



"Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience"
-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

*The
Couchiching
Conservancy*



Growing healthy Heartwood

2012 | **Annual
Report**

President's Message

What does Grant's Woods have to do with a major development in the heart of New York City?

Through the Canadian Land Trust Alliance LEED program an energy efficient, environmentally designed green building project is going ahead in the Big Apple. In return, the Couchiching Conservancy is receiving a \$2,000 credit which will support one acre of Grant's Woods for a five year period. It allows companies that are serious about the environment to purchase carbon offsets that count toward LEED certification by supporting land trusts. It feels good to know that all the hard work we are doing to protect our natural environment -- from pulling garlic mustard to building fences and counting birds -- is now being recognized by the financial/development industry. I think the Land Trust Alliance LEED program will provide a significant source of revenue in years to come. This and other fundraising initiatives, such as the Heartwood Fund, which now has more than \$700,000 in pledges are examples of how the Board of Directors, The Past Presidents Council, and our hard working staff are adapting to the changing times.

A lot has been accomplished but there is still a lot more to do. During my past four years on the board, I have seen change within the organization caused by external factors such economic downturn, new government regulations and climate change. As a result, we are fine-tuning our strategic approach to land acquisition and putting more emphasis on sustainable fundraising programs and the development of volunteer programs that reflect the priorities of our long term strategic plan.

I would like to thank all the board members for their hard work over the past year, some of whom have taken on special tasks. New Board members Doug Christie and Margaret Pomeroy are reviewing our old policies and bylaws and making recommendations to update them so they will be in compliance with the new Canada Not-for-Profit Corporation Act. Vice President David Homer is leading a team updating the five year Strategic Plan. A very successful membership workshop held on Nov. 25th identified some new priorities which will ensure the Couchiching Conservancy's success over the next five years.

With the great help of staff, led by our hard-working Executive Director Mark Bisset, we have achieved all this in a fiscally sound manner managing to finish the year with a surplus in our operating account and a substantial increase in our reserves.

I would like to give a heartfelt thanks to Peggy Foley and Isabelle Thiess who are leaving the Board. As treasurer, Peggy has been instrumental in moving the Conservancy forward in our new investment strategies and financial reporting activities. Past president, Isabelle, has dedicated many years to the board and staff. Although she will be missed on the board, I am sure she will continue to be involved with the Conservancy in the many volunteer activities.

Finally, as outgoing president, I would like to thank the membership, the board and staff for the great support I have received over the past two years. From a purely fiscal perspective the lands that the Couchiching Conservancy stewards are valued in the millions, but from an environmental perspective they are priceless. The Couchiching Conservancy is one of the most trusted organizations in our community because our only interest is in the protection of our natural environment for our children and our children's children.

It has been both an honour and a pleasure in serving this great organization.

Jamie Powell, President



The Couchiching Conservancy Board 2012

Jamie Powell, President
David A. Homer, Vice-President
Peggy Foley, Treasurer
Ingrid VanderMarel, Secretary
Bob Sullivan
Margaret Pomeroy
Doug Christie
Gord Michener
Isabelle Thiess
Staff
Mark Bisset, Executive Director
David Hawke, Stewardship Manager
Gayle Carlyle, Outreach Coordinator
Dorthea Hangaard, Special Projects Manager
Tanya Clark, Development Coordinator

The Couchiching Conservancy is a non-profit organization, Incorporated in 1993, and registered as Canadian charity No. 13972 5030 RR 0001

Stewarding Natural Lands

The past year has been very busy with many stewardship programs being undertaken. Kyra Howes left on maternity leave in April and Dave Hawke took over her duties for a year. Two summer interns, Katie Cook and Lauren Schmuck, provided excellent assistance to many projects.

Funding from the provincial and federal government, the Ontario Trillium Foundation and other organizations allowed us to carry out numerous stewardship projects on both conservation and private lands in 2012. Experimenting with different methods of maintaining grasslands on the Carden Plain led us to carry out a controlled burn on Cameron Ranch in partnership with Ontario Parks, the federal government and Wildlife Preservation Canada. The following three categories highlight some of the initiatives undertaken in 2012.



