

CAT TALES

FALL 2005 ISSUE

In This Issue

It's been a hot, dry summer and we need to conserve water. See **page 1**.

More about water... See **page 4** to read about source water protection planning and **page 8** to read about adventures while doing our stream flow study. Who knew?

The fish are thanking us for new habitat along Little Cataraqui Creek and along several other streams thanks to buffer plantings by many volunteers. More on **page 11**.

Friends can be a really big help, especially when it comes to taking care of conservation areas. Read about the Friends of Lemoine Point's activities on **page 5**.

The Friends of Mac Johnson Wildlife Area wax poetic on **page 10**.

And the new Friends of Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area want you to join them. See **page 12**.

The Cataraqui Conservation Foundation is also a friendly group. More about their activities on **page 11**. Plus their gala fall fundraiser is in November. See **page 7**.

And speaking of fall activities... we've got great fall programs and events. See *What's Happening* on **pages 6 and 7**.

Do you like animals? The groundhog is our Creature Feature on **page 2**. Plus, find out the latest Trumpeter Swan news on **Page 10**.

Also news from staff, new legislation and regulations, and lots of projects sprinkled throughout our fall edition.

Watershed Swelters; Drought Declared

For the first time since 2003, a team of public and private water managers, coordinated by the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority, declared a Level I low water condition.

"This June 27 declaration was based on four consecutive months of low rainfall and low water levels in area streams," said Mara Shaw, watershed management coordinator for the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA). "The WRT's immediate goal was to advocate for voluntarily reducing water consumption by 10 per cent."

Ms. Shaw said rainfall from March through June was 54 per cent of normal. Although July brought close to normal rainfalls, the drought declaration remains in effect since three-month rainfalls are critical in determining the drought status.

The Level I declaration applies throughout the CRCA's jurisdiction spanning 3,500 sq km including all or parts of 11 municipalities from Greater Napanee to Athens to Brockville.

There are three levels of low water declarations. Level I reflects concern. Level II indicates a potentially serious problem. Level III details failure of the water supply to meet demand.

"Levels I and II focus on voluntary conservation techniques that we anticipate the public will enact for the good of the watershed," said Ms. Shaw.

The WRT met July 28 and determined that the Level I condition remains in effect.

The WRT job is advocacy. The Level I goal is a 10 per cent cut in water use. Simple water-saving measures such as cutting back on lawn and garden watering, not washing cars or consolidating laundry loads do



The lack of rain this summer resulted in low water levels in many area lakes and streams.

much to conserve water. More conservation ideas are available on the CRCA website: www@cataraquiregion.on.ca.

The WRT does not supersede existing agencies, policies or laws.

"It coordinates actions of water management agencies, private sector organizations and water users during times of low water levels," said Ms. Shaw.

"Hay farmers are reporting decreased yields," said Ms. Shaw. "They are first to notice drought and the springtime data confirm their reports."

Anecdotal information collected by CRCA supports this. This year's first hay harvest

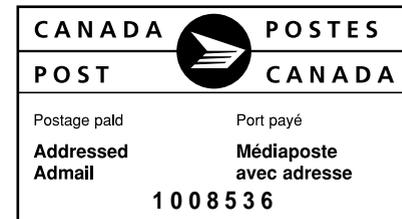
was anywhere from 30 to 60 per cent of last year's. One farmer told the CRCA that hay prices are 2.5 times what they were last year.

The implication is serious for the agriculture community. Some farmers are reportedly sending animals to market now to avoid buying feed for them this winter.

WRT membership of large water users and water managers includes: the CRCA, Ministry of Natural Resources, Ministry of the Environment, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ministry of Agriculture and Food, public health units, representatives of agricultural and other organizations, school boards, public utilities, municipalities and others.



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Creature Feature - Groundhog - *Marmota monax*

M*armota monax*, commonly called the groundhog or woodchuck, probably is contemplating hibernation as you read these words. The positive aspect about sleeping through winter is that you do not have to spend autumn gathering and storing food.

Groundhogs are true, deep hibernators. They possess the ability to dramatically drop their body temperature. There is a corresponding decrease in heart rate from 100 beats per minute to about 15. Oxygen consumption is reduced because a hibernating groundhog breathes only once every six minutes.

Hibernation weight loss may relate to each animal's size. For instance, young animals normally lose 50 per cent of body weight. Their older, larger brethren may lose only a quarter of total body weight during winter siestas.

Groundhogs' thickset bodies are supported on short, but strong legs designed for dig-

ging. Their dens may extend as far as 15 m and as deep as two m below ground level. Each den has a main entrance, selected for its commanding view of approaching danger. Inevitably there are other entrances and exits for use when the resident groundhog is chased. Some construct deeper winter dens in the shelter of the forest and shallower summer dens closer to favoured foraging areas.

Groundhogs are solitary animals that range from 46 to 66 cm in length, not including a tail that measures between 11 and 16 cm. They weigh between 1.8 and 5.4 kg. In the wild they may live four to six years, but in captivity have been known to survive as long as 10 years.

These grazers prefer meadows, or the forest edge, to the deep woods that house their cousins, the squirrels. On sunny days, they forage early and late in the day. In colder weather, they are more active at mid-day. Preferred foods include plants, seeds, berries, maybe bark or twigs, insects and

occasionally the young of ground nesting birds. Be warned, a vegetable garden holds a magnetic-like attraction for foraging groundhogs.

Don't be surprised if you spot a groundhog perched atop a fence post or in a tree. They climb to reach good locations to bask in the sun.

Groundhogs mate in spring. They may breed as yearlings, but most wait until their second year. The gestation period is 31 to 33 days and litters range between one and eight, but usually three to five. There is one litter per year and the newborns weigh about 260 g at birth. Their eyes open within a month.

Groundhogs are territorial and will defend a home range. They are loners except during the mating season. Groundhogs appear to be grizzled; the feet and tail are dark and there may be light, contrasting patches surrounding the mouth and snout.

There is a venerable tongue twister that relates to this animal. It asks: how much wood could a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?

The answer is 700 pounds or 317.52 kg according to calculations by a wildlife biologist. The answer is based on a volume measurement of a typical groundhog burrow filled with wood instead of dirt.

About Groundhog Day

The lowly groundhog is the only animal with a day named in its honour. There is no Aardvark Day, no Lion Day, no Whale Day, not even Beaver Day, although this latter critter is commemorated on the backside of Canadian nickels.

But every February 2 is Groundhog Day and it has nothing to do with the film



This young groundhog at Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area perched upon a retaining wall to bask in the sun while maintaining a watch for threats.

industry, given there is a movie by the same name.

Instead, groundhogs are lumbered with an ancient European belief that certain gifted animals are blessed with an ability to predict spring's arrival. This notion is said to have arrived in North America with German immigrants called the Pennsylvania Dutch.

There is even a rhyme that celebrates the groundhog's mystical gift:

If Candlemas be fair and bright,
Winter has another flight,
If Candlemas brings clouds and rain,
Winter will not come again.

Candlemas occurs half ways between winter's first day and spring's first day. Tradition suggests the hibernating groundhog awakens February 2. If it sees its shadow ("fair and bright"), it's six more weeks of winter slumber. No shadow ("clouds and rain") is said to mean an early spring arrival.

All nonsense, of course. Yet the lowly groundhog, as noted, is the only creature with its own special day.

Go figure.

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Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority

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Kingston This Week

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The Hands-on Approach is Popular With Teachers and Students

Hands-on learning in the outdoors is a blast through the CRCA's Conservation Education Programs based at the Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area. All programs are directly linked to the curriculum and are offered throughout the school year for all grades ranging from preschool and kindergarten to grade 12 and Adult English as Second Language Learners. We even have an Alternative Conservation Education Program on Monday afternoons for ages 2 - 13 years old.

This past school year's programs were well attended and generated excellent feedback from visiting teachers, parents and students. One visiting teacher wrote that "the program introduces children to a responsible approach to nature and to each other as well as informing them about the specifics about a wide range of nature-based topics." The approach that conservation education teachers, Stana Luxford and Angela McAneney take is that of "instilling awe and respect for the natural environment today (which) leads to a conservation ethic in decision-making for tomorrow".



