Ranch is an outstanding natural area. Together with the 2900-acre Cameron Ranch, which was successfully acquired in 2003, this project will protect the core of the specialized shallow limestone bedrock habitats on the Carden Alvar. ∞



Author Fred Bodsworth congratulates teenaged birder Brennan Ackert of Joyland Beach on participating in the Carden Challenge.



The team of Kathy Callahan, Ellen Larson, Leslie Dymont and Dale Leadbeater receive their prizes for top team pledges.

Don't miss out on *Ladies of the Lake* Calendars

Grace your walls in 2006 with a unique calendar featuring tasteful photos of ladies from around Lake Simcoe (including one of the Conservancy's Board members) who are committed to restoring the quality of this great natural asset. The ladies are captured in a variety of outdoor activities – kayaking, ice-fishing, visiting the sugar bush – but sans clothing! Available for only \$15 at the Conservancy office or the Bird House Nature Company. Supplies are limited! ∞

Local Businesses Sign On to Support The Conservancy

Protecting green space for future generations clearly benefits the people of this region. Now, a number of progressive local businesses are also recognizing that natural areas are good for our economic base as well. Green spaces provide an attractive environment vital to the tourism industry, help maintain a quality of life that attracts employees and retirees, and sustains clean air and water.

With the help of a grant from The Sustainability Network, the Conservancy has launched a corporate membership program to reach out to local businesses. To date, 26 local businesses have signed up, and others are considering doing so. Many other local businesses have donated valuable good or services to the Conservancy, which will be recognized separately.

Corporate memberships come in three levels, ranging from \$150 to \$1000 or more per year. As a result of presentations and contacts by consultant Marian Parrott, Conservancy staffer Rosalie Pratt, and other volunteers, the following businesses have taken a leadership role as Conservancy corporate members:

Level I: Army Navy & Air Force Veterans in Canada
Artech Promotional Wear
Coldwater Road Animal Clinic
Crawford McKenzie McLean & Wilford Law Firm
The Crow's Nest
Dr. Steven J. Cruise (Midland)
Kevin Ellis: Remax Midland
Hardwood Hills
Inn The Woods Bed & Breakfast
Kathy Hunt Communications
Mail Boxes Etc.
Office Links
Perkinsfield Auto Parts Wreckers

Level II: Bayview Wildwood Resort
Bird House Nature Company
Coldwell Banker Realty
Dearden and Stanton Limited
Fern Resort
Francoz-Morton Steel Service Centre
The Marketing Group of Canada Ltd
Mundell Funeral Home Ltd
C.T. Strongman Surveying Ltd
Scanlon & Associates

Level III: Casino Rama
Orillia Power Corporation
Scott Inc. Construction

In addition, several local media have entered into media partnerships with the Conservancy. The Orillia *Packet & Times* is providing a very significant amount of advertising space over the next 18 months. *Jack-FM Radio* assisted with promotion of the Conservancy spring events in 2005, and is providing advertising support this fall. The *Midland Free Press* and *Orillia Today* have also assisted with event promotion. ☺

Casino Rama: Looking Out for the Long Term

Sherry Lawson, the Director of Corporate Affairs and Public Relations at Casino Rama, is clear about why her employer became one of the Conservancy's first corporate members:

"Casino Rama has always supported the Couchiching Conservancy, a well-run, grassroots environmental organization with a history of doing good work in our area. If our generation doesn't follow through with preserving land and its plants and animals, there will not be any left for our children and grandchildren to enjoy."



Sherry Lawson, of Casino Rama, with Ron Reid.

Through its Community Wellness Program, Casino Rama has previously supported several Conservancy projects, including field work on the Oro Moraine, the Cameron Ranch Alvar project, and Earth Day celebrations. Their support is clearly paying dividends in making this a greener and healthier place to live for future generations. ☺

Not every business quite grasps just what we do. Admittedly, Couchiching can be a bit of a tongue-twister if you didn't grow up here. But a recent Canpar delivery from a Toronto bank office was addressed to "The Gucci King" at our location. Maybe we are preserving the "Lake of Shoes"?



Summer student Jacqui Kerr puts finishing touches on a new washroom building at Grant's Woods. The building features environmentally-friendly composting toilets, and is designed for use by student groups and other visitors to the trail system.

The Couchiching Conservancy Board

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