



# Conservancy NEWS

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

Seasonal Highlights from The Couchiching Conservancy

SEPTEMBER 2007

## Memories of a grandfather prompt a land donation



**I**n the late 1800s, Washago was a bustling place. Steamers plied the waters of Lake Couchiching bringing people and supplies to this connection with the north country. Businessmen took advantage of the Green River to power mills for sawing lumber and grinding grain for the surrounding community. A network of local families set down roots, and many of their descendants are still associated with the community today.

Prominent among those families were the Hope-

Smiths, who owned tracts of bush and rough farmland around the growing village. Over time, parts of that land were sold off or developed, but a strong core remains in family ownership just north of Washago.

This summer, one of those family members, who goes by the name of Hope Smith, completed the donation of a 113-acre property, fronting on Riverdale Drive, to The Couchiching Conservancy. At Hope's request, this land will be known as the Alexander Hope-Smith Nature Reserve in honour of her grandfather.

This reserve is entirely wooded in a mix of upland and wetland tree species typical of the southern Shield. On the ridges, poplar and birch are common, with some areas of hemlock and white pine. In the wetter parts of the property, which has standing water in the spring, red maple and black ash form a shady canopy.

One of the most interesting features of the property is its northern boundary,

which fronts onto a narrow linear wetland known locally as Boyd's Creek. This marshy strip, accessible by canoe, features patches of water lilies and pickerel weed. It is likely important as a fish nursery for adjacent areas of the Green River, and may host threatened species such as Blanding's Turtle and Golden-winged Warbler.



Donor Hope Smith is flanked by her cousins Paige Kennedy and Rodger Hope-Smith, who are both part of the stewardship team for the new reserve.

Without Hope Smith's generous donation, the long-term fate of this area would likely be development of some sort. The surrounding roads and waterfront areas are lined with houses, and a new 20-lot subdivision was recently approved across the road from the reserve.

A property stewardship committee largely made up of local residents is already in place for this new property, and plans are in the works for walking and ski trails. The Alexander Hope-Smith Nature Reserve promises to be a great asset to the Washago area for many years to come. ☺

# Species at risk need your help — by Kyra Howes



Photo by Jean Iron.



The bright blue tail of a Five-lined Skink is designed to break off if a predator tries to grab it.

The larger domed shell of a Blanding's Turtle distinguishes this threatened species from the more common Painted Turtle.

Over the past few years, Species at Risk (SAR) have been receiving more attention, especially with the passage of new federal and updated provincial legislation. A total of 539 plant and animal species are officially designated as Species at Risk across Canada. At least 30 of those species are found in the Couchiching region, and The Couchiching Conservancy has been working to increase public and landowner awareness of these species and their needs.

There are a number of reasons scientists are taking a closer look at the dwindling populations of these species. Dalhousie University's Dr. Jeffrey Hutchings, an Orillia native, has identified the main causes of many of the population declines as habitat loss or degradation, human population growth, over-harvesting, and competition from invasive species. Many threat-

ened species require large expanses of undisturbed habitat, which are becoming less common.

The Couchiching Conservancy has a number of properties where SARs have been identified. If you want to catch sight of a rare species, stop by the Church Woods to try to locate a Red-headed Woodpecker. Take a walk along the wetlands in Prairie Smoke Reserve to find a Blanding's Turtle. Step gently onto the Roehl Reserve, the Butler Reserve or Severn Woodlands to catch a glimpse of sun-basking Five-lined Skink or Eastern Massasauga rattlesnakes. On many of our properties, timing your visit for late summer or early fall will reward you with sightings of the beautiful Monarch butterfly.

Gayle Carlyle, our Landowner Contact Representative, has been working with landowners and

community groups along the Trent-Severn Waterway to increase awareness of SARs on local properties. Some of her activities include doing property walk-about to highlight critical habitats, providing information packages, and making recommendations to help protect threatened species. For example, she might suggest growing native plants in your garden, watching what goes out in your household waste, or leaving areas of your yard or waterfront natural. She can also provide information about getting involved in Species at Risk recovery programs, or local organizations such as Kids For Turtles or Scienstional Ssnakes. ♡

For more details, contact Gayle Carlyle at [Gayle@couchconservancy.ca](mailto:Gayle@couchconservancy.ca) or at (705) 326-4643.

The Couchiching Conservancy 

# Adding meaning to walking trails — by Jacqui Kerr

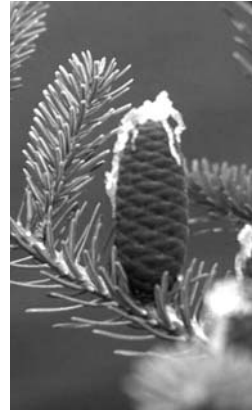
As summer draws to a close, so does work on two exciting Conservancy projects. In the first, summer staff have been busy collaborating with the Township of Tay to enhance their beautiful new public trail system.

With support from the Huronia Community Foundation, the Conservancy kicked off a five-year project to identify species of plants found along Tay Shore Trail. Tay's scenic trail can be picked up at the St. Marie Among the Hurons location next to Wye Marsh. It runs east along the shore of Hogg Bay, up through Victoria Harbour, and continues along Sturgeon Bay. Information about the trail can be found in the recent publication produced by Tay Township or by visiting their website at [www.tay.township.on.ca](http://www.tay.township.on.ca).

The other summer trail project was suggested by Sherry Lawson of Casino Rama. Conservancy summer staff have been gathering information to develop an interpretive walk in Grant's Woods that will spotlight traditional medicinal plants.