Nature Pledge winners, Mrs. Jacobi's class from Cataraqui Woods Public School show their appreciation for their red pine tree.

Favourite programs include Featuring Fall, Kinderscience, Instincts for Survival, Mapping It Out, Nature in Winter, Cross-country Skiing, Maple Madness, Pussywillows and Pollywogs (newly titled Marsh Mysteries), Home Sweet Home and Water Cycle Journey.

Nature Pledge Winners

A big congratulations goes out to Mrs. Jacobi and her class from Cataraqui Woods Public School 2004 - 2005 for their pledge to respect all nature. Education Officer Stana Luxford and Education Assistant Angela McAneney presented them with a Red Pine sapling to be planted in front of their school. All visiting classes are encouraged to

demonstrate their learning experience after they take part in one of the CRCA's conservation education programs through a conservation project or activity.

New This Fall

Fees have been increased this fall to \$6.50 per student to help cover our program delivery costs. At the time of printing, we are still waiting to hear from the Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District and the Limestone District School Boards. Both have been asked to increase their per student subsidy to \$3.00. Since our education programs depend on fees and fundraising, we had no choice but to increase fees this year.

On a positive note, we are offering some new programs this year. New programs for the 2005-2006 school year are: Birds, Birds, Birds!, Migrating Monarchs, Plants Large and Small, and Wet and Wild. Visit our website to review the complete program calendar for 2005 - 2006 at www.cataraqueiregion.on.ca.

Teachers from Kingston and the surrounding region are encouraged to book a program by either e-mailing educate@cataraquiregion.on.ca or calling (613) 546-4228 ext. 251.

CRCA Has Another Successful Summer Camp Season

The summer camps were a huge success! Both the Nature Explorers Camp and the Wilderness Backpacking Experience had waiting lists. Our camps book up quickly so it is important to register your child in the spring of 2006 to ensure a spot.

The Nature Explorers Camp theme weeks, swim days at Gould Lake, guest

speakers and nature focus and exploration were given four paws up! The Nature Explorers Camp owes its success to the superb summer camp staff of Amber Gibson (Newt), Katharine Speck (Katydid), Erin Saddler (Fish), and Michael Griggs (Slug) who all made camp a safe and fun experience this past summer.



Children from the Nature Explorers Camp cool off with a game of beach volleyball at Gould Lake Conservation Area.

The Wilderness Backpacking Experience in Frontenac Provincial Park provided opportunities for youths 12 to 14 to enjoy a five-day, three-night backpacking experience. One camper wrote that "it was my first time ever and I will do it again next year"! The focus of the camp is all about

conservation and low impact camping.

It was led by CRCA conservation education officer Stana Luxford (Pine), camp life-guard Stuart Themens (Bear), and volunteers Taylor Helferty (Snake) and Marie Poisson (Sunset).



Wilderness Backpackers enjoy a break at an evening campfire in Frontenac Provincial Park.



Research on Source Water Protection Now Underway



Keeping water clean is the main focus of source water protection planning.

What can we do to help ensure that there are plentiful supplies of clean drinking water available for future generations?

This is an important question for all of us, and especially for the CRCA staff working on source water protection, a special watershed management project. The goal is to develop recommendations for protecting the amount and quality of source water, or untreated water in lakes, rivers, and streams that is used for drinking and many other purposes. The recommendations will be organized into source water protection plans that will be prepared on a watershed basis. There are ten watersheds across the Cataraqui Region, from Spring Creek near Napanee to Buells and Butler's Creek in Brockville. Right now, the focus of the project is to conduct background research on both surface and groundwater. This is the first time that the water resources of the Cataraqui Region have been subject to such a comprehensive study.

Conservation Authorities across Ontario have been asked by the province to coordinate the source water protection effort, in cooperation with municipalities, industry, organizations, and citizens. With provincial funding, the CRCA has established a project team with expertise in disciplines such as engineering, cartography, planning, biology, chemistry, and communications.

Project Manager Rob McRae explains: "One of the first steps is to gather all of the existing information about local water resources and the factors that affect them."

This is a massive task that requires the use of a geographic information system (GIS) computer. We will also be considering the existing efforts of local agencies and landowners to protect water, and how to support this in the future. Initial meetings have been held with the staff of each municipality to introduce them to the project.

In considering our sources of drinking water, the project will look at municipal wells and surface water intakes, and also the surface and ground waters that supply the numerous private systems across the region.

The provincial legislation for source water protection plans is anticipated this fall. After the legislation is passed, the CRCA plans to establish a source protection committee of stakeholders, and several working groups across the region. Later, we will be meeting with our citizens to hear what they have to say about local water issues, and the best ways to protect water supplies.

Source water protection plans will help identify local water issues, target ongoing work to where it is most needed, and provide a basis for more localized research in the future.

The intent is to release our initial background findings in early 2006. Keep watching Cat Tales and the CRCA website for more information about this important project.

Central Cataraqui Region Natural Heritage Study Enters Home Stretch

Think of the Central Cataraqui Region Natural Heritage Study as an environmental snapshot of Kingston and Loyalist Township.

"The municipal partners in this study will use its findings to develop or update their official plan policies and zoning bylaws as they relate to natural heritage features in accordance with new provincial policies," explains Ecological Planner Christine Woods of the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA).

The study has dual purposes: to identify a system of natural features and areas including wetlands, woodlands and significant wildlife areas that support biodiversity within the municipalities; and, to suggest ways for the municipalities and their residents to develop strategies to protect and enhance habitat, biological diversity and water resources.

Township to solicit public comment and assistance, two in each municipality. Additional meetings will be held this fall.

"The people at those meetings had pretty good ideas about what was going on," says Ms. Woods.

The study involves stakeholders through two committees. A technical steering committee includes municipal planners and representatives from the Ministry of Natural Resources. And an advisory committee includes representatives from interest groups including agriculture, the public, Kingston Field Naturalists, the home-builders' association and Queen's University.

The study has implications for more than municipal planners. Its findings may be used to develop and plan stewardship activities.

"We're looking at a final draft by this



Some of the members of the Central Cataraqui Region Natural Heritage Study Team include (left to right) Christine Woods, CRCA; Tom Beaubiah, CRCA; Murray Beckel, Loyalist Township; and Travis York, CRCA.

Central to the project are six maps, three for each municipality. One map documents significant woodlands. Another deals with landscape features such as wetlands, areas of natural and scientific interest, water-courses and habitat. A third map records floral and faunal data such as waterfowl stopover areas and deer yards. The maps are dynamic and can reflect change.

You can view these maps at either municipal office or online at www.cataraquiregion.on.ca.

Loyalist Township is expected to review and update its official plan based on study results. And study recommendations will form a component of Kingston's new official plan.

This study is conducted by the conservation authority on behalf of the two municipalities. The project has been underway since spring of 2004. It is expected to wrap-up early in 2006 after public consultation meetings and study revisions. Then it will be presented to the municipal clients.

Initial findings were presented in April at public meetings in Kingston and Loyalist

fall," Mr. Beaubiah says. "As you might imagine, there was a lot of information to collect and verify."

Gathering so much data is a challenge. Once the initial draft was written, field verification was performed by summer student Gillian Pacey.

Natural heritage studies are becoming common. As requirements to reflect new provincial planning policies develop, more municipalities turn to natural heritage studies to determine ways to preserve natural features.

"It makes municipal planners' jobs much easier when they have all the data available," explains Mr. Beaubiah. "A study like this puts a lot of things into perspective so municipalities can look at long term planning and development."

This is a good news story for everyone. Both Ms. Wood and Mr. Beaubiah suggest the study can benefit local economies by preserving the character and diversity of the region both ecologically and culturally by providing a diversity of recreational opportunities for residents of the municipalities.



Lemoine Point Conservation Area Accessibility Trail Opening Celebrated

The Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA) and Friends of Lemoine Point celebrated the official opening of an accessible trail at Lemoine Point



Marie Surridge's smile reflects the success of July's official opening of the accessibility trail at Lemoine Point Conservation Area.

Conservation Area in Kingston on July 13.

"This was a joint project of the Friends of Lemoine Point and the CRCA," said John Conley, CRCA chair. "It was organized by Marie Surridge, a member of the Friends of Lemoine Point."