Invasive Plant Species

- The battles continue. Garlic mustard and dog-strangling vine are two of the species on the receiving end of extra control efforts. A new project with the Invasive Species Centre and Tides Canada has provided funds for training volunteers to seek out, map and control invasive plant species. 2013 will see a focused effort on removing garlic mustard from our hardwoods and dog-strangling vine from the fragile alvar habitats.

Site Monitoring Visits

- Each property receives an annual visit from staff in addition to the seasonal visits by the volunteer property management teams. These monitoring visits look for anything “untowards” that may be occurring (dumping, trespass) as well as possible new wildlife sightings. Invasive species are searched for, reported and if found, eradication plans can be formed to combat these species.



Trail Development and Mapping

- Some of our properties are very attractive to visit and explore, and we try to encourage people to enrich their outings with an experience to one of our special places. To ensure sensitive areas are not affected, trails are being mapped and marked. Where we have to remove trees for safety reasons along established trails, the wood is left on-site to rot and replenish the soil while providing habitat for numerous species.
- Not every property is compatible with a trail development, and careful decisions are made as to which ones will have formal trails developed.



Conservancy in the Community

- Community support and involvement is an essential part of our success. We are proud of all we have been able to accomplish with contributions from the local communities. Our outreach program this year included:
- Launch of a new website designed by staff from Downtown Computers. This restructured and updated website has helped showcase our conservation efforts and allowed us to reach a broader audience. Because the website is a content management system, we are able to include new information from our office on a regular basis.
- Two guided hikes/workshops were held in the spring. One at Grant's Woods focused on landscaping with native plants, in partnership with Ego's Garden Centre. The other was the second phase of the habitat enhancement project at Washago Centennial Park with support from Trent Severn Waterway.
- Conservancy Ambassadors Team; special volunteers who represent the Conservancy at community functions. They represented the Conservancy at the Orillia Farmer's Market and Volunteer Fairs.
- Re-structured volunteer database that will enhance volunteer opportunities.
- The sixth annual Carden Nature Festival, which featured over 100 field trips and workshop, and attracted close to 300 participants. Almost 75 volunteers were involved in the Festival organizing and successful implementation.
- Media partnerships with the Orillia Packet & Times, the Lindsay Post, and the Midland Free Press which provided regular information about the Conservancy's activities to a wide audience.
- Assisted with planning and logistics for the Ontario Land Trust Alliance Gathering in September at Geneva Park. Also organized and conducted tour of Carden Plain for attendees at conference.
- Presentations were made to a number of community groups and service clubs.
- Delivery of "Nature in the Neighbourhood", a program designed to enhance nature learning opportunities for children in elementary school.

Copeland Forest Stewardship Initiative

The Copeland Forest remained a key focus of our efforts this year. Our goal is to find solutions that will ensure recreational use will not compromise the ability of future generations to enjoy and explore this exceptional forest. This begins with sound scientific research, and in March we completed a four-season biological inventory. The report identifies significant features of the forest and wetland ecosystem, rare and endangered species, invasive species, and provides recommendations for moving forward.

We held several educational workshops, including a well-attended session on invasive species which resulted in enthusiastic teams of volunteers tackling Garlic Mustard in Copeland. There are in total 450 people on our Copeland Forest mailing list; most of them new to the Couchiching Conservancy.



The Copeland Forest Stewardship Committee is now fully formed, with 18 voting members and five technical advisors who are working on management recommendations. These recommendations will be presented to MNR in the spring of 2013.

If we needed any further proof that this project matters, it was received at the Open Forum in November. Over 140 people spent a day at the Alpine Room of Horseshoe Resort, tackling the question, "what are the challenges and opportunities facing Copeland Forest?" Twenty two reports were generated by the end of the day, a rich resource for the Stewardship Committee to draw upon. Thanks to Past President Gord Ball, for his experience and wisdom in facilitating this forum, and to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for making this project possible.

