



# CAT TALES

spring/summer 2016

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## Be Tick Safe When Heading Outdoors

Like a slow invading army, ticks are gradually expanding their territory throughout Eastern Ontario, already seen as a hotbed for ticks. And with the growth of the tick population, particularly deer ticks, there is the related increase in the number of cases of Lyme disease amongst humans.

It's been estimated that one in five ticks carry the bacteria associated with Lyme disease. One doesn't need to be a mathematical genius to deduce that if the overall tick population is on the rise, the incidences of Lyme disease will also be on the rise.

In an article in the *Ottawa Sun* earlier this spring, scientist Wayne Knee of the Canadian National Collection of Insects, Arachnids and Nematodes at Agriculture Canada suspects that the general warming that's occurring due to climate change is having an impact on the spread of ticks.

Already a hardy creature, some ticks can survive in sub-zero temperatures and generally thrive in warmer temperatures.

Throughout Ontario, from January to November 2015, the *Toronto Star* found that there were 304 confirmed cases of Lyme disease and 54 probable cases. In 2014, over the same period of time, there were 149 confirmed cases, and 71 probable ones.



*Blacklegged Tick (Deer Tick)*

So that's double the number of cases, and those are only the ones that were diagnosed correctly.

There are a variety of symptoms associated with Lyme disease. The problem is that many of the earliest symptoms are similar to those of the flu, meaning patients and even health care professionals misdiagnose them. These symptoms include sore throat, headaches, congestion and stiff muscles and joints. Recently, a special conference of health care professionals, public health officials, patients and the federal government was held in Ottawa to share information, help improve diagnostic techniques and treatment options for those living with Lyme

disease.

All parties are optimistic that a comprehensive strategy for combatting the disease will be forthcoming. It's expected that this plan will come from the federal government in about a year.

In the interim, as public health officials throughout the Cataraqui watershed and elsewhere in the province have been saying for a number of years, there are things that individuals can do to help protect themselves, their families and their pets from contracting this debilitating ailment when going out onto trails, into bush or forested areas.

*Continued on page 3*

## CREATURE FEATURE - Goldfish (*Carassius auratus*)

They've often been the first pets for millions of kids around the globe. Easy to care for, nice to look at, and inexpensive, goldfish are quite possibly the first foreign fish introduced to North America, primarily to adorn decorative ponds and tanks. Since the 960s CE, goldfish had been domesticated in China, and are a member of the carp family. Over the years, through careful breeding, dozens of distinctive breeds have been created which vary widely in size, body shape, and fin configuration. And they're not always 'gold' either, as goldfish can also feature prominent combinations of red, brown, black, yellow, white as well as the more commonly known orange.

Folks in China have lumped the various incarnations of goldfish under four primary classifications:

- 1) Crucian - these are the 'common' goldfish that don't have any unique or strange colourations or anatomical features.
- 2) Wen – these are the ones that have the more fancy tails, often described as a 'fantail.'
- 3) Dragon Eye – these are the ones with the extended 'google' eyes often seen in home aquariums around the world.



Photo by Ontario Steams

- 4) Egg – they are more egg-shaped and have no dorsal fin.

Goldfish have excellent eyesight for fish. Scientists say they have the ability to distinguish between four different primary colours, and can see well enough and are smart enough to actually be able to tell one human apart from another. That's why they seem to react favourably and come bobbing up to the surface when their owners approach the pond or aquarium.

According to a recent investigative piece by the BBC, the largest goldfish in the world was measured at 19 inches

and lived in the Netherlands. Some of these larger ones, including a five pounder in Great Britain, are believed to be released into the wild because they have outgrown their domestic situation. Behaviour-wise goldfish have been described as 'gregarious' and 'friendly' towards one another, and rarely get into conflicts except if they are competing for scarce food resources.

So why are we including goldfish in our Cat Tales Creature Feature since goldfish are predominantly a domesticated fish? It's because they are technically an invasive species. For generations,

for one reason or another, live pet goldfish of all varieties have been released into the wild – into lakes, rivers and even small streams. Any species that is not native to the ecosystem and which competes with native plant and animal life for food is considered to be an invasive species, no matter how benign their overall impact on the environment.