Mrs. Surridge's husband, David, was first to use the trail and he led event participants to a celebratory meal at one of the picnic sites.

The 1.3 km loop trail makes use of the existing trail network and service roads at the north end of Lemoine Point Conservation Area. The trail and road surfaces have been upgraded to make them wheelchair accessible. Other trail improvements include two accessible picnic tables, improved washroom facilities and appropriate signage.

The Friends of Lemoine Point is an active group of volunteers who undertake initiatives to maintain and improve facilities at

Lemoine Point Conservation Area.

"It has taken us two years to complete this project," said Ms. Surridge. "We're very pleased with the results. Our next project is to improve accessibility at the south end of the conservation area."

Project funding was provided by the CRCA, individual donors, and the City of Kingston's Healthy Communities Fund. It was completed using volunteer and CRCA staff labour, as well as donated labour and equipment from Len Corcoran Excavating.



One of the first customers to officially open the accessibility trail was David Surridge, assisted by one of his grandchildren.

Native Plant Nursery Completely Funded Through Generosity

Volunteers and generous donors collaborated to create a native plant nursery at the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority's (CRCA) Lemoine Point Conservation Area. "It's 99 per cent volunteer run," says CRCA Forestry Technician Rick Knapton. "We just do not have the staff."

The nursery propagates and grows plants native to Lemoine Point Conservation Area. It was established by CRCA staff assisted by the Friends of Lemoine Point, a non-profit volunteer group. The Friends undertake activities to protect and enhance the natural environment of Lemoine Point. Nursery volunteers include: Millie Belyea, Peter Butler, Larry McCurdy, Myles McCabe, Jerry Zabel, Jane Murphy and Lou Mullin.

Mr. Knapton says the goal is to ensure that native tree species naturally adapted to the area are used as stock for habitat restoration. This guarantees conservation of the area's diverse ecosystem.

"Site specific nursery stock is always more successful than stock that is adapted to other regions," says Mr. Knapton. "Everything growing here is collected with our own fingers."

For instance, cones are collected and shipped to the Ontario Tree Seed Plant, a provincial agency that extracts the seeds. The nursery owns 25,000 white pine seeds and 75,000 white spruce seeds, all from Lemoine Point 'parents'.

Mr. Knapton says there are 20 native tree and shrub species growing in the nursery. It was launched in 2004 and is in the middle of its second phase. Plans call for construc-

tion of an interpretive facility and an arboretum or botanical garden devoted to trees. Mr. Knapton hopes to see an irrigation system installed. And he wants educational materials created.

The interpretive facility will mimic the existing six-sided pavilion found in Lemoine Point's forest. Three sides of the new structure will bear interpretive panels and a projection screen. The other three sides will be open for seating as many as 30 people, or the size of a school group.

"The idea is to invite speakers to teach both children and adults alike," he says.

The arboretum will display labeled examples of what grows in the nursery.

No one can accuse Mr. Knapton of limited thinking. He envisions the day when he can help fund the nursery through stock sales to other conservation authorities, public agencies or the public.

So far, the project has been funded by the Friends of Lemoine Point. The estimated price for completing this phase is \$40,000. Mr. Knapton estimates about 75 per cent has been raised, but he's looking for donations for the other \$10,000.



The Nursery in summer 2005, with completed fencing and some nursery stock being grown.



The Lemoine Point Native Plant Nursery under construction in fall 2004.

How you can contribute or volunteer

Volunteers and donors are essential to the success of the Lemoine Point Native Plant Nursery.

Donors receive receipts suitable for income tax purposes. And their donations will help to ensure the development of a positive contribution to the local ecosystem.

And volunteers are always welcome. "Volunteering is a wonderful opportunity to participate in a worthwhile ecological project and learn how to propagate and grow diverse species of trees and shrubs," says Mr. Knapton.

Donors or volunteers should contact Mr. Knapton by leaving a message on his voice mail at 389-3651. He is available by e-mail at rknapton@cataraquiregion.on.ca. Or leave a message with the Friends of Lemoine Point at (613) 546-4228 ext. 306 or lemoine@cataraquiregion.on.ca.

CRCA Acquires New Tenant

The Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA) welcomed its first business tenant on September 1 as the Ontario Trails Council (OTC) relocated its office to the Outdoor Centre at Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area.

"This is something new, for us to take on a business-oriented tenant," says CRCA General Manager Steve Knechtel. "They approached us asking if there was any space. Also, it provides an opportunity to generate a bit of revenue."

OTC now occupies the room known as the library on the Outdoor Centre's lower floor.

"There will be occasions when they hold organization meetings, hopefully using the Outdoor Centre, in addition to the office rental," adds Mr. Knechtel.

The Ontario Trails Council (OTC) is a non-profit organization established in 1988. It promotes the creation, development, preservation, management and use of recreational trails throughout Ontario. OTC is unique among trail organizations. It brings together trail user groups with conservation authorities, municipalities and landowners. It is a source of trail information and support creating awareness, providing education and advocating for improvements in the visibility of the trail industry.

OTC initially sought for advice on possible locations. For the conservation authority, it was opportunity knocking.



Fall is a fantastic time to visit our conservation areas! Cycle the Cataraqui Trail. Picnic at Lemoine Point Conservation Area. Take a nature hike at Parrott's Bay or Gould Lake Conservation Areas. Visit the swans at Mac Johnson Wildlife Area. Or enjoy a great fall program at Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area. Visit our web site at www.cataraqueiregion.on.ca to find the conservation area closest to you.

Entry Fees

Gould Lake and Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Areas have a daily entry fee of \$4.00 per person for adults and children over 12 and \$2.00 per person for children 12 and under. The maximum fee is \$10.00 per car. Annual passes are available for \$50.00 per year and entitle you to unlimited access to both conservation areas.

Donation boxes are located at our other conservation areas and at our boat ramps. Your donations help to maintain these facilities, so please make a contribution each time you visit.

Hours of Operation

Conservation Areas

- 7:30 a.m. to dusk daily

Little Cataraqui Creek Outdoor Centre

- 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday to Friday
- 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Sundays and holiday Mondays
- Closed Saturdays during the fall

Cataraqui Trail

Brown Bag Seniors' Program Cataraqui Trail Hike

Thursday, September 15
(10:00 a.m.)

Meet at Shoppers' Drug Mart parking lot across from the Kingston Centre to carpool to Sydenham for a fall hike on the Cataraqui Trail. Bring drinking water, sunscreen, insect repellent and your lunch. We'll eat lunch at Burega's on Loughborough Lake. For more information call Moira at 544-9529.



Cataraqui Trail Bike and Hike

Sunday, September 25

- 62 km cycle - 9:30 a.m. Perth Road Village to Forfar Cheese Factory to Chaffeys Locks
- 33 km cycle - 10:30 a.m.

Kin Park, Harlem Rd., Portland to Chaffeys Locks

- 37 km cycle - 10:30 a.m. Perth Road Village to Chaffeys Locks
- 17 km cycle - 11:15 a.m. Highway 15 to Chaffeys Locks
- 8 km hike (one way) - 10:30 a.m. Highway 15 to Chaffeys Locks

Collect pledges and cycle or hike to raise money for the Cataraqui Trail. Choose from one of four bicycle trips or one hike. The Cataraqui Trail is a former rail line, so the terrain is gentle and the scenery is spectacular.



The suggested donation is \$25.00 or more per individual or family. Raise \$25.00 or more and you earn a free lunch coupon and a chance to win prizes. Lunch will be served at the Chaffeys Locks Community Hall.

Mac Johnson Wildlife Area

Mac Johnson Wildlife Festival

(Mac Johnson Wildlife Area, Brockville)
Sunday, October 2 (Noon to 4:00 p.m.)

Admission is \$5 per car.

Celebrate fall with the Friends of Mac Johnson Wildlife Area. Wildlife will be featured all afternoon with hikes, activities, and presentations. Enjoy the wood carving demonstrations. Try a canoe or kayak courtesy of the CRCA. Pack a picnic lunch or enjoy delicious hot dogs and chili, plus pick up some sweet treats at our bake sale.

