



Conservancy NEWS

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

Seasonal Highlights from The Couchiching Conservancy

May 2005

Major new project on The Land Between

Where on earth is The Land Between? We hope many more people will be able to answer that question a year from now. The Couchiching Conservancy and other organizations are taking the first serious look at this special landscape.

The Land Between (or TLB, for short) is a corridor of shallow bedrock along the southern edge of the Canadian Shield stretching from Georgian Bay to Kingston.

The Land Between corridor lies between the farmlands of southern Ontario and the forested hills of cottage country, and it has a history of being overlooked. But it is a very important ecological transition zone – in its geology from limestone to granite, in its elevation and in its climate. As a result, it is rich in biodiversity, recognized as exceptionally diverse in its breeding birds, reptiles and amphibians, and vascular plants.

Much of this area is under threat from expanding quarries, motorized recreation, and the wave of development pressure being pushed northwards by Greenbelt restrictions farther south. While several major new parks have been created

within TLB in recent years, other Crown lands and privately owned areas are at serious risk.

We have teamed up with the Kawartha Heritage Conservancy, our sister organization based in Peterborough, to identify gaps in protection and new opportunities for conservation in TLB, and to engage other organizations and agencies in a collaborative approach. We hope this will be a three-year project. We

have funding for the first year from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the EJLB Foundation, and the Salamander Foundation to support a project manager and a series of science-based activities.

In mid-May, Ben Porchuk will be joining us at Grant's Woods Conservancy Centre to head up this venture. Ben has spent the past 12 years on Pelee Island working on conservation projects, most recently as Executive Director of a community organization called Wilds of Pelee Island. He will be a welcome addition to the Conservancy, and to the Orillia community, and he is looking forward to making TLB an important part of our conservation agenda. ☺



Earth Day: smiles in spite of the showers

by Rosalie Pratt

What a group! Amid the April showers (which bordered on cold, hard rain at times!), over 100 volunteers swung into action and we celebrated Earth Day 2005 in high fashion.

Despite the weather, we welcomed several hundred people, and the feedback from the community has been heart-warming. This was a family event, with lots of children participating in meaningful, educational, and fun activities. Children took home the birdhouses,

continued, page 2...

Earth Day

continued from cover

salamander shelters, and whirligigs they constructed. Adults were able to access quality information and advice from various nature experts and to buy native seedlings, wild-flowers, and apparel. The family day was topped off by food and drink provided by the Twin Lakes Conservation Club.



This was our first such event, and we learned a lot. Certainly we were reminded once again of the dedication and goodwill of our volunteers. We learned that people will come for miles to pick up left-over seedlings at bargain prices – next time, we'll offer our members a pre-paid preferred price. And we learned that many sectors in our community like to do something positive for Earth Day – the media that helped with promotion; the local businesses that sponsored advertising or donated services; terrific folk music provided by Alex; and Casino Rama, which provided seed funding.

Will we do it again next year? Maybe, with some changes and, hopefully, better weather. We would be interested in your feedback; if you have comments or suggestions, call Rosalie at 326-1620. ☺

UPDATES

from the Conservation Front

Lots of activities and events coming up!

Rosalie has been busy making sure that Conservancy members and volunteers are never bored, and that the community hears about us regularly. Mark your calendars for these upcoming events you won't want to miss:

On **May 28 and 29**, Grant's Woods Conservancy Centre will be part of Orillia's first **Doors Open** weekend. Free admission; open each day 10 am until 4 pm.

On **June 11**, a **volunteer- and member-appreciation tour** will take place in our wetland reserves and other properties near Sparrow Lake. Sorry, now sold out at 40 participants.

On **July 1**, we join the **Canada Day** celebrations at Couchiching Beach Park with a **Sciensational Ssnakes** display. This is always a crowd-pleaser, and a great way to teach kids (and grown-ups, too) to learn to love snakes. Volunteers are needed; if you can help, please call Rosalie at 326-1620.

