



Conservancy NEWS

September 2011

Seasonal highlights from **The Couchiching Conservancy** — Protecting the special natural features of the Couchiching region for future generations.

Bluebird Ranch: new safe haven for birds

Anyone who has visited the Carden Alvar has passed by a property that will soon be protected through the efforts of The Couchiching Conservancy. The new property can be seen easily from either McNamee Road or Wylie Road.

This 206-acre parcel, called Bluebird Ranch, will welcome visitors to the Carden Alvar, since it sits at the foot of Wylie Road just to the south of other major protected areas. On its fences, bird boxes host families of eastern bluebirds, a striking songbird that has rebounded from near extinction thanks to conservation efforts.

The grasslands and forests of Bluebird Ranch provide crucial habitat for other species, too: upland sandpipers and bobolinks, Wilson's snipe, and a whole suite of sparrows. Its plant life is certainly as colourful, with alvar flowers such as prairie smoke and balsam ragwort.

The Couchiching Conservancy's agreement to purchase Bluebird Ranch includes two residential lots recently severed along Wylie Road. These lands will be reserved for nature and managed for bobolinks, bluebirds and other wildlife.

About half of the \$300,000 needed for the land purchase and initial management will come from a special federal fund administered by the Nature Conservancy of Canada. A generous local donor is providing another 25 per cent. The remaining, critical \$37,000 must be raised by this fall through private donations.

The Ontario Stone Sand & Gravel Association (OSSGA) and 11 of its member companies are participants in the Carden area and support a balanced



Bluebird. Photo: Larry Kirtley.

approach that will both preserve outstanding natural habitats and protect prime aggregate resources for the future. Members of the OSSGA have made a major contribution toward the purchase of Bluebird Ranch.

Every dollar donated is matched by three dollars from the Carden Acquisition Fund and the Natural Areas Conservation Program. But we can't access those sources without your donations. Your help would be greatly appreciated.

Cheques, made to The Couchiching Conservancy—Bluebird Ranch, can be mailed to Box 704, Orillia, ON L3V 6K7. If you prefer, you can pay with VISA by calling 705 326-1620 during regular office hours. You can also make an online contribution through Canada Helps — <http://www.canadahelps.org> — where a special fund has been set up. Charitable receipts are issued for all donations over \$20. 🌿

OF NOTE:

One Wild Night: Join us Saturday, October 15, for our second fundraising dinner and silent auction. We are pleased to announce that Georgian College Orillia will provide the venue for the dessert, beverage and entertainment portion of the evening. The organizing committee is hard at work putting all the details together, and it promises to be another exciting and successful event. If you are interested in being a dinner host for the event, please contact Kristi McKechnie at 705 689-9491 or kmckdesign@xplornet.com.

Wine order: The fall Pelee Island Winery order forms will be sent out shortly so the wine will be ready for pick-up before Thanksgiving. If you would like to be included in the Conservancy Wine Club and receive a copy of the order form, please call 705 326-1620 or email gayle@couchconservancy.ca. Since we started the club, we've had over 80 people sign up. Every purchase helps raise funds for the Conservancy. We also thank Pelee Island Winery for participating in our Corporate Membership Program.

Carden Nature Festival: This festival proved to be another roaring success, with over 310 people registering for the three-day activity-filled event. It was also a success in other ways, chief among

them its organizational efforts and the economic boost to the local community. Plans are underway for 2012; the website providing more information will be up and running sometime in mid-January. Don't be disappointed: register early.

Support our Dragonboat "magic": Once again the Conservancy will be taking on all challengers at the Orillia Dragon Boat Festival, slated this year for Saturday, September 24. Pledges are welcome, and you're invited to cheer on our team at Couchiching Park. For more information, contact Gayle at 705 326-1620 or gayle@couchconservancy.ca.

Green thumbs needed: The front gardens at Grant's Woods are in need of a facelift. If you have some time on your hands and want to help beautify our property for visitors, please call Gayle at 705 326-1620. Most of the work will involve some weeding and cleaning up the edging.

Copeland Forest Project: Dorthea Hangaard, coordinator of this new program, has been busy gathering information on the historical uses of this OMNR-managed forest near Craighurst. She is also developing a list of user groups and organizing workshops for the fall. Dorthea will have an update for the next issue of *The Conservancy News*. For information on the Copeland Forest Project, contact her at 705 326-1620 or dorthea@couchconservancy.ca.