Even though most goldfish have lived lives of pampered domestication (compared to their fish counterparts in the wild) they are actually a pretty tough species. Scientists say they are able to handle a wide range of water temperatures and water with lower levels of dissolved oxygen. In actual fact, the murkier and more inhospitable the better, as it's been found that goldfish don't do as well in very healthy water ecosystems: they like so-called 'degraded' ecosystems with poor water quality, according to the folks at the Ontario Invasive Species Awareness program. So in those areas, they will compete with native fish feeding on eggs of other fish, larvae and some aquatic plants.

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## CAT TALES

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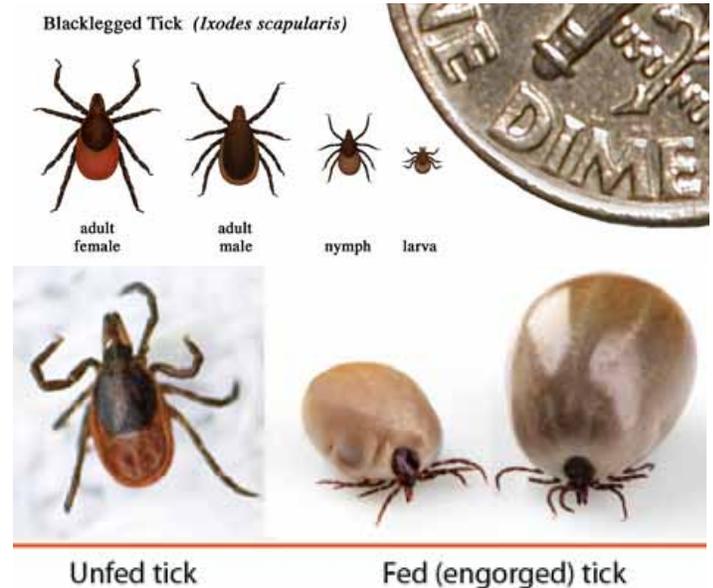
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## (Continued from pg.1) - Be Tick Safe

- 1) Wear light-coloured clothing (so you can see the ticks easier).
- 2) Wear long pants and long sleeves. Tuck your pants into your socks.
- 3) Don't wear sandals or open-toed shoes.
- 4) Use insect repellents that are federally regulated and contain DEET.
- 5) After you've been outside, thoroughly check your clothing, body and pets for ticks. Showering right away will help removed ticks if they have not attached themselves yet.

For more information on how to prevent and treat Lyme disease, go to the following KFL&A Public Health link: [www.kflaph.ca/en/healthy-living/Lyme-Disease.aspx](http://www.kflaph.ca/en/healthy-living/Lyme-Disease.aspx) And for the Canadian Lyme Disease Foundation, visit [www.canlyme.com](http://www.canlyme.com).



## Working Near Water? You may require a permit from the CRCA



Do you have a building project or doing some work along your shoreline? If you are planning to build or alter land (excavation, filling) near a wetland, watercourse or along a shoreline, you may require a permit or planning approval from the CRCA. Planning and development staff would like to remind

residents, developers and others that shorelines, floodplains, wetlands and lands adjacent to them pose natural hazards including flooding and erosion. Development projects, including decks, boathouses, docks and alterations to watercourses, may require planning approval from your municipality. These

works may also be covered under the CRCA's regulations. Before formally submitting your application to your municipality, we recommend that you consult with a CRCA planner in order to make the process as smooth as possible.

The CRCA planning staff are accessible, easy to talk to and can help guide you through the permit process. So if you are planning an addition to your lakeshore home, changes to your dock or any other projects that may be within 50 metres of water please give them a call. Assistance from the CRCA planning staff can save you time and money.

For planning applications, regulation permits or development inquiries please call: 613-546-4228

**Andrew Schmidt**, Development Review Manager at ext. 224 (Greater Napanee, Loyal-

ist and South Frontenac)

**Michael Dakin**, Resource Planner at ext. 228 (Leeds and the Thousand Islands, Athens, Front of Yonge, Elizabethtown-Kitley and Brockville)

**Christine Woods**, Resource Planner at ext. 235 (Rideau Lakes, Kingston and Gananoque)

For shoreline, in-water works (e.g. docks, shoreline retaining walls) and enforcement inquiries call:

**Jason Messenger**, Development Officer at ext. 286 (all of the above mentioned areas).

For information on CRCA policy and guidelines or to find a fee schedule and application form please visit our website at [www.crca.ca/planning-permits](http://www.crca.ca/planning-permits).

