



Conservancy NEWS

November 2011

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

A big thanks to Bluebird Ranch donors

2011 brings a special Halloween treat to birders. October 31 is when ownership of Bluebird Ranch transfers to Couchiching Conservancy. This 206-acre property at the foot of Wylie Road in the Carden Alvar provides excellent habitat for a diversity of grassland birds and acts as a gateway for visitors to the area in search of birds.

Financial support for this purchase came from a diverse range of sources. The federal Natural Areas Conservation Program, which is administered by Nature Conservancy of Canada, provided half of the overall project costs. The Carden Acquisition Fund, supported by a generous local donor, provided another 25%. This left about \$75,000 to be raised through other private donations.

In tough economic times, finding that amount of donated cash can be a challenge. But, piece by piece, the money came together. The teams taking part in the Carden Challenge contributed \$11,000. A dinner and silent auction, co-sponsored with the Ontario Aggregate Producers Association and their Carden member companies, raised \$12,000. An application to the McLean Foundation yielded \$15,000. The Kawartha Field Naturalists collected several thousand dollars from their members. The Toronto Ornithological Club, spurred on by matching grants provided by one of their members, contributed over \$16,000. And generous donors from the Conservancy membership and beyond sent in contributions for the rest — an amazing response from those who believe that the future of Carden's natural bounty is important.

If you visit Carden Alvar next spring, you won't



A field in Carden. Photo: The Couchiching Conservancy.

notice much that is different on Bluebird Ranch — and that's part of the point of this acquisition. The two residential lots along Wylie Road won't be built on; they will forever remain a haven for sparrows and meadowlarks. The cattle will continue to graze the abundant grasses; the bobolinks will continue to sing their cheerful burbles above.

We will be working on a management plan over the next year, looking at the potential of removing some pockets of cedar to open up and connect some of the grasslands.

We are also working hard on another property purchase — not far enough along to announce yet, but stay tuned! With the federal funding program drawing to a close, we want to make sure we make the most progress we can over the next six months. Your support makes that possible, so please accept our thanks for your generosity. 🍀

OF NOTE:

Annual General Meeting: Join us Saturday, January 28, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at Lakehead University, University Avenue. Find out what we've been up to this past year and what we have in store for 2012. Special guest speaker will be Kevin Callan, aka "The Happy Camper."

One Wild Night: On Saturday, October 15, the Conservancy held its second fundraising dinner and silent auction. Over 75 guests savoured dinner at a host home and then travelled to Georgian College for dessert and entertainment. Almost \$5,000 was raised.

Special thanks go to our corporate sponsors Scott Inc. Design+Build, Davenport Subaru, Canadian Linen and Uniform Service and TD Canada Trust. And thank you to all the businesses and individuals who donated the great items for our silent auction.

Carden Nature Festival: Believe it or not, this popular festival is fast approaching. The website will be launched in mid-January with online registration. New this year: online registration payment with PayPal!

A boatload of thanks for supporting the

Conservancy 'Magic': Once again the Conservancy valiantly took on challengers at the annual Orillia Dragon Boat Festival. On September 24 the team paddled its way to success, raising more than \$5,000 to receive a matching \$5,000 from Casino Rama. We are grateful to Casino Rama for their ongoing support. Money raised by our team will go toward the endowment fund with The Community Foundation of Orillia & Area.

Make it a green Christmas: Show that special someone you care this holiday season while supporting conservation efforts in your own neighbourhood with *Protect An Acre* gifts. At only \$25 per acre, you can give family, friends, and co-workers a unique gift that keeps on giving. Contact our office at 705 326-1620 or email gayle@couchconservancy.ca to find out more.

Presentations: Four representatives from the Conservancy gave two separate presentations at the joint Canadian and Ontario Land Trust Alliance gathering in Kingston in September. Mark Bisset was also part of a panel at an Ontario Trillium Foundation session on the state of non-governmental organizations. 🌿



Like us on Facebook. Visit our page to keep up to date on our activities and photos from our properties.

The Couchiching Conservancy 2011 Dragon Boat team in action. Photo: Janet Machan.



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:

Level V Oak

Orillia Packet & Times
Pelee Island Winery
Microsoft (Tech Soup)
Hehn Trickey Professional Corp.
The Davey Tree Expert Co. of Canada

Level IV Maple

Orillia Power Corporation
Downtown Computers
Scott Inc. Design+Build
Orillia Chamber of Commerce

Level III Pine

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 Road Animal Clinic
C.T. Strongman Surveying Ltd.
G.H. Stewart Const. Inc.
Roy A. Pearn Enterprises
Joanne Haskins, Think Communications

Level II Cedar

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

Level I Willow

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
Mid Ontario Disposal
Scott's Garden Centre
Snuggles Pooch & Kitty Holiday Camp
Dr. Richard Johnston
Orillia Mazda
BDO Canada LLP
Dr. Michelle Gordon
Zwicker Evans Lewis
Bayview Wildwood Resort
The Marketing Group of Canada Ltd.

*The
Couchiching
Conservancy
invites
you to join
our Green
Team!*

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. 🌱

Update on the Copeland Forest Stewardship Initiative

More than 180 people attended two meetings to discuss a Copeland Forest Stewardship Initiative, underlining tremendous interest in the project.

"It's almost as if people were waiting for this initiative to happen; so many are passionate about the Copeland and want to ensure that it stays the way it is," said Jamie Powell, board President for the Couchiching Conservancy.

Over 100 people packed into a church basement in Craighurst to hear a presentation on the meaning of stewardship and to speak to MNR representatives. They had the opportunity to fill out a survey, pore over maps and discuss the history of the forest. User groups in attendance included mountain bikers, horseback riders, cross-country skiers, hunters, dogsledders and nature lovers.

The attendance numbers speak to the fact that there are so few large areas of forest left in southern Ontario where people can engage in just about any recreational activity that is not motorized. As one nearby resident said, "I don't know how I would get through my work week if I couldn't get into the Copeland three or four times a week."

On October 23, over 80 mountain bikers met at the Craighurst Community Hall to get organized as a Copeland Forest stakeholder group and appoint some representatives for the future Copeland Forest stewardship meetings. Mountain bikers are perhaps the largest user group in the Copeland; they came to the meeting from as far away as Guelph and Hamilton.

Jason Murray, Ontario representative for the International Mountain Biking Association, spoke to the crowd about challenges faced by mountain bikers in North America. Jason was impressed by the turnout and the enthusiasm for Copeland. He believes that by taking responsibility for the care of the forest, Copeland riders have a unique opportunity to hang on to what they have.

This meeting will serve as a template for future meetings that The Couchiching Conservancy will facilitate with all the Copeland user groups. We hope that by next spring representatives from all stakeholder groups will have been chosen.

The Copeland Forest is a 4,400-acre recreational management area overseen by the Ontario Min-

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istry of Natural Resources. A three-year stewardship initiative is currently under way that will see users of the Copeland Forest providing management advice to the MNR and participating in stewardship activities. The Couchiching Conservancy is coordinating the project, thanks to a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. To sign up for the mailing list or to find out more, contact Dorthea Hangaard at dorthea@couchconservancy.ca or 705 326-1620. 🍁



Winter beckons at Grant's Woods. Enjoy the beauty of nature this holiday season — *The staff and board of The Couchiching Conservancy.*