Eastern white cedar (Waasbshki-giizhik) and Balsam fir (Zhingob), both reputed to have applications in treating cold and flu symptoms, are two among many of the species to be featured. Trail signage will provide the name of the plant, a photograph of it, and its traditional uses. All information will be posted in both Ojibwe and English.

The project is nearing completion and is anticipated to be ready by late fall. Many sincere thanks – Miigwech – to the individuals who have contributed to the project: Ron Douglas and Vicki Snache of the Rama Cultural Department provided contact information and photographs of the plants.



The fragrant needles of Balsam fir have long been used by Ojibwe healers to treat colds and flu.

Indispensable information about the uses of traditional medicines has been provided by Conservancy volunteer Colleen Cooney, and Cheryle Snache and Jennifer Jewell of Rama.

Translations have been made by Irene Snache, author of the Rama First Nation Ojibwe Language Dictionary. This work is being continued by Jeff Monague, an Ojibwe Language Instructor for three local schools.

The Tay Shore Trail and the Grant's Woods traditional-medicines trail projects have been great learning experiences for our summer staff and will provide the everyday hiker with new insight as well. Come out and take advantage of both these great opportunities to learn more about the beautiful area we live in! ☺

## Planned Giving Idea #2 — by Paul Russell, Treasurer

Over the next several issues of *Conservancy News* we will profile various ways you can make a difference in preserving your community's green spaces through planned giving. As a registered charity, certified under the Ecological Gifts program, The Couchiching Conservancy is well positioned to maximize the effectiveness of your gift of nature.

### **Gifting Idea #2: Have the ownership of your life insurance policy changed to The Couchiching Conservancy.**

Did you purchase a life insurance policy in the past to protect a family that has since grown up? Would you prefer tax relief now, rather than at death? Naming The Couchiching Conservancy as owner and beneficiary of your existing policy might be the

answer. You'll receive an immediate tax receipt equal to the current cash-value of the policy. You or your spouse can take advantage of this donation within the current tax year. You'll also receive a tax receipt each year equal to the policy premiums as you continue to pay them. Best of all, you are able to leverage a small current outlay into a major future gift to the Conservancy, since we will receive the full value of the policy on your passing.

We would be pleased to sit down with you and your advisors to explore your options for this and other gifting ideas. Simply contact us at 326-1620 to arrange a personal appointment. Since everyone's tax situation is unique, it is important for you to obtain independent advice before deciding on any planned gift. ☺

# Corporate Members support nature

**T**his region can proudly claim an attractive environment that entices new businesses, employees and retirees to locate in Orillia and the surrounding communities. Our region also depends on tourism, and all businesses benefit from the influx of people throughout the year. A case in point: the 160 participants in the first Carden Nature Festival this June spent approximately \$30,000 in the community on accommodations, food, services and products – that’s green for green!

Last year, 75 local businesses showed they believe in our work by becoming corporate members through either in-kind or financial contributions. Mid-way through this year’s campaign, we are delighted to report that the following businesses and organizations have already joined or renewed their membership.

Celtic music group ALEX  
 Army Navy & Air Force Veterans in Canada  
 Artech Promotional Wear  
 Julia A. Bailey, Barrister & Solicitor  
 Bayview Wildwood Resort  
 Dave Beckett – Artist  
 Birchmere Retirement Residence  
 Bird House Nature Company  
 Casino Rama  
 Diane Oliver – Clarabella the Clown  
 C.T. Strongman Surveying Ltd.  
 Coldwater Road Animal Clinic  
 Complete Rent-Alls (Orillia) Inc.  
 Crawford, McKenzie, McLean, Anderson & Duncan LLP  
 D. Saulnier Auto Parts & Wreckers & Used Cars  
 Dalt’s Honda  
 Donald D. Scott Custom Builder & Renovator Inc.  
 Garfield Dunlop  
 Dr. William R. Edwards, D.C. – Midland  
 Ellis Hearing Aid Service  
 Gartner Lee Limited  
 Hacker, Gignac & Rice – Midland  
 Hardwood Hills Bed & Breakfast  
 The Home Depot, Orillia  
 Kathy Hunt Communications  
 Inn the Woods Bed & Breakfast  
 Laidlaw Transit Ltd.  
 Mawdsley’s Mobile Crane Rental Ltd.  
 Mariposa Market  
 Marketing Group of Canada  
 Meridian Credit Union  
 Mid Ontario Disposal  
 Midland Toyota – Midland

Mundell Funeral Homes  
 Office Links  
 Ontario Waterway Cruises Inc.  
 Orillia District Chamber of Commerce  
 Orillia Mazda  
 Orillia Power Corporation  
 Orillia Square Merchants’ Association  
 McDonald’s Restaurant  
 Pelee Island Winery  
 RBC Foundation  
 Russell Christie Miller Koughan Winnitoy Veldboom  
 Scanlon & Associates  
 Sciensational Ssnakes!!  
 Scott’s Garden Centre  
 Snuggles Pooch and Kitty Holiday Camp  
 Speedy Signs & Truck Lettering  
 The Crow’s Nest – Midland

The Friendly Fermentor  
 Sir William Mackenzie Inn  
 The Tree Man  
 Unison Engine Component  
 Washago Tim-Br Mart  
 Waubashene Heritage  
 Derek C. Wicks – Artist  
 Wildflower Farm  
 Zwicker, Evans, Lewis

This impressive list of businesses and organizations will be recognized at our corporate event on Friday, October 26 at Grant’s Woods. Next time you patronize one of these businesses, say “Thanks!” for their role in keeping Orillia and area green for future generations. ☺

## The Couchiching Conservancy Board

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