## Enjoy the Outdoors with your family!

Did you know that the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority owns more than 4,000 hectares (10,000 acres) of land? This includes seven Conservation Areas, eight boat ramps and seven water access points suitable for kayaking and canoeing. It also includes the Cataraqui Trail, a multi-use trail along a former railway bed stretching from Strathcona to Smiths Falls.

We encourage you to get outside this spring and summer and enjoy our facilities. You could:

- launch a canoe or kayak at one of our water access points and explore a lake or river that you have never seen.
- cool off with a refreshing swim at Gould Lake or Lyn Valley Conservation Areas
- pack a picnic lunch to enjoy in one of our picnic areas
- go bird watching (see [crca.ca/good-birding-practices](http://crca.ca/good-birding-practices))
- take a nature hike along one of our many trails
- launch a boat at one of our boat ramps and go fishing (in accordance with MNR regulations)
- cycle or horseback ride along the Cataraqui Trail
- rent a canoe, kayak or pedal boat ([crca.ca/canoe](http://crca.ca/canoe))

Just remember to take only pictures and leave only footprints. If you are visiting one of our Conservation Areas with your dog please ensure it is on a leash at all times for the comfort and safety of all users. Don't forget to stoop and scoop!

Find a Conservation Area near you:

- Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area** (Kingston)
- Lemoine Point Conservation Area** (Kingston)
- Gould Lake Conservation Area** (South Frontenac)
- Lyn Valley Conservation Area** (Elizabethtown-Kitley)
- Mac Johnson Wildlife Area** (Elizabethtown-Kitley, Brockville)
- Marshlands Conservation Area** (Kingston)
- Parrott's Bay Conservation Area** (Loyalist)

For further details on the CRCA's Conservation Areas please visit our website at [www.crc.ca/conservation-areas](http://www.crc.ca/conservation-areas)



## CREATURE FEATURE - continued



Photo by Dayna Laxton

In North America, significant populations have been found in watercourses and bodies of water through all provinces of Canada and in all areas of the United States except Alaska. Large concentrations exist along the north shore of Lake Erie and the Western end of Lake Ontario, although smaller populations exist throughout the province. Scientists haven't spent a lot of time studying the overall impact of goldfish on the Ontario ecosystem but, again according to the Ontario Invasive Species Awareness Program "may reduce the province's biodiversity through their effect on native species."

- Goldfish eat snails, small insects, fish eggs and young fish, meaning they are both a competitor and predator for native species.
- When they feed, they stir up the mud in the water which can impede the growth of aquatic plants.
- They are kind of like the

rabbits of the domesticated fish world and can reproduce quickly and in large numbers, displacing native species in certain areas.

- They carry unique diseases such as the koi herpesvirus which can harm local fish populations.

Folks are advised to do what they can to prevent the accidental spreading of this species as, at some point, there may begin to be detrimental impacts on native species. As a general rule, scientists and conservation officials ask people to not release any live fish into Ontario waterways or lakes. If you want to get rid of unwanted aquarium fish, return or donate it to a pet store or local school. If you see a goldfish or any other invasive species, contact the toll-free invading species hotline at 1-800-563-7711.

## Fewer visitors, but still a fun, pancake-filled Maple Madness

Warmer, wetter weather did have an impact on the number of visitors who travelled to the sugar bush at the Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area north of Kingston to participate in the 2016 edition of the CRCA's Maple Madness celebrations.

Running for the entirety of March Break, from March 12 to 20, and for the following two weekends (March 26 & 27 and April 2 & 3), the event featured a host of fun activities for the entire family, including puppet shows, First Nations Displays, tree tapping demonstrations, maple taffy and old tyme sugar bush chore demonstrations. Oh, and there were also tasty, fluffy pancakes and maple syrup aplenty.

Statistics gathered by CRCA staff from the Outdoor Centre show that there was a drop in visitors from 2015. A total of 7,923 people attended 2016 Maple Madness, compared to 8,566 the previous year. It was slightly higher than the 2014 total, which saw 7,904 visitors. Since 2007, the largest number of visitors happened in 2013, when 11,348 people attended CRCA Maple Madness.

Those who came seemed to enjoy the fare as they devoured 13,625 pancakes, down slightly from the 2015 number of 13,737. During the busy year of 2013, 15,015 pancakes were served. It might be interesting to note that this year's single day record of the number

of pancakes sold was 1,715, just 49 fewer than the busiest year of 2013 where 1,764 pancakes were sold in a single day during that year's Maple Madness.