Notable in 2012

- The creation of the Heartwood Fund for the long-term sustainability of the Conservancy. The Past Presidents Council surpassed its first-year goal, bringing in close to \$700,000 in pledges.
- The creation of the 100-acre Kris Starr Sanctuary on the Head River at the north end of the Carden Plain, made possible by a part-donation from Bill and Molly Starr, along with contributions from Lou and Judy Probst, Jean O'Grady and the federal government's Natural Areas Conservation Program. The sanctuary is named in memory of Kris Starr, who tragically died of cancer in his early twenties.
- The donation by Dr. Nancy Ironside of a mortgage on a 300-acre property in north Severn Township, valued at \$75,000, with the funds directed to the support of Conservancy operations.
- The transfer of title from Judy Probst to the Couchiching Conservancy of Prospect Marsh Nature Reserve on the Carden Plain. Prospect Marsh, a 200-acre wetland has been under the stewardship of the Conservancy since being purchased by Judy in 2008.
- The completion of a Conservation Easement Agreement by Lynn Russell on an 85-acre wetland dominated by black ash and red maple on the Carden Plain.
- The launch of a new website, www.couchichingconservancy.ca.

Preserving natural lands

The Conservancy brought 185 acres under protection through the purchase of the Kris Starr Sanctuary and the conclusion of the Lynn Russell Conservation Easement Agreement on the Carden Plain. Title to the 200-acre Prospect Marsh was officially donated to the Conservancy by Judy Probst. The property has been under the stewardship of the Conservancy since 2008. A special stewardship initiative in Copeland Forest saw the creation of a community committee that will work to care for the 4,400-acre tract in partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Managing a strong, sustainable organization

With the creation of the Heartwood Fund and a significant donation by Dr. Nancy Ironside that will generate operations funds over the next four years, The Couchiching Conservancy is entering 2013 in a strong financial position. Every past president in the history of the organization, along with two past treasurers, have worked throughout the year to bring in close to \$700,000 in pledges for this new endowment fund. Because it is targeted to planned giving, the fund will not directly benefit the organization for some years, but as it grows it will ensure future stewards of the Conservancy will be able to keep the promises we have made.

At present, we finished the 2011-12 fiscal year with a healthy surplus of more than \$70,000, thanks to the donation of a mortgage on a property owned by Dr. Ironside. Our overall revenue for 2012 was \$892,101 while our expenses were \$762,106.

By Board policy, some funds are held for special purposes. In 2012 we added almost \$50,000 to reserves, replenishing funds drawn to cover acquisition costs in 2011 and increasing our stewardship funds. Additional funds were used to cover taxes owing on Alexander Hope Smith Nature Reserve due to a delay in approval of a conservation land tax exemption. Overall, the net increase to our reserve funds was more than \$100,000. An independent financial audit for our fiscal year (ending Oct. 31, 2012) has been prepared by Hehn Trickey Professional Corporation Chartered Accountants and is available to the public.



Thanks to Our Supporters

The Conservancy's success would not be possible without the support of the community, and of many individuals and agencies. In particular, we would like to gratefully acknowledge the support of Tides Canada Foundation and The Ontario Trillium Foundation, an agency of the Ministry of Culture, which receives annually \$100 million in government funding generated through Ontario's charity casino initiative.

We also received grants during 2012 from

- Environment Canada Natural Areas Conservation Program
- TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
- The Heritage Canada Foundation
- Summer Job Service, Georgian College
- Invasive Species Centre
- Ontario Heritage Trust
- Tides Canada Foundation
- The Schad Foundation
- Ontario Federation of Anglers & Hunters
- Community Foundation of Orillia & Area
- ELJB Foundation
- Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
- Ontario Job Connects
- Trent Severn Waterway, Parks Canada
- Mountain Equipment Co-op
- Gosling Foundation
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
- Ontario Land Trust Assistance Program
- Habitat Stewardship Program, Environment Canada
- Nature Conservancy of Canada
- Wildlife Preservation Canada
- CFWIP
- Township of Severn
- Canadian Heritage
- Canada Summer Jobs
- Ontario Parks

