



MUSKOKA
CONSERVANCY

www.muskokaconservancy.org

2018-2019 Annual Report



A message from our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Muskoka is known the world over for its beautiful manicured golf resorts, gorgeous cottages and powerboat action. At a fundamental level, though, nature is what makes it real. And Muskoka Conservancy is all about keeping it real.

Nature is our anchor. It's our foundation. If we lose nature, there isn't really much point in the other stuff. That's why Muskoka Conservancy has tightened its focus in recent years. Muskoka needs an ambitious and effective nature conservancy, and we are determined to deliver.

Together with your support we have secured 5 new conservation properties in the last two years. In 2018 we added our 40th and 41st properties. One is a 63-acre wetland, beaver meadow and mixed forest near Port Sydney called Bert & Millie's Marsh, named by donor Larry French in honour of his parents. The other is a gorgeous 100-acre stream and wetland complex, our first in the Skeleton Lake watershed, acquired with the financial support of the Kenneth M Molson Foundation. Both Larry French and Jessica Brunton of the Molson Foundation understand the importance of nature in Muskoka, they recognized they were in position to make a difference, and most importantly, they acted. We can't thank them enough.

To be in the best position to secure conservation land, Muskoka Conservancy requires the support of a large group of members and supporters. To you everyday nature lovers who support Muskoka Conservancy according to what they can afford, whether in time, skills or dollars, your collective resources are the heartbeat of our organization. Thank you!

As we look ahead, Muskoka Conservancy plans to continue targeting acquisition of large wetlands, important ecosystems, sensitive habitat types and shoreline. Our new Skeleton Lake property is an example of this shift. The purchase protects a stream and wetland bordered by Crown Land on three sides. A Provincially designated Conservation Reserve is nearby. Our new nature reserve strategically fills a gap that adds resiliency to an area already recognized for its ecological value.

Protecting wetlands and streams protects water quality in our lakes. It also helps to prevent flooding. Protecting sensitive natural shoreline prevents erosion, protects plant and animal habitat, plus, it keeps Muskoka looking like Muskoka. This is how we are keeping Muskoka real. We need to do more but we can't do it without you!

So we thank you, members and supporters, large and small. We greatly appreciate all you've done, but we also ask you to help us grow. Please, talk to your neighbours. Talk to friends and family. Tell them what we've done together. And please ask them to help their nature conservancy keep Muskoka real.

Scott Young, Executive Director



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Aaron Rusak, Administration and Program Coordinator
Amber Merritt, Administration and Program Coordinator

Cover Photo:

By Janet Butler, 2019 Michael Foster Photo Contest Winner



A message from our President



It has been my privilege to serve as president of Muskoka Conservancy for the past 18 months. As I hand off the presidency to Norm Moffat, I would like to thank the Board of Directors for their support and assistance.

I would also like to thank the staff of Muskoka Conservancy. Scott Young continues to do an excellent job as Executive Director. Jenn LeMesurier, Land Management Co-ordinator returned from maternity leave in January and has now moved on to a position that offers her more opportunity to advance professionally. We wish Jenn the best in her new role. Aaron Rusak, who ably filled in while Jenn was on leave, has returned to job-share with our newest team member, Amber Merritt.

Most residents of Muskoka, as well as visitors, appreciate the beauty of our landscapes. To help them understand that such beauty is also fragile and often under threat, Muskoka Conservancy undertakes a number of outreach activities. Nature Quests are open to all and feature visits to our properties with an experienced naturalist. The Little Sprouts program, organized by Board member Christina Hunter, teaches our youngest citizens about the wonders of nature. With invasive and exotic species an ever-increasing threat, our native plant sale allows gardeners to plant species that are both attractive and will thrive in Muskoka. We thank Jan McDonnell for her continued shepherding of the plant sale.

We protected two new properties this year. With the assistance of the Kenneth M. Molson Foundation, we purchased 40 ha of forest and wetland near Skeleton Lake. We also completed the acquisition of Bert and Millie's Marsh, over 20 ha of marsh, swamp and forest near Hwy 11 and Stephenson Rd. 4, donated by Larry French and home to species at risk.

Volunteers are at the heart of many of Muskoka Conservancy's activities. Without them, we could not adequately monitor our properties or run our outreach and fundraising activities. We do sincerely appreciate the efforts of all our volunteers. We would particularly like to thank the committee that organized Muskoka on the Edge 2018 for an outstanding event that made a major contribution to our ability to continue to protect wild spaces in Muskoka.

Marg McLaren, President

Muskoka Conservancy: 2018 Impact by the numbers

We are protecting...

- **26** Nature Reserves
- **15** Conservation Easements
- Over **2,600** acres
- **49,000** feet of shoreline
- **473** acres of wetland habitat
- **19** Species at Risk habitats

We are supported by...

- **386** Members
- **64** Benefactors
- **55** Patrons
- **7** Official Partners

Our community outreach was...

- **5000 +** Volunteer hours
- **50** Nature Quest participants
- **450 +** Little Sprouts followers
- **1179** Facebook followers
- **1358** Twitter followers
- **1319** Instagram followers



**Thanks to
Katharine Clarkson
for running our
summer photo
contest!**

Thank you!

Benefactors:

Robert and Allyn Abbott
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Scott Young and Martha Arm-
strong

Special Thanks to Margaret and Peter McLaren!



Muskoka Conservancy is grateful to Margaret and Peter McLaren for their leadership and support. As President, Margaret has lead by example, volunteering for tasks from filing to field work. Both Margaret and Peter have always been willing to share their knowledge and have set a high bar with their annual financial support.