Lemoine Point Conservation Area

Brown Bag Seniors' Program Fall Colours Walk

Thursday, October 20 (10:30 a.m.)

Meet at the north parking lot (Coverdale Dr. entrance) for a fall colours walk at Lemoine Point Conservation Area. Dress for the weather and bring your camera, drinking water and lunch. Weather permitting, we'll enjoy our lunch in the picnic area.



Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area

Save The Snakes

Sunday, October 2 (2:00 p.m.)

Matt Ellerbeck is back by popular demand to share his love of snakes. Mr. Ellerbeck will bring live snakes for families to touch and learn to feel comfortable around them. He is passionate about snakes and educates people on how to live in harmony with them.



Fall Harvest Celebration

Sunday, October 9 and
Monday, October 10

(Thanksgiving)

(1:00 - 4:00 p.m.)

Come celebrate fall with your family. This event is hosted by the newly formed *Friends of Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area*. The Friends have a wonderful lineup of fun family events.



On Sunday, enjoy a wagon ride to our sugar bush to enjoy and learn about fall colours and the history of Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area. Visit a re-enactor's fur trading post. Listen to local story tellers or try your hand at log sawing.

On Monday, the Friends of Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area welcome you and your family to return for chili and pie. Taste local organic produce at one of the food stands. Have your face painted or take part in cookie decorating. Visit a re-enactor's fur trading post. Walk off your turkey dinner by taking part in a self-guided nature scavenger hunt.

Women's Wilderness Weekend

Friday, October 14 (7:00 to 9:00 p.m. pre-trip packing at Outdoor Centre)
Saturday, October 15 (9:00 a.m.) to Sunday, October 16 (4:00 p.m.) - Frontenac Provincial Park

Have you ever wanted to try wilderness backpacking and not had the opportunity? Join avid backpackers and teachers, Stana Luxford, Amber Gibson, and Marie Poisson, for an invigorating weekend of camping out, learning new wilderness skills, and getting away from it all. Space is limited to eight participants so reserve your spot no later than Friday, October 7 by calling (613) 546-4228 ext. 251 or e-mail educate@cataraquiregion.on.ca. The cost is \$75.00 per person, which includes equipment and food. Proceeds from this weekend will go directly to purchasing equipment for CRCA conservation education programs.

Bald Eagles in the Thousand Islands

Sunday, October 16 (2:00 p.m.)

Bud Andress, park warden at St. Lawrence Islands National Park, has been studying the Bald Eagle population of the Thousand Islands for a long time. Find out more about these magnificent birds including how they are monitored by radio transmitters.

Meet the Real Bat Man

Sunday, October 23 (2:00 p.m.)

Bats are cool! Find out why as bat expert Matt Saunders introduces you to their fascinating world. Seating is limited, so be sure to come early!

You can also buy a bat house kit and build your own bat house. Don't forget to bring your hammer.

Halloween Haunted Hike

Saturday, October 29

5:00 to 6:00 p.m. Pumpkin Carving

6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Campfire and Haunted Hike

The first 50 cars receive one free pumpkin per car to carve here. Additional pumpkins can be purchased at the Outdoor Centre. Please bring your own carving tools.

After your pumpkins are carved, join us for an early evening campfire and haunted hike

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\$35 membership valid Oct. 05 - Mar. 07

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- Paddling from Boathouse
- Canoe & Kayak Courses
- Day & extended Tripping
- Whitewater!

- Winter hike, ski & party

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Opening 2005

FALL Calendar 2005

from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. The campfire is the starting point for our haunted hike. That follows the service road to Trail 5, crosses the wobbly wooden bridge and ends at the Outdoor Centre. Activities are geared to younger children, but all ages are welcome. Be sure to wear a costume!

Volunteer for Nature: Fall Trail Clean up

Sunday, November 5 (2:00 to 4:30 p.m.)
Help prepare the trails for our winter recreation activities of cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and hiking. You can help to trim and clear the trails. This event is hosted by the newly formed Friends of Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area and the Canadian Ski Patrol. Join us for hot apple cider and cookies after all the work is done. Bring your work gloves, safety glasses, warm outdoor clothing, and any trimming tools.

Martian Alert!

Saturday, November 5 (7:00 p.m.)
The Royal Astronomy Society of Canada Kingston Centre returns for an exciting talk focusing on Mars. They will also share information about stars, galaxies, the moon and all things astronomical. You can also gaze through a high powered telescope. Families and all ages are welcome.



Sizzling Salsa Dance Lessons

Thursday, November 3 and Thursday, November 10 (7:30 - 9:30 p.m.)
Strap on your dancing shoes, choose your partner and learn new moves for those upcoming Christmas parties. Join Peruvian dance instructors, Natalia and Fernando



Flores for two introductory salsa dancing les-

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sons at the Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area Outdoor Centre.

The cost is \$15.00 per person and includes two separate dance lessons totaling four hours of salsa! Spaces are limited to a maximum of 15 couples, so register as soon as possible by contacting Stana Luxford at 546-4228 ext. 251 or educate@cataraquiregion.on.ca.



Canadian Ski Patrol Annual Ski Swap Portsmouth Olympic Harbour

Friday, November 11 (6:00 to 9:00 p.m. Used equipment drop-off)

Saturday, November 12 (9:00 a.m. to 6 p.m. - used equipment drop-off 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.)

Sunday, November 13 (10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.)
Support the local Canadian Ski Patrol by taking part in their annual Ski Swap. You can bring in your old skis and winter equipment and have a great opportunity to pick out something new or used for yourself or your family. Get ready for the winter season and check out what your nearby ski areas have to offer. Stop by the CRCA booth on Saturday and buy an annual vehicle pass for one year of outdoor activities at either Little Cataraqui Creek or Gould Lake Conservation Areas.

Brown Bag Seniors' Program Looking for Signs of Winter

Thursday, November 17 (10:30 a.m.)
Meet at the Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area Outdoor Centre for a walk on one of the trails. We'll be looking for early signs of winter. Dress for the weather, bring lunch and drinking water.

Watercolour Workshop

- Painting the Fall Landscape
Saturday, November 19
and Sunday, November 20
(10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.)
\$40.00 per person per day or \$70.00 for both days



Artist Marta Scythes is back by popular demand. This time we're offering a two-day watercolour workshop with a focus on landscape painting. Marta is an excellent instructor and well-known local artist. This workshop is suitable for both beginner and intermediate levels. The first day is geared to beginners. The second day will help you to progress. You must pre-register by calling (613) 546-4228 ext. 221. The registration fee does not include materials and supplies. (A materials list is provided when you register.)

Nature Explorers P.A. Day Program

Friday, November 25 (8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.)
Ages 6 to 11

\$30.00 per child
Bring your children to Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area for an action-packed day of outdoor and indoor adventures that include games, crafts and stories. Learn about wildlife, conservation and the environment.



No arrivals before 8:30 a.m. please; the program ends at 4:30 p.m. Bring a lunch, snacks, drinking water and extra clothes. Cost is \$30.00 per child and you must pre-register. For more information call 546-4228 ext. 251.

Forever Green

Saturday, November 26 (6:30 p.m.)
Royal Military College - Staff Officers' Mess



\$75.00 per person (\$40.00 tax receipt provided)

In celebration of its 40th anniversary, the Cataraqui Conservation Foundation is hosting a fundraising gala dinner at the Royal Military College Officers' Mess. The evening features a fabulous silent auction, and a talk by Dr. John Smol, Professor of Biology at Queen's University and Canada Research Chair in Environmental Change. Proceeds will help support the CRCA's conservation education programs, land acquisition and repairs to the Outdoor Centre elevator. For more information, please call the CRCA office at (613) 546-4228 ext. 221.

Ski Waxing Clinic

Sunday, December 4 (2:00 p.m.)
Winter is almost here so get your skis ready with the Canadian Ski Patrol. Learn waxing techniques for different conditions. Be prepared for the first snow.



Christmas Coffee House

Sunday, December 11 (2:00 to 4:00 p.m.)
Celebrate the Christmas season with local musicians. At our Christmas Coffee House, you can be part of the entertainment or be part of the audience. Everyone is welcome to share their musical talents or just enjoy a hot drink and some festive music.



