



CAT TALES

FALL 2008 ISSUE

In This Issue

It's fall and it's time to go back to school, learn a new skill, explore the outdoors or curl up and enjoy a good read. *Cat Tales* is a good read this issue, with lots of news about the CRCA.

Check it out!

- You can go back to school (page 1), learn something new or have some fun at one of our fall programs (pages 6 and 7).
- Speaking of something new ... ever heard of a bryozoan? Amaze your friends by reading our Creature Feature on page 2.
- It's all in the name of science. See page 8.
- What's more fun than a gala fundraiser? The Foundation wants to see you this fall. See page 11.
- More studies and plans are underway. Read about the Parrott's Bay Master Plan and a study of Lower Beverley Lake on page 3.
- We're sprucing up our buildings and conservation areas but much more needs to be done. We have had a major trail wash out. More on page 5.
- Read about the latest on our drinking water source protection project on page 8.
- The Friends of Mac Johnson Wildlife Area have plans for a busy fall and winter. See page 9.
- It's time to think about trees. More on page 12.
- Meet our new staff and mascots on page 10 and our summer staff on page 9.
- Plus expansion plans for Leeds and Thousand Islands (page 5), the watershed report card (page 9) and all the latest news!

Back to School with the CRCA

Even if you're not a student anymore, you probably think of September as a new beginning. For the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA), we're welcoming in the new school year with a few changes to our conservation education programs.

The CRCA has a long history of providing conservation education programs at Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area in Kingston. We began offering these programs in 1981. At Mac Johnson Wildlife Area in Brockville, we took over operating the conservation education programs in 2007.

Finances are always a concern as our programs run on a break-even basis, with user fees and donations as our main sources of revenue. Recently we had some good financial news from the Limestone District School Board (LDSB). They have agreed to increase their per student subsidy to \$3.00 to match the Algonquin and Lakeshore Catholic District School Board. This means that LDSB students will now pay \$3.50 per student.

Late in 2007, INVISTA made a major contribution to our conservation education programs. In June, Paul Brown and Stuart Carter from INVISTA Kingston came out on a field trip to Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area. They enjoyed a wetland program with Marie Poisson's Kindergarten class.

At Mac Johnson Wildlife Area, the Ontario Trails Council (OTC) has partnered with us to deliver the *Kicking It Up on the Trails* program. It's a new program that combines orienteering, environmental ethics, trail use and trail maintenance. Thanks to the OTC contribution, we are able to offer this full day program at a half-day rate. But book early, the program is only offered this fall. The program was "kicked off" at an open house held at Mac Johnson Wildlife Area on Saturday, September 27.

CRCA Education Officer Angela McAneney (seated) shows Stuart Carter (left) and Paul Brown from INVISTA some of the tiny creatures that live in the wetland at Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area.



We are also offering an incentive to people to book fall and winter programs at Mac Johnson Wildlife Area. Book before October 31, 2008 and your name will be entered in a draw to win a free winter program for your class. Our program is very full in the spring and not well attended during the fall and winter. We would like to change that by encouraging teachers to book early. Contest details and rules are available on our website.

The Cataraqui Conservation Foundation is also a major supporter of our conservation education programs. Their annual fall gala and their Partners in Education fundraising campaign raises a substantial amount of money annually for education. Read more about the Foundation on page 11.

Thank you to all of our supporters and to the teachers who bring their students out to our conservation areas to learn about the natural world.



The CRCA is offering a new program, *Kicking it Up on the Trails*, at Mac Johnson Wildlife Area in partnership with the Ontario Trails Council.



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Creature Feature

The Bryozoans (*Pectinatella magnifica*)

Bryozoans, often described as *globs*, resemble jellyfish but feel like gelatinous bags of liquid. They are colonial, aquatic animals and some colonies were discovered locally by kayakers Nancy and Rob McRae.

"We found them in Hart Lake, a small lake situated between Loughborough and Opinicon Lakes in the Cataraqui River system in early August 2007," recalls Mr. McRae.

Scientific literature suggests that fresh water bryozoans thrive in still or gently moving warm water. Their colonies attach themselves to submerged tree branches, dock pilings and other underwater objects. They are "filter-feeding invertebrate animals composed of many identical zooids joined seamlessly as a colony, each zooid capable of independent feeding, digestion and reproduction," according to the website www.answers.com/topic/phylactolaemata-freshwater-bryozoans-biological-family.

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Another published description suggests that bryozoans resemble Jell-O-like blobs. Their presence may be a blessing since they may be intolerant of pollution although scientific literature is divided on this claim. However, bryozoan colonies can be nuisances if they disrupt water intake pipes for drinking water, irrigation, wastewater and cooling water systems.

A benefit of bryozoan colonies is that they help clean lake water because they are filter feeders ingesting suspended particles called phytoplankton (algae) and organic matter from dead plants and animals.

There are 5,000 living species of bryozoans plus an extensive fossil record. Most live in a marine environment, but 50 species live in fresh water. The example discovered by the McRae family, and shown

in the accompanying photo, is believed to be *Pectinatella magnifica*.

The bryozoan fossil record dates back 500 million years and reflects more than 15,000 species. They are said to outdate dinosaurs by almost 300 million years making them one of the earth's oldest creatures.

Mr. and Ms. McRae discovered several colonies during their Hart Lake expedition.

"I recall seeing about three or four (colonies)," says Mr. McRae. "We found them about two metres from the shoreline, about one meter below the water's surface, always attached to fallen tree limbs."

The bryozoan colony in the photograph measures about 30 cm in diameter, Mr. McRae estimates. The couple had never encountered them before. He says he's heard reports that bryozoans have been observed on Whitefish Lake, further down the Cataraqui River system.

"They took us by surprise," says Mr. McRae.

Not only do these bryozoans resemble blobs or globs, their consistency is what you might expect from a gelatinous shape that is 99 per cent water.

For more information about bryozoans, check the following websites:

www.ucmp.berkeley.edu/bryozoa/bryozoa.html

www.bio.umass.edu/biology/conn.river/bryozoa.html

www.answers.com/topic/phylactolaemata-freshwater-beyozoans-biological-family

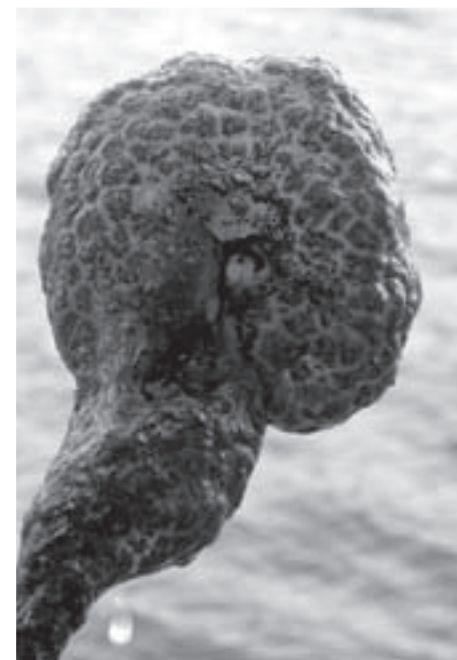
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bryozoa

www.earthlife.net/inverts.beyozoa.html

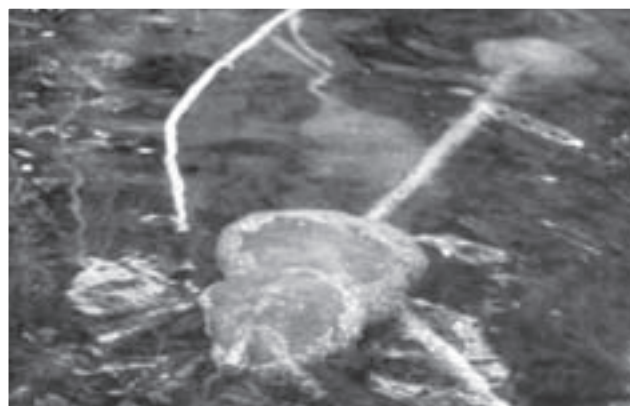
All bryozoans, literature suggests, are hermaphrodite meaning they are both male and female. They lack defined respiratory and circulatory systems, but they do have simple nervous systems.

Their predators are raccoons and fish.

Bryozoans are distributed on every continent with the exception of Antarctica.



This bryozoan colony was discovered on Hart Lake by Nancy and Rob McRae.



This image shows how a bryozoan colony appears in the water.

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Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority

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Master Plan is in the works for Parrott's Bay Conservation Area

The Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA) is preparing a master plan to guide management of its Parrott's Bay Conservation Area in Loyalist Township for a 20-year period.

"Although long identified as an area of significant value for conservation, work on a master plan was started only after the bulk of the property parcels were purchased and assembled so it now becomes prudent to create a plan for this conservation area," explains Lands Planner Jason Hynes.

- The plan will:
- evaluate the property from biological, cultural and management standpoints
 - anticipate future usage to plan for the level and extent of ecological protection and
 - anticipate user demands and usage to establish the conservation area as a valued community and CRCA asset.

- The strategic component parts essential to this, or any, master plan include:
- a site description and analysis
 - an evaluation of natural and cultural features
 - a market and situation analysis
 - public consultation through public meetings to solicit comments and
 - a property management plan that reflects public input.

The plan, like most of its kind, will be created to manage Parrott's Bay Conservation Area

for a 20-year period. At that time it will be revisited and updated. Much of the up-front plan work will be done by Mr. Hynes drawing upon the expertise of other CRCA employees.

The main steps to prepare the plan include: data collection, establishing goals and objectives, public consultation, planning revisions that reflect public input, writing a draft plan to be circulated to planning partners (such as Loyalist Township), revising this draft based on response, and finally, submission of a master plan for approval by community partners.

"There has already been a small meeting held with a limited number of invited stakeholders and neighbours to get some initial input," explains Mr. Hynes. "There will be an opportunity for the public at large to express their opinions and raise questions at a later point in the planning process."

Much of the research and accumulation of background material has been initiated, collected and is nearing completion. Mr. Hynes has met with Loyalist Township staff and the Parrott's Bay Advisory Committee as well as holding a small focus group meeting on July 3.

"A first draft of this master plan is anticipated by year's end," predicts Mr. Hynes.

For those who wonder about the advantages of a master plan, consider the following.

"The primary advantage is that it takes a holistic (ecological, cultural and economical) view of the site and through the governing policies of the CRCA it establishes the best uses of the property," says Mr. Hynes.



Above: A local family spends an enjoyable afternoon fishing at Parrott's Bay Conservation Area.

Below: CRCA Lands Planner Jason Hynes studies an interpretive sign erected at Parrott's Bay Conservation Area.



CRCA partners in major study

The Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA) has partnered with the Algonquin to Adirondacks Conservation Association (A2A) and others to study Lower Beverley Lake funded by the Species At Risk Stewardship Fund.

"The project has three major phases and the CRCA is involved with one phase that has three essential components," explains CRCA Biologist Tom Beaubiah, the project's technical advisor.

The three components involving the CRCA include a shoreline survey, individual property assessments and an in-water vegetation survey. The CRCA's role involves geographic information systems and mapping provided by CRCA Geomatics Technicians Travis York and Erin Oogarah.

"The shoreline mapping determines where shorelines are natural, regenerative, ornamental or degraded," explains Mr. Beaubiah. "We're

looking to map those shorelines and show where degradation and restoration or stewardship opportunities exist."

This includes an assessment of buffering upland vegetation and its depth.

"This will result in various maps that show shorelines characteristics, including structures, so we can assess conditions and changes," adds Mr. Beaubiah.

The second essential component is a shoreline survey conducted from a boat. This involves visual observation to determine then map any issues or concerns impacting upon water quality and species at risk.

"Essentially this has no direct impact on landowners," says Mr. Beaubiah. "They may be approached in the future by a stewardship program or other organization with offers to help them overcome any shorelines issues affecting

water quality and species at risk, but there is nothing compulsory, nothing regulatory or otherwise. It's information gathering."

The third essential component involving the CRCA was the in-water vegetation survey. Students looked at plant communities and mapped them, seeking habitat suitable for aquatic species at risk.

The second phase of the project was conducted by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR). Their staff conducted a seine net survey sampling 150 sites in search of species at risk.

"They have identified species at risk on Lower Beverley and have verified the presence of species at risk through this program," says Mr. Beaubiah.

The third phase was a water quality program designed "to get a snapshot of water

quality through the summer months." This was performed by A2A volunteers.

The Algonquin to Adirondacks Association promotes ecological connectivity and biodiversity throughout a broad region of eastern Ontario and northern New York State between Algonquin Park and the Adirondack Mountains. This includes the Frontenac Arch, a narrow band of pre-Cambrian rock that acts as a north-south pathway for animal and even plant species.

According to the A2A website, more than 100 species at risk call the region home.



Report confirms ecological value of Bayview Wetland acquisition

A report prepared for the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA) confirms the ecological value of the portion of the Bayview wetland acquired in 2007 by the Conservation Authority.

"So it is really important that the Conservation Authority manage a number of its sensitive areas to retain their natural values," says CRCA General Manager Steve Knechtel.

Further, the study recommends that as other privately owned portions of the wetland become available the CRCA try to buy them based upon environmental significance.

The study was a follow-up to the 2007 acquisition to create a plan to look after the property

on behalf of future generations. Further, it was important "to consider looking at what might make sense to add to the property down the road," adds Mr. Knechtel.

Early in 2007, the CRCA, helped by its fundraising arm, the Cataraqui Conservation Foundation, raised \$1 million to buy 700 acres of the wetland from the estate of the Judge W.J. Henderson.

The overall area of interest covers slightly more than 1,300 acres. Public ownership was long considered to be the best way to protect this ecologically sensitive land. It was first suggested that the CRCA acquire this land in the mid 1960s and again in 1996.

Public ownership through the CRCA allows for consistent con-

servation management through a single land owner. Public ownership also helps maintain a linkage between adjacent public holdings at Parrott's Bay, Lemoine Point and the Collins Creek watershed corridor.

The property is a Provincially Significant Wetland. Also it is a regionally significant Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI) because it contains a fen, a marsh and a swamp.

There are rare and endangered plant and animal species here including least bitterns, black terns and flying squirrels.

The property also features old growth forest characteristics. Old growth forests are defined as being over 100 years old.



The areas outlined in a solid black line on this map of Bayview wetland were purchased by the CRCA in 2007. The area was acquired for environmental protection purposes and will not have developed recreational facilities.

CRCA board, staff, tour eastern end of jurisdiction

Members of the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority board, staff and others toured the eastern half of the CRCA jurisdiction in August. Last year, a similar tour covered the western portion.

"The tour objectives were to: view some of the CRCA's variety of land holdings; learn about the diversity of conservation efforts undertaken by the Conservation Authority and its many partners; demonstrate the value of the CRCA to communities in the region while providing a chance for members and staff to get to know each other," says CRCA General Manager Steve Knechtel. "What a great, well-spent day."

Ten members of the board and municipal councillors joined staff members for the all-day tour. It was punctuated by brief, location-related talks by staff. Each topic correspond-

ed to the area or features visible from the tour bus.

From Kingston, the tour headed to Gananoque and then north to the Marble Rock Conservation Area. Topics discussed along the way included partnerships with local groups, recreation routes and resource conservation as well as area history.

The tour stopped at Lansdowne to discuss drinking water source protection, municipal wells and forestry. Then it was on to the Outlet passing a CRCA boat ramp along the way. Topics included lakes, fisheries and wetlands as well as water access points.

At Lyndhurst, the tour learned some area history and how the CRCA monitors water flows at its water monitoring station located there.

The tour visited another CRCA boat ramp at the village of Charleston. Discussion topics included municipal projects, development approvals and stewardship. Then it was on to Athens where the

topics were landscape planning and groundwater.

Lunch at Mac Johnson Wildlife Area was provided by the Friends of Mac Johnson Wildlife Area at the nature centre there. Ron Gardiner talked about conservation education followed by Friends' Chair Doug Mather.

In Brockville, the tour also visited water control structures and talks focused on stormwater, waterfront development, municipal projects, green space and the municipal water intake.

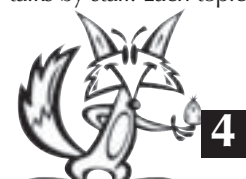
Next, the group visited Lyn Valley Conservation Area and toured the site. Discussion topics

were recreation and floodplain management.

Finally the tour returned to Gananoque where the topics were partnerships, urban forestry, trail, waterfront development, the municipal water intake and water control structures.



CRCA Development Officer Andrew Schmidt talks about regulations backed by Source Protection Committee Chair John Williamson, left, CRCA Chair Bob Morrison, centre, and CRCA Board Members John Bonser, Allan McPhail and Gary Osborne right.





Enjoy the fall colours in our conservation areas! Cycle the Cataraqui Trail. Picnic at Lemoine Point Conservation Area. Go on a nature hike at Parrott's Bay or Gould Lake Conservation Areas. See the swans at Mac Johnson Wildlife Area. Take in a great fall program or check out the interpretive trail at Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area. Visit our website at www.cataraquiregion.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. The fee is:

- \$4.00 per person for adults and children over 12
- \$2.00 per person for children 12 and under
- maximum fee of \$10.00 per car.

Annual passes are available for \$60.00 per year and provide unlimited access to both of these 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

Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area

Fall Colours Celebration

Sunday, October 12 and Monday, October 13 (1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.)
Come and celebrate the Thanksgiving weekend at Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area. Catch a wagon ride back to the sugar bush where you can go on a fall colours tour. Last wagon leaves the sugar bush at 3:50 p.m. Satisfy your sweet tooth and stop by our canteen for some pie, cider and some crisp apples which taste great on a crisp fall day.

Volunteer for Nature, Open House

Fall Trail and Garden Clean-up
Sunday – October 19
(1:00 to 4:00 p.m.)

Free Admission to Volunteers

Come to the Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area and volunteer for nature by helping the Friends of Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area prepare the trails and butterfly gardens for winter. Bring work gloves, safety glasses, pruning shears, garden tools and water bottles, labelled with your name on it. We have extra if you need to borrow tools.

Trees Ontario Landowner Workshop Series

Thursday, October 23 (7:00 to 9:00 p.m.)
Admission is free

Learn about tree planting programs and financial incentives to plant trees that are available to landowners. For more information or to register call Trees Ontario at 1-877-646-1193 or e-mail info@treesontario.on.ca.



Halloween Haunted Hike

Saturday, October 25
5:00 to 6:00 p.m. - Pumpkin Carving
6:00 to 7:30 p.m. - Campfire and Haunted Hike
The first 30 cars will get 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 from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. The campfire is the starting point for our haunted hike. The haunted hike 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 come dressed in a costume!



Pleasure Craft Operator's Card

Sunday, October 26
(8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.)



Boaters, get certified with the Kingston Power and Sail Squadron course that qualifies you for a Pleasure Craft Operator's Card. By 2009 all boat operators

must have proof of competency. The course includes 2.5 hours of instruction, a short break then a one-hour exam.

The cost is \$55 plus a manual that may be purchased in advance for \$16 at the Marine Museum of the Great Lakes, or the day of the course. The Power Squadron recommends that you buy and read the manual in advance. Please note that you must register in advance to participate because there is

a limit of 20 people. The cost includes your entry fee to Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area. The registration form is available on the CRCA website at www.cataraquiregion.on.ca.

The Real Bat Man

Sunday, November 2
(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! Matt's presentation is from 2 to 3 p.m. Bat house construction follows at 3 p.m. Kits will be available to purchase (while supplies last) after the talk. You can stay and assemble your bat house with us (but please bring a hammer) or take it home to build.



Digital Techniques for Nature Photography



Sunday, November 9
(1:00 to 4:00 p.m.)
Register now for this workshop with Kingston This Week photo editor Rob Mooy who has more than 35 years of photography experience.

The cost is \$10 plus the entry fee to Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area. The workshop begins with advice for nature photographers including what not to do. Then you'll venture into the field to shoot. Later, Rob will offer a critique. You must register to participate. A registration form is available on the CRCA website or by calling (613) 546-4228 ext. 221. This workshop is limited to 25 participants. Once you've registered, you may

submit questions to Rob in advance at robmooy@kingstonthisweek.com and he will bring answers to the workshop. Be sure to bring your digital camera.

The Geological Roadshow

Sunday, November 23
(2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.)
Think you have a meteorite? Got a rock, fossil or a mineral that you want to know more about? Take this opportunity to bring your unknown geological samples to this event that is based on the popular Antiques Roadshow format and have them identified by Mark Badham, curator of the Miller Museum of Geology at Queen's University. Please note that no monetary appraisals will be given for samples, only identifications.

Tree Trimming Party

Sunday, December 7
(2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.)
Come join us to trim our Christmas tree. Make a festive ornament, string popcorn and cranberries or decorate a cookie for .75 then munch it up. You can take your ornament home or leave it on our tree.



Brown Bag Seniors' Programs for Fall Hike the Cataraqui Trail

Thursday, October 16 (10:00 a.m.)
Please meet in Shopper's Drug Mart parking lot to car pool to Perth Road for the west side of the Cataraqui Trail. Lunch will be at Brooks Landing, 6449 Perth Road, approximately 2 km north of the Cataraqui Trail. Dress for the weather. Bring water



to drink and your cameras. Lunch costs \$6.00.

Looking for Signs of Winter

Thursday, November 20 (10:30 a.m.)
Please meet in the north parking lot of Lemoine Point Conservation Area to check out signs of approaching winter on the trails. Dress for the weather and bring water to drink. We'll go to a restaurant if the weather is too cold to eat outside.



Christmas Pot Luck and Walk

Thursday, December 11 (10:30 a.m.)
Please note, this walk is on the second Thursday. Meet at the Outdoor Centre at Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area on Division Street. It's that time again for a short winter walk and a Christmas pot luck. Please bring a dish to share with staff and friends. Merry Christmas to all!



Saturday, November 8 (6:00 p.m.)
Vimy Officers' Mess
CFB Kingston
\$100.00 per person
(tax receipt for a portion of the ticket price)

Come out to the Cataraqui Conservation Foundation's annual fundraising gala dinner for the CRCA's conservation education and land acquisition programs. Enjoy great music while you browse through the silent auction tables. Pick up some early Christmas presents and help support conservation. For tickets and information, please call (613) 546-4228 ext. 221.



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Updates on Drinking Water Source Protection

In our last issue of *Cat Tales* (Spring-Summer 2008) we provided you with details on many aspects of drinking water source protection. In this issue, we would like to provide you with some updates.

Terms of Reference

During the spring and summer, the drinking water source protection staff and the Source Protection Committee (SPC) were busy working on what's called a *terms of reference* (ToR). This is basically a work plan that guides and defines research and planning, assigns roles and responsibilities, establishes timelines and provides funding estimates.

It's a requirement of the *Clean Water Act* that the ToR be prepared. It's also a requirement that the public be consulted throughout this process.

A series of three public open houses were held in May to introduce the ToR and get public input. The open houses were held in Kingston, Brockville and Bath. There was public interest in drinking water source

protection in general, but not many comments were received on the ToR itself.

Over the summer the document was fine-tuned. The final version was published for comment on the CRCA website. The comment period closed on August 27.

Based on a positive response, the Cataraqui Source Protection Authority has forwarded the proposed Terms of Reference to the provincial Minister of the Environment for approval.

Preparing an Assessment Report

The Ontario Ministry of the Environment (MOE) continues to develop regulations, rules and guidelines to direct the preparation of source protection plans. As these are developed, they are required to be published for public comment on Environmental Bill of Rights website.

In June, the MOE published draft regulations and rules on preparing an Assessment Report for our local watersheds. This is one of the next steps leading to the

preparation of a source protection plan. The Assessment Report will tell us about the risks to our drinking water sources and provide a basis for the recommendations in the Cataraqui Source Protection Plan.

As with all steps in this process, our Assessment Report will be subject to extensive public consultation. The final version will likely be published in 2010. In the meantime, we are busy with detailed technical studies that will be incorporated into the Assessment Report.

Source Protection Committee Meetings

This fall, the Cataraqui Source Protection Committee will be meeting in communities across the source protection area. Our meetings are held in the evening and are open to the public. We can also provide an opportunity for presentations by delegations, but advance notice is required. Please check our website for the dates and locations of upcoming meetings.

New Website Launched

Here is a great new way to keep up to date on the source protection activities in your community. A new website – www.cleanwatercataraqui.ca -- has been launched to provide information on the source water protection that we are doing.

Find out who is on the Cataraqui Source Protection Committee and how to get in touch with committee members. You can also check the meeting schedule, read our minutes and agendas.

The process of preparing a source protection plan is also explained.

You can also watch our work progress. As our various technical studies are completed, information will be posted on the website so you will have access to our findings.

There are also educational resources about drinking water available, as well as links to other source protection areas and regions across the province.

Everything you need to know about drinking water source protection is now in one convenient location.

Bug collecting for science

During spring and again in the fall, two Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority employees have the enviable task of spending sunny days waist deep in local watercourses. Despite cold water and numerous bug bites, Water Quality Specialist Holly Evans and Source Water Technician Nicole Irvine climb willingly into chest waders to monitor the health of local streams and creeks.

Holly and Nicole are collecting benthic macro invertebrates – that's bugs to you and me. More accurately, these tiny insects live at the bottom of watercourses. They matter because they are water quality indicators.

Holly and Nicole use a "kick and sweep" method to collect samples. During a three-minute period, the stream bottom (substrate) is disturbed so insects can be

captured in a small mesh net. This is performed at three locations in each stream sampled. Collected samples are preserved for processing. Back at the office, Nicole uses a microscope to sort the harvest.

Their results are reported to the Benthos Biomonitoring Network (OBBN) as part of a province-wide effort to create a database. It will be used locally in our drinking water source protection and watershed management programs.

"The OBBN has 27 taxonomic groups used for classification, but CRCA sends our samples to a specialist to classify down to species," says Nicole. "In the lab, subsamples are taken and counted under microscope magnification. The species found reflect the health of the stream."

Standard protocol methods are used for collecting benthic macro invertebrates. A field sheet is completed to identify stream details including information about the stream bed, vegetation in and surrounding it, portion of canopy cover and more.

All this contributes to the success of the Ontario Benthos

Biomonitoring Network.

"The insects can also be used to monitor changes," Nicole elaborates. "The CRCA is at the stage of gathering base information since this is a relatively new program for us, but we add our findings into the OBBN database and can pull information from it to compare similar stream types."

Think of it as using nature to monitor nature . . . naturally.



Net contents include litter from a stream bed as well as microscopic insects.



Broad wing damselfly as it appears magnified 400 times.



Nicole Irvine gathers samples for examination under a microscope.



Friends of Mac Johnson Wildlife Area plan fall and winter activities



Fun with water: Two youngsters enjoyed last year's water events at the Wildlife Festival.

The Friends of Mac Johnson Wildlife Area in Brockville were busy over the summer preparing for the annual fall Wildlife Festival held on September 28.

"We hold three events a year: the spring open house, usually in May; the fall wildlife festival in September or October plus the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority's (CRCA) winter fun day featuring dog sled races in January," says Friends spokesperson

Ron Purser.

The fall event traditionally attracts between 75 and 125 visitors to the Wildlife Area on Debrugge Road, north of the city. Events included: a barbecue, pumpkin carving, apple bobbing, pond dipping, guided trail hikes, tractor and wagon rides, displays and free canoe and kayak rentals courtesy of the CRCA.

Also planned for this fall are two work bees. Volunteers are needed to do brushing along the Centennial Road fence later this fall. The Friends will also be rebuilding the skating shelter later this fall. If you are interested in helping out, please call Stefan Foerster at (613) 345-1990.

The Friends also plan to replace the osprey nesting platform later this year. Despite the fact that it is now tilted at a gravity-defying angle, the osprey nested successfully again this year.

Winter activities include the annual Winter Fun Day which is scheduled for Saturday, January 24. It will include dog sled races, cross-country skiing and skating,

provided that the snow and ice cooperate.

In other news from the Friends, Mr. Purser says that the Ontario Senior Winter Games cross country skiing event will be held at Mac Johnson Wildlife Area between February 11 and 13.

It all adds up to a busy fall and winter for the Friends.



Hey this is fun: At last year's Wildlife Festival, not all the fun was had by children.

CRCA to produce watershed report card

The Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA) will produce a 2008 watershed report card to serve as snapshot of the state of the environment in the conservation authority's jurisdiction.

"Part of the work of conservation authorities is to monitor the region's natural environment and inform the public about its condition," explains Watershed Management Coordinator Mara Shaw. "We now have a summary of the monitoring results to provide."

All 36 of Ontario's conservation authorities are producing such report cards.

"The provincial standard for frequency is every five years but we're hoping to put one out more frequently so people have up-to-date information about the status of our watershed," says Ms. Shaw.

The report card will provide information about surface and groundwater quality as well as forest conditions.

"Putting all this together will give a picture of where we're at," adds Ms. Shaw. "In future, we'll be able to compare that information to subsequent report cards and start reporting long-term trends as well."

The report card will be circulated via the municipal offices of the CRCA's 11 member municipalities as well as directly to the general public. The information will be available on the CRCA website and by request at the conservation authority's Kingston administration office.

CRCA jurisdiction stretches from Greater Napanee on the west to Brockville on the east north to Newboro.

CRCA employs summer staff

Every year, the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority hires area students to fill a variety of positions.

Five of those jobs were at Gould Lake Conservation Area and this year the positions were filled by Calla Turnbull, Alicia Botden, Taylor Helferty, Jordon Bowes

and Emily Kristensen. Jordon Bowes was unavailable for a photograph.

Other summer positions included day camp Katie Speck, Jess Pelow and Whitney Kittner. They were supervised by Day Camp Supervisor Carolyn Lauzon who also is the education assistant at the CRCA.

Rob Williams worked as an environmental technician.

Finally, Isabel Ashton and Devin Green worked as junior conservationists for the summer.



Calla Turnbull,
Gould Lake Staff



Taylor Helferty,
Gould Lake Staff



Carolyn Lauzon,
Day Camp Supervisor



Jess Pelow,
Day Camp Staff



Devin Green,
Junior Conservationist



Alicia Botden,
Gould Lake Staff



Emily Kristensen,
Gould Lake Staff



Katie Speck,
Day Camp Staff



Whitney Kittner,
Day Camp Staff



Isabel Ashton,
Junior Conservationist



Rob Williams,
Environmental Technician



Fox family charms and fascinates CRCA staff

Cataquai Region Conservation Authority (CRCA) staff enjoyed a daily opportunity this year to observe a family of red foxes mature and learn to fend for themselves.

"I've rarely seen foxes, probably less than a half dozen times," says CRCA Finance Coordinator Cheryl Rider, a country dweller who is surrounded by wildlife, including elusive but largely invisible foxes.

That changed this spring. Ms. Rider and colleague, Administrative Assistant Donna Campbell, became unofficial photographers for a red fox family. Between them, they documented the family life of the mother fox and her five kits.

The vixen (mother fox) evicted the CRCA's resident groundhog from her burrow early in the spring. There, the fox gave birth to five tiny kits with shocking china-blue eyes. They emerged from their den on wobbly legs. Their coats were a dusky grey with scant promise of the inevitable red. They resembled a comical kitten-puppy cross.

"The first time Mother Fox saw us watching through the window, she headed for the hills, leaving the kits to fend for themselves," recalls Ms. Rider. "Abandonment does not impress me, but what did (impress me) was how she eventually took the kits, two at a time, to teach them to hunt."

The other three remained near the den. "She turned and gave each a look as if to say 'you stay here and wait your turn' and they seemed to listen," recalls Ms. Rider.

Ms. Campbell revised her initial judgment of the vixen's inclination to leave her kits when confronted with humans.

"At first, I wanted to call Children's Aid when she abandoned her kits," she jokes. "But later I realized this was her way of staging a diversion to distract predators."

Each kit reacted in his or her own way to a cautious approach by picture seekers.



Donna Campbell took this close-up of the fox kits.

Both photographers learned to back off at the first sign of skittishness.

"If I got too close, they darted back into the safety of their den," says Ms. Rider.

Ms. Campbell credits the "amazing zoom lens" of her camera for close-ups. Ms. Rider enjoyed the unique opportunity of photographing the kits with mom at feeding time.

Perhaps the best fox story is told by CRCA Receptionist Stephanie Vinkle. Using a video camera to record the kits at play, she documented a swallow diving at one of the kits who, no doubt shocked by the unprovoked contact, tumbled back into the den. The tiny bird bounced off the kit's head, angrily chirping. Turns out the swallow was nesting nearby.

Others recall the night a boardroom meeting was disrupted when Ms. Fox returned to the den to deliver a duck dinner for the kits. The meeting room overlooked

the den so everyone watched while feathers flew. It was the ultimate wildlife reality show.

Weeks later, one of the kits loped into the CRCA parking lot bearing a muskrat where it was greeted by two brothers or sisters. Without breaking stride, all three gripped the muskrat in their mouths while maintaining a ground-eating lope. Ah, the joys of sibling rivalry at feeding time.

Some of the kits' rites of passage were recorded by either Ms. Rider or Ms. Campbell.

"The first shot I took was April 1," says Ms. Rider. The last one was on May 30 so we got to watch them almost every day for two months. They were a pleasure to watch and educational too."

At the end of May the fox family dispersed. Now, CRCA employees catch only fleeting glimpses of an occasional fast-moving red streak as reminders of the fox family.

CRCA stretches gate fee hikes over three years

The Cataquai Region Conservation Authority (CRCA) will increase gate fees effective January 1, 2009 at Little Cataquai Creek and Gould Lake Conservation Areas. The fee hike reflects increased operating costs.

At the direction of the CRCA's board, the fee hikes will be phased in over three years, from 2009 to 2011, to reduce the impact on patrons. The board also decided to revisit the question of gate fees in 2011.

An annual pass priced at \$60 in 2008 increases to \$65 in 2009, \$70 in 2010 and \$75 in 2011. For those looking for a gift for outdoorsy friends or family members, annual passes make great presents, but act before January 1 to beat the fee hike.

At other Conservation Areas such as Lemoine Point and Parrott's Bay, as well as boat ramps and water access points, no fees are charged. Instead the Conservation Authority relies on public contributions through donation boxes to help offset operating costs.

New staff join the CRCA

Welcome to new CRCA employees Andrea Gummo, Peter Hebert and Michael Dakin.

Environmental Planner Andrea Gummo grew up near Bloomfield, not far from Kingston. She earned her bachelor's degree at Montreal's McGill University, graduating in 2005. She went on to earn a master's degree in planning from Queen's University, graduating in 2008.

Andrea spent the summer of 2007 working for the China Academy of Land and Resources Economics in Yan Jiao, China.

Andrea is replacing former Environmental Planner Lindsay Closs.

Water Resources Technician Peter Hebert's hometown is Kingston. He earned

a bachelor of engineering in water resources engineering at the University of Guelph.

His work experience includes time with the Ontario Ministry of the Environment Eastern Region as a surface water technician. Peter also worked with the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority as a student hydrologist and Golder Associates in Burnaby as a co-op student.

Peter is replacing former Water Resources Engineer Abdullah Hossain.

Ecological Planner Michael Dakin was born in Kingston and grew up in Greater Napanee. He studied at Queen's University for the past six years earning a BA in geography and an M.Pl. in environmental planning.

Michael is filling in for Christine

Woods while she is on maternity leave.

In our last issue, we missed welcoming Donna Campbell, Administrative Assistant to our staff. Donna has replaced Patricia Hudson Mills, Authority Secretary.

Donna's background includes spending 13 years in technical positions in Montreal's aircraft engine industry, as well as extended

periods off working and travelling in Australia and Sweden.

Welcome to Andrea, Peter, Michael and Donna.



Environmental Planner
Andrea Gummo



Water Resources Technician
Peter Hebert



Ecological Planner
Michael Dakin



Administrative Assistant
Donna Campbell



Foundation News

The Cataraqui Conservation Foundation supports the CRCA in raising funds for Authority projects – such as acquisition of environmentally sensitive land – and programs such as education of young people about the environment. Two major fundraising endeavours are partners in education and ***The Forever Green*** fall gala banquet.

Forever Green

The fall gala banquet is a key fundraising initiative for CRCA education programs and land acquisition. This year's ***Forever Green Gala*** is being held on Saturday, November 8, 2008. Our goal is to raise \$50,000 at the gala evening, and direct this sum toward CRCA educational programs and future land acquisitions.

The Forever Green Gala has proven a popular event, and was oversold last year. To accommodate those who wish to be included in this festive evening, we have moved the event to Vimy Officers' Mess at CFB Kingston, which will accommodate 240 guests. We are reaching out to sponsors, donors, and potential attendees right now. For further information about the Forever Green Gala, please call the CRCA office at (613) 546-4228 ext. 221.

Partners in Education

The second key fundraising focus is the ***Partners in Education*** program. Every year Foundation board members approach the community seeking funds for CRCA educational programs. Led by certified teachers, these programs are run at Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area in Kingston and Brockville's Mac Johnson Wildlife Area, providing students with unique hands-on experiences concerning local and global environmental issues and the linkages between human activity and the natural environment. The education programs include local schools during the normal school year, and feature camps during

summer months.

Watch for a letter from the Cataraqui Conservation Foundation seeking your help with the Partners in Education program. Call the CRCA at (613) 546-4228 for further information or visit the Foundation section of the CRCA website.

Latornell Symposium Student Award

This year, for the first time, the Foundation is inviting submissions from Queen's, RMC or St. Lawrence College students for an award to attend the A.D. Latornell Conservation Symposium from November 19 to 21, 2008. The A.D. Latornell Conservation Symposium was started in 1993 to provide a forum for conservation staff, students, academics, non-government organizations and politicians to share ideas, tools and strategies for managing natural resources.

The closing date for applications was September 30. The successful student will be selected at the October meeting of the Cataraqui Conservation Foundation. The student will be required to make a presentation at a future Foundation meeting about their attendance at the Symposium.

Annual General Meeting Features Conservation Award

The Cataraqui Conservation Foundation held its annual general meeting on May 27, 2008 at Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area. Foundation members and other interested attendees listened to a review of the past year's activities, a presentation of the financial report and a report from a nominating committee for directors and officers for the following year. In addition, the Foundation ratified a revision to its bylaws.

At the 2008 annual general meeting, the Foundation president, Dr. John Morse, introduced Dr. James Day as winner of the 2008 conservation award. Dr. Day was

honoured for his long term contributions to the Kingston region environment.

The Foundation welcomed new directors Leslie Bell and John Kitney to the Board. John took over the Treasurer position from Jean Churchill-Wilson. Jean is continuing as a director. Also recognized were retiring directors Ross Forrest and Graham Lodge.

Former president Liz Evans was recognized for her many contributions to the Foundation by being made an honorary director.



Foundation President John Morse presents the 2008 Conservation Award to Dr. James Day (left) as director Stewart Fyfe looks on.

Bidding at gala fundraiser Forever Green's silent auction is always a popular activity. This year's fundraiser is being held on November 8 at the Vimy Officers' Mess.



CRCA recognized for efforts at Pitch-In Kingston

The Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority has been recognized for its employees' trash collecting efforts at Pitch-In Kingston on April 25.

Thirteen employees harvested litter along McKay Street in the vicinity of the intersection with Progress Avenue in Kingston. Several employees also cleaned out a stretch of the Little Cataraqui Creek

where it parallels McKay Street.

On July 18, the Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce, which organizes the annual event in Kingston, recognized the CRCA's efforts with the *Clean World Award in Recognition of Sustained Action to Improve Canada's Environment*. The award was accepted by the CRCA's Administrative Assistant Donna Campbell,

who organized her colleagues for the event.

The CRCA has also learned that it has been nominated for a national award through Pitch-In Canada. This organization is based in British Columbia.

Pitch-In Canada is a national non-profit and charitable organization, established in 1967. More than 3.5 million volun-

teers participate in thousands of projects each year. All share a common interest: to improve communities and the environment.



Native Plant Nursery group reports successful year

The Lemoine Point Native Plant Nursery enjoyed a busy and successful year, according to one of its volunteers, Jane Murphy.

"Raising trees, shrubs and flowers from seed and cuttings requires a lot of volunteer hours, hard work and an assist from Mother Nature," says Ms. Murphy. "This year, she was generous in the water department so our irrigation system had less work to do."

The nursery was fortunate with financial and practical help during the past three years from parent organizations, the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority (CRCA), the Friends of Lemoine Point, the Frontenac and Lennox and Addington Stewardship Councils, Community Foundation of Greater Kingston and Healthy Communities Kingston, as well as local Horticultural Societies and various suppliers.

"This year, we were awarded a Home Depot-Evergreen Foundation Rebuilding Nature Grant which will allow us to build a sheltered work-area, and the foundation for the hoop-house which will be used to start plants and give them winter protection," says Ms. Murphy. "Home Depot will also provide some hands-on helpers for the project."

The hoop-house is a kind of greenhouse, a half-moon shaped structure of metal half hoops with a vinyl skin.

The nursery supplied several local organizations with plant material:

- St. Lawrence Parks needed trees and shrubs and specific flowers that nursery workers were able to grow;
- The Community Foundation of Greater Kingston's Environmental Legacy Fund is purchasing 225 trees and shrubs to plant at Lemoine Point;
- The Girl Guides will plant 50 willows of three species in September;
- 400 spruce trees for

school yard planting;

- A local business needed poplars and willows to form a living barrier between business properties; and
- The Friends Heritage Forest group will plant several hundred shrubs near the airport fence at the south end of the Conservation Area.

Some of the nursery's flowers and shrubs can be seen in the garden at the Administration Office at Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area.

"In addition, we have made a start in locating specimen trees near the nursery fence where they may be easily viewed," notes Ms. Murphy. "And our fall sale allows the public to buy good strong plant material for their properties and increases the diversity of the flora in the Kingston and area landscape."

Finally, the nursery group received youth volunteer assistance this year from: the Youth Green Team from St. Lawrence College, the Stewardship Rangers of Lennox and Addington Stewardship Council on two occasions, and the Mormon Youth with six leaders. They worked on gravelling the paths, weeding and transplanting seedlings.



Volunteers from a number of different organizations helped with chores like weeding and creating gravel paths at the Lemoine Point Native Plant Nursery.



Order trees now for spring planting

Planning to do some tree planting next spring? Then the time to order your seedlings is now!

There is a minimum order of 500 seedlings and species must be ordered in multiples of 50. If you don't have room for that many trees, Forestry Technician Rick Knapton suggests considering a group order with your neighbours.

The cost of seedlings ranges from \$0.40 to \$0.80 each. You can choose from a variety of hardwoods, shrubs and conifers. However, in order to get the species you want, you need to order early.

If you don't want to do your own planting, the CRCA offers planting assistance at an additional fee.

The CRCA encourages you to order your tree stock now for spring planting.



For order forms and more information about our tree planting assistance programs, please visit our website at www.cataraquiregion.on.ca and go to the Conservation Services section.

If you are interested in learning more about tree planting programs and financial incentives that are available to landowners, you may want to attend a workshop on October 23 at the Little Cataraqui Creek Conservation Area Outdoor Centre. Trees Ontario is hosting the workshop. For registration and other information see the What's Happening pages in this newsletter.

CRCA participates in shared web mapping service

Conservation Ontario, the umbrella organization for Ontario's 36 conservation authorities, in conjunction with six conservation authorities is offering a common Internet mapping application to increase mapping service capacities of its members.

It provides conservation authorities and clients access to a wide variety of geospatial data. This includes information about conservation lands, regulated lands, hazardous areas and important natural lands and features that protect people and property from potential flooding and erosion.

The service benefits all conservation authorities by:

- providing improved and easy access to important conservation data;
- helping to build local mapping ser-

vices capacity through shared infrastructure;

- offering a cost effective method to meet current and future mapping needs;
- reducing, eliminating or preventing any backlog of planning applications; and
- providing the ability to share information across municipal boundaries and watersheds.

Geospatial data is information that identifies the geographic locations of features and boundaries on earth. These may be natural or built features. Geospatial data is stored as coordinates and can be mapped.

Visit the site at www.camaps.ca.

