



Conservancy NEWS

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

Seasonal Highlights from The Couchiching Conservancy

MARCH 2010

A big year – in more ways than one

Ron Reid and Janet Grand are having a big year.

It's their 25th wedding anniversary, and in celebration of the event they have challenged themselves to see as many bird species as they can in Ontario in 2010. And to make the challenge more interesting and fruitful, they have turned it into a fundraiser for the Conservancy. The two are taking pledges for every species they see. Ron and Janet say that having this financial incentive gives them that extra little nudge to get out of bed before dawn to continue their quest.



The monies they raise will go toward the purchase of Wolf Run Alvar, a rugged wilderness property on the Carden Plain. Ron and Janet are just beginning to explore this 303-acre property and its mix of grassland and shrubland alvars, conifer and deciduous woods, and extensive open wetlands. Given the diversity of the landscape, they are hoping to find an equally diverse number of bird species. They have been told that one researcher who visited the area several years ago reported seeing a

peregrine falcon patrolling the sedge marshes.

Wolf Run Alvar comes from the name of the access road, Wolf Run Trail, which runs along the northern edge of former Carden Township.

Currently Ron and Janet are up to 99 species and have pledges at just under \$50 a species. As a special incentive, an anonymous donor has stepped up and agreed to match any new pledges that come in from this point forward. That includes top-ups to pledges that have already been made.

The price tag for the Wolf Run Alvar project, including associated costs like appraisals and stewardship, adds up to just over \$225,000. The Couchiching Conservancy has applied to a federal program for half of that, but we still need to raise quite a bit of cash before the closing date in October 2010 – so please be generous in pledging your support. You will receive updates on their progress as well as the satisfaction of helping to secure another great natural property for future generations. You will also receive a charitable tax receipt for your donation. Contact Ron or Janet at ronreid@couchconservancy.ca.

Annual Meeting a crowd pleaser

Over 120 members and supporters braved a chilly January afternoon to attend the Conservancy's 2009 Annual General Meeting in Orillia. The enthusiastic crowd heard about an event-filled year that included the Carden Nature Festival and the first-ever Conservancy Cycling Adventure. Both of these happenings helped showcase our outreach efforts.

On the land-protection front, the Conservancy assumed management of new properties in Carden: the McGee Creek and Cranberry Lake Wetlands, donated by Judy and Lou Probst to the Nature Conservancy of Canada, and Little Bluestem Alvar.

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A big year *(continued from page 1)*

Also dedicated in 2009 was Prospect Marsh Nature Reserve. Judy Probst purchased the marsh in memory of her parents, Min and Ralph McCleary, with the long-term intention of donating it to the Conservancy. A conservation easement was also completed on an Oro Moraine property owned by Mack Williams.

The successful transition to a new executive director following the retirement of Ron Reid was noted as a highlight of the year. Ron is continuing his alliance with the Conservancy by working on a half-time basis on projects in Carden Township.



And the winner is... Congratulations to Mary Thornbush from Orillia. She was the lucky raffle winner of a pair of hand-carved paddles generously donated by Lisa Gillette and Gary Peters. Pictured above with Mary (left to right) are: Couchiching Conservancy staff members, Mark Bisset, Executive Director; Gayle Carlyle, Outreach Coordinator; along with guest speaker, Liz Ross.

Treasurer Peggy Foley provided a positive report on the Conservancy's financial situation, highlighting a strong performance despite tough economic times. In addition to acquiring new properties, the Conservancy was able to add to reserve funds and generate a small surplus thanks to the dedication of its supporters.

President Isabelle Thiess was re-elected for another one-year term, and two new directors – David Hawke and David Homer – were elected to the Board.

Once the business part of the meeting wrapped up, attendees were treated to a fascinating presentation from local naturalist and research assistant Liz Ross. Liz spoke about her trips to the Arctic and her newsworthy discovery of a new mammalian fossil. Thanks go to John Jenkins for providing the speaker gift.

Each year, the Conservancy honours some of its volunteers for exceptional service. This year, silver pins were awarded to Mack Williams, Stan Hope-Smith, Paul Laver, Sid Hadlington, Garfield Dunlop MPP, and David Kennedy.