Brown Bag Seniors' Program Christmas Potluck

Thursday, December 15 (10:30 a.m.)
It's time for our annual Christmas potluck! Please bring a dish to share, your own plate and cutlery and drinking water. First meet at the Outdoor Centre for a short winter walk. Then we'll come back to the Outdoor Centre, warm up and share some Christmas cheer.



Christmas Party for the Birds

Sunday, December 18 (2:00 to 4:00 p.m.)
Come out with your family and make a Christmas craft to decorate the trees outside and to help feed the birds at the same time. Materials used in the crafts may contain nuts.

PLAY AND LEARN

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2511-U2 Princess Street 384-4885
(corner of Princess and Gardiners Road)

10% Discount with this ad Expires Sept. 30, 2005



Snapping Turtles, Barking Dogs, and Curious Cows are all Part of CRCA Stream Flow Study

A tame rabbit hops over to watch Stream Assessment Technician Kacey Cooper wade in Little Cataraqi Creek West, beside Day's Road in Kingston. Ms. Cooper ignores the audience; she's used to four-legged gawkers.

"We've had cows, dogs, snapping turtles and rabbits, everything you can imagine," she says of daily distractions from her labours.

Despite a tense encounter with a snapping turtle, overly-friendly cows are the most annoying.

"They try to lick the measuring tape," Ms. Cooper says.

She is gathering data for a low flow stream survey.

"This is a new project with the Ministry of Natural Resources to verify the applicability of their low water flow indicators to our watershed," explains Cataraqi Region Conservation Authority (CRCA) Watershed Management Coordinator Mara Shaw. "It looks at the impact of drought on seven streams throughout our watershed."

Today, Ms. Cooper is measuring stream

velocity. First she strings a tape measure, the same tape with taste appeal to cattle, across the stream. This measurement is called a transect.

Next, plastic clothesline pegs evenly spaced along the tape designate where she will take water velocity readings. Ms. Cooper assembles a measuring device resembling a propeller on the end of a metal shaft. This end is dipped into the stream. Ms. Cooper dons headphones that connect to the shaft's top end. As the propeller spins, it clicks audibly in the headphones. Ms. Cooper counts clicks, or revolutions, and records those numbers. A stopwatch regulates timing. This all translates into velocity or speed of the water turning the propeller.

With her reading completed across the transect, Ms. Cooper shifts the tape downstream and repeats the process.

"You do this for a certain number of transects," she says.

Stream flow varies across each transect. Near the banks, for instance, the flow may be negligible. Moving farther into the stream, the flow varies until it reaches its main concentration called the thalweg. What emerges from Ms. Cooper's data is a portrait of the stream's flow characteristics and velocities.

The study's seven streams are scattered across the CRCA watershed which sprawls across some 3,500 kms. The streams are: Cooligan Creek, Eden Grove Creek, Little Cataraqi Creek East, Little Cataraqi Creek West, Millhaven Creek, Wilton Creek and Collins Creek.

"We selected a variety of different streams," explains Ms. Shaw who supervises the study. "Some flow through limestone while others flow through the Canadian Shield."

Back streamside, Ms. Cooper emerges from the creek to shuck her waders. The thermometer hovers at 33 degrees. Those heavy rubber waders resemble a portable sauna and call to mind that colloquialism about sweating the details.



Kacey Cooper measures stream velocity in Kingston's Little Cataraqi Creek – West Branch; note the clothesline pegs on the tape across the creek.

CRCA Adds Three New Positions

Three new employees have been hired by the Cataraqi Region Conservation Authority (CRCA) and a fourth has advanced from contract to full-time status. The three new employees have been hired to replace existing CRCA staff who are now working on the source water protection project.

MD (Monir) Moniruzzaman joined the CRCA on April 4 as a watershed engineer. His work involves reviewing development applications and providing technical advice on natural hazards and storm water management. This includes flood forecasting and drought monitoring; guiding operations and maintenance of water control structures and

coordinating planning and data management of water quality and quantity monitoring.

Before he joined the CRCA, Monir worked for AME Materials Engineering. Previously, he worked as a water control structure engineer and water resource engineer.

Kyle Munro of Aurora has been hired as an environmental planner. His duties involve dealing with planning-related applications and inquiries from municipalities. He also is involved in the master and stewardship plan efforts for the Mac Johnson Wildlife Area.

Kyle's experience includes planning research and event coordination. Past employers include: Lake Ontario Waterkeeper and the Canadian Urban Institute. His spare time is spent camping, canoeing, painting and flying kites.

Conservation Authority Regulations to be Updated By Next Year

Conservation Authorities across Ontario are updating their regulations made under section 28 of *The Conservation Authorities Act (Fill, Construction and Alteration to Waterways Regulations)*. By 2006, all Conservation Authorities are required, by the provincial government, to have updated regulations in place.

This initiative has been a long time in the making. In 1995, the Red Tape Commission began looking at ways to streamline provincial government acts and regulations. The Commission had a focus on making it easier to do business in the province, but they also wanted to maintain legislation protecting public health, safety and the environment.

The Commission identified a need to make amendments to

The Conservation Authorities Act. The Act was amended in 1997. A new province-wide regulation, called the *Regulation of Development, Interference of Wetlands and Alteration to Shorelines and Watercourses* was enacted in 2004. This provides consistency across Ontario and complements the provincial land use planning policies under *The Planning Act*.

Because of these changes, the CRCA needs to make changes to our regulations. Some of the new regulations will apply to our whole watershed. However, we are planning to focus our efforts on those areas

where we have existing fill regulations, floodplain mapping and municipal requests.

With updated regulations, the CRCA can help to ensure that new development is located outside of flood-susceptible or erosion-prone areas, and that shorelines, sensi-



Updated regulations will help keep development out of floodplains and protect wetlands and streams. This aerial view of Little Cataraqi Creek shows the natural areas adjacent to the creek and the nearby urban development.

tive wetland areas and watercourses are maintained, wherever possible.

CRCA staff has been preparing new maps and regulation schedules. These will be available at public open houses which will be held this fall.

For more information, stay tuned to our web site (www.cataraqueiregion.on.ca) and watch your local newspapers for advertising about public open houses. If you have any questions, Holly Evans, CRCA environmental technician, is the project leader. You can reach her at (613) 546-4228 ext. 244 or by e-mail at hevans@cataraquiregion.on.ca.

Kyle was a classmate of Christine Woods when both attended the rural planning and development masters program at the University of Guelph. Christine, who worked as a contract employee since September 2003, has achieved regular employee status as the CRCA's ecological planner.

Among her current projects in the Central Cataraqi Region Natural Heritage Study which is described in a page 4 article.

Christine also reviews development applications and provides comments to municipalities for new and updates official plans and zoning bylaws. She also responds to general develop-

ment inquiries from the public.

In her spare time, Christine is a quilter and gardener. She comes from Ottawa.

Michael Sykes was hired in mid-March as the communications and marketing assistant. His role is to ease Communications Coordinator Karla Maki-Esdon's load as she takes on new responsibilities in the communications field.

A former journalist, Michael spent the past two years working for the Arthur Child Heritage Centre of the 1000 Islands as an exhibit interpreter. He spends his spare time photographing nature and trying to avoid poison ivy.



Three new staff have been hired to fill in for staff now working on source water protection planning. The new staff are (left to right) MD (Monir) Moniruzzaman, Kyle Munro and Michael Sykes.

Christine Woods, ecological planner, has been promoted from a contract to a full-time employee of the CRCA.



Marshlands Conservation Area is Welcoming Visitors



A hiker starts his trek on the Rideau Trail at Marshlands Conservation Area in Kingston.

The park-like setting of the Marshlands Conservation Area in Kingston attracts hikers, birdwatchers and others who appreciate this natural setting within the heart of a great city.

"In large part, we are quite happy with the outcome of the recent renovation project," says project manager Rob McRae of the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA). "We did a fairly good job of tree preservation since the design philosophy was to keep (the site) natural."

The origin of this project dates back to the 1970s when the conservation authority acquired land parcels along the Little Cataraqui Creek Valley.

"A lot of the conservation authority's heart and soul was around the Little Cat," says Mr. McRae.

