



Conservancy NEWS

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

Seasonal Highlights from The Couchiching Conservancy

November 2005

A green future for the Carden alvar



“We need a strong planning process to create a workable balance between conservation and quarries on the Carden alvar.” That was the overwhelming conclusion of discussion groups at the Carden Plain Natural Heritage Conference. The conference, co-sponsored by the Conservancy, Carden Field Naturalists, and the Carden Plain Important Bird Area Committee, drew 95 participants from a wide range of backgrounds. A follow-up meeting to report on results of the conference involved another 45 local landowners.

As a result, representatives from the quarry industry and conservationists have begun discussions on a joint working group to explore ways to reduce future conflicts. If this process is successful, it could help provide a framework for both future municipal Official Plan policies and addressing concerns raised by local residents.

Certainly the Carden alvar will be a focus of conservation attention for many years to come. At the conference, the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) unveiled a draft conservation plan that calls for acquisition of an additional 7,000 acres of significant habitats over the next decade within a defined project area. This will create the largest protected area of alvar in North America.

The purchase of Windmill Ranch is a key part of this overall vision. The Couchiching Conservancy has met its target of raising \$100,000 towards its purchase price with the help of many local donors. The NCC expects the formal transfer of title will take place early in 2006, with the property to be vested with Ontario Parks and managed jointly with Cameron Ranch.

Several other Carden alvar projects are underway, so watch for announcements soon. ☺

Corporate Member program takes off

Over 40 local businesses have signed on as corporate members of the Conservancy so far in 2005. Most of those businesses were on hand October 28, a brisk fall day, at Grant's Woods to receive attractive display plaques recognizing their support. Ten “Level III” members, who contributed \$1,000 or more each, were also recognized with their names carved into a 10-tonne granite boulder placed on site through the cooperation of Glen Stewart Construction, Mawdsley Mobile Crane Rental, and Sanderson Monument Co.

continued page 2



Stewart Construction delivers a corporate-recognition rock to Grant's Woods.

Corporate Members

continued from cover

We listed about half of the corporate members in a previous newsletter; others include:

Level I:

Snuggles Pooch & Holiday Camp
Ontario Marine Operators Association
Farr's Roofing
Hacker Gignac Rice
Midland Toyota
The Carpet Warehouse
Manticore Books
Scott's Garden Centre
Ellis Hearing Aid Service
Garfield Dunlop
Fred Hook Ltd.
Catholic Family Life Centre
Speedy Signs & Truck Lettering

Level II:

Arcade Guardian Pharmacy
National Bank of Canada

Level III:

Bird House Nature Company
The Tree Man ☺

Jane Ball joins Conservancy Board

Jane Ball, an energetic resident of the Oro Moraine, has agreed to join the Board to replace Dan Stoutt, who retired earlier this year. Jane has been an active volunteer on Conservancy projects for many years, and her recent retirement from the Simcoe Learning Centre has allowed her to take on broader responsibilities. In welcoming her to her new role, President Nathalie Rockhill noted that Jane's father, W.T. Brown, had been one of the founding members of the Conservancy in 1993. ☺

Federal Environment Minister visits Grant's Woods



Minister of Environment, Stéphane Dion (left), with MP Paul Devillers.

The Honourable Stéphane Dion, Minister of Environment, recently toured Grant's Woods at the invitation of MP Paul Devillers. During the visit, he took the opportunity to chat with Bill Grant by phone, expressing thanks on behalf of the federal government for his significant contribution to protecting the ecological features of this region.

The Minister also used the backdrop of old-growth forests to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the

Ecological Gifts program, which provides income-tax benefits to landowners who donate land or conservation easements to certified organizations. The Couchiching Conservancy was honoured to be selected as an example of the public benefits of this program. The Conservancy has accepted six Ecological Gifts to date, with another two expected to be completed soon. ☺

UPDATES from the Conservation front

A full-colour brochure on Grant's Woods has been produced with assistance from the Community Foundation of Orillia and Area. The brochure is being distributed through tourism outlets and school groups.



The Couchiching Conservancy website is being regularly updated, thanks to the work of Mat Dwyer, an Orillia high school student. The website lists coming events as well as information about Conservancy properties and programs.

Rosalie Pratt has completed her one-year HRDC placement with the Conservancy, but has been hired on a part-time basis to continue her community outreach. Rose will continue to set up educational events and to encourage membership growth.

The Conservancy Board has established a new President's Fund to help sustain core operations in future years. Initial assets in the Fund include proceeds from the sale of a two-acre property donated by Glen and Anne Miller, as well as a \$10,000 anonymous donation in memory of W.T. Brown. Other contributions to the Fund, through bequests or donations, are welcomed.

Ladies of the Lake 2006 calendars are still available through the Conservancy office or Bird House Nature Company, with proceeds going to support Conservancy programs. These calendars, described as "cheeky but not cheesy," have been a smashing success. They are great gift items at \$15 each.

UPDATES

a busy schedule of coming events

Take the sting out of winter by participating in Conservancy workshops and events. Register early by calling Rose at 326-1620. Conservancy members receive a 25–30% discount on listed prices; children under 10 are admitted free. Unless otherwise noted, all events are at Grant's Woods Conservancy Centre.

Saturdays: January 7 to February 4, 1–3 p.m.

Still Camera Basics Workshops led by Dave Hicks and Valerie Yakemchuk. Maximum 15 participants. Set of four sessions \$60; \$45 for members.

Saturday, January 28, 2 p.m.

Annual General Meeting featuring Dr. Si Lowry reporting on his experiences in a medical clinic in the Far East. Swanmore Hall at the Leacock Museum; no cost.

Tuesday, February 7, 7–9 p.m.

Ben Porchuk discusses his project involving **The Land Between**, a diverse corridor along the southern edge of the Canadian Shield. \$15; member price \$10.



Granite barrens are typical of northern sections of The Land Between.

Tuesday, February 14, 7–9 p.m.

Night Skies for Lovers. Brian Mould introduces beginners to astronomy. \$15; member price \$10.

Wednesday, March 8, 7–9 p.m.

Natural Landscaping with Glenda Bosley. Sold out last year. \$15; members \$10.

Wednesday, March 29, 7–9 p.m.

Restoration and Naturalization. Sandy Agnew focuses on ponds, shorelines and streams. \$15; members \$10.

Thursday, April 6, 7–9 p.m.

Setting Down Roots. Earl Dertinger teaches how to choose and plant the right tree. Sold out last year. \$20; members \$15, including materials.

Thursday, April 27, 7–9 p.m.

Natural Health. Rosalie Pratt will introduce the joys of foot reflexology. \$20; members \$15.

Saturday, May 13, 10 a.m.–4 p.m.

Mother Earth Day at Grant's Woods. Guided walks, folk music, tree and shrub seedlings for sale, lots of family activities, free bus shuttle from ODAS Park. \$5/person; children 5 and under admitted free.



Save that date!

Spring activities will include a bus tour of Conservancy properties on May 27, and the second annual Carden Challenge on June 16 and 17. More details to come in the next newsletter.



Protect an Acre available for gift-giving

Looking for that perfect gift for family, business associates, or friends? Your \$25 Protect an Acre contribution helps the Conservancy maintain its growing roster of natural properties. An attractive gift card can be mailed directly to your recipient, or sent to you for personal delivery.

Give the gift of nature this year – simply call 326-1620, or send your contribution by mail. ∞

The Couchiching Conservancy Board

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