John and Lynda Rogers
Susan Sedgwick
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Thank you!



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Stewardship and Outreach

Little Sprouts Eco Club

2019 has seen more growth for the Little Sprouts with many new families joining the Facebook group and attending the monthly outings. This year the kids learned about repairing their own items at their first ever Repair Cafe in February. In March they toured Van Schyndel's greenhouses and planted their own flowers. This was the largest group outing to date with over 100 people. A group so large it had to be split into 3 timeslots.

Thanks to the Town of Gravenhurst, the Little Sprouts received funding from the Terrence Haight Community Grants for some exciting outings planned this summer and fall in Gravenhurst, including a shoreline learning event with the Watershed Council and blueberry picking at a local farm.

In June the kids will be hosting their 2nd annual Little Makers Market on June 23rd at the Conservancy office. Stop by from 10 to 12pm and show support for this budding entrepreneurs!

If you have knowledge of interesting outings or activities that you think the kids would enjoy please contact Christina Hunter at the Conservancy office. The kids are always eager to learn new ways to love our natural spaces!



Christina Hunter, Director

Nature Quests



The Muskoka Conservancy Nature Quest program is a great way to get in touch with nature and learn from the experienced naturalists in Muskoka. In 2018, a number of Nature Quests were hosted to get people outdoors and on to our properties. In spring, there was a vernal pool walk. During the summer, we held paddle outings and a forest therapy walk. And in the fall, a birding outing and a hike with your hound were both held. Connecting people to nature and allowing them to explore our properties is a very important part of what we do. Stay tuned for additional Nature Quests this year, as they're held monthly and allow participants a chance to visit our properties.

Native Plant Sale

In 2018, one hundred and fifty six orders were placed for native plants, and the rascally Nature Nut made its debut! There were 45 different species of native trees, shrubs and perennials totalling 2790 plants. Wow! A huge thank you goes out to all our volunteers, who help make the Native Plant Sale a success every year. The Native Plant Sale is a great way to promote native plant gardening in Muskoka and teach people the benefits of using native plants.

The Nature Nut is a local acorn who wants everyone to love native Muskoka plants as much as he does. If you have any suggestions to make the sale even better, please write a letter to: Nature Nut, 47 Quebec Street, Bracebridge, ON, P1L 1T8.



Stewardship and Outreach

Upjohn Wetland Access Trail

Established in 2016, the Upjohn Wetland Access Trail has become an increasingly popular trail to hike, go birding, and spend some time outdoors. In 2018, we began work to reclaim a trail that will complete another 1.5 kilometer loop. There are a number of groups to thank for the work they've done to help create the trail. Evergreen and Muskoka Brewery provide volunteers as well as funding to the project, with volunteers coming out twice to help build the trail. Another huge thank you goes to Riley Norwood, for volunteering his time and creating the bridge that spans a beaver creek. Finally, RBC Dominion Securities spent half a day on the trail clearing brush and helping blaze it.



Upjohn Nature Reserve is truly a special location in Muskoka. Secondary growth forest mixed with a large wetland complex make it a gorgeous place to spend the day. The views from the trail really illustrate why protecting the natural areas of Muskoka is so important. Additionally, several species at risk have been identified on the property, which makes it a very ecologically significant property. A final thank you goes out to all our volunteers, donors, and supporters who have made all this work possible.

Project Protect



In 2018, Muskoka Conservancy launched a citizen science pilot program, aimed at enhancing our knowledge of the bird and amphibian populations on our properties. Two properties were selected to be surveyed, the Upjohn Nature Reserve and the Bert Cross Family Nature Reserve. For frog monitoring, three surveys were carried out in April, May, and June. Bird monitoring occurs during the breeding bird season, which is from early June until early July. In total, ten surveys were completed, with five surveys happening on each property.

The pilot project was a huge success. At least five amphibian species were detected at Upjohn and three species were heard at Bert Cross Family Nature Reserve.

The program also helped identify species at risk on the nature reserves. Upjohn went from having just a single species at risk to six species in total identified, due in large part to this program.

In 2019, we're continuing the project, but have increased the number of properties surveyed to nine properties. This is engaging a team of around 20 volunteers, and training sessions have been held to assist volunteers with amphibian identification. The program is already proving to identify countless new species on these properties and is greatly assisting the management actions we undertake on these properties.



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Two New Nature Reserves!

Bert and Millie's Marsh Nature Reserve

- 70 acres in total
- Large wetland area
- Habitat for species at risk

Bert and Millie's Marsh Nature Reserve is around 70 acres and supports some very crucial habitat for species at risk. It has a large wetland complex as well as high numbers of vernal pools in the spring.



Stream to Skeleton Lake Nature Reserve

- 100 acre nature reserve
- Large variety of habitat
- Just north of Skeleton Lake

Stream to Skeleton Lake is located on the north end of Skeleton Lake and boasts a creek, beaver pond, and upland forest. Additionally, evidence of several mammal species has been found on the property.



41 Properties Now Protected

- Over 2,600 acres
- 473 acres of wetland
- Over 49,000 feet of shoreline

With the help of our supporters, Muskoka Conservancy now protects 41 properties! These properties protect habitat for species at risk as well as preserve the natural areas of Muskoka.



Official Partners:



Contact us

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47 Quebec Street, Bracebridge
Mailing address: Box 482,
Bracebridge, P1L 1T8

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info@muskokaconservancy.org
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