The Little Cataraqui Creek empties into Lake Ontario's Cataraqui (Elevator) Bay near the Auld Subdivision. Over time, the conservation authority acquired several land parcels in and adjacent to the subdivision.

In a separate but related development, the Rideau Trail Association was formed in 1971. The Rideau Trail ran down the middle of the Little Cataraqui Creek Valley and it seemed obvious to locate it on the conservation authority property at the trail's south end.

A loop parking lot was created "to service the south end of the Rideau Trail and the other was to provide more localized access for birdwatchers and others," says Mr. McRae.

The area's official name, The Little Cataraqui Bay Marshlands Area, caused confusion with the Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area so the former was short-

ened to Marshlands Conservation Area. That applies today.

A need to renovate the site became apparent in the late 1990s. This involved improving visitor facilities as well as access and traffic flow. There was an extensive public consultation process in 2004 and Mr. McRae became the project's manager.

"We used that feedback plus some internal thinking to advance a design (for the property)," explains Mr. McRae.

Road access was shifted from King Street that is a busy thoroughfare. "Speeding traffic made it really difficult to get in and out of the conservation area at certain times of the day," says Mr. McRae.

The entrance-exit was relocated to the less travelled Trailhead Place around the corner from King Street. The conservation lands area was landscaped; the parking lot paved. A focus of the area's development plan was preservation of existing trees.

Two tasks remain. First, large signs to identify the property will be erected facing King Street. Second, an information kiosk will be erected.

"The Rideau Trail Association has been a partner on this property since Day One," notes Mr. McRae. "They continue to assist the conservation authority with the Marshlands property."

Others deserving of mention include: The Scott Wentworth Landscape Group Ltd that authored the plan, and the Josselyn Engineering Inc. that engineered the entrance road.



Signs were installed at the new entrance and at the start of the Rideau Trail in the early summer. Signs along King Street will be installed later this year.



Laura Dietrich (centre) radios the Search and Rescue (SAR) helicopter as Shannon Fleming (right) looks on.



A Cormorant helicopter airlifts a parachutist during SAR training at Gould Lake Conservation Area.

CRCA Staff Learn How to Conduct a Search and Rescue Operation

(In June 2005, CRCA staff participated in search and rescue training provided by Canadian Forces Base – Trenton at Gould Lake Conservation Area. 'Tiger' Dietrich provides a unique perspective on the training.)

"Hey good buddy, you got your ears on?" was the extent of my C.B. lingo. Little did I know that by the end of the day I would be communicating with a 'Herc' aircraft.

Hi, my name is Laura Dietrich and my handle is Tiger. I was fortunate to be invited by The Gould Lake Outreach Program of the Limestone District School Board along with seven other CRCA staff members to attend search and rescue training (S.A.R.).

The first part of the day involved in-class survival training. The most important aspects of this training which everyone should remember when heading out into the woods for a hike or camping trip are what the SAR team refer to as the Survival Pattern, Enemies of Survival and things to include in your kit. There's not enough space here to include everything, but basically you need to keep calm, stay focused and carry a few basic items with you when you are going for an outing.

Stana Luxford, CRCA education officer and leader of our summer camps, participated in this training. This information is now part of the curriculum in our Wilderness Backpacking Experience camp.

We were then ready for some practical group training involving ground signals, fire making, emergency stretchers and searching techniques using whatever resources were around us. Lucky for me one team member had a lighter, so I could use my Girl Guide skills from a few years ago and was successful at my first task. We then spent a large part of our time learning how to conduct a line-body search, which assumes the person is unconscious and the search group is close enough together to see and feel if person

may have fallen and to look for clues.

The highlight of the day was a mock rescue in which a Hercules transport airplane dropped two parachutists to attend to a person with a back injury. A Cormorant helicopter then air lifted the victim and parachutists. It is impossible to put into words the anticipation of our group as we ran down the hill to light the bonfire signal, scattering to put flagging tape on all areas of danger for the parachutists and ran up the hill again. We all watched in amazement as the Herc swooped through the air to drop the parachutists, and the Cormorant airlifted the victim to safety, the force of the wind scattering debris around us.

Very few people are lucky enough to experience a mock rescue, we were very fortunate to have these aircraft and personnel available to us.

The day ended with a test of our abilities, the main search and rescue mission. We were given a scenario - two missing adults out canoeing. Clues and dummies were placed around Gould Lake and time was critical to find the missing parties.

We had to plan a search and rescue as quickly as possible to minimize the search area. The more time that goes by, the larger the search area will become. By sending out groups in canoes and on trails we could confine the search area and, with the aid of walkie-talkies, find the missing parties. After two gruelling hours in the hot, mosquito-infested woods of Gould Lake we successfully completed our task.

Thank you to the S.A.R. technicians for the education we received and stories that gave us a glimpse into the dangerous situations that are just part of their everyday life.

Over and out 'Tiger' Dietrich.



2005 Is a Busy Year for Programs, Activities and Special Events

It has been a hectic year with lots of projects, activities and events. Our skating rink at Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area was abuzz with activity this winter as we had one of our longest skating seasons ever. After a slow start, our skating rink opened in January and skating continued until mid-March. The ice surface was great due to cold weather and the weed harvesting that was done in the fall of 2004.

We also had four sponsored evening skates at Little Cataraqui Creek. Thanks to Tim Hortons and Novelis for sponsoring free public skates. They

really helped to generate interest and publicity for our fabulous facilities.

The CBC also filmed some of the skating sequences for a new documentary on the ice at Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area. Watch for *Hockey - A People's History* this winter on CBC.

Maple Madness at Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area was also well attended this year. People braved the late winter chill to enjoy pancakes and maple syrup back in the sugar bush. Taffy on the snow (actually crushed ice) was very popular with visitors. This was a new activity that

we plan to repeat next year. Thanks to former CRCA staffer Donna O'Connor for sharing her expertise.

The Annual Spring Open House on May 15 at Mac Johnson Wildlife Area also drew a good crowd. The drumming circle by Environmental Connections and The Healing Arts Centre attracted participants of all ages.

Canoe Fun Day was held the same day at Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area. Many individuals and families took advantage of the sunny spring day to try out canoes, kayaks and paddle boats for free.

CRCA staff pitched in and cleaned up a stretch of

Perth Road, near the entrance to Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area, during Pitch-In Day on April 22. Many bags of roadside litter were collected. The litter included everything from take-out food containers to a pair of long underwear!

This fall, CRCA water management staff will be continuing with major maintenance and repairs to dams and water control structures throughout the watershed. Three new stream gauge stations will also be installed. More on that in the winter issue of *Cat Tales*.



Rob Gerritsen (left), CRCA conservation lands coordinator, and Steve Knechtel, CRCA general manager, picked up litter along Perth Road during Pitch-In Day this past April.

Next spring, osprey will have a new nesting site at Parrott's Bay Conservation Area located just west of Amherstview. Thanks to the efforts of Diane Lawrence of the Kingston Field Naturalists (KFN) and Hydro One, a new osprey nesting platform has been installed on the east side of Parrott's Bay. The platform was built by the KFN and installed by a crew from Hydro One in early July.



Two members of a Hydro One crew install an osprey nesting platform at Parrott's Bay Conservation Area. Providing assistance on the ground are two other crew members and Erwin Batalla (left) and Diane Lawrence (right) of the Kingston Field Naturalists.



A dogsledder races the course at Mac Johnson Wildlife Area during the third annual Winter Fun Day held in January 2005.

Another successful Winter Fun Day was held at Mac Johnson Wildlife Area in January. Beautiful winter weather and great snow and ice conditions contributed to a successful day. More than 130 cars came through the gate. Visitors enjoyed dog sled races, skating, cross-country skiing and warming up by the fire with chili and hot dogs.

Trumpeter Swans in the Brockville Area



Mac and Millie tend their four cygnets early this spring at Mac Johnson Wildlife Area. Unfortunately, due to snapping turtles, only one cygnet remains.

This June, with the help of funding from the Friends of Mac Johnson Wildlife Area, a follow-up aerial survey was conducted to check the previously known locations of nesting trumpeter swans around the Brockville area. The survey found all of last year's nesting sites were in use, except one.

