



# Muskoka Steward

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## BIRD BONANZA



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## Zero Waste, Zero Problems!

At the beginning of the year, I made what some would think is a slightly crazy New Year's resolution: I would try to bring my plastic consumption down to zero. I had already tried and failed very quickly the year before, so I changed my approach. On paper, eliminating plastic doesn't seem too challenging. Use cloth bags when shopping, don't buy things with plastic packaging, and use shampoo bars. I figured it could eliminate most of the plastic pretty quickly. Boy, was I wrong!

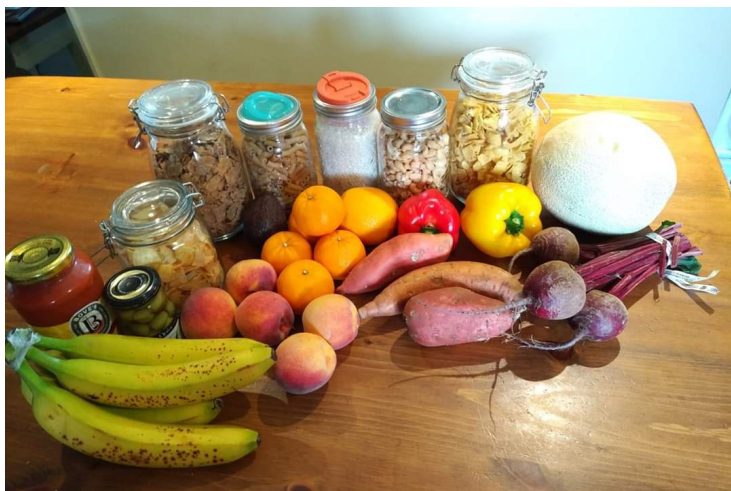
There are so many places that plastic crops up in that you don't even consider. The biggest area I didn't consider was just daily hygiene. Plastic toothbrushes, plastic toothpaste tubes, plastic razor, even your deodorant comes in a plastic container. Eliminating all of those things was actually the hardest. I now use a bamboo toothbrush, an all-metal razor, and both my deodorant and toothpaste come in glass jars that I can reuse.

The other big area that required significant change was my shopping habits. Plastic is part of the packaging for so many food products, it's almost impossible to buy regular goods that are difficult to make. I have yet to find a pasta that comes without a little plastic window on the container or a cheese that doesn't come wrapped in plastic. Crackers all come wrapped in plastic and you can only buy milk in cartons, no more bagged milk!

I'm not the only one trying to lessen my environmental impact. Christina Hunter is a director with Muskoka Conservancy and runs the Little Sprouts Eco-club. She's decided to commit to a zero waste lifestyle. I chatted with her to discover some of the successes she had and why she started going zero waste. "I decided to go zero waste when the Little Sprout Eco-Club took it's tour of our local recycling centre. It opened my eyes to the sheer volume of waste our community alone produces each week."

Christina had some of her own problems regarding grocery shopping. "My daughter's dietary needs made going zero waste difficult. Gluten free products always come in packaging to ensure safety for those that are celiac. We very rarely find gluten free products that aren't packaged in plastic."

Not all of it is hard change though, there are some things



that become easier. For Christina, "Making our own food was easier than expected. I was always hesitant to make things from scratch. Things like pie crusts or sauces, I had always mindlessly reached for in the grocery store. Now I like to find recipes and see if I already have the ingredients at home to make prior to heading to the store." I've found personally that a zero waste lifestyle forces you to be more prepared and organized as you can't fall back onto grabbing any old thing at the grocery store.

Sometimes it can be tricky to see the impact of these changes and what they can do for the environment. Sandra Rosewarne has been doing roadside cleanup along her road for several years and I got her feedback on what she's seen to get a sense of what modifying your habits could do. "I started cleaning up the roadside a couple years ago. I had noticed a sign at Bass Lake Park saying that the residents were partially responsible for maintain the park. So I thought, well I'm a resident, maybe I should be doing some maintenance. So I grabbed a couple bags and walked from the park down to Taylor Road. I filled six or seven garbage bags that day. From there, I just got in the habit of walking the roadside two or three times a week and picking up the garbage I found. Now I only get half a bucket."

Changing habits can be challenging, but that's the majority of the work for going zero waste or just helping to clean up our community. Small changes in habits may seem to not have an impact, but they add up over time. After all, once you start a habit, it can be tricky to break, so starting good ones can make a world of difference.

*Aaron Rusak*



## Jet Surfing to Save the World?

I was recently interviewed by an environmental studies major from a U.S. university in Upstate New York. We met in Baysville (2 meters apart) over coffee from Ms. Nelle's (highly recommended). Andrew is an undergrad and a Muskoka cottager who is seeking a variety of perspectives on environmental, economic, and cultural changes in Muskoka over the years.

