



Muskoka Steward

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Protecting Muskoka: Our 40th and 41st Properties!

Muskoka Conservancy is pleased to announce the securement of its 40th and 41st properties! Stream to Skeleton Lake and Bert and Millie's Marsh are our newest nature reserves. Thank you to all our supporters for allowing us to make these acquisitions possible.



Stream to Skeleton Lake is a 100-acre parcel located north of Skeleton Lake and has several significant natural features. A creek runs the length of the property, which has helped create significant wetland habitat for many

species, including beavers. A beaver dam along the creek has created a beaver meadow, accompanied by a thicket area that may host several at-risk birds in the spring and summer. Outside of the wetland area, the property is dominated by upland forest, featuring a secondary growth forest and large glacial erratics.



Bert and Millie's Marsh Nature Reserve is a unique habitat in Muskoka and is quite unlike any of our other properties. Its most distinctive feature is a 20-acre wetland with a significant beaver dam on the southern side. The wetland is comprised of mainly cedar and spruce, but the property includes a portion of upland forest as well. The northern part of the property is a black spruce swamp and is prime habitat for many boreal species.

Muskoka Conservancy is very excited about both new properties. The land they protect is very ecologically significant in the area and provides corridors for many animal species. Thank you again to all our supporters, as we can't do any of this without you!

Aaron Rusak



Board of Directors Recruitment

Muskoka Conservancy is always interested in hearing from people who would be interested in helping to oversee the operations of the organization by serving on the Board of Directors. The Conservancy requires a variety of skills on its Board, including expertise in financial matters (accounting, CRA regulations, tax and estate planning, investments), law (especially as it applies to Not For Profits and land transactions), fundraising and conservation management/ecology. If you have skills and expertise in any of these areas and an interest in serving on the Board of Directors, we would love to hear from you!

Please contact either Scott Young (705 645-7393 ext. 204, sy-oung@muskokaconservancy.org) or Margaret McLaren (705-645-1015, mclarenma0@gmail.com) if interested!

A message from our Executive Director

Woodpecker Ranch a reality thanks to Kenneth M. Molson Foundation and Larry French!

In the autumn edition of *The Steward* I wrote about Muskoka Conservancy's need for investors to help acquire a Woodpecker Ranch to help prevent forest damage due to invasive insects. WOW! What a response! Since then, donors of dollars and real estate have been buzzing around Muskoka's land trust, and we have been able to acquire two new nature reserves!



Bert and Millie's Marsh Nature Reserve

I know some will say there's no such thing as Woodpecker Ranch and it's all just a big coincidence. You are entitled to your opinion, I'll just point out that both of our new nature reserves have terrific wetlands and streams, and both have large forested areas that are the perfect home for—you guessed it—woodpeckers! So, there. Let's just agree to celebrate and I'll tell you a little bit more about it all.

I'll start by saying that the natural environment has a very good friend named Jessica Brunton in the Kenneth

M. Molson Foundation. Jessica's leadership and foresight has brought the Conservancy and the Foundation together with an emphasis on strategic acquisition of ecologically sensitive lands. Through the latest Molson donation of \$80,000, the Conservancy was able to find a key 100-acre lot in the vicinity of the existing Cardwell Forest Reserve, north of Skeleton Lake in the Township of Muskoka Lakes. Our new reserve is adjacent to several Crown land parcels and is connected to Skeleton Lake by a stream and wetland complex. We'll share more about this spectacular property in future issues, but for now, we simply can't thank Jessica and the Kenneth M. Molson Foundation enough!

Another great friend of nature in Muskoka is Larry French. Larry is a long-time supporter of Muskoka Conservancy and he has now donated a 65-acre nature reserve in Port Sydney. This beautiful land includes a mix of forest and more than one type of wetland where there have been multiple recorded sightings of species at risk. In remembrance of generations past, the nature reserve will be known as Bert and Millie's Marsh. Our many thanks to Larry for his generosity and caring!

Big picture, Muskoka Conservancy now protects 41 properties. Our new additions have grown our portfolio to about 2,600 acres featuring 50,000 feet of shoreline and 473 acres of wetland. We are proud of these numbers, and we know there's lots more work to be done.