In addition, several pairs were observed swimming and flying in spots that were considered suitable habitat for future nesting sites.

Remarkably, two different pairs were observed with six cygnets and seven cygnets. The breeding pair in the compound at Mac Johnson Wildlife Area, Mac and Millie, had their best clutch size ever, with four cygnets hatching. Unfortunately, disaster struck when two cygnets disappeared in a week. When the third cygnet was fatally injured, three large snapping turtles were trapped and relocated elsewhere. The last cygnet is healthy and growing quickly.

The total population of trumpeter swans in this area is now estimated to be over 30. In the fall, Brockville is unique in having groups of up to 15 beautiful white swans trumpeting overhead on their way from the Mac Johnson Wildlife Area down to the St. Lawrence River.

A Road Less Travelled

Summer at Mac Johnson Wildlife Area

(Lesley Rusk, one of the Friends of Mac Johnson Wildlife Area, shares a poetic view of summer at the Wildlife Area.)

It is the height of summer. It is so hot that I can hardly hear any birds; they are hiding from the heat deep in the trees. To protect the grass the dew falls heavily at night lasting well through the morning.

The geese are grazing too, coveting the shade, until the gander decides its time to drink and swim at the pool and off they go in single file. The young have lost their fuzzy feathers; they now sport the handsome dress of their parents. As I approach with crusts I listen to their soft pipes and whistles, the parents hiss in warning. They are vulnerable as the flight feathers have not yet grown back and the youngsters are only growing theirs. Overhead a great blue heron languidly flaps across the water. The swans stretch and flap and preen, the cygnets copy or nibble at the weeds in the water.

At dusk the birds call again, chickadees, blue jays are by far the noisiest, but the

CRCA Upgrades Computer Operating System

Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA) employees have improved individual and collective productivity thanks to a computer operating system upgrade.

Now, all computers operate Windows XP Professional, an upgrade from the older Windows 98 system.

"Thanks to the upgrade, new software is available," explains Travis York, a geomatics technician who also doubles as one of the conservation authority's information technology (IT) experts. "This upgrade ensures a greater compatibility with other organizations as Office is the IT standard."

Another upgrade is the addition of a freeware program called PDF995. This allows users to create portable document format (PDF) documents from within any program.

Also becoming fully operational is the Sentry File Document Management system. CRCA employees can convert any document into a PDF, place it in a Sentry File folder then upload it to a central server. These records are able to be retrieved across the network and are stored off-site. This is important in case of a catastrophic computer system failure or a fire.

Future plans calls for the installation of another server enabling fully automated data backups. It also will function as a central server for geographic information systems data and other databases.

Last fall, the CRCA purchased a satellite system for Internet and e-mail access. The new system was installed by Direcway. It provides much faster access than our previous dial-up system with shared phone lines.

"Because of our location, we chose a satellite system," explains Rob Gerritsen, conservation lands coordinator and IT expert. "It was the only way for us to obtain a high speed connection." This fall, high speed internet service will be installed at the CRCA's Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area Outdoor Centre.

crows arrogant in their black velvet are loud and raucous. A faint breathy sound tingles the hair on the back of my neck as a shadow glides by shoulder-high. It has to be an owl. Swallows swoop and dive; their competitors are bats that suddenly appear their sharp squeaks just audible.

I haven't seen any deer yet, but in the mud around a puddle she left her hoof print.

The sun sets flooding the sky with wondrous shades of red, scarlet, orange the clouds reflecting the final rays.

My dog and I head for home, marvelling at our fortune to experience such beauty and wildness so close at hand.



Foundation News - Celebrating the Cataraqui Conservation Foundation's 40th Anniversary

July and August, the months when the Cataraqui Conservation Foundation reflects on the past year and begins to look forward to the next, is again a busy time. Calendars begin to fill once more as meetings and events get scheduled. This is our 40th year of operation. We hope that you will join with us in celebrating this milestone.

The years 2004-2005 brought some changes to the Foundation. Officers are: Lynne Kenny (president), Liz Evans (past president), Barbara Bradfield (secretary) and Jean Churchill-Wilson (treasurer). Two new members, Sue Miklas and John Morse, bringing their expertise and enthusiasm to the group, are welcomed. Thanks to everyone on the board of directors for the many hours of volunteer work they have done, for their dedication, and especially for their commitment to help preserve our environment. The Foundation would also like to acknowledge their appreciation of Marian Ellis for her secretarial work and to all those on the CRCA staff for their continuing support and assistance.

Educational Talks Series

The Foundation, under the leadership of Harry Cleghorn, held a successful series of five educational talks last winter and spring. Topics included Genetically Modified Foods, Environmental Factors as Potential Causes of Breast and Prostate Cancers, Green Power, Exploring the Night Sky, and West Nile Virus. These talks were very informative, they introduced more people to the Foundation and to Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area and served as a fundraiser.

We are offering another series of talks over the next winter and spring. Interested

in exploring the night sky or finding out more about Canada's progress in the implementation of its Kyoto Protocol plan? Then join us for our 2006 educational talks series. Look for details of this program in the Winter 2006 issue of *Cat Tales* and on the CRCA web site.

Partners in Outdoor Education

Director Lorna Hendry oversaw the annual *Partners in Outdoor Education* program last September, raising funds for education programs at Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area and Mac Johnson Wildlife Area in Kingston and Brockville.

This letter campaign will continue this fall. Watch for your letter in the mail in September and be sure to become a Partner in Outdoor Education. For more information contact the CCF.

Annual Conservation Award

The Foundation is proud to acknowledge annually the efforts of individuals nominated by their organizations for their work in



Norm Ruttan of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve was also recognized for his contributions to the local natural environment. Norm's award was accepted by Biosphere Reserve colleagues (left to right), Don Ross, Dave Bull and Jim Franchetto.



Sharon Critchley of the Kingston Field Naturalists, shown here with husband John, was one of the 2005 Conservation Award recipients.

preserving the environment. The Annual Conservation Award this year was given to two dedicated environmentalists: Sharon Critchley of the Kingston Field Naturalists and Norm Ruttan, retired executive director of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve. These awards were presented at our annual general meeting in May at the Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area Outdoor Centre. Special thanks to clarinetist Judy Wolfe Labbe and flutist Susan Lebaron who provided musical entertainment at this meeting.

Art Workshops and Other Activities

Moir Drummond organized two art workshops which were held at the Outdoor Centre in the spring. Jerry de Jong and Hazel Allen both offered their time and efforts which again helped the public awareness of the Foundation and its fundraising mandate. We look forward to future workshops in the spring of 2006. If you have any ideas, or suggestions, please let us know.

Through increasing memberships, blue-bird donation boxes, and individual efforts, the Foundation continues to fund CRCA

programs and projects such as summer camps, education programs, the repairing of the lift at the Outdoor Centre and conservation land acquisition.

Major Fall Fundraiser

The Foundation's major fundraiser for 2005 will be a gala benefit dinner called **Forever Green** on Saturday, November 26, 2005, 6:30 p.m. at the Royal Military College Senior Staff Mess.

Funds raised from this event will benefit the purchase of land with environmental significance, CRCA conservation education programs and the rehabilitation of the special needs lift at the Outdoor Centre. A silent auction, door prizes, music and guest speaker will add to the fun and entertainment. Due to the generous donations from local businesses and many individuals, this fundraiser last year was a tremendous success. The planning committee for this year is already hard at work and **Forever Green** promises to be another entertaining, worthwhile event. Call the CRCA office at 546-4228, ext. 221 for more information or tickets.

As members of the Foundation meet at the Outdoor Centre early one morning in July, we see runners using the trails, a kayaker viewing the herons, orioles outside the window and we hear children from the day camp laughing and playing in the background. Our environment is so important and we are reminded once again why we volunteer to be a part of this wonderful organization.

You can help support our activities by purchasing a Foundation membership, attending our fundraiser or making a donation to one of our fundraising campaigns.

New Fish Habitat Created in Little Cataraqui Creek



An aerial view of the completed Little Cataraqui Creek fisheries enhancement project taken in April 2005. Meandering channels and ponds were created in the marsh to improve habitat. Lake Ontario is in the top right corner of the photo.