It was a good chat. We talked a lot about the activities of seasonal residents, tourists, and permanent residents and their impacts on the environment. I have not got a clue how it will all shake out once Andrew speaks to a variety of subjects and completes his project. I almost always find talking about these topics incredibly useful, and sometimes surprising.

Do I think year-round residents and cottagers are culturally at odds?

Do I think climate change is affecting flooding in Muskoka?

What do I think of wake surfing boats with music blasting?

These are decent, thought provoking questions. I told Andrew that we need to have open-minded conversations and if things are going to change.

"If we all agree climate change is a serious problem and we need to lower carbon emissions," I extolled, "perhaps there's an adrenaline rush akin to wake surfing that is less carbon intensive—"

"Like jet surfing!" Andrew exclaimed. "That could be the

answer."

"Um...I was thinking about foil sailboats, kiteboarding or white-water paddling," I said, hesitating, "...but, uh, sure."

Jetsurf is a brand of motorized surfboard. On You Tube it looks like a real rush. A lot of sunshine and spray with fit tanned surfers cutting over the water with big toothy smiles. It looks like it would be super-annoying to some—there will be issues. But the carbon fiber boards only weigh about 40 pounds. It certainly looks like it would use a whole lot less energy than a wake boat plowing up big surfable waves. Absolutely less carbon intensive than flying to Maui.

In my Muskoka dreamland, we all get a big kick out of hiking a new trail, paddling a canoe to a picnic island, or sailing in heavy weather. But I know better. As a Town Council colleague once used to say: "there's a reason there's 53 flavours of ice cream."

Imagine a boatload of wake surfers saying "...yeah, climate change is real, let's go birding." It's ridiculous.

I consider it a huge win that most of us agree change is necessary. I accept that different people, with a little incentive, will reduce their carbon impact in their own ways.

No, Jetsurfing isn't going to save the world, but it may well be what progress looks like in cottage country. And for the sake of moving ahead, I am okay with that.

*Scott Young*

## RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP OR JOIN US TODAY!

An annual membership is an easy way to show your support for nature conservation in Muskoka. Donors of \$95 or more will be added to our membership list.

### Online

Visit [muskokaconservancy.org](http://muskokaconservancy.org) and click donate in the top right:

**DONATE**

### Mail

Send cheque or credit card information to:

Box 482  
47 Quebec Street  
Bracebridge, ON  
P1L 1T8



### Phone

Call 705-645-7393 ext. 200 to make a donation over the phone



**In person donations are always welcome!**

## Muskoka Conservancy's 42nd Property!

Muskoka Conservancy is pleased to announce the conservation of its 42nd property, Muskoka Welcome Nature Reserve. This property is located in the Kahshe Lake Barrens and was acquired with the generous support of the Kenneth M Molson Community Foundation.

Muskoka Welcome Nature Reserve is an 103 acre nature reserve with significant wetlands and rock barrens habitat. Adjacent to the Kahshe Lake Barrens Conservation Reserve, it provides significant habitat for several species at risk. Initial surveys have already revealed species at risk on the property and a number of bird and herptofauna species.



The property is adjacent to the Kahshe Barrens Conservation Reserve, which creates an additional corridor for species to move between protected areas. The acquisition of the property means that Muskoka Conservancy protects a over 2,600 acres of land in Muskoka, including habitat for over 20 species at risk.



### NEW AGM FORMAT

For those of you interested in joining our AGM this year, look below for the details. If you have any questions, please email [info@muskokaconservancy](mailto:info@muskokaconservancy) or call 705-645-7393 ext 200.

**Date: Saturday June 13**

**Time: 10 am**

**Link: [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8927953949?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8927953949?pwd=aDLsdU0xaFLCNFBqNWNxQjJwdDJCQT09)**

**[pwd=aDLsdU0xaFLCNFBqNWNxQjJwdDJCQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8927953949?pwd=aDLsdU0xaFLCNFBqNWNxQjJwdDJCQT09)**

**Password: 878676**

### Looking out for the future!

**Please Join Us!**

### Muskoka Conservancy Annual Meeting

**YOU** can play a critical role advancing nature conservation in Muskoka! Your local land trust protects over 2,700 acres of land, 50,000 feet of natural shoreline, and 500 acres of wetland. With your participation, we can do more!

