

GRAND

THE GRAND STRATEGY NEWSLETTER

ACTIONS

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Grand River
Conservation
Authority



The Grand:
A Canadian
Heritage River

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The plantation forest at Dumfries Conservation Area in Cambridge is a quiet oasis that shuts out traffic noise and is a peaceful place in the city.



A gem in the heart of Cambridge

By Janet Baine
GRCA Communications Specialist

The passion Elinor and John Hueton have for Dumfries Conservation Area is evident with every footfall as they walk through this hidden gem in the centre of Cambridge.

They know this land intimately.

Elinor was born in Cambridge (Preston) in a home on the banks of the Grand River in 1931. Many of her early memories relate to the river — playing hockey on it, visiting the islands in its centre and climbing a big “Christopher Robin” tree to look out and see the Doon Pinnacle in the distance before the tower was constructed. John became an environmentalist during his teens in Cape Town, South Africa. Although they spent most of their lives away, they moved back to Puslinch in 1990.

“My father was an environmentalist long before his time. He bought the first farm in 1916 and others up to 1967. He wanted to preserve some untouched green space in the heart of the city in which people could relax and enjoy nature,” Elinor said. He donated the land for a park to the province, which later turned it over to the GRCA to develop and manage.

They formed the Friends of Dumfries Conservation Area, an organization made up of neighbours and people interested in the park, who have been concerned about development around the park. The group has done their best to promote and protect the piece of wilderness in the heart of the city. In 1998 Elinor received a Grand River Conservation Watershed Award and her father received a posthumous Honour Roll award in 1976, the first year this award was given out by the GRCA. Dumfries has many other supporters including the three Rotary Clubs of Cambridge and nearby Babcock and Wilcox.

“We’re continuing a legacy started by my father, Percy Hilborn, who donated 75 hectares of land 43 years ago so it could be kept unspoiled as a quiet park in perpetuity. His ideas were reinforced by my late sister Helen Bridle, who was also a steward of the property,” Elinor said.

What they love most is to walk through with a first-time visitor. They revel in the delighted exclamations at some of the biggest trees in Waterloo Region, the old growth forest, the plantation forests planted by Elinor’s father, a babbling creek, five wetlands and the Hilborn Arboretum. The terrain is varied which makes it

full of surprises.

The Huetons estimate 150,000 visits are made to Dumfries each year, but still many residents have never stepped inside the vast interior. Dumfries is what the GRCA calls a passive recreation area, since it is not used for camping or swimming and it is free to visitors.

John recalls a teacher who brought his class to a forested area and then asked the students to be quiet for five minutes. Their comments were, “but it is so silent.”

“At the centre of the woods surrounded by busy roads and shopping centres, you can find a perfect silence but for the sigh of the wind and the trees above,” John said.

The Hilborn Arboretum

In 1984, the Hilborn Arboretum was developed on two hectares at the corner of Dunbar Road and Hespeler Road by the Preston, Hespeler, and Galt Horticultural Societies. The Arboretum was a provincial centennial year project. Nearly 1,000 trees and shrubs were planted, including approximately 75 tree species.



Elinor and John Heuton



Paddlers on the Speed River in Guelph. The city is on a small river and is very dependant on groundwater, so water conservation is a priority.

City of Guelph leads the way in water conservation

By Janet Baine
GRCA Communications Specialist

Guelph is at the leading edge of water conservation in Ontario, and the GRCA is keeping a close eye on the city's progress.

The average Guelph resident uses about 200 litres of water a day, compared to a provincial average of 260 litres and a national average of 335 litres. Still, residents of countries like Britain and Germany use about 150 litres, so Ontarians have a long way to go to improve water conservation.

“We're very interested in what Guelph is doing. We're interested to see how some of the ideas they have developed can be transferred across the watershed,” said James Etienne, senior water resources engineer with the GRCA.

Instead of joining other watershed cities to investigate bringing water from Lake Erie through a pipeline to accommodate growth, Guelph opted to take a different approach. The city had 115,000 residents in 2006 and is projected to reach 175,000 by 2031, according to Places to Grow. To meet the needs of the growing community, Guelph developed a Water Supply Master Plan that set tar-



LOOK WHO'S TAKING ACTION

gets for reducing daily water use based on figures from 2006:

2010: 10 per cent reduction

2017: 15 per cent reduction

2025: 20 per cent reduction

Research has shown that 60 per cent of Guelph homeowners don't water their lawns anymore, so the outdoor lawn watering bylaw, started in 2002, has been effective. It allows the city to enact outside water use restrictions.