Early in 2005, the CRCA completed fisheries compensation works in the Little Cataraqui Creek wetland (near Front Road). This work was done through Fisheries and Oceans Canada to replace fish habitat on behalf of six parties in the Kingston area.

The work involved creating meandering channels and ponds within the cattail stands to provide more open water habitats. The contractor commenced work on

February 22, 2005 and completed the excavation the end of March under ideal working conditions.

Sediment curtains were installed at the outlets of the channels to reduce disturbance to the rest of Little Cataraqui Creek. These curtains provided an effective barrier to contain the site while the work was underway.

The ponds and channels are oriented towards the south west to take advantage of prevailing wind movements to provide gentle flushing of the area. It is anticipated that a diverse fish population will take advantage of the new habitat as well as other aquatic organisms, waterfowl, and amphibians.

CRCA staff will monitor the site over the next four years to assess the effectiveness of the work. More information about this project is available from CRCA biologist, Tom Beaubiah at (613) 546-4228 ext. 240 or by e-mail at beaubiah@cataraquiregion.on.ca.



The Little Cataraqui Creek fisheries enhancement project in March (photo on left) and June (photo on right). The site will be monitored over the next four years by CRCA staff.

Encouraging the Health of Urban Streams

The Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority and the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve are wrapping up a two-year project



Ernestown Secondary School students, shown here with CRCA biologist Tom Beaubiah (back row, left), planted buffers along Millhaven Creek in two Loyalist Township Parks.

promoting healthy vegetated buffers along urban streams.

Trees, shrubs, grasses and other vegetation located beside a stream help to promote the health of that stream by trapping and filtering sediments, providing wildlife habitat and by reducing the temperature of the water.

The *Urban Stream Buffer Program* has had two successful planting seasons fall 2004, and spring of 2005. Additional plantings are proposed for this fall and spring 2006.

The previous plantings have gone extremely well with considerable participation by residents from Loyalist Township to the City of Brockville. Special thanks to those that have contributed their time.

The program provides plant materials for landowners that wish to enhance or create a buffer along a stream. A variety of wildlife-attracting shrub and tree species are available.

If you wish to have your property considered for the program, please call Tom Beaubiah at (613) 546-4228 at ext. 240, before March 1, 2006.



Preserving Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area - Together

"All you need are friends," thought the CRCA as it looked for a solution to the continuous balancing act of maintaining the beautiful nature preserve at Little Cataraqui Creek with its small, yet hard-working staff. The idea of the Friends of Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area was born.

A steering committee consisting of people from various backgrounds drew up a constitution that was presented at the first Friends meeting in February. The stated objective of The Friends is to provide crucial support to the CRCA by assisting in activities that promote public awareness of Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area (LCCCA), while contributing to the protection and enhancement of this unique natural environment. Of course, the main ingredient of such a plan is a sufficiently large volunteer base. Responding to the challenge of getting an operative Friends group off the ground, a number of the meeting's participants formed a provisional task force.

True to the axiom that it is best to lead by example, the task force has been active in a variety of ways. In spring, a number of us assisted in the Canoe Fun Day, while others participated in a trail clean-up. On a sunny day in May, Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area welcomed numerous families to its boat dock. Outfitted with the necessary equipment and safety instructions, some went for their first canoe, kayak, or paddle boat ride ever, and could do so for free. Most rewarding for the volunteers were the excited faces of children as they reported back on having

seen ducks, geese, turtles, or the occasional water snake. Committed to providing a clean and healthy environment in which outdoor enthusiasts can jog, walk, or ski, volunteers cleared the trails of refuse and overhanging branches, and bridged flooded areas with tree limbs to ease passage.

Over the summer, we have continued with trail maintenance and planning for fall events. Organization of the traditional Fall Colours

Festival on Thanksgiving weekend, for example, is well underway. And skiers will no doubt appreciate the trail clean-up scheduled for November, while a number of volunteers look forward to enjoying the crisp air as they help restock firewood.

Our project to promote The Friends of LCCCA through electronic newsletters, flyers, and word of mouth is an ongoing one. There is a great need for volunteers to help maintain the property as well as assist in planning and executing events throughout the year. Dedicated individuals are also sought to

help form the future board of directors. This is an exciting time to be part of something new and to leave your mark on a growing organization. If you too are committed to conservation, and enjoy spending time at Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area, please join us and become an active member of The Friends. Because isn't this what friends are for?

For more information contact Stana Luxford at 546-4228, ext. 251, or by e-mail at educate@cataraquiregion.on.ca.



The Friends of Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area provided assistance at Canoe Fun Day held in May. Other events are planned for the fall (see the fall calendar on pages 6 and 7).

Everything You Always Wanted to Know About The Greenbelt Act

The Greenbelt Act, 2005, is a new piece of provincial legislation that protects a total of 1.8 million acres of environmentally sensitive and agricultural land stretching from the Niagara Peninsula in the southwest to Rice Lake in the east. More than 800,000 acres of this area include land protected by the Niagara Escarpment Plan and the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan.

The additional one million acres are protected countryside.

This Act is a response to the predicted population increase of the Golden Horseshoe (the area surrounding the

west end of Lake Ontario) from a population of seven million today to about 11 million by the year 2031. If current development trends continue, an area the size of Toronto, over 1,000 square kilometres, could be consumed within 30 years. The primary goal of this legislation is to limit urban sprawl and its impacts including overdependence on cars, loss of farmland, and pollution of air, water and soil.

Furthermore, advocates encourage more compact forms of development in the interest of the protection of prime agricultural and specialty-crop land as a source of food and residual health benefits. It is interesting to note that one hectare of corn has the ability to absorb 22 tons of carbon dioxide annually.

CRCA Acts to Solve Sinking Land Problem at Sydenham Dam

The Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA) is investigating why depressions in the earth are appearing in an earthen embankment below Sydenham Dam.

"This was originally the site of an old mill," explains CRCA Watershed Coordinator Mara Shaw. "When they took that down, the structural pieces were backfilled. The presence of large chunks of concrete leaves pockets into which soil and sand can settle."

The visual evidence appears as depression in the ground. The CRCA has erected safety fencing, "but now we need a long term solution," says Ms. Shaw.

CRCA Watershed Engineer Monir Moniruzzaman is supervising the project.

"The original dam was constructed in the mid 19th century to provide power for a local mill," he says. "The CRCA rebuilt the dam in 1978 as a reinforced concrete gravity structure near the former mill site."

Next to the former mill site was a sluice opening that was closed by a concrete bulkhead when the new dam was constructed. Behind the bulkhead is the dam's western, downstream earthen embankment. This was formed by infilling soil and abandoned structural components from the old mill when it was demolished in the mid 20th cen-

tury.

Mr. Moniruzzaman says the fill material is believed to contain large chunks of concrete and wooden blocks.

Settling is occurring across 150 sq. metres of the embankment. The soil depth ranges from one metre to 3.5 metres. Water seepage is suspected beneath the settling area. "Our intention is to find out what is undermining the slope, to find out

why it is settling every year," Mr. Moniruzzaman explains.

The consultants hired by CRCA are performing a seepage and settlement analysis. They will propose remedial actions attaching costs to each recommendation. Their task involves drilling core samples to determine what's under the earthen embankment.

"We want to quantify whether it is the seepage settling the land or the huge void underneath," says Mr. Moniruzzaman. "Once we know the cause of the settling, we'll try to fix it."

Ms. Shaw suggests it may be possible to solve

the problem by using heavy equipment to compact the area.

"We're trying to figure out the best way to compact it without causing any vibration to the dam," she adds.

The consultants were expected to submit recommendations by the end of August.



CRCA Watershed Management Coordinator Mara Shaw, Watershed Engineer Monir Moniruzzaman and consulting engineer Jose Pineda discuss the Sydenham Dam project.

TARA
NATURAL
FOODS

81 Princess Street

The protest by Greater Toronto Area farmers at Queen's Park last March was a good indicator of their opposition to The Greenbelt Act. Many of them were upset by the possibility of being unable to sell their farms to developers at the time of their retirement. Presently

Peterborough area, which is a considerable distance from the CRCA watershed.

To see a copy of this, or any other provincial legislation or regulations, visit this web site www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/.