Other organizations are an important source of support for Conservancy operations and projects. During 2012, we received contributions and volunteer support from:

- Scales Nature Park
- Kids for Turtles
- Orillia Naturalists Club
- Carden Field Naturalists
- Kawartha Naturalists Club
- Durham Region Field Naturalists
- West Humber Naturalist Club
- Twin Lakes Conservation Club
- Township of Oro-Medonte
- Dufferin Aggregates
- Ferma Aggregates
- Lafarge Canada
- K. J. Beamish Construction Co.
- Bell Canada Employee Volunteer Program
- Orillia District Chamber of Commerce
- Ontario Nature
- Lakehead University
- The Land Between
- Ontario Land Trust Alliance
- Toronto Ornithological Club
- Ontario Stone Sand & Gravel Association
- Ontario Field Ornithologists
- Bruce Stanton Constituency Office
- Garfield Dunlop Constituency Office
- Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority
- Victoria Stewardship Council
- R. W. Tomlinson Aggregates
- The Miller Group
- Brereton Field Naturalists
- YMCA Leadership Program
- United Way
- St. Paul's United Church
- Washago Lions Club
- Peel Birding Club
- Regent Park Public School
- Walker Industries
- Lion's Club of Orillia
- Holcim Canada Inc.



Corporate Support

Many companies across the region have provided services, products, sponsorships, or other assistance to the Conservancy during the past year. We sincerely appreciate their contributions. We would like to thank the members who were major supporters in 2012.

Pelee Island Winery	Russell Christie LLP	CT Strongman Surveying Ltd.
Packet & Times	TD Bank	Jack Booth Professional Corp.
The Davey Tree Expert Co.	Orillia Power Corporation	Crawford McLean Anderson & Duncan LLP
Hehn Trickey Professional Corp.	Scottinc. Design & Build	Kiwanis Club of Orillia
Downtown Computers	The Bird House Nature Co.	

Other valuable corporate support was received from:

G.H. Stewart Const. Inc.	Electronic Distributors International	Bruce Stanton MP	Tim Hillson MD
Ontario Waterway Cruises Inc.	Ego's Nurseries Ltd	BDO Canada LLP	KH Communications
Rose Printing	Dr. Anthony Reid	Birchmere Retirement Residence	Mariposa Folk Festival
Lewis Downey Toronosky Lassaline & Timpano	Garfield Dunlop MPP	D. Saulnier Auto Parts	Mariposa Market
Dalt's Honda	Roy A Pearn Enterprises	Impression House	Camp Couchiching
The Water Market	Century 21 Sparkling Waters Realty Inc.	K McKechnie Architectural Design	Zwicker Evans & Lewis
Orillia Chamber of Commerce	Washago Lumber Co Ltd	Mid Ontario Disposal	Meridian Credit Union
Mawdsley's Mobile Crane Rental Ltd.	Dundee Wealth Management	Office Links	TD Waterhouse
Orillia Lion's Club	Dr. Michelle Gordon	Scott's Garden Centre	Norwood Industries

The following individuals and groups The following individuals contributed \$200 or more to the Conservancy and its projects during 2012. Support from all of our donors is greatly appreciated.