The Couchiching Conservancy Dragon Boat team gets ready for competition for the 2010 races.



Business leaders say “Yes” to a greener future

The Conservancy is grateful for the support we receive from business leaders in our community. These forward-thinking citizens share our belief that protected, natural land is an essential part of a healthy community.

To date, the following individuals and businesses have joined our Corporate Membership Program:

Orillia Packet & Times
Pelee Island Winery
Microsoft (Tech Soup)
Hehn Trickey Professional Corp.
The Davey Tree Expert Co. of Canada
Orillia Power Corporation
Downtown Computers
Scottinc. Design & Build
Orillia Chamber of Commerce
Ego's Nurseries Ltd.
The Bird House Nature Co.
The Water Market
Ontario Waterway Cruises Inc.
Mundell Funeral Home Ltd.
Dalt's Honda
Donald H. Worling Q.C.
Coldwater Rd. Animal Clinic
C.T. Strongman Surveying Ltd.
G.H. Stewart Const. Inc.
Roy A. Pearn Enterprises
Dr. Anthony Reid
Julia A. Bailey Barrister & Solicitor
Garfield Dunlop MPP
Sunshine Carpet & Flooring
Inn The Woods B&B
Mawdsley's Mobile Crane Rental Ltd.
Zwicker Evans Lewis
Champlain Manor
Ellis Hearing Aid Service
Tim Hillson MD
Birchmere Retirement Residence

Bruce Stanton MP
K. McKechnie Architectural Design
Crawford McLean Anderson & Duncan LLP
D. Saulnier Auto Parts
Dr. R. Aggarwal
Office Links
Think Communications
Mid Ontario Disposal
Scott's Garden Centre
Snuggles Pooch & Kitty Holiday Camp
Dr. Richard Johnston
Orillia Mazda
BDO Canada LLP

If you and your business would like to join our “green team,” please contact Gayle at 705 326-1620 or gayle@couchconservancy.ca and find out how you can make a real difference in your community. 🌱

Copeland Forest in autumn.



Carden Challenge Results

Carden Challenge supporters drive us to biggest year yet

The teams participating in the 2011 edition of the Carden Challenge broke all sorts of records in their efforts to support the work of The Couchiching Conservancy on the Carden Plain.

A record 11 teams took up the challenge and raised more than \$22,000, which is the most money raised in the event's history.

Team Ammodramus continued the record-breaking trend. Made up of Christopher Escott, Sandy Dobbyn, Burke Korol and Michael Runtz, the team spotted 135 different species of birds at this year's competition. That's an all-time record, surpassing the previous record of 126 species in 24 hours.

This year, half the funds raised are going toward the purchase of Bluebird Ranch, the 206-acre grassland adjacent to Windmill Ranch on the Carden Plain.

Thanks to all those who pulled together teams and braved pre-dawn starts to raise money for the Conservancy. Special thanks go out to all the financial supporters, too.

We've booked May 25–26 for the 2012 Challenge. If you are a new birder, we can help connect you with experts to build a team and take part in this great event. We hope veteran birders will answer the call to challenge the high standard set by Team Ammodramus this year. To register your team for 2012, contact Ron Reid at ronreid@couchconservancy.ca. 🐦



The Conservancy is grateful for the hard work, dedication and enthusiasm of our seasonal staff this summer. From left to right: Brenan Ackert, Hannah Tennant and Catie Cook.

Couchiching Conservancy

P.O. Box 704
Orillia ON L3V 6K7

705 326-1620

nature@couchconservancy.ca
www.couchconservancy.ca



The Couchiching Conservancy Office

Mark Bisset, Executive Director

Gayle Carlyle, Outreach Coordinator

Kyra Howes, Stewardship Coordinator

The Couchiching Conservancy Board

Isabelle Thiess 705 259-5547

Peggy Foley 705 325-2287

David Hawke 705 835-6213

David Homer 705 833-2571

Kristi McKechnie 705 689-9491

Jamie Powell 705 835-0149

Lou Probst 705 438-1324

Bob Sullivan 705 325-8775

Ingrid VanderMarel 705 835-2289