New at this year's meeting was the acknowledgement of Corporate Members who have been supporters since the creation of the program five years ago. A special thanks to:

Bayview Wildwood Resort
C.T. Strongman Surveying Ltd.
Casino Rama
The Davey Tree Expert Co. of Canada Ltd.
(The Treeman)
Coldwater Road Animal Clinic
Crawford, McKenzie, McLean, Anderson &
Duncan LLP
Donald D. Scott Custom Builder & Renovator Inc.
Ellis Hearing Aid Service
HGR Lawyers
Inn The Woods Bed & Breakfast
Julia A. Bailey Barrister & Solicitor
KH Communications
Office Links
Orillia Power Corporation
Snuggles Pooch & Kitty Holiday Camp
The Bird House Nature Company ☺

Welcome aboard!

The Conservancy's newest staff member is **Jess Sheppard**, who will be working on a special project for the next month.

With funding from the Government of Canada through the Orillia Area Community Development Corporation, The Couchiching Conservancy is working to develop and implement a youth summer program. This program will see local high school students volunteering on multiple Conservancy sites, learning about our environmental practices as they contribute their community-involvement volunteer hours over the course of a week. ☺

BRIEF NOTES

Notes

Fall cycling adventure

Plans are well underway for the 2010 Conservancy Cycling Adventure, which will take place on Sunday, October 3. Based on the success of last year's event, we anticipate even more people will join in on a fun and "green" way to visit our properties and local neighbourhoods. The beautiful village of Washago will be the location for this year's event, which will include visits to three Conservancy properties in the area. Stay tuned for further details.

Carden Nature Festival

Registrations are coming in daily and excitement is mounting for the fourth annual Carden Nature Festival June 4-6. This popular event features over 100 nature-related activities including bird watching, watercolour painting, paddling, and flora and fauna identification, all led by enthusiastic experts. Registration is easy – check out the website at www.CardenGuide.com/Festival. See you at the Festival!

A new adventure

Looking for something to do with the family this March break? How about a visit to the newly created Scales Nature Park in Orillia? Scienstational Ssnakes is ready to show off their new indoor reptile and amphibian park and will be contributing 10 per cent of sales for Saturday, March 13 and Sunday, March 14 to the Conservancy.



Volunteers from the Conservancy will be on hand to meet visitors and share information on our conservation projects. For more information, contact Gayle at

326-1620 or visit www.couchconservancy.ca.

Are you up for a challenge?

The Carden Challenge is taking place Friday, June 18 to Saturday, June 19 and is a unique and exciting way to raise funds for the Conservancy. All proceeds will go to support the stewardship of Carden's alvar and bird habitats. Put together a team of four, or sponsor your favourite birder to see how many bird species they can count in a 24-hour period. Celebrity birder this year is Graeme Gibson, author of several books, including *The Bedside Book of Birds*. For more information, contact Ron Reid at ronreid@couchconservancy.ca.

Wearing a new hat

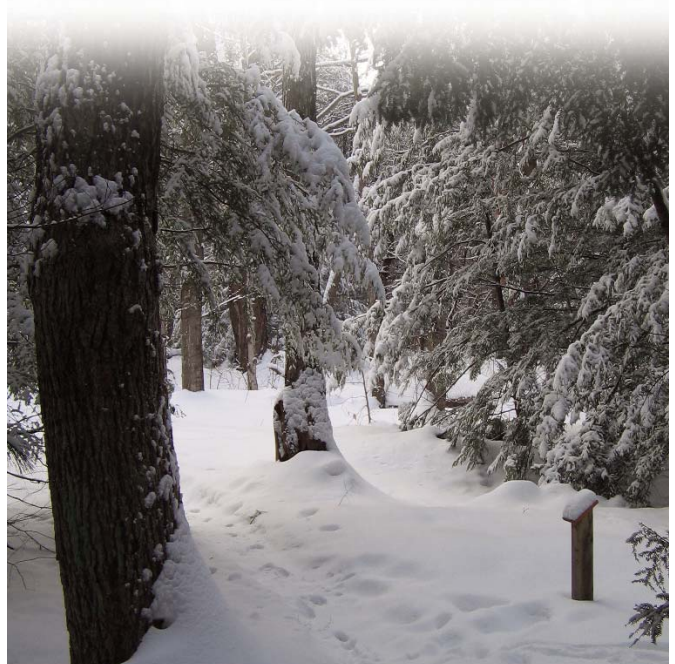
Conservancy staff member Kristen Field has become the first-ever executive director of a newly formed organization called the Magnetawan Watershed Land Trust. Kristen will continue working for The Couchiching Conservancy while she helps build the new land trust on a part-time basis. Congratulations to Kristen.