The CRCA thanks all the folks who ventured out to see our displays and Maple Madness activities. We especially want to thank all the staff, and volunteers, including teacher candidates from Queen's University, who helped make for a seamless and fun visitor experience.

We look forward to Maple Madness 2017!

For the school programs – which were booked to capacity - hundreds of students were taken back to the demonstration sugar

bush at the Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area on the tractor-drawn wagons. Kindergarten to Grade 2 students used a fun riddle and scavenger hunt game to visit the various stations and learn how syrup is made, starting with learning how to identify sugar maples, through to the processing of the sap into syrup and maple sugar. Grade 3 students experienced the bush in the manner of early European settlers, while students from Grade 5 and up practised their mathematics skills through 'Maple Math.' CRCA staff looks forward to next year's Maple Madness fun. Visit our website at [www.crca.ca](http://www.crca.ca) to find out when Maple Madness is happening in 2017.



## Co-operative Effort Helped Fix Washed Out Portion of Cataraqui Trail

The rain came like a torrent out of the sky earlier this spring, once again demonstrating the power of nature in a dramatic way. When rain falls in large quantities over a short period of time, flooding is usually the result. In early April, the Cataraqui Region experienced just that, causing a portion of the Cataraqui Trail between McGillivray and Indian Lake Roads in South Frontenac Township to be washed out. This necessitated the closure of approximately 10 kilometres of the trail for users.

Officials with the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority, which owns the trail,

the Cataraqui Trail Management Board and community partners responded quickly arranging for the closure, public information and media notices, as well as the repair work itself. CRCA Lands Planner Jason Hynes, said the repair work was done quickly and effectively, allowing for the re-opening of the trail on April 23.

"We want to thank many of our friends and partners for their rapid mobilization, energy, time and resources in responding to this challenging emergency situation. The co-operation we received allowed for the work to be completed in a timely man-

ner so that our loyal users could get back to enjoying the full 104-kilometre trail," he said once the work was completed. Hynes did say that because of the unforeseen nature of the wash-out and the accompanying costs, some of the trail revitalization work that had been budgeted for 2016 will now have to be delayed. "All of our ongoing initiatives (planned or otherwise) require significant funding, which is, in large part, made possible by individual donations from Trail users". Cataraqui Trail fundraising events and annual donations are critical to continuing improvements and

the long-term survival of the trail. If you are a Trail user and supporter we hope you will consider making a contribution, 100 % of which will be applied to trail upgrades and maintenance and are also fully tax deductible. For more information about the Cataraqui Trail, visit [www.cataraquitrail.ca](http://www.cataraquitrail.ca).

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR!**  
Special fundraising dinner at the Opinicon Lodge  
September 30

[cataraquitrail.ca](http://cataraquitrail.ca) for details



## Update - Conservation Authorities Act Review

Last summer, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry Initiated a review of the Conservation Authorities Act by posting a discussion paper to the Environmental Bill of Rights Registry. This was previously reported in the Fall 2015 issue of Cat Tales which can be found at [crca.ca/cat-tales-newsletter](http://crca.ca/cat-tales-newsletter). The discussion paper highlighted and solicited feedback around three areas of interest: governance, funding mechanisms, and roles and responsibilities of Conservation Authorities. In response to the comments received, the Ministry has identified five priorities for updating the Act:

1. Strengthen oversight and accountability in decision-making.
2. Increase clarity and consistency in roles and responsibilities, processes and requirements.
3. Improve collaboration and engagement among all parties involved in resource management.
4. Modernize funding mechanisms to support conservation authority operations.
5. Enhance flexibility for the Province to update the Conservation Authorities Act in the future.

A new consultation document has now been posted to the Environmental Registry. The document represents the next stage of the review and was created to help generate additional discussion related to the priorities. The posting can be found at [www.erb.gov.on.ca](http://www.erb.gov.on.ca) by searching for posting number 012-7583. The deadline for comments is September 9, 2016.

In addition to the posting, the Ministry will host five facilitated regional multi-stakeholder engagement sessions about the document. For further information on Conservation Authorities and the Act Review visit [www.conservation-ontario.on.ca](http://www.conservation-ontario.on.ca) and click on the About Us tab.

# WHAT'S HAPPENING 2016



Spring and summer are ideal times for visiting one of our Conservation Areas! Enjoy hiking, paddling, bird watching and nature appreciation or cool off with a refreshing swim. To find the Conservation Area closest to you visit [www.crca.ca](http://www.crca.ca).