From **June through September**, **Jeff Miller** will run **Look-See-Paint** sessions at Grant's Woods, with donations from the fees going to the Conservancy. Pre-register at ODAC (329-2333) or call Jeff at 329-1844 for details.

The evening of **August 17** will be our **Midsummer Night's Dream** workshop; see the enclosed flyer.

On **September 21**, the **Future of the Carden Alvar Natural Heritage Conference** will bring a variety of speakers and perspectives to Dalrymple to explore ways to reduce the conflict between quarrying and conservation. Registration is only \$20, which includes lunch. Call us for details.

On Saturday, **September 24**, the host of **CBC Radio's Quirks and Quarks, Bob MacDonald**, will be our special guest speaker at the Orillia Opera House. Bob spent his childhood in Orillia and is looking forward to bringing his message about "Perspectives on a Planet" back home. Tickets are \$20 each, \$10 for students, and are available at the Opera House box office.

For October, who knows? Maybe a Pumpkin Evening? (I'm almost afraid to ask!) ☺

Wye comes to the Woods

As soon as our trail system in Grant's Woods opened, we began receiving enquiries about programs for schools and other groups. Because the Conservancy's work focuses specifically on natural lands protection, providing that sort of programming is not high on our priority list.

The Friends of Wye Marsh, based in Midland, do have both the mandate and the expertise to deliver top-quality interpretive programs, so rather than begin a competing education program of our own, we have signed a partnership agreement with Wye Marsh. Their interpretive staff are setting up new programs to be delivered at Grant's Woods, with a target of hosting 60 group visits over the first two years.

Again, the Ontario Trillium Foundation has been generous in providing seed funding to get the program established, and Shell Environmental Fund is also helping with funding for trail enhancements and installation of composting

UPDATES **continued...**

toilets. Participating groups will be expected to pay a program fee, and we hope the program will be self-sustaining over time.

If you know of any groups that might be interested in a program at Grant's Woods, contact Vida Woods at 526-7809 or wyemmarsh@cryston.ca for booking information. Initial program offerings range from "The Friendly Forest" for Kindergarten–Grade 1 students, through various aspects of the web of life in an old-growth forest for older classes, to general-interest programs such as Look-See-Paint and orienteering. ∞

Carden Challenge will benefit Windmill Ranch

Securing the 1,600-acre Windmill Ranch continues to be our top priority in 2005, especially since the target closing date had to be delayed because sufficient funding was not in place. Nature Conservancy of Canada and the other partner groups involved in this project have re-doubled their efforts, and we are likewise trying new avenues to attract support.

One of our new initiatives is the Carden Challenge, an event that engages teams of four in a friendly competition to confirm as many bird species as possible on the Carden alvar within a 24-hour period. The Challenge takes place on **June 17/18**, with the winning team taking home a beautiful trophy donated by Bob Bowles.

But, of course, the purpose of the Challenge is to raise money through pledges based on the number of species seen. So the team with the highest pledged amount wins a set of four silver plates engraved with Audubon sketches, donated by David Kennedy. The individual with the highest pledged amount receives Swift Tri Lytes binoculars, generously provided by The Bird House Nature Company.

We are hoping to have at least half a dozen teams competing. Already we have registrations from such colourfully named foursomes as The Feathermuckers, Three Reeves and a Ruff, and Curlew Quartet. The latter team includes our celebrity challenger, Fred Bodsworth, who is a lively and skilled birder as well as an accomplished author. If you would like to sponsor him or any of the other teams, you can do so through the Conservancy office.

The Carden Challenge may well become an annual event, but for this year it can give a boost to funding for Windmill Ranch. Overall, the campaign to raise \$1.1 million for purchase of the ranch is well over halfway to completion. At the local level, we have raised more than \$88,000 toward our target of \$110,000. ∞

Good stuff for free! Just ask us.

Two new information pieces are available to Conservancy members:

An attractive new **Conservancy poster** features full-colour photography by David J. Hawke with a map of natural areas on the front, and detail about Conservancy activities and criteria for land-securement projects on the back.