So, I say bring on the next Woodpecker Ranch. Maybe you know someone like Jessica or Larry who would like to be a rancher?

Scott Young

Learning all about the "Birds at Your Feeder"

For the past month, Muskoka Conservancy has been hosting a birding course, titled 'Birds at Your Feeder'. The course covers feeder bird identification, diet, social behavior, and body language.

Over 30 people registered for the course and the turnout has been fantastic! Even though birding can seem daunting, the attendees of the course are learning a lot and are gaining confidence to be able to identify the birds in their backyard.

With the success of the course, Muskoka Conservancy will look to offer additional birding courses in the future, with a potential course on warblers or birds of prey coming later. Stay tuned!



Red-bellied Woodpecker

Volunteer Highlight: Bob Weekes

Volunteer contributions are essential to the operations and success of Muskoka Conservancy! In this edition of The Steward, we wanted to highlight Vice President of our Board of Directors, Bob Weekes.

Can you give us a bit of background on yourself?

Sure! I was raised in Toronto and attended the University of Toronto (B.A. in Political Science and Economics) and then attended Osgoode Hall Law School. I came to Gravenhurst in 1975 with my late wife, Jinny. I practiced law in Gravenhurst from 1975-1991, and then was appointed Superior Court Judge in 1991. I retired from the Court in 2009.

What got you interested in Muskoka Conservancy and joining the Board of Directors?

I have a love of nature and natural spaces! I spend a lot of time in the outdoors, including cross-country skiing, hiking and canoeing. Much of the warm months is spent at an off-grid cottage at the north end of Georgian Bay. I was a supporter of the Nature Conservancy for many years, but then moved that support to the Georgian Bay Land Trust and now, also, to Muskoka Conservancy. Joining the Board seemed like a natural progression. I would like to assist the Conservancy in growing its holdings so as to protect as much natural space as possible.

What inspires you about nature?

I feel connected and at peace in natural environments.

What's your favourite place in Muskoka, and why?



I am very fond of the Muldrew Barrens where I often ski. I seldom encounter anyone there. Over the years, I have observed a kill spot recently vacated by wolves or coyotes. I have seen the wing-tip feather marks of a large owl which swooped down on a snow covered pond to take a small animal. I regularly come across the tracks of many mammals. It is wonderful to know that all this takes place just 15 minutes from town!

We feel very lucky to have Bob a part of our organization, and look forward to working with him as we protect more natural space across Muskoka! Thank you, Bob!

Little Sprouts Update

The Little Sprouts had a great turnout over the holidays at Morrison Meadows for some outdoor fun in the snow! Tubing, skating, snowshoeing and birdfeeder crafts were a hit!

We're looking ahead and getting ready for Spring with lots happening with the Little Sprouts! February we're holding our first ever Repair Cafe, where the kids will be bringing broken items and professional FIXERS in our community will show them the value of repairing an item and saving it from the landfill.

The Little Sprouts will be teaming up with the Town of Bracebridge for a special Easter event at the Woodchester Villa on April 20th. Bring the whole family to this special event for some planting, eco-crafting, egg-hunting, nature exploring and more!

Stay tuned as we plan more exciting nature conservation learning this year for our little eco-club and the community partners we'll be working with!

Christina Hunter



Citizen Science—Discovering nature in our own backyards!

Muskoka Conservancy's

PROJECT PROTECT

Science isn't just lab coats and test tubes. Citizen Science is a growing movement and all you need is a love of nature! We need volunteers to help survey and record bird and frog species on our nature reserves. This gives us crucial information on the state of our lands, lakes, and forests here in Muskoka.

NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY
CITIZEN SCIENCE 101 TRAINING SESSION
FEB 20 | 2 TO 4 PM

Contact Aaron at:
info@muskokaconservancy.org • 705-645-7393 ext 200

Help conserve Muskoka's natural areas

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
WWW.MUSKOKACONSERVANCY.ORG







This year marks the launch of Project Protect, a new initiative aimed at expanding our knowledge of the species that use Muskoka Conservancy's nature reserve properties.