**ZOOM Conference Saturday June 13 at 10am**

**Zoom: [https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8927953949?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8927953949?pwd=aDLsdU0xaFLCNFBqNWNxQjJwdDJCQT09)**

**[pwd=aDLsdU0xaFLCNFBqNWNxQjJwdDJCQT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/8927953949?pwd=aDLsdU0xaFLCNFBqNWNxQjJwdDJCQT09)**

**Password: 878676**

**Don't Miss Special Guest Speaker Eric Davies!** Eric will thrill you with his knowledge of Muskoka's beech forests, bird diversity, and nature conservation!



## Pandemic Pastimes

A few weeks into lockdown, with the guilt of having accomplished next to nothing since this began, I got an email from the Cornell Lab Bird Academy offering a discount on a course entitled “Joy of Birdwatching”. I am a bird-watcher wannabe. I bought myself a pair of binoculars for my birthday last year and am still struggling to zero in on a sighting. I have friends who class themselves in the intermediate bird-watching category but compared to me they are extremely advanced – recognizing birds simply from a distant trill. Up until this COVID-19 thing we were going on hikes where they would amaze me with the variety of their bird sightings. So I eagerly signed up for the Cornell course. It was well worth every penny. Though the course was chock full of useful information I didn’t find it taxing my dusty brain. But if I did feel overwhelmed, the fact that it was online meant I could take a break and come back with a glass of wine when I was ready for more. The course offered strategies for identifying birds based on time of year, their various habitats and behaviours and a bit about their different sounds. (The Bird Academy offers a whole course just on identifying birds based on their songs). It also offered a number of activities designed to reinforce the learning. They offered two free apps (I haven’t encountered any ads on either app) for bird identifying and tracking. The first app I downloaded was

Merlin ID and I have used it a lot to identify birds in my backyard and the neighbourhood. The other app is eBird. Both apps are from the Cornell Lab. (And did I mention they are free?) eBird is used to track your bird-watching outings and keep a tally of your sightings. All this information can be submitted to Cornell’s world-wide database as part of their Citizen-Science project collecting data for researchers to track birds and their migration patterns. Check out [ebird.org](http://ebird.org) and see what it can do for you.

Just for fun, can you identify the bird below? This picture was taken by Marilyn White.

*Sue Wi-Afedzi*

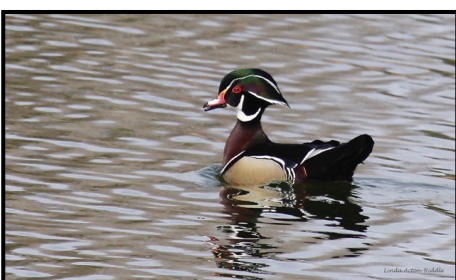


## World Migratory Bird Day Photo Share

Earlier in May, we took advantage of some new software to host a World Migratory Bird Day Photo Share. We received over 50 photos from enthusiastic birders across Muskoka and supplemented that with a few photos our staff had taken. The result of that was a stunning, informative presentation on the birds of Muskoka.

In total, 34 people joined the Zoom meeting. Here are just a few highlights from the share.

*Aaron Rusak*



**Wood Duck— Linda Acton-Riddle**

**Great Blue Heron—Wendy Hill**



**Barred Owl—Chris Cragg**

**Northern Flicker—  
Corry Ziörjen**

## World Migratory Bird Day Photo Share—Additional Photos



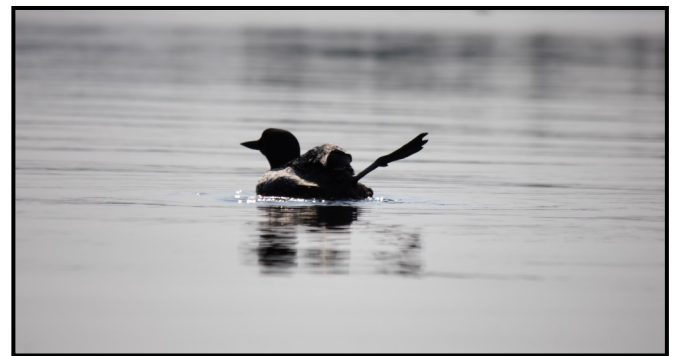
Pine Warbler—Wendy Hill



Northern  
Hawk Owl—  
Elisabeth  
Mahler



Yellow-bellied  
Sapsucker—  
Owen Brasi



Common Loon—Janet Butler

**Muskoka Conservancy's Shop Items Available All the Time Online**  
([muskokaconservancy.org/shop](http://muskokaconservancy.org/shop)) or at the Muskoka Conservancy  
Office, 47 Quebec Street, Bracebridge or in Toronto from Elisabeth  
Mason at (416) 924-4868!

Our items include coffee mugs, toques, books on butterflies and  
reptiles, note cards, and "Made in Canada" tea towels.

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