## ENTRANCE FEES

Gould Lake and Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Areas have a daily entry fee of:

- \$5.50 for adults and children over 12
- \$3.00 for children 12 and under
- maximum fee of \$14.00 per car

## HOURS OF OPERATION

Conservation Areas are open only during daylight hours.

## LITTLE CATARAQUI CREEK CONSERVATION AREA

**OUTDOOR CENTRE** is open from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday to Friday (other times available by appointment). Closed weekends from May to September except during programs. Room rentals are also available.

## RENT A CANOE, KAYAK OR PEDAL BOAT THIS SUMMER

Explore the waters at Gould Lake and Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Areas! During the summer months we rent canoes, kayaks and pedal boats - pedal boats only available at Gould Lake. Rental rates being at \$8.00 per hour and include paddles, life jackets and

safety kits. Rentals are available from May to September. Daily admission fees apply. Rentals at Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area are available Monday to Friday at the CRCA administration office from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

## GOULD LAKE CONSERVATION AREA

Enjoy the warm weather at Gould Lake Conservation Area this summer with a picnic, swim, or paddle in a canoe or kayak. There are 20 km of hiking trails for you to enjoy with many spectacular views of the lake. CRCA staff are available at Gould Lake from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on weekends only during May and June. During July and August staff are there daily from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Gould Lake has a daily entry fee or you can buy an annual vehicle pass. The Conservation Area is located 5 km northwest of Sydenham. For more information visit our website at [www.crca.ca/conservation-areas](http://www.crca.ca/conservation-areas).

## LYN VALLEY CONSERVATION AREA

Cool off at Lyn Valley this summer! The small spring-fed lake provides an excellent swimming spot with a sandy beach to relax on. Picnic tables and change rooms are also available. Lyn Valley is open from May to September and located north-west of Brockville on Lyn Valley Road. For more information visit our website at [www.crca.ca/conservation-areas](http://www.crca.ca/conservation-areas).

## CATARAQUI TRAIL

Go on a hike, head out for a run, cycle, or ride your horse on the Cataraqui Trail - a 104 km multi-use trail that runs from Strathcona to Smiths Falls. The trail is located on a former CN Railway line so the terrain is flat with a mainly gravel surface.

The following users are permitted on the Cataraqui Trail: walkers, hikers, joggers, naturalists and bird watchers; cyclists (due to the gravel surface, a 2" tire is recommended); horseback riders; snowmobilers with a current Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs trail permit; and cross-country skiers. Except for trail maintenance and emergency vehicles, motor vehicles are not allowed on the Cataraqui Trail. This means that vehicles such as ATV's and dirt bikes are not permitted on the trail. Visit [www.cataraquitrail.ca](http://www.cataraquitrail.ca) for a trail map and information and also check them out on Facebook and Twitter.

## Bike or Hike Fundraiser

*Saturday, August 20*  
Yarker

Help raise funds to support the Cataraqui Trail at the annual Bike or Hike event. For details & registration forms visit [www.cataraquitrail.ca](http://www.cataraquitrail.ca)

## Opinicon Lodge Dinner

*Friday, September 30*  
Chaffey's Locks

A special fundraising dinner with proceeds going to support the Cataraqui Trail. Further details will be available at [www.cataraquitrail.ca](http://www.cataraquitrail.ca)



## Help Keep Your Drinking Water Safe

Groundwater is water that is held underground in the gaps between soil particles or rocks. This shared resource is used by people in the Cataraqui Source Protection Area for drinking water and other purposes. It is important to take actions to protect water from pollution.

Groundwater in the Cataraqui area is highly vulnerable to pollution from everyday activities (e.g. road salting, septic systems) and accidental spills. This is because the soil is generally thin or completely absent, the underlying bedrock has many gaps called fractures, and there is a relatively high water table. During the development of the Cataraqui Source Protection Plan, technical work for the Plan and other regional groundwater studies identified almost the entire area as a highly vulnerable aquifer because there is not enough natural protection (e.g. soil) above the aquifer.

Approximately 20 per cent of local people rely on private intakes or wells for their drinking water source. Careful use and protection of the groundwater is therefore crucial for many rural residents and business owners across the region.