The city has some innovative rebate programs for efficient toilets, front-load washing machines, home humidifiers, waterless floor drains, rain barrels, grey water systems (this uses shower water to flush toilets) and rainwater harvesting systems. The city staff have worked closely with industries to save water, including the Sleeman Breweries Limited, which now saves 90 cubic metres of water a day. The University of Guelph saves 380 cubic metres per day, or enough water to meet the needs of 1,500 Guelph residents.

“As one of Canada's largest commu-

nities reliant on a finite groundwater supply for our drinking water source, water conservation plays a very important role in ensuring the ongoing sustainability of our precious water resources,” said Wayne Galliher, water conservation project manager. “We need to integrate technology and social change. With this in mind, public education is a key component.”

The city has developed what it calls Blue Built Home water efficiency standards and incentive program for new housing. This certifies new homes under one of three efficiency standards — bronze, silver and gold. Even a bronze level will save 24 per cent of water use or \$100 annually based on a family of three. The silver standard incorporates grey water recycling and the gold standard adds rainwater harvesting.

In recognition of its conservation successes, Guelph received the 2011 Ontario Water Works Water Efficiency Award of Excellence in Water Efficiency. This award was granted for the city’s 2009 water conservation and efficiency strategy. Further information can be found at www.guelph.ca/water-conservation.

Waterloo Region conserves

Waterloo Region’s water consumption is also declining.

The region is working on a 2011 water supply Master Plan that recognizes changes in water demand trends thanks to water conservation planning. In addition to residential water use reductions, the region’s plan has focused on public education, outside water use, industrial/commercial efficiency and system leak detection. Residents, businesses and municipalities used under 149,000 cubic metres of water per day in 2009, down from 165,000 nine years earlier, according to a report from the Region of Waterloo. During this time, the population increased by 75,000. Like Guelph, Waterloo received an award in 2010 for work related to public awareness and education.

DUC receives award for 30 years of wetland work

Ducks Unlimited Canada has been working for over three decades to restore wetland habitat in the Grand River watershed.

DUC has invested \$1.6 million in 80 wetland projects in this watershed and received a 2010 Grand River Conservation Award on Sept. 16 for its outstanding contribution to conservation.

“If you look back over the years, DUC has been a solid partner and the most influential non-profit advocate for wetlands in this watershed and beyond,” said Martin Neumann, supervisor of terrestrial resources at the GRCA.

The 70-year-old organization began doing work in Ontario during the mid-1970s. DUC is a national, private, non-profit organization committed to conserving wetlands and their associated habitats for North America’s waterfowl, other wildlife and people.

Most small wetlands have been removed from the landscape because they get in the way of other land uses, such as development and agriculture. Yet wetlands provide an essential function by cleaning and holding water on the land, maintaining biodiversity and providing habitat for many species, including waterfowl.

Waterfowl have different habitat needs depending on the season. In the early spring, returning waterfowl break off into pairs and look for small wetlands to raise a family. Three to four weeks later, hens will seek out bigger wetlands with abundant food to raise their broods. Later in the fall, they roost in big flocks on larger wetlands and lakes. They need abundant high-energy food at all of these wetland locations.

A study completed by DUC found that waterfowl need more habitat than is currently available in the Grand River watershed. The Grand is considered one of eight priority habitat areas for wetland restoration in southern Ontario.

Ducks Unlimited Canada and the GRCA have a common interest in restoring and maintaining wetlands. DUC’s expertise is specific to wetlands and staff has worked closely with the GRCA on many projects. They also work together with many landowners to advise where and how to restore small wetlands. The landowners may also receive funding assistance from both organizations to undertake restoration projects.

DUC programs include restoring and enhancing wetlands, providing nesting



Jeff Krete of Ducks Unlimited gives a tour of wetlands for landowners.

boxes, plantings along waterways, fencing of livestock and native plantings. These programs benefit waterfowl, wildlife and people.

DUC has also helped the GRCA acquire wetlands including property at Dunnville Marsh near Lake Erie, Chesney Bog in Oxford County and in Brant County. DUC has helped the GRCA with wetland creation, including three wetland cells on Monticello near the headwaters of the Grand River, and five wetland ponds at Luther Marsh.

"The Monticello project is the most spectacular wetland restoration project in our watershed in the last 25 years," said Neumann. It is on Ministry of Natural Resources land and is managed by GRCA staff. The restoration work was undertaken with the assistance of DUC.

"In the future we look forward to continuing our long partnership with the GRCA. We are working hard to meet our habitat goals for waterfowl and to build capacity for wetland restoration with all of our conservation partners" said Lynette Mader of DUC.