This is a citizen science program that has volunteers conduct frog and bird surveys on Muskoka Conservancy properties. No experience is necessary for volunteers and the results of our first training day have been fantastic. Seven volunteers participated and learned the different frog calls in Muskoka. Another training day will be held on February 20th, from 2 to 4 pm for anyone else interested in taking part in this project.

Again, no experience is necessary, just a desire to learn about frogs and protect Muskoka! Call Aaron at 705-645-7393 ext 200 or email info@muskokaconservancy.org for more information.

Memorial Bench at Dyer Memorial Nature Reserve

There is a new addition to the grounds of the Dyer Memorial Nature Reserve in Huntsville. A memorial bench was installed at the property by David McLean in memory of his wife Joanne McLean. The stone was moved by toboggan to the property and assembled on site in January.





MICHAEL FOSTER PHOTO CONTEST 2019

Theme: FOREST BATHING






The Michael Foster Photography Award is presented annually to the photographer whose image best represents the beauty of Muskoka. The image that receives the most "likes" on Instagram will be the winner and the photographer will receive a mounted enlargement of their photo and will be celebrated at our Annual Members Meeting.

Submit your photos via Instagram to:
[@muskoka_conservancy](https://www.instagram.com/muskoka_conservancy)
and tag #mccontest



DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS: APRIL 1, 2019

SAVE THE DATE



NATIVE PLANT SALE

Saturday, May 11th, 2019

MUSKOKA CONSERVANCY

UPCOMING EVENTS

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| March 1 | SNOWSHOE NATURE QUEST
<i>Upjohn Nature Reserve, 10 am - 12 pm</i> |
| April 28 | POND EXPLORERS
<i>Upjohn Nature Reserve, 9 am - 11 am</i> |
| May 11 | NATIVE PLANT SALE
<i>Bracebridge and Huntsville, 9 am - 12 pm</i> |
| May 12 | SPRING BIRDING NATURE QUEST
<i>Cross Nature Reserve, 8 am - 10 am</i> |
| June 8 | ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING
<i>Bracebridge, 10 am</i> |

**STAY IN TOUCH FOR MORE
DETAILS AND TO REGISTER!**

"Look deep into nature, and then you will
understand everything better" - Albert Einstein

Muskoka Conservancy's Online Shop

Purchase all of your favourite Muskoka Conservancy gear online without leaving the comfort of home!

Stay warm this season with a Muskoka Conservancy toque! Check out our online shop at muskokaconservancy.org/shop

Items are also available at **47 Quebec Street**. Or for those of you in Toronto, contact **Elizabeth Mason** at **(416) 924-4868**.

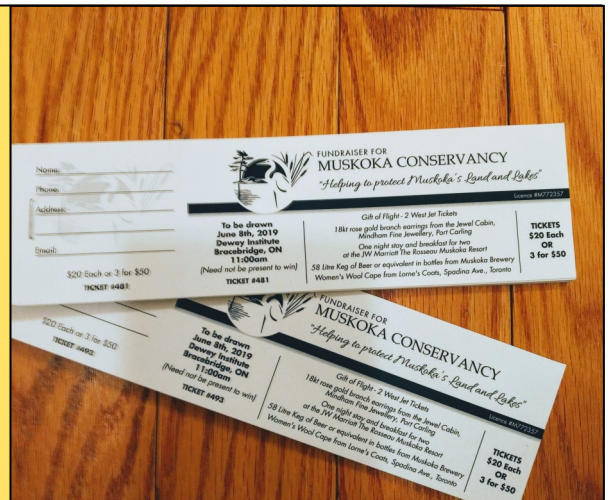


Raffle Tickets Now on Sale!

Raffle includes 5 fabulous prizes:

1. Gift of Flight—2 West Jet Tickets
2. 18kt gold earrings from the Jewel Cabin, Mindham Fine Jewellery
3. One night stay and breakfast for two at the JW Marriott
4. 58 Litres of Beer from Muskoka Brewery
5. Women's Wool Cape from Lorne's Coats

Tickets are \$20 each or 3 for \$50. The winners will be drawn on June 8th. To purchase tickets, please call 705-645-7393 ext. 200. If you live in Toronto, please call Elizabeth Mason at 416-924-4868 to purchase tickets.



Thank you to our official partners!



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