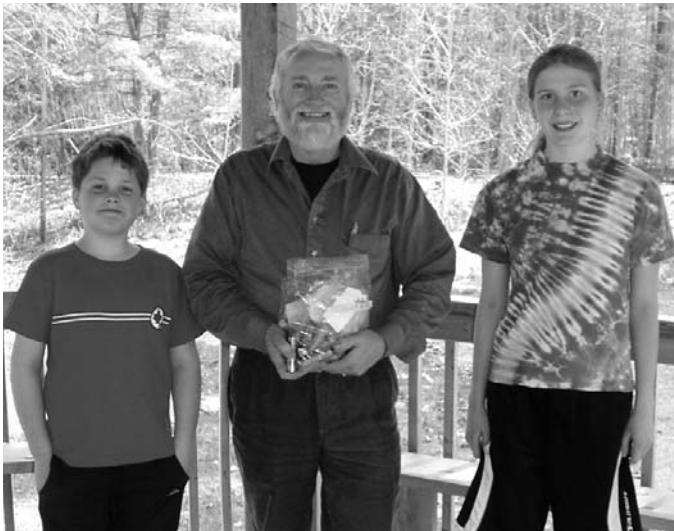
The Carden Plain Important Bird Area Committee and a series of partners, including the Conservancy and the Carden Field Naturalists, have produced a new **Nature Guide to the Carden Plain**. It includes detailed mapping and suggested sites to visit. ∞

Earth Day

continued from cover



Earth Day Donation



John Benedetti and Erika Hartog from Marchmont Public School delivered a great bag of pennies collected to celebrate Earth Day.

The Couchiching Conservancy Board

Nathalie Rockhill, President438-1301
 Rob Cutler, Treasurerrobert.cutler@td.com
 Julie Cayley725-7164
 Earl Dertinger487-2840
 Lou Probst438-1324
 Joan Rosebush329-1448
 Dan Stoutt329-8232
 Bob Sullivan325-8775
 Isabelle Thiess326-5547
 Ron Reid, Executive Director326-1620

The Couchiching Conservancy
 P.O. Box 704, Orillia, Ontario L3V 6K7
 nature@couchconservancy.ca
 www.couchconservancy.ca



Charitable Reg. No. 139725030RR0001

Open 7 days - THE CROW'S NEST - 3 locations

Collectables, antiques, estate & new jewellery
 Stained glass, china, Hummel, Doulton & Home Decor
 Collectable, antique & playable dolls

Smoke shoppe & lottery - buy, trade, sell

Crow's Nest	Crow's Nest II	Crow's Nest III
236 King St. Midland 705-527-7777	57 Mississaga St. Orillia 705-327-7777	179 Hurontario St. Collingwood 705-446-2777

crowsnest@thunderstar.net

Eco + Medic

Ecosystem Restoration Services

Pond, Shoreline, Stream, Woodland Restoration, Residential Naturalization
 using Native Plants & Wildflowers

For a Free Consultation call Sandy Agnew
 705-835-6824 or email bluebird@mid.igs.net



C.T. Strongman Surveying Ltd.

Ontario Land Surveyors

Chuck Strongman, B.Tech., O.L.S.

4145 Burnside Line
 R.R. #4, Orillia, ON
 L3V 6H4
 Tel: (705) 329-0765
 Toll Free: (800) 387-1668
 Fax: (705) 329-0424



PETER W. GILL, B.Sc.F., R.P.F. LANDSCAPE CONSULTANT

3957 Fairgrounds Rd., R.R. #2, Orillia, ON, CA L3V 6H2

LANDSCAPE DESIGN AND SITE PLANNING
 WOODLOT, SHORELINE & LAND MANAGEMENT
 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT
 ECO-RESTORATION

Tel: (705) 329-1404

Fax: (705) 329-3651

Chrisandra Firth

Zwicker, Evans & Lewis
 93 Coldwater St. E., Orillia • 705-325-6146



Janet Grand

Supplies and Gifts
 for
 Nature Lovers

108 Mississaga Street East
 Orillia, Ontario L3V 1V7

birdhouse@thunderstar.net

(705) 329-3939