Not only is the groundwater in the Cataraqui area vulnerable to pollution, two independent studies show that it is in on of three 'hot spots' within southern Ontario where the groundwater has already been contaminated with bacteria from both human and animal sources. Links to these articles are provided below.

Experts from across eastern Ontario are collaborating to learn more about this challenge. The Thin Soils Working Group gathers to discuss recent findings, upcoming research and potential measures to improve groundwater protection in eastern Ontario where there is generally thin soils over fractured bedrock. The informal group includes groundwater experts from conservation authorities, universities, Public Health Ontario and the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change. While these efforts continue, residents and business owners in the Cataraqui Source Protection Area must be diligent in their efforts to protect their drinking water from pollution.

*Article that examined pollution in wells on farms in southern Ontario:* Perkins, N.R., Kelton, D.F., Hand, K.J., MacNaughton, G., Berke, O., & Leslie, K.E. (2009). An analysis of the relationship between bulk and tank milk quality and wash water quality on dairy farms in Ontario, Canada. *Journal of dairy science*, 92(8), 3714-3722. [Link to - Abstract>>](#) [Full Article>>](#)

*Article about pollution in clusters of southern Ontario wells:* Krolik, J., Maier, A., Evans, G., Belanger, P., Hall, G., & Joyce, A. (2013). A spatial analysis of private well water *Escherichia coli* contamination in southern Ontario. *Geospatial health*, 8(1), 65-75. [Link to - Abstract>>](#) [Full Article>>](#)



Figure 1.  
Activities on the ground surface can affect sources of drinking water

## How to Keep your Drinking Water Safe

### Maintain your well:

- Update your well to current standards.
- Have a sample of your well water tested for free through your local health unit frequently.
- Keep potential sources of pollution down gradient and at a distance from wells (e.g. livestock, chemicals, garbage).
- For new home construction, consider separation distances between your well and septic which are larger than what is required by the Ontario Building Code.

### Maintain your septic system:

- Have a licensed sewage hauler or on site sewage system professional inspect the system every three to five years.
- Pump out your tank when a third of the tank is full of sludge and scum.
- Have your effluent filter checked and cleaned every year. If you do not have an effluent filter, consider adding one to your system.
- Do not flush unsuitable items (e.g. chemicals, medications, sanitary products).

Information from: Conservation Ontario, Septic Smart! (Rideau Valley Conservation Authority), Raisin-South Nation Source Protection Region



For more information on the Cataraqui Source Protection Plan please visit [www.cleanwatercataraqui.ca](http://www.cleanwatercataraqui.ca) or contact Holly Evans, CRCA Environmental Technician: 613-546-4228 ext. 233 or [hevans@crca.ca](mailto:hevans@crca.ca)

## Sign Up for the Natural Edge Shoreline Naturalization Program



Watersheds Canada and the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA) are inviting residents of the Cataraqui Watershed who own shoreline property to participate in the new, innovative Natural Edge shoreline naturalization program. Restoring, preserving and protecting a shoreline in a completely natural state is achieved by planting native vegetation, including trees, shrubs, ground cover, grasses, wildflowers and aquatic plants. These plants are best able to withstand even the harshest environmental conditions that occur in our watershed.

What this does is help stabilize the shoreline from erosion, which is good for the property owner, but even more advantageous for the local ecosystem. Having a diverse abundance of plant life on the shoreline also performs the important function of improving the water quality by filtering the runoff from the land during rainfall or spring melts.

This special program thanks to funding from the Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund to provide ecological toolkits for shoreline property owners seeking to participate in this wonderfully beneficial program.

Each toolkit contains information and resources for planting a wildflower garden and planting of native shrubs and trees. There are also two bird houses and two bat boxes.

The more naturalized a shoreline, the better a habitat it becomes for not just the plants but for a number of significant mammals, fish, birds, bats, butterflies, hummingbirds and bee species – the last three being very important pollinators.

Watersheds Canada is offering free site visits for interested landowners where they will create a planting plan that is tailored to each unique landscape. Once the landowner approves a planting plan and signs a stewardship agreement, Watersheds Canada will co-ordinate the ordering, delivery and planting of the plants, providing all tools, materials and labour to get the job done in a timely manner.

Landowners are expected to contribute only 25 per cent of the overall cost of the program. That cost varies on the size of the land and the intricacy of the planting plan agreed upon.

For more information, visit [www.watersheds.ca](http://www.watersheds.ca). Or email Barb King at [king@watersheds.ca](mailto:king@watersheds.ca).