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

Refilling water bottles is getting easier

From stores to libraries to municipal offices — there are lots of places within the Grand River watershed to refill a water bottle and thanks to the Blue W program, these locations are easy to find online or using a smart-phone.

This helps eliminate the need to purchase bottled water and then send the plastic containers to the landfill site. It also promotes municipal tap water as safe, cost-effective, convenient and environmentally-friendly.

The program was launched last May in Guelph and it is spreading throughout the watershed and the country. It was started by Guelph Resident Evan

Pilkington as an alternative to buying bottled water or building new fountains.

"Refill your reusable bottle — anywhere. It's really that basic," he said in a City of Guelph press release. "Guelph is a city full of people who appreciate tap water. Helping provide residents and visitors greater access to safe, clean municipal tap water is what Blue W is all about." Volunteers apply decals in windows of participating local businesses. Even on its launch date, more than 30 locations signed up in Guelph.

Blessing the Grand River

By Janet Baine
GRCA Communications Specialist

Norma General visited many spots along the Grand River between the headwaters at Luther Marsh and the mouth of the river at Port Maitland.

Each day along her journey by foot and by car, she offered a blessing to the water — quiet, solemn words in her own language. She is calling her walk "Women and Water: Givers of Life" and she wants to raise awareness of violence.

The trip along the 300-km river started May 7 and took two weeks.

General looked to this journey to help restore the balance that has been lost for her and in the world around her. Three years ago, her granddaughter was murdered when she was five months pregnant. General has many questions about this, because she doesn't understand how this life could have been taken. Water is her medicine and it is here at the river's edge that she regains balance. In many cultures, people seek spiritual connection in nature, and this is true for General as a member of the Six Nations.

"I hear the water singing for me and I hear the birds singing for me to remind me there is a future still coming," she explains. She welcomed others to join her along the way, although on the day I met her at RIM Park in Waterloo, there were only four walkers. They walked slowly, noticing the creatures and wild flowers along the way.

"The walk is to be with water and pray for it. There are many tributaries that reach over the land which is the mother's body and they join the river. All the plants, trees and animals are meant to replenish us and cleanse us and we the people have forgotten that this is nat-



From left, Patty Doxtdator-Hill and Norma General offer a blessing to the water along the Grand River at RIM Park in Waterloo.

Photo by Janet Baine

ural medicine for healing.”

“We can live without food, but not without water,” General says. “It all goes back to my granddaughter because someone took her life. Abuse is causing illnesses, such as anxiety and depression because of not building our relationships and not living in accordance with nature. Every day is an opportunity to honour all the elements within nature and our personal relationships and journey with the water.

“For me, a solution is to go back with creation and honour the gifts that were given to us and to think about how precious life is. All of us have something to offer to life. We don't ever come empty-handed. Every day is a new opportunity to make change and to make it better. We are supposed to be medicine for each other as the environment is medicine to us and we should be medicine to others.”

One walker who joined her for the morning at Luther Marsh said he could have listened to General's stories all day. There is lots to learn when you walk a path with another who values nature.

Pinehurst's Run for the Toad Celebrates 10th anniversary

By Janet Baine
GRCA Communications

If you think you might want to participate in the Run for the Toad at Pinehurst Conservation Area on Oct. 1 and run 25 or 50 km on a trail, register soon because the event sells out months in advance.

From a modest beginning with 124 runners 10 years ago, the Run for the Toad has grown each year and now has 1,400 participants.

These numbers make it one of the biggest trail runs in North America and the biggest in Canada for the past four years. It has grown incrementally each year as caps on runners are increased by about 150 annually.

The event is a labour of love for Peggy and George Sarson who are life-long runners and residents of Waterloo. Ten years ago they decided it was time for them to give back to the running community and they opted to do so by

organizing a trail race. They selected Pinehurst as the ideal location.

“I used to go to Pinehurst when I was younger. It left an impression on me — the trails, forest, park and lake are ideal for a trail race. We explored it and decided to do it,” George says.

The event now attracts runners and walkers from across Canada and the U.S. Surrounded by mature Carolinian forest, the park is located in an area known for its abundant and diverse wildlife encircling a stunning 23-acre kettle lake.

The unusual name for the race is related to a popular children's TV show that the Sarsons created called Toad Patrol that aired in world broadcast markets.

The trail is very well groomed and offers some great scenic vistas of the surrounding forest and countryside. Each year the trails are improved so that safety on the trail is paramount.