Agnew, Sandy	Kiff, Janet & Ray	Darker, William	Green, Gerry
Ilyniak, Morris	Brown, Peter T.	Paul, Peter & Donna	Smerdon, Dorothy
Uys, Paul	Kinghorn, John Robert	Desbrisay, Jeanne	Grossman, Sharron
Atwood, Harold	Byer, William R	Pomeroy, Margaret & Meghan	Smith, Dennis
Iron, Jean	Larsen, Ellen	Duchesne, Ron	Guthrie, H.D.
Valk, Matthew & Jane	Callahan, Kathy	Powell, Valerie & Jamie	Speakman, John
Ball, Gord & Jane	Laver, Paul & Frances	Dunsmore, Rosemary	Hadlington, Sid
Ironside, Nancy	Challis, John	Probst, Lou & Judy	Stephen, Murray & Marcia
VanderMarel, Ingrid	Leask, Robert & Beverley	Elend, Barb	Hall, Harry & Marian
Ballantyne, Robert	Charlebois, J. Paul	Richardson, Gwen	Stewart, James K.
Jenkins, Jeramie	Lowry, Si & Wendy	Elliott, Heather	Hamilton, Jane
Walton-Ball, Mary	Charters, Anderson and Susan	Rockhill, Nathalie	Sullivan, Michael
Beck, Gregor	Maltby, Cam & Mary	Fecht, Joe	Harris, Nancy L.
Jenkins, John & Sharon	Christie, Douglas & Barbara	Rolland, Mark & Cecile	Sullivan, Robert & Wendy
Watt, Valeire	McSorley, Lois & Wayne	Fonseca, David	Hawke, David & Juliana
Bednarz, Evelyn	Clarke, Richard M.	Rosebush, John & Joan	Thiess, Isabelle & Gary
Johnson, Shirley	Mick, Omer & Mary	Ford, Derek	Hird, Joyce
Wiancko, Leanore	Colenbrander, Katharine	Ross, Jamie & Anne	Thomson, Adam & Shirley
Bisset, Mark & Sandi	Mugford, Don	Fry, Cyril	Holt, Margo
Jones, Richard	Cook, Ian & Carol Phillips	Russell, Lynn	Thomson, Ken & Corinne
Wood, Kimberley	Neidrauer, Lois M.	Furniss, P. Herb	Homer, David & Bonnie
Bobyk, Ann	Cooper, John C.	Shand, G.B.	Turnbull, Carolyn & Neil
Kelch, Margaret	O'Grady, Jean	Gingrich, John A.	Howard, Robert J.
Worling, Donald D.	Correa, Alan L.	Sinkewicz, Michael	Unwin, Mike
Bone, Dan	Pady, Lynn	Gordon, Michael	
Kennedy, David	Crooks, Timothy	Smale, Alan R.	
Brenner, Konrad	Page, Jeanne & George		

Our Priceless volunteers

Once again our volunteers contributed boundless energy, enthusiasm, talent and dedication towards the conservation efforts of the Conservancy. Volunteers participate on property management teams, assist with creating and enhancing wildlife habitat, help with fundraising, sit on committees, and assist us in a hundred special ways—many are involved in more than one project throughout the year!

Our volunteer Coordinator, Jane Ball, has been busy updating and maintaining our extensive database as well as recruiting new volunteers. If you would like to lend a hand, please contact the Conservancy office at 705-326-1620 for more information.

At each annual meeting, we present pins to recognize special volunteer dedication. In 2012, a gold pin was presented to Ingrid VanderMarel, while silver pins were presented to Ron & Sharon Hancock, and Mark Powell.

Among our most active volunteers are our Board members, who dedicate many hours to overseeing Conservancy affairs as well as often being involved in projects. Many thanks to our 2012 volunteers (and our sincere apologies if we missed anyone):

Adkinson, Angela	Cook, Katie	Hodgson, Tony & Marg	Milligan, Josh	Stephen, Murray &
Agnew, Sandy	Cook, Al	Holt, Margo	Moore, Melanie	Marcia
Antochin, Liz & Peter	Crooks, Tim	Homer, David A. & Bonnie	Moore, Ginny	Stephenson, Shannon
Armstrong, Greg	Cutler, Rob	Hope-Smith, Rodger	Moy-Shuster, Stefanie	Stinnissen, Arni
Atwood, Harold	Dale, Peter	Howes, Warren	Munro, Judy	Storry, Noella
Babbineau, Rose	Darker, Bill & Helenmaria	Hunt, Katrina	Neville, Lisa	Stoutt, Dan
Ball, Gord & Jane	Darker, Dave & Amy	Ironside, Nancy	Nixon, Catherine &	Sullivan, Robert & Wendy
Bam, Homi	Deimling, Carol	Jaski, Greg	Richard	Sullivan, Michael,
Bell, Tassia & John	Drozda, Lori & Sheri	Jenkins, John & Sharon	Norman, Michael	Caroline, Jacqueline
Bender, Ian	Duggan, Sean	Jones, Michael & Barb	Oben, Miriam	Tang, Jennifer
Bisset, Sandi, Mark, Sam	Elliott, Heather	Junck, Ken	Owen-Keith, Miriam	Thiess, Gary & Isabelle
Blair, Gord & Bernice	Engeland, Linda	Kennedy, Dave & Page	Pemily, Emily	Thomson, Adam & Shirley
Boehnert, Betty and Roy	Evans, Chris	Kennedy, David	Peyton, Barry	Thomson, Ken
Bone, Dan	Fell, Garry	Kirby, Sean	Pitts, John	Thomson, Matt
Bowden, Lydia	Foley, Peggy	Kirby, Mary Lou	Pomeroy, Margaret	Thornley, Glen
Bowman, Ken & Linda	Gamroth, Mary Sue	Kluger, Ron & Ronna	Pomeroy, Meghan	Totten, Bev
Bray, Bob & Nancy	Gauldie, Heather	Konda, Ed	Powell, Jamie & Valerie	Tryon, Brett & Ken
Breckenridge, Cathie	Gilchrist, Danny	Lancaster, Marty	Presement, Harvey	Turnbull, Neil & Carolyn
Brenner, Konrad	Gill, Peter & Pat	Lauer, Rhonda & Tim	Probst, Lou & Judy	Turner, Jan
Brown, Jerry & Lorraine	Gillette, Lisa & Gary	Laver, Paul	Reid, Ron	VanderMarel, Ingrid
Brown, Peter	Peters	Leadbeater, Dale	Robillard, Suzanne	Voutour, Susan
Brown, Ian	Gillette, Michael	Lowry, Wendy	Rockhill, Nathalie	Walker, Madeline
Budge, Ann & Don	Glazer, Stan	Macdonald, Jim & Cathy	Rosebush, Joan & John	Wand, Kim
Burgan, Leah	Grainger, Deborah	MacNaughton, Ann Marie	Ross, Anne & Jamie	Watt, Val
Button, Ian	Grand, Janet	Mainprize, Daphne	Rowell, David	Wells, Meaghan
Byer, Reid	Grandine, Joan	Massig, Cathy	Russell, Paul	Westerby, Lynne
Campbell, Dave & Barb	Gray, Neil and Cameron	Massig, Joanne	Scott, Don	White, Randy & Cindy
Carlyle, Gayle & John	Hadlington, Sid	McCreath, Paul	Seigel, Jack	White, Chad
Challis	Hall, Harry & Marian	McFadden, Steve	Shaw, Kelsey	Whitman, Bill & Christie
Charles, Sandra	Hancock, Ron and Sharon	McGoveran, Adam	Shaw, Nigel	Wiancko, Leanore
Christie, Douglas &	Hangaard, Dorthea	McIntyre, Ross	Sinclair, Muriel & Alex	Wilkins, Dave & Mary
Barbara	Haskins, Joanne	McKechnie, Kristi	Sinclair, Carol	Wilson, Melanie
Christie, Michael	Hatch, Mark & Kim	McNeill, Colleen	Sloley, Jane	Wilson, Tom & Judy
Christie, Meaghan	Hathaway, Jeff	McSorley, Lois & Wayne	Smales, Alan	Wilson, Bruce & Jean
Clarke, Susan	Hawke, Juliana & David	McTavish, Susan	Smith, Ken & Judy	Winter, Jacqueline
Cleland, Murray	Hawke, John	Michener, Gord	Smith, Dennis	Woodford, Jim & Pat
Cook, Ian	Hess, Julian & Sandra	Mick, Omer & Mary	Smith, Hope	

Photography provided by John Challis, Larry Kirtley, and Conservancy staff and volunteers