Get growing!

The Couchiching Conservancy and Ego's Nurseries Ltd. on Horseshoe Valley Road have teamed up to help gardeners enhance wildlife habitat. Ego's will be selling native shrub and tree species, grown on their own property, at a reasonable cost, with \$10 from each plant going to support the Conservancy. Species include white spruce, balsam fir, white cedar, hemlock, nannyberry and red-osier dogwood. Plants can be pre-ordered through Ego's at 326-9922. Pick up is scheduled for Saturday, April 24. Please contact Gayle at 326-1620 for more information.

Christmas Card Photo Contest

Believe it or not, we're already getting ready for this year's holiday season by inviting photographers to enter our contest and be in the running to have their photo on the cover of our Christmas cards. What a great reason to get out and enjoy nature this winter! Details can be found our website or by calling Gayle at 326-1620. ☺



Do you have some spare time on your hands?

Here is just a small sample of volunteer opportunities coming up with the Conservancy. Please contact Betty Forward at 329-4571 to register unless otherwise indicated.

Wildlife Preservation Canada's Grassland Bird Survey: various locations – Mid-April to July

Based on the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, this program will focus on monitoring grasslands throughout the region. Register directly at 1-800-956-6608 (toll-free) or gbs@wildlifepreservation.ca by March 19.

Invasive Species Identification and Volunteer Training – March 28

Led by the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, this is your chance to learn about invasive species encroaching into the area. Starts at 10 a.m., lunch provided. Training will also be available for those interested in volunteer property stewardship.

Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters Roadside Invasive Species Monitoring – TBD

Apply your newly honed skills from the workshop and assist OFAH in the discovery of invasive species throughout the community.

Volunteer Training – April 14 (evening)

Interested in becoming a volunteer property steward, but not sure what it entails? This evening training session is an excellent opportunity to learn more about how to assist with the protection of our properties.

Grant's Woods: Orillia – Anytime you are available

We are going to attempt to control the periwinkle that has spread into the forest around the Grant House. Anytime you come by for a walk and have a few minutes to spare, please leave some periwinkle in the designated containers at the site. Kindly check in at the office before you begin work.

Wetland Restoration Project: Carden – May 12

As part of our effort to reduce the impact of cattle grazing on wetlands, we will be installing a fence and restoring a wetland in Carden. Get your boots and shovels out for a day of native tree planting.

Garlic Mustard removal at the Church Woods property: Shanty Bay – May 30 and June 2

Throughout the spring, volunteers will be removing invasive Garlic Mustard from the property. Additional dates may be available. Contact Betty for details.

A complete list of volunteer opportunities is available on our website: <http://www.couchconservancy.ca>

The Couchiching Conservancy Board

Isabelle Thiess, President	259-5547
Peggy Foley	325-2287
David Hawke	835-6213
David Homer	833-2571
Kristi McKechnie	689-9491
Jamie Powell	835-0149
Lou Probst	438-1324
Bob Sullivan	325-8775
Ingrid VanderMarel	835-2289
Nathalie Rockhill (Ex-officio)	438-1301

The Couchiching Conservancy office 326-1620

Mark Bisset, Executive Director

Kyra Howes, Stewardship Coordinator

Gayle Carlyle, Outreach Coordinator

Kristen Field, Science Intern

The Couchiching Conservancy

P.O. Box 704, Orillia, ON L3V 6K7

nature@couchconservancy.ca • www.couchconservancy.ca

The Couchiching
Conservancy 

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