Registration is already in full swing for the popular Run for the Toad race at Pinehurst Conservation Area on Oct. 1.

"The Run for the Toad has been excellent for Pinehurst," said superintendent Scott Parkinson. "The partnership between the event and the group over the last 10 years has been wonderful. George and Peggy Sarson are true ambassadors of Pinehurst and have done so much for promoting the park and its trail system. I would like to congratulate the Run for the Toad Race and all the participants on their 10-year achievement."

This is a big event that includes, a training day in July, entertainment for kids, medical support and a dozen massage therapists and several sports medicine practitioners, prizes, awards, a dinner and after party. "Tent City" is set up for all these activities.

"Peggy and I are in lock-step in how we plan and execute. We vet every detail continuously. We get a lot of satisfaction in seeing the participants fulfilled at the end of the day," George says.

Most races are organized by a club with committees of people looking after everything, but this one is planned entirely by the Sarsons. It takes eight days to set up the event and the Sarsons count on a team of volunteers, mostly runners themselves, to help with set up and on race day.

For more information on the run, please visit www.runforthetoad.com website.

Run for the Toad and many individual runners donate to improve the trail system in the park through the Grand River Conservation Foundation. To contribute to the trails at Pinehurst, please visit www.grcf.ca.

Follow the GRCA on:



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Waterloo Regional Museum river exhibit

By James Jensen
Curator of Exhibits

When the Waterloo Region Museum reopens on May 1, the permanent exhibits will still be in the process of being designed and built, but one permanent exhibit includes lots about the Grand River.

This display is already installed and it explores the natural environment of Waterloo Region and how it has affected the lives of the people who live here — both in the past and today. This exhibit examines animals found in Waterloo Region, both common and at-risk. Trees and other flora get their due, as well as the rock formations that underlie and shape the region. Of course, the Grand River and groundwater figure prominently.

The exhibit combines animal and rock specimens, video of the Grand River flooding, wood samples and bird calls. It has images and artifacts from the Waterloo Region Museum's collections. About 4.5 million years of natural history are packed into a compact space in the museum's lobby.

Creating this exhibit benefited from the input and assistance of many people in Waterloo Region.

Get the creeps in Creepy Caledonia

By Ian Thompson,
Creepy Caledonia

Are you a brave soul? In 2011 Creepy Caledonia, a committee of the Caledonia Agricultural Society, will lead brave souls along the banks of the Grand at Caledonia spreading spooky folklore and terrifying legends passed down through generations of Caledonia families.

The tours focus on the history of Caledonia, the Grand River Navigation



Caledonia Town Hall is on the Creepy Caledonia tours that will be taking place this summer and fall to raise funds for the Caledonia Agricultural Society.

Company and several Caledonia landmarks including the historic Old Mill located just downstream of the dam at Caledonia.

These fun, educational and absolutely terrifying tours teach the significance and importance of the Grand River within communities along the watershed, and the surrounding area.

Tour dates are June 25, July 9, 23, Aug. 6, 20 and Sept. 3. Tours can also be booked for parties or private functions.

For more information and local stories, legends and lore see: www.creepy-caledonia.org.

Win a Nikon D90 in GRCA photo contest

Enter the GRCA photo contest to win a camera, a \$300 gift certificate or a monthly draw for a season's pass to visit all GRCA conservation areas.

The GRCA photo contest started April 30 and runs until March 31, 2012. Submit your entry electronically in one of three categories:

- (1) People of all ages enjoying local conservation areas
- (2) Conservation area land and water-scapes
- (3) Conservation area flora and fauna

Photos reflecting any Grand River Conservation Authority conservation area, trail, or a local river involving any

GRCA-sanctioned activity are welcome.

Grand Prize: One Nikon D90 digital SLR camera with a standard 18-55mm kit lens (or equivalent camera and lens of similar value) for the top overall photo chosen from all entries.

Category prizes: A \$300 gift certificate for Henry's Photo/Video/Digital stores for the top photo in each of the three photo categories.

Depending on the photos submitted, there will also be a number of honourable mentions.

Monthly Draws: In addition, there will be 11 bonus Conservation Area Season Vehicle Pass draws - one draw per month - from May, 2011 to March, 2012. Each photographer who submits a photo during a particular calendar month will be entered into the monthly draw. A winner will be chosen at random.

A person may win a season vehicle pass draw and still be eligible for the grand prize or one of the category prizes. Only one grand prize or category prize per person.

All photos must be submitted electronically in digital format as a JPG file. They must be at least 2100 pixels wide for a horizontal image or 2100 pixels high for a vertical image.

A complete list of rules and submission information is available on www.grcadrivers.ca.



DID YOU KNOW?

Spring is best time to eliminate hogweed

Spring is the best time to eliminate giant hogweed, an Asian plant that was brought to North America about a century ago.



It is now spreading throughout southern Ontario. It has been found on several GRCA properties near Belwood Lake, St. Jacobs, Kitchener, Guelph and Cambridge. The GRCA has a program to eliminate giant hogweed from its property, but it is a persistent species that is difficult to permanently remove. If you spot some on private land or in an unmarked area, e.g. along a riverbank or stream, contact your local municipal weed inspector. If you spot it on a GRCA property such as a conservation area or other signed and marked property, contact the GRCA's operations department at 519-621-2761.

Hogweed can suffocate local vegetation and cause a serious health risk to people who come into contact with it. The sap will make a person's skin extremely sensitive to sunlight causing burns and blisters. The sensitivity can last for years.

By August, hogweed stands out because it grows more than four metres tall, but in May it is shorter and 30 cm in diameter. It is a member of the carrot or parsley family and its stem has purple blotches and is intensely hairy. The leaves are very large and jagged. It is easily confused with cow parsnip, angel-



Giant hogweed has very large spikey leaves. In the spring it is most easily identified by its purplish hairy stem, which makes it stand out clearly from its close relatives. Do not touch this plant as it can result in third degree burns.

ica and water hemlock. The GRCA has created a fact sheet to assist with identification. This can be found in the Forestry section of our website under Invasive Species.

Giant hogweed is a perennial weed, meaning the same plant will grow for more than two years. New plants are established only from seed. What is unique about giant hogweed is that it only flowers and produces seed once in its lifetime, according to research done in the Guelph area. Once it has produced seed, the plant dies. Therefore the strategy for limiting the spread and movement of giant hogweed is to stop seed production.

GRCA staff dig out the plants each spring, but in most cases new plants will grow up each year from seeds.

The GRCA does not own or manage all river and stream banks. Most banks are privately owned therefore it is the responsibility of the landowner and the municipality to take action against hogweed on private land.

A fact sheet and videos to help identify and control giant hogweed posted on www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca.



About Grand Actions

This newsletter is produced bi-monthly by the Grand River Conservation Authority.

To subscribe: by mail or e-mail please send your contact information. There is no cost to subscribe. Please ensure your contact information is complete and up-to-date.

To search: Current and back issues are available online at www.grandriver.ca. Multiple copies may also be available for groups or schools.

Submission deadlines: The 15th of February, April, June, August, October and December. Submissions may be edited for length or style. Photos and event information is also welcome. We do our best to publish items, but we are not able to guarantee publication.

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The Harris Woolen Mill at Rockwood Conservation Area is back in action after a \$855,000 facelift in 2010. In fact, wedding bookings are solid through this summer and film scouts are once again checking it out as a location. The scenic limestone mill ruin was closed in 2009 due to safety concerns. But the restoration solved those problems. It also features new lights, benches and a decorative iron bridge.



The Grand Strategy Calendar

Grand Opportunities Day, Saturday, June 4, Belwood Lake

Conservation Area. A day of on river seminars about fly fishing sponsored by Friends of the Grand River. Since 1996, this event has raised \$45,000 for the Grand River Tailwater Fishery. See a flyer about Grand Opportunities Day.

Speed River Clean Up, Saturday, June 4, meet at the Gazebo at Royal City Park, 11 a.m. for registration and opening ceremonies then head to the river. At 12:30 p.m. there is a local food potluck and community get-together. Bring your favourite dish, which includes local foods. Each dish will be entered in a draw to win 2 tickets to the Speed River Fundraising Dinner at Borealis Grille, a \$120 value. Please bring your own plate and utensil. Entertainment, a guest speaker, the Bonnie McCallum Award and door prizes. Volunteers needed to take on special tasks before and during the cleanup. For details visit www.opirgguelph.org.

Annual Fishing Derby, Sunday, July 10, Conestogo Lake Conservation Area, 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Derby entry fee is regular park admission plus \$1. Registration is at the boat launch. Length will decide the winning fish and ties will be decided by a coin toss for this catch and release event. There is also a \$5 Big Fish Pool for the adults. In addition to prizes for the biggest fish, many draw prizes are available. Derby entrants will be fishing for catfish, small-mouthbass and pike. For more call the park at 519-638-2873.

Note: A complete list of events in the GRCA's conservation areas and nature centres is available on www.grandriver.ca in the Calendar section.