## SEND US YOUR PHOTOS

We would love to showcase some of your photos on our TV at the Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area Outdoor Centre. If you have photos of wildlife, scenery or you and your family enjoying one of our Conservation Areas please send them to us and we will include them in our monthly slideshow. You can email photos to [kfazackerley@crca.ca](mailto:kfazackerley@crca.ca) or drop them off on CD or USB stick at the CRCA Administration Office.

## Wild Parsnip a Growing Concern for Health Officials



Like some wild animals, wild parsnip looks pretty, but has a very nasty bite if you get too close. The bane of many nature lovers, gardeners, municipal workers and staff of conservation authorities across Ontario, the plant is expanding its territory in the Cataraqui watershed, therefore folks need to inform themselves as to the best way to prevent exposure, and also prevent its seemingly exponential spread.

And as we're well into the spring season, it's worth a refresher course in this noxious invasive species.

### What is wild parsnip?

It is "an invasive plant native to Europe and Asia. It was likely brought to North America by European settlers who grew it for its edible root." Since its introduction, most likely in the 19th century, it has spread throughout North America. Yes, the roots are edible as they are with other forms of parsnips or their relative, the carrot, but the sap from the plant can cause nasty burns on exposed skin.

"It typically grows a low, spindly rosette of leaves in the first year while the root develops. In the second year it flowers on a tall stalk and then dies. The plant can form dense stands and spreads quickly in disturbed areas such as abandoned yards, waste dumps, meadows, open fields, roadsides and railway embankments. Because of where they live, it is easy for the seeds to be dispersed over a wide area by both wind and water," said the Ontario Invasive Species Awareness Program website. Having large stands of wild parsnip on farmland can make a big dent in the saleability of forage crops like hay, oats and alfalfa. As anyone who walked through parts of Lemoine Point Conservation Area over the past couple of summers knows the wild parsnip can grow to be more than 1.5 metres tall. At full maturation, the single green stem can be between two to five centimetres thick.

The compound leaves are ar-

ranged in pairs, with sharply toothed leaflets that seem to be shaped like a mitten. Most noticeable are the tiny yellow flowers which form umbrella-like clusters that are between 10 to 20 centimetres across.

### Why it burns:

The sap is basically a protective device generated by the plant. And it is not, in and of itself, dangerous. It's when the sap gets on skin and then that skin is exposed to the ultraviolet rays of the sun where things go bad.

The chemicals within the sap react to the ultraviolet light causing severe blistering and burns, sometimes not appearing for a day or two after the initial exposure. This is why you have to be careful around it, especially if there are broken stalks, leaves or flowers.

### How to avoid it and protect yourself:

- 1) Public health officials and CRCA staff advise people to stay on groomed areas of parks, roadsides and pathways where there is a much lower chance you will encounter wild parsnip.
- 2) When working around or near it, or when walking through ungroomed areas of bush or grasslands, wear goggles, gloves, long pants and long-sleeved shirts. Thoroughly wash boots and gloves with soap and water before taking off your protective clothing.
- 3) Children need to be reminded not to pick wildflowers, and also make sure they know what wild parsnip looks like so they will more easily avoid it.
- 4) If you have got some of the sap on your skin, wash the specific area very thoroughly as soon as you can. Seek

medical attention if you notice that the skin is starting to become irritated in that area.

### Ways to get rid of wild parsnip from your property:

- 1) For small groups of the plant, pulling them out by hand is recommended. Flowering plants have thick stems and can be pulled easiest after a good rain or during a dry spell when the root shrinks. If the seeds are starting to ripen, remove the pulled plants from the area to avoid spreading them.
- 2) You can also dig out the plant using a narrow shovel, spade or even a trowel to loosen and then uproot each plant - hopefully getting the taproot as well.
- 3) Early in the season, mowing can work as long as the mowing takes place before the seeds set in the late summer or early fall. The downside is that the plants will likely resprout, so you need to combine mowing with other methods of extraction. It's important that you should not burn or compost wild parsnip plants that they have cut down or dug up. Plants and roots should be put in a large, dark plastic bag and placed in the sun away from areas where kids or pets might roam. After sitting in the sun for a couple of weeks, you can contact your local municipality to see if they can be disposed of at a landfill site.

For more information on wild parsnip visit:

[www.invadingspecies.com](http://www.invadingspecies.com) or  
[www.omafra.gov.on.ca](http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca)