

GRAND

THE GRAND STRATEGY NEWSLETTER

ACTIONS

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Grand River
Conservation
Authority



The Grand:
A Canadian
Heritage River

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Cover photo:

*Hardy paddlers on New Year's Day paddle to Glen Morris.
Photo by Tom Harman*



Seeking serenity on the Grand

By Janet Baine
GRCA Communications Specialist

Urbanization intrudes surprisingly seldom during a canoe trip down the central Grand River.

There are far-off traffic noises and buildings or hydro lines sometimes peek through the forest. A piece of garbage occasionally hints that thoughtless people have been nearby. With a little imagination, it feels as if the Grand River is hidden deep in Canada's wilderness and belongs to the heron, the swallows, the wind and me.

On Tuesday evenings and some weekends starting last May, I paddled most of the Grand River to Port Maitland on Lake Erie. I joined the Waterloo Wellington Canoe Club part way through their summer odyssey of paddling the entire 300-km Grand River from start to finish. This is the second time the club has undertaken the entire Grand River in one season. They called it GREEN 2009 (Grand River End-to-End Navigation). I missed the early spring paddles at the headwaters. As many have before me, I dis-

covered a perfect recreational opportunity very close at hand. It brought tranquility, fun, fresh air and friendship.

I had spent years planning to canoe the Grand River, and summers came and summers went with only one excursion between Cambridge and Paris.

In contrast, the canoe club offered a paddling opportunities once or twice a week that took place with or without any given club member. I made sure I took part in as many of the 19 GREEN paddles as I could. Some co-workers joined me on occasion.

I didn't have a canoe and none of my family share my interest. But the club provided companions who generously shared their expertise and found a spot for me in their boats. Now I have my own kayak, as club members use both canoes and kayaks.

Four club members — Paul Kostiuk, Barb Davenport, Kathleen Vanessa Hyland and Tom Harman — paddled the entire river in 2009. But on any given section, six to nine boats would be unloaded for the GREEN paddles.

Until the dizzying southern portion of the

river, where watching for waves from speed boats was a challenge, the Grand was relatively unhindered by recreational users. Some sections are only accessible by canoe.

Dedicated fishermen are the most commonly seen recreational users. They wade into the shallow waters, while hikers and cyclists use the riverside trails. The 275-km Grand Valley Trail and other trails runs beside the river, but I have yet to see more than one or two hikers out for an evening stroll, even in the most heavily populated areas. I know a great deal of credit for this recreational resource in the midst of a heavily populated area goes to the river's natural volatility when it comes to flooding because policies keep buildings away from the river's edge.

With military precision the canoe club organized shuttles at put-ins and take-outs that divided the river into short stretches. The wet weather of 2009 cooperated, because the biggest challenge of paddling the Grand is ensuring that there is enough water for a boat to move freely upon the surface. But never be fooled: the river can overturn paddlers who are not on the look out for an unexpected bend or rock.

Now I am transformed from an occasional flat-water paddler into a canoeing enthusiast.

After spending my days writing about river management and restoration, it is fabulous to get out and simply enjoy the river's calming beauty. Even though the Grand River and its tributaries are used and often abused, they cleanse the soul and are a reminder of the value of keeping our natural environment clean.

For more information:

E-mail: wwccpresident@yahoo.ca or
Phone: 519-824-3824.

Website:

www.waterloowellingtoncanoeclub.ca

The club welcomes new members.

More reflections on 19 GREEN paddles

By Barb Davenport

Early in the spring with snow still on the ground, a small group of hardy paddlers met at the Grand River headwaters.

The air was crisp. I'm sure the locals were wondering who these strange looking people were dressed up in toques, wet suits, winter coats and heavy winter boots standing around a bunch of canoes. GREEN 2009 paddles had begun. At this point, the Grand River is only less than ten feet wide and running through rural country.

Over the course of all the paddles, I was struck by the diversity of this mighty river, from the serenity and pastoral beauty at the headwaters to the chaos at the mouth. From little evidence of man's interventions to seeing garbage everywhere and experiencing the effects of dams. From a small river to a river which felt more like a lake. From being one with nature to sharing the river with speed boats, sail boats, fishermen and water skiers. We saw more wildlife on this river than what we've seen on remote rivers.

Three hundred kilometres, 5 months, 19 paddles and 50 hours later, the last official GREEN paddle finished. We enjoyed some great meals at local restaurants with stops for ice cream.

Along the way, we had lots of laughs, had a few aquatic misadventures, enjoyed some amazing stories and accumulated a huge volume of pictures.

Barb Davenport is the president of the Waterloo Wellington Canoe Club.

Grand River photos from top:

Portaging across the top of the Shand Dam; between Blair and the Cambridge GTO; put-in at Templin Gardens, Fergus; harnessing a tail wind in the southern Grand River en route to Byng Island; arriving at Port Maitland where the river enters Lake Erie.





Coming through a culvert south of on the northern Grand River
Photo by Judy Luffman

Three Grand clubs for canoeing seniors

If you are over 55 and available during the day, you have many opportunities to join a canoe club.

All three are based in different cities. They are associated with local seniors clubs. The clubs provide equipment such as canoes and paddles.

The clubs in Cambridge and Waterloo are well established and sometimes have a waiting list for members in order to ensure that all receive training. The Guelph club in its second year.

All three feature regular outings on the Grand River and elsewhere, training, and other activities.

The Ancient Mariners, Cambridge:

Website: www.ancientmariners.ca

Phone: 519-748-5386

E-Mail: wbellinger@primus.ca

Old Salts Seniors Canoe Club, Waterloo:

Membership meeting:, Feb. 18 at 1 p.m. at Wing 404, 510 Dutton Dr., Waterloo.

Phone: 519-888-7565

E-mail: oldsalts@gmail.ca

The Evergreen Canoe Club, Guelph

Phone: 519-824-3336 or 519-822-5789

Further information: *Paddling the Grand River*, published 2006, available in bookstores and through the GRCA website. Or, check the Canoeing section of www.grandriver.ca.

Lessons learned after '74 flood

This is one of a series of articles about the history of the GRCA, which was formed in 1934 and recently celebrated its 75th anniversary.

By Janet Baine
GRCA Communications Specialist

Recent flooding in the Grand River watershed would have been much more serious if it were not for the havoc wrought by the memorable flood of 1974.

That flood was a defining moment in the history of the Grand River. It resulted in numerous changes that have reduced the risk of flooding to people and property.

May 17, 1974, started out sunny and warm. It deceived people who were “unaware of the approaching catastrophe,” according to Judge W.W. Leach, who presided over a provincial inquiry into that flood.

When the rain came, there was little that could be done, because the GRCA’s reservoirs were already full. According to the inquiry, warnings were sent, but

they didn’t get through to everyone affected.

By 7 p.m. on May 17, the Grand was rushing through downtown Galt at a rate of 1,490 cubic metres per second (m³/s), a record flow that has yet to be surpassed. The summer low flow is only 15 m³/s.

Dikes gave way in Bridgeport and Brantford. For a time, the Brantford water treatment plant was knocked out of commission, creating a state of emergency.

Floodwaters also engulfed parts of Paris, Caledonia, Cayuga and Dunnville. All told, damages amounted to more than \$6.9 million (\$29 million in today’s dollars), excluding cleanup costs.

‘Apathy’ about floods

This flood left so many questions that the provincial inquiry into it went on for



A February thaw in 2009 brought the Grand River into this neighbourhood in Cayuga. To see more recent flooding pictures, check the [grandriverca](http://grandriverca.youtube.ca) page on youtube.ca.



Through flood damages have been reduced, some parts of the watershed are still susceptible to flooding, such as New Hamburg. Photo above was taken after a 1975 flood. Flooding is the leading cause of public emergencies in Ontario today.

months. Judge Leach found that “in 1974 there was apathy throughout the watershed, not only among the endangered, but in municipal governments and, to some extent, in the GRCA.”

He called for a better flood warning system to be tested annually. He proposed improvements in the reservoir network. He urged the development of a computer simulation model for the river. And he called on governments to buy more land and further control development in the flood plain to reduce future damages.

Even with all of that in place, Judge Leach pointed out that the threat of flooding would never disappear.

“The potential exists for very serious flooding in the watershed in the future, with real danger of loss of life and extensive property damage.”

Since then, \$43 million has been spent on new dikes and flood protection work in Brantford and Cambridge. Millions more have been invested in other communities.

Over the years, the GRCA has fine-

tuned the dam and reservoir system to hold water back and minimize flooding. Over the course of the last year, the reservoirs prevented millions in damages for each of three separate events, but there is no calculation of the savings.

The sudden mid-winter thaw on Dec. 28, 2008 and the ensuing flooding showed how flood damages were averted. The flooding could have been a lot worse if the reservoirs in the system hadn’t been nearly empty, said Dwight Boyd, Senior Water Resources Engineer at the GRCA.

At the time of the flood, the reservoirs were at their normal winter holding level, but they filled up quickly because the sudden warm temperatures caused the snow to melt rapidly as rain pelted down. The combination of snowmelt and rain was equivalent to rainfall of 110 mm to 215 mm (about 4.5 to 8.5 inches), Boyd said.

The reservoir system cut flood peaks by 40 to 80 per cent on the rivers and streams where there are reservoirs, otherwise they would have exceeded the

levels set during the 1974 flood in some areas.

There would have been extensive flooding in St. Jacobs on the Conestogo River. In Brantford, water would have been close to the top of dikes constructed after the 1974 flood. In Haldimand, water would have inundated portions of Caledonia, Cayuga and Dunnville.

The flood warning system is crucial to reducing the risk of flooding. This includes monitoring the temperature, rain, snow and river levels. Weather radar information has recently been integrated into this system to help make flood forecasting as accurate as possible.

Always on call

A GRCA staff member is on call at all times and is alerted of any unusual increase in river levels, and these staff members meet weekly.

This warning system is especially important during the era of climate change, because severe weather systems may increase the potential for flooding, especially in localized areas. Real-time streamflow information has been in place since 1989 and most of this information has been available in the River Data section of www.grandriver.ca since 2000.

When flooding is possible, messages are sent to municipal flood coordinators, who are senior municipal staff, such as fire chiefs and public works managers. They can mobilize the emergency response within their local community. The police and the media also receive these messages and help to let people know if they will be affected.

This flood warning system has been tested each year since 1976, just as Judge Leach recommended. After the test, the flood coordinators meet at the GRCA usually in February, to talk about the flood outlook for the coming year.

\$1 billion flood infrastructure

The province has about \$3 billion-worth of flood infrastructure and nearly a third of this is in the Grand River watershed.

GRCA at UN's World Forestry Congress

It was an eye opener for the GRCA's Martin Neumann to talk about forestry in the Grand River watershed at the United Nation's World Forestry Congress in Buenos Aires in October.

This event takes place every six years and it attracted 7,500 people from 160 countries.

Neumann, supervisor of terrestrial resources, spoke about "Forest and Water working together: a 75 year success story."

During his presentation, he was asked how a forester can consult a hydrologist or other experts with such ease in the Grand River watershed.



Martin Neumann

"It is a real tribute to the way our organization works. Conservation authorities are unique and there are no barriers between different disciplines because we all work together under one roof," Neumann said. He realized while attending this event how easy it is to lose sight of how Ontario's 36 conservation authorities stand out as collaborative organizations in the world of con-

servation management.

Key challenge of our time

The UN considers a key challenge of our time to be the difficulty in bringing people together from different disciplines and jurisdictions to work on forestry and hydrology. Conservation authorities encourage inter-disciplinary and cross-jurisdictional collaboration for watershed health.

Neumann's talk described the way the GRCA also undertakes forestry projects with partner organizations. An example he gave was the Guelph Rotary Forest project near Guelph Lake. The Guelph Rotary Club has taken on the challenge of organizing an annual event to plant trees each spring over a dozen years with assistance from the GRCA and other organizations. Eventually, a 40-hectare field will be turned into a forest.

A fellow panelist from Australia was very interested in undertaking a similar project in his own country.

"Some of the things that we do here can be easily transferred to other locations," Neumann said.

This UN congress was part of the preparation for the Copenhagen Climate

Change summit in December due to the connection between the worldwide problem of deforestation and climate change.

Diversity and naturalization are key features of plantation forests that are being undertaken in the Grand River watershed. But in most of the developing world, plantation forests are very large with either one species of pine or eucalyptus. These monoculture plantations play a role in taking pressure off natural forests, because they are used for the products they produce. But they are not very resilient and they don't encourage biodiversity.

In contrast, most private landowners within our watershed who plant trees are interested in creating wildlife habitat, and are often less interested in timber production — a luxury that other parts of the world may not have.

Forests and water are two of the key global environmental challenges of this century, and their increasing scarcity affects the quality and even the viability of life for millions around the world. Imagine if the conservation authority model holds one of the keys, in some small way, to meet those challenges, Neumann says.

ATVs a big problem at Conestogo Lake

By Dave Schultz
GRCA Communications Manager

Every year, Dean McFadden welcomes tens of thousands of people to Conestogo Lake Conservation Area, where he's been park superintendent for 9 years.

Campers, swimmers, boaters, anglers, cottagers, hikers, picnickers, hunters and others enjoy the natural setting and amenities of the Drayton-area park, owned by the Grand River Conservation Authority. They come in through the gate, pay fees and use the facilities provided for them.

But there's one group that isn't welcome at Conestogo Lake — off-roaders.

Whether they're driving small all-ter-



It is a challenge to get people from different jurisdictions and disciplines working together to improve watershed health. This is a reforestation project in Argentina that will help improve water quality.



Dean McFadden Conestogo Lake conservation area superintendent shows a spot where off-roaders have torn out a sign before going on to damage a natural area.

rain vehicles (ATVs) or large four-wheel-drive pickups, they literally leave a trail of destruction. They're trespassing and paying nothing to the upkeep of the conservation area.

They show up each fall when the water level in the Conestogo Lake reservoir drops down to its winter holding level and will be there almost daily until the snow flies. Then they're back in the spring until the reservoir is refilled.

Many will tear through the woods on their way to the reservoir bottom where they spin doughnuts in the mud flats. To get there, they'll run around gates, over torn-down fences and right past "No ATV" signs posted throughout the property.

Signs disappear, fences cut

The signs disappear regularly. Fences are cut down. Barriers built out of fallen trees have been cut into pieces and tossed out of the way.

McFadden estimates he spends about \$1,000 a year replacing signs and fences. That's money that comes directly out of park revenues, since no tax dollars are used to maintain the property.

And that doesn't even begin to account for the environmental damage done by the four-wheelers that create big ruts, erode hillsides and leave behind

assorted garbage, including liquor bottles.

It's all very frustrating for McFadden who is one of just two full-time employees working year-round to maintain the 2,300 hectare property. About half of the property is forest and most of it is riddled with illegal trails.

"They're riding right past the signs, so they know they're not supposed to be there," McFadden said while touring the property recently. "It's a huge property and it's impossible to fence it all. But they just cut through the fences anyway."

It's not only destructive, it's illegal. Provincial law prohibits off-road vehicles from conservation authority lands. On top of that, they're trespassing on GRCA land because they're entering the property through makeshift entrances while the park is closed.

Every fall, McFadden, assistant superintendent Mike Stanwyck and other GRCA staff, spend many hours patrolling the property, looking for trespassing four-wheelers and repairing their damage. Steel warning signs have a life expectancy of a few days, and plastic ones can disappear in hours. He's had to replace gates at \$450 a shot and place large concrete blocks at trail entrances.

But, more often than not, the ATV riders just carve out a new entrance a few metres away.

A first offender may get a warning or a \$70 ticket. Although he hasn't done it yet, McFadden could take a repeat offender to court where the fines could run \$2,000 or more.

When Wellington County OPP spot a trespasser they may hold him until McFadden arrives to issue a ticket.

He knows some ATVs are locals but others come from miles around. He's ticketed trespassers from Palmerston and Kitchener who will bring their ATVs to the park aboard a trailer.

McFadden said one common misconception is that Conestogo Lake Conservation Area is "Crown land" but that's just wrong.

"Anyway, even if it were Crown land, that doesn't give them the right to come in and wreck it," he says.

The ATVs are causing problems for other park users, as well. Each fall about 200 hunters buy permits to hunt pheasants, waterfowl and small game. A hunter may spend a lot of time in a tree or a concealed area waiting for game to come his way, only to have the quiet destroyed by a speeding ATV.



Large ruts on a trail are part of the damage left by off-roaders.

Cottage owners are also annoyed by the constant noise and the damage to the lakeside portion of their lots, which they lease from the GRCA. The GRCA has been working with cottagers to impress upon them that their leases forbid them from using ATVs in the conservation area outside of their own lots.

The ATVs also ruin snowmobile trails which are carefully maintained by members of local clubs who have a lease with the GRCA and pay a fee to use them. ATVs are not permitted in any season on trails maintained by the Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs.

ATV riders may even be putting their own lives at risk.

"It's a big property," says McFadden. "If an accident happens, how can we find them and rescue them?"

The ATV trails are often narrow and rutted, it would be next to impossible to get a rescue vehicle into the forest, he said.



LOOK WHO'S TAKING ACTION

A patch of wisdom

By Valerie Fieldwebster
Resource Interpreter

During our visit to Newfoundland we were lucky to have our friends Dave Shepherd and Julie Cappleman to show us around.

One evening, while sitting around a bottle of wine, Dave explained the concept of having a "patch." Not surprisingly, a patch is a very British thing. It is simply your area of land. It is not something you own, but rather an area you watch. Having a patch means observing what is there in all seasons. Watching birds arrive and depart, and watching buds ripen and turn to fruit. When you have a patch you learn by observation and exploration. Dave explained about a stray migrant petrel that had been spotted



Valerie Fieldwebster at work documenting a species in the forest.

on the coast of England. As the bird flew along the coast it was crossing over individual patches. The bird's flight was well documented as each birder recorded it and alerted the birder in the next patch that this accidental visitor was heading their way. The beauty of having a patch is the depth of knowledge and understanding a person gains. Dave knew exactly where to take us to have the best chance of seeing Willow Ptarmigan or Caribou. Watching a patch develops a nurturing relationship between the observer and the land. Anyone can enjoy patch watching. No need for vacation time, planes or long car rides, just steal some time out of your busy day and make a short visit to your local patch.

Today, on my way home from a challenging day at work, I passed the cranberry marsh which I might call my patch. I stopped the car and put on my boots and went for a hike. Not far along, my way was blocked by a large black willow that had fallen across the trail. I remembered that it had been in ill health and last year there had been a cavity nest in the trunk. The trail was not in very good shape, there being large burdock plants growing all over it. I had to pick my way carefully in order not to pick up any of these Velcro-like friends. Inside almost

every one of those burrs is a weevil, waiting to emerge in the spring. Whatever bird eats burr weevils is going to have a great spring! Looking down, I saw raccoon tracks in the snow, and I was reminded of a spring walk where I found a painted turtle shell. What luck I thought, but then a couple of days later, I found another turtle shell with part of the turtle still in it. Then on a third outing, another excavated shell. Very few animals can get at a mature painted turtle to eat it. It was those long fingers making tracks in the snow that identified the culprit. In total, last spring I found the remains of four mature turtles eaten by the raccoon. Sadly last spring I also found a beautiful Red Fox that had been hit and killed by a car. Strangely though, another Red Fox came along and deposited scat on its head. What was that about?

My patch is a dynamic place. I am anxious to see if the Great Horned Owl returns to nest this winter, how many turtles emerge from hibernation, and who is going to eat all those burr weevils?

So I invite you to take a walk in the Vance Tract off Downy Road in Guelph. Or claim your own patch from one of the many rich natural heritage areas we have in the Grand River watershed.

Naturalizing Marden Creek to bring back the brook trout

By Janet Baine
GRCA Communications

Trut Unlimited Canada's Speed Valley Chapter received a 2009 Grand River Watershed Award for their work with the Wellington County Stewardship Council in bringing brook trout back to Marden Creek, an important tributary of the Speed River at the north end of Guelph.

"Brook trout are special because they require clean, clear cold water with lots of oxygen and that's the way these streams have been since the glaciers retreated. Brook trout are a good indication that the streams are healthy. If brook trout are living there, we know the streams are doing well," says chapter president Mike Emeneau.

The group's mission is to work with landowners and other like-minded groups to preserve, enhance and conserve coldwater habitats within the Speed Valley watershed. The Speed Valley Chapter started four years ago and they now have more than 50 mem-

bers. They have been taking many steps to restore the creek which has been degraded over the last century due to deforestation, intensive agriculture and nearby development.

The chapter holds work days which attract 30 or 40 people who come to help deepen and narrow the stream — a wider stream warms and slows the water. They've added deflectors to help maintain the banks and created pools and spawning areas to improve fish habitat. They have also taken some ponds offline, so that the stream goes around the ponds instead of through the middle of them. The water went into one pond at 17 degrees and left it at 27 degrees, so that the trout could survive above the pond, but not below it. After the changes, the temperature dropped.

1993 Watershed award

Trout Unlimited has 17 chapters in Ontario including two in the Grand River watershed. The Middle Grand River Chapter based in Brantford received a 1993 Watershed Award For



Brook trout from Marden Creek.

information, call Dave Chapman at 905-573-9017.

To see a video about this work, check the Watershed Awards section of grandriver.ca. For more information about the Speed Valley chapter call Mike Emeneau at 519-837-2507.

Benches installed along Elora-Cataract Trailway

Five new benches have been placed along the Elora-Cataract Trailway and there are plans to install four more this year.

This is thanks to a program called Project BOOT (Benches On Our Trail) and it has been undertaken by the Elora Cataract Trailway Association, six local Lions clubs, the GRCA and the Credit Valley Conservation Authority.

Each agency is responsible for portions of the initiative. The Lions Clubs are selling, installing and maintaining the benches, which are \$450. The six local Lion's Clubs are Elora, Fergus, Belwood, Marsville, Hillsburgh and Erin.

The Elora Cataract Trailway Association is a volunteer organization that promotes and advocates for the trailway. The former railway land is owned by the two conservation authorities.

Anyone who is interested in contributing to the installation of a bench should get in touch with their local Lion's Club or Raymond Soucy from ECTA at 519-843-7703.



Volunteers from the Speed Valley Chapter of Trout Unlimited Canada on a work day in Marden Creek..

Photo by Larry Halyk



Pollination Guelph plans to have several areas planted with pollinator-friendly plants in 2010. These will be examples of what people can do in their own yards.

Guelph makes a beeline in conservation

By Victoria MacPhail
Pollination Guelph

Did you know that Guelph will soon be the home of the world's first large-scale pollination park? That one out of every three bites of food is a result of pollinators? That pollinators are in serious decline, but a lot can be done to help them?

Pollination takes place when pollen moves from one part of a flower (the anthers) to another (stigmas). This is done by birds, bats, insects, the wind, or rain. This transfer leads to fertilization and successful seed and fruit production.

Pollinators are the animals that pollinate over 90 per cent of all flowering plants, and primarily include bees, flies, butterflies, moths, and other insects, although birds, bats, and other animals can also pollinate. Together they are an indispensable natural resource, and their daily work is essential for over a billion dollars of apples, pears, cucumbers, melons, berries, and other farm produce.

However, these beneficial insects are under pressure from loss of habitat, loss

of food sources, disease and pesticides. As important as pollinators are to agriculture and ecosystem health, surprisingly little is known about their status or how to reverse their decline.

First big pollinator park

Members of Pollination Guelph are dedicated to conserving and developing pollinator habitat. The group promotes awareness of the role of pollinators in local and global environmental sustainability. It will showcase world class pollinator projects that are a model for citizens and communities throughout Canada and internationally.

The initial project is 45 hectares (112 acres) at the decommissioned Eastview landfill site on the northeast side of the city. It is one of the first and largest pollinator initiatives in Ontario, Canada, and internationally and highlights the city's commitment to the environment.

The park will increase public education and participation. People can then take this knowledge and make their own pollinator-friendly areas, or support similar initiatives. Even now other commu-

nities are looking to Guelph as an example to follow.

Like all animals, pollinators need food, water and shelter. Shelter in this case is nesting or egg-laying sites: hollow twigs, dead wood, underground holes, bare soil and the underside of plant leaves. Food is usually pollen (protein), nectar (energy) and, for some species, other plant tissues. The park will be designed to satisfy all these needs, and therefore will be an ecological reserve, allowing populations to stabilize, increase, and then disperse into adjoining areas.

The park will also help more than just pollinators. For example, with more pollinators, there will be more fruit and seeds produced which will, in turn, attract more birds and other animals.

Research is already underway to monitor the diversity and abundance of pollinators as the park develops and matures. Additional research projects will involve different methods of planting, species mixes, provision of pollinator nesting habitats, and much more.

Pollination Guelph broke ground in 2009 with a 1.5 hectare demonstration plot. Some of the species for this meadow include black-eyed susans, coneflowers, bee-balm, bergamot, tickseed, beard-tounge, goldenrod, aster, gramma grasses, sporodropseed grasses, milkweeds and blazing star. We also hope to have a formal section with examples of garden plants, including fruit and vegetables that require pollination.

To learn more, visit www.pollinationguelph.ca. Details about a pollination symposium on Saturday, March 27 will also be posted there.

A pollinator park in Cambridge

The Ancient Mariners Canoe Club is also a-buzz with plans for a pollinator park at Riverbluffs Park in Cambridge. Last year fences were removed and a former off-leash area was allowed to grow. Eventually, the club hopes to install benches, signs and trails.

Trees: Growing shelterbelts in rural areas

By Dallas Campbell
Trees for Mapleton

Rural areas in the Grand River watershed are going to look very different in 15 years.

In Mapleton alone, residents planted 40,000 trees last year. Those trees aren't easy to spot right now, but they are all around. With time, they will grow to define rural property lines. The sides of creeks and rivers will slowly emerge into buffered corridors where plants and wildlife communities can flourish. Barns, houses and workshops will be surrounded by trees that will protect them from the harsh winter winds.

As anyone can tell you, heating means big bills throughout the winter. No matter how well a house, building or barn is insulated, the winds blow dollars out of your hands and into the bank accounts of propane and natural gas companies. Some of this hard won money could remain with the rural property owner.

Planting trees around the perimeter of a farm or rural property will increase crop yields by as much as 20 per cent over time. Many rural residents are already enjoying the benefits of well placed windbreaks that were planted 20 or more years ago. Every spring many more windbreaks are being planted. The Trees for Mapleton program has focused a lot of time and effort on this style of



These trees form a shelterbelt.

tree planting and education, with plenty of success. What I propose to you now is the shelterbelt style of tree planting.

The theory behind shelterbelts is easy to explain. Basically, trees are planted around a farmstead to reduce the wind that hits the buildings. Less wind means less need for heat. In fact, the average farmstead heating bill in Mapleton can be reduced by as much as 27 per cent when trees are planted in the right places. Proper spacing between trees can be tricky. Wind direction and species selection also need to be considered.

There are many reasons to consider a shelterbelt tree planting project. If you own a rental property, your tenants will benefit from the reduced heating bills over time.

Many reasons for shelterbelts

Properly placed trees in a dairy operation can help shade livestock and increase milk production through the summer months. Milk production starts to decline after temperatures of 20 degrees are reached. Trees can be planted parallel to buildings so that they don't take up too much space but still have the desired effect. They also increase privacy. If you have issues with snow build up along laneways and turning areas, trees can help reduce the amount of work put into snow removal through the winter. Less time behind the snow plow and more time for other important chores.

These services are available throughout the Grand River watershed through the Rural Water Quality program. Staff can provide the technical assistance in developing a tree planting plan for a spring or fall project in 2010. Call soon, as trees are limited. Consider how a shelterbelt planting can work for you on your property.

Call Tracey Ryan 519-621-2761 ext. 2269 or e-mail her at tryan@grandriver.ca to be put in touch with the appropriate staff member.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Grand River: Grand Conversations

Landscape and the Grand River will be the main feature in Stefan Rose's work as the City of Kitchener artist-in-residence for 2010.

Rose, a Waterloo artist, was appointed by city council in November. He has designed a program of photography, poetry and video to explore the effects of landscape and geography on people's community-building experiences.

The year-long program, entitled "Grand River: Grand Conversations," will be showcased in a number of locations, including the Rotunda Gallery at Kitchener City Hall and inside Grand River Transit buses in conjunction with Earth Day. The bus exhibits would be also interpreted as a booklet for distribution at library branches, and as a PDF file for distribution through the internet.

"The Grand River is as important to the lives of 21st century residents as it was to the original settlers of Berlin," said Cheryl York, arts and culture coordinator for the City of Kitchener. "It will be exciting to see how this project develops a relationship between art and



Stefan Rose and an old camera used in Kitchener in the early 1900's.

environment.”

In addition, a video of the Grand River would be created for exhibition on the Cube, on the Berlin Tower at city hall. Throughout the program, Rose will organize artist talks, engage in conversation with residents about their experiences with the river, and conduct two photo critique sessions for the public.

“I am interested in the way that landscape and geography inform a community’s identity,” said Rose. How do sometimes inaccessible waterways connect to the Grand River and the nearby inhabitants? He would like to hear from Kitchener residents as to why the Grand River is significant to them; e-mail can be sent to GrandConversations@live.ca.

His website will help people to find out more information about his artmaking during 2010. It is www.grandconversations.spaces.live.com.

Rose, who was born in Leeds, England and immigrated to Canada in 1977, is interested in creative and documentary forms, using photography, videography, and poetry. He uses a large-format banquet camera, among others, for his creative work.

The environment has become an area of great interest for the community, and the Public Art Working Group, which selected the artist, wanted to recommend this opportunity to develop a collaboration between the arts and the environment.

Osprey adapting to artificial nesting

By Tony Zammit
Aquatic and Terrestrial Ecologist

It’s becoming a familiar sight — a large osprey nest atop a utility pole.

Ospreys are large brown and white raptors that have long, narrow wings and a white head with a prominent dark eye streak. They feed on fish, which they catch by plunging into the water feet first. With needle-sharp hooked talons and zygodactyl feet (two toes face for-



Dave Lamble, retired teacher and volunteer, banding an Osprey chick at Luther Marsh, while Bob Bell, Superintendent, handles the boat.

ward and two toes face backward), they extract their prey from the water.

Like other fish-eating species, osprey populations declined dramatically between 1940 and 1970 as a result of eggshell thinning and egg mortality, which has been linked to DDT and other compounds used in pesticides and herbicides. After DDT was banned in 1972, osprey populations rebounded. The species is now secure within the Great Lakes region.

Traditionally they nested in white pine trees, large dead trees near lakes and rivers, or in standing, dead timber in flooded wetlands. As the landscape was altered by people, traditional osprey nesting sites became scarce. In fact, lack of suitable nesting sites remains a limiting factor for the species.

Utility poles are a favourite spot where ospreys rear their young as they adapt to the changing environment. Some birds tolerate people, and as such several pairs can be seen nesting above roadways and recreational areas.

But utility poles can be bad news for ospreys. If sticks or other nesting material touch the power line, the result can be a short circuit, explosion, a power outage and death for the birds.

Local utility companies have worked closely with the Grand River Conservation Authority and other landowners in the watershed to prevent such problems. They have erected artificial nesting platforms next to or above electrical transmission lines. This gives raptors a safe place to nest and helps to keep the electricity flowing.

Osprey management on GRCA land occasionally involves erecting nesting platforms and protecting known nesting sites in areas such as Luther Marsh. In any given year, Luther boasts the highest concentration of osprey nests within the Grand River watershed. Osprey platforms have been erected on other reservoirs managed by the GRCA, most notably Laurel Creek, Guelph Lake, and Conestogo Lake. Several nest platforms are also visible near Belwood Lake.



A landowner’s story

“We have marvelled at ospreys hunting along the Grand River in East

Garafraxa Township for many years,” says Ruedi Waelchila. “Knowing that this species will build nests on utility poles close to busy roadways, we wondered whether an osprey platform built on our property, which is divided by the Grand River, would be a good idea.”

Waelchila consulted with staff from the Ministry of Natural Resources, Dave Lamble, a renowned bird bander, and Tony Zammit.

His search led to a meeting with Barry Coyle from Hydro One, who generously offered to take over the project. Last summer, not only did Hydro One staff build the platform, but they dug the hole, supplied the pole and put everything in place for a platform on Waelchila’s property.

Ospreys have become highly regarded as a symbol of a healthy and productive ecosystem. Waelchila may have the chance to view an osprey nest at close range, knowing the young will be safe as they grow to maturity.

About Grand Actions

This newsletter is produced every two months by the Grand River Conservation Authority. Current and back issues are available online at www.grandriver.ca.

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Deadlines for submissions are the 15th of February, April, June, August, October and December. Submissions may be edited for length or style.

Tax deductible donations to go toward the cost of producing this newsletter are always welcome.

This publication is printed on Rolland Enviro100, an FSC certified, environmentally-friendly paper. The paper is manufactured using 100% post-consumer fibre and is processed chlorine-free using biogas energy.



The Grand Strategy Calendar

13th Annual Heritage Day Workshop and Celebration, Cambridge Centre for the Arts, Friday, Feb, 12, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. The theme of the workshop is Beyond 20/20 Vision: A New Lens for Heritage, Arts and Culture. The event is free and donations are welcome. Registration and program information is in an attached flyer and it is also posted on www.grandriver.ca.

First Annual Ice Fishing Derby, Pinehurst Lake Conservation Area, Saturday, Feb. 13, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. This is a Catch and Release Panfish Derby. Tickets are available in advance or the day of the event for \$15 per adult and \$8 per child (14 and under). There are lots of great prizes to be won and it is on Family Fishing Weekend. For more information, please call Pinehurst at 519-442-4721.

Backyard Bird Count, Laurel Creek Nature Centre, Waterloo, Feb. 13, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. Join people from across the country for the annual Learn to identify and record backyard sightings of birds. Begins with a presentation and continues with a hike to look for birds and possibly even give the chickadees a treat. Come prepared for the weather. Please call 519-885-1368 to reserve a space. Program cost is \$5/person.



Hoot like an owl.

Winter Birds, Shades Mills Conservation Area, Cambridge, Sunday, Feb. 14, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Come learn about the birds that don’t fly south but stay and brave our winter season. Who knows, you might even find a Chickadee eating out of your hand. The fee is \$5 per person or \$20 per family. Call 519-623-5573 to pre-register.

Hoot and Howl, Guelph Lake Nature Centre, Sunday, Feb. 14 and Saturday, March 13, 7-9 p.m. An introductory slide show followed by a guided hike, topped off with hot chocolate. Bring your flashlight and we will practice hooting and howling. Special program fee applies: \$10/adult, \$5/child, \$25/family of 4. Please phone 519-836-7860 to pre-register.

Owl Prowl, Laurel Creek Nature Centre, Waterloo, Saturday, March 6, 7:30 p.m. - 9 p.m. The evening will kick off with a short presentation on local owls, followed by a hike to call for owls and capped off with a round of hot chocolate. Phone 519 885-1368 to pre-register. Program is \$5/person.

March Break Environmental Day Camp at Guelph Lake Nature Centre, and Laurel Creek Nature Centre, March 15-19. Please visit www.grandriver.ca or call Guelph Lake Nature Centre at 519-836-7860 or Laurel Creek Nature Centre at 519- 885-1368 for more information.

It’s For the Birds, Sunday, March 28, 2 to 4 p.m., Guelph Lake Nature Centre. A short hike to look for winter birds, including a stop at the Chickadee Tree. Afterwards, build a birdhouse that you can take home. Bird houses are \$10 each. Bring a hammer and lots of muscle power. Birdhouses are limited so please call 519-836-7860 to register.

Note: There are always many activities at the GRCA’s nature centres and conservation areas, but there is not normally enough room in the Grand Strategy calendar to list them, but they are here to remind you to check www.grandriver.ca for this information.