

## **Ontario Nature honours provincial conservation heroes**

***City of Orillia and Region of Waterloo, Sudbury area water quality group and residents of Lakefield, Kirkfield, Hamilton, Cobourg, Bright's Grove, Oakville and Peterborough recognized for leadership in conservation and nature protection***

(Kirkfield, Ontario, June 7, 2008) – This weekend, Ontario Nature (ON) acknowledged the contributions of individuals and organizations who have contributed to the protection of nature and habitat through program development, education and leadership.

Several hundred naturalists from across Ontario gathered in Kirkfield (east of Lake Simcoe) for ON's 77th Annual General and Meeting and Conference. The presentation of the 2007 ON Conservation Awards coincided with the Carden Nature Festival.

There were 12 recipients in 7 categories for the 2007 ON Conservation Awards:

**Richards Education Award. - Jacob Rodenburg, from the Kawartha Outdoor Education Centre (Lakefield).** *This Award is presented to an individual who has succeeded in helping people understand the natural world and become enthusiastic supporters of conservation and environmental protection, largely through natural history education and communication.*

Jacob has been a teacher of outdoor education for more than 20 years and for the last 10 years Jacob has been the Executive Director of the Kawartha Outdoor Education Centre. He has been a mentor to many young naturalists and environmental leaders and through his teaching has made a life-long impression on literally thousands of Ontarians. He also "walks the talk" and has been the driving force behind making the facilities of Camp Kawartha and the Kawartha Outdoor Education Centre more sustainable.

**J.R. Dymond Public Service Award Junction Creek Stewardship Committee from Sudbury.** *This Award is presented to an individual, group or government agency which has demonstrated distinguished public service that resulted in an exceptional environmental achievement.*

The Junction Creek Stewardship Committee is dedicated to restoring life to the Junction Creek watershed which runs through Greater Sudbury, a watershed which was degraded by decades of industrial and urban misuse. Thanks to the Junction Creek Stewardship Committee, Junction Creek is being restored and revitalized for the enjoyment of many within Sudbury. Their work is impressive in both the breadth of their activities and the depth of those activities. They have been conducting extensive restoration programs ranging from shoreline restoration, to garbage clean-ups, to Brook Trout re-introductions. They have been engaged in educational programs, research programs into water quality, stormwater management and pollution prevention campaigns. By holding public events, they are bringing people together to help remediate Junction Creek and are providing a noteworthy public service.

**The W.E. Saunders Natural History Award - Bob Curry of the Hamilton Naturalists Club for the publication "Birds of Hamilton & Surrounding Areas".** *This award is presented to an individual who achieves a significant goal related to an aspect of natural history, or natural science research.*

"Birds of Hamilton & Surrounding Areas" is a very significant contribution to the natural history of the Hamilton region and it was a massive undertaking spearheaded by Bob Curry. The book is a 676 page reference book on the status of some 386 species of birds that have occurred in the Hamilton study area. The entire process included the creation of a computer database to analyze more than 60,000 bird records from the Hamilton Naturalists Club and cataloguing bird records from various museum sources.

This book increases awareness and provides an educational opportunity for youth and community members regarding the rich diversity of birds in the area. Towards that end, 81 complimentary copies of the book have been provided to library boards, to the public and separate school boards, as well as a copy to McMaster University and the Six Nations Library.

**The Lee Symmes Municipal Award - City of Orillia and the Region of Waterloo.** This Award is presented to a community which has exhibited leadership and achievement in planning or implementing programs that protect and regenerate the natural environment within a community.

It recognizes the City of Orillia, and most notably Mayor Ron Stevens, senior City staff and Council for protecting Scout Valley Woods from development threats posed by a proposed sewer trunk line. We were well aware of the previous threats and commend Orillia for taking the progressive action of not only protecting Scout Valley Woods, but also for the precedent setting act of placing a conservation easement on Scout Valley Woods and actually donating it, complete with funds for monitoring, to the Couchiching Conservancy. We thank you for your efforts and accomplishments and can only hope that other Cities and Municipalities will follow your progressive lead.

The Region of Waterloo was recognized for designating two Environmentally Significant Landscapes (ESL) in their Regional Official Plan – a first in the province. They include the Laurel Creek Headwaters ESL which links several important natural habitats and landforms on the Waterloo Moraine. The second site is the Blair-Bechtel-Cruickston ESL at the juncture of the Grand River and the Speed River. This area is home to many rare species, yet sits surprisingly close to the cities of both Kitchener and Cambridge.

The two ESLs protect close to 10,000 acres of significant natural areas and prime agricultural lands. They are environmental jewels in the Region and home to a wide variety of wildlife, birds, amphibians, rare plants and species at risk. These ESL's very much embody Ontario Nature's vision of a greenway at the regional level and hence our enthusiastic support of this accomplishment. Again, we can only hope that other regions and municipalities will follow your lead.

**The Ontario Nature Achievement Award - Audrey Wilson (Cobourg) of the Willow Beach Field Naturalists.** For an Ontario Nature member who has made an outstanding contribution to the activities of Ontario nature

Audrey Wilson lives in Cobourg and has been active in Northumberland County. Audrey is a naturalist, who is well known within the community, and in many parts of the province. Over the years, Audrey's name has become synonymous with natural history, nature study and outdoor education.

She's accomplished in the fields of ornithology, entomology and notably the study of Lepidoptera, and most notably for her work on the Monarch Butterfly. She is also an accomplished nature photographer.

**The W.W. H. Gunn Award - Lou Probst of Kirkfield** - This Award is presented to an individual who either by acting independently, or as a leader, demonstrates outstanding personal service and a strong commitment, over the long term, to the conservation of nature, with exceptional results.

Lou Probst lives in Kirkfield, Ontario. Lou has been a strong and central player in a decade of conservation successes on the Carden Plain. He has his wife Judy moved to a farm in the heart of the Carden in the early 1990s and Lou quickly became incredibly active in a wide range of conservation activities some of which include: Chairing the Carden Plain Important Bird Area Committee, who has undertaken activities including interpretive signage, producing a birder's guide, mapping significant habitat for grassland birds, and periodic point-count monitoring to detect changes in bird population over time.

He also has co-chaired the Carden Nature Festival planning committee, with a primary responsibility for developing the program and arranging volunteer leaders.

He has served on the Board of the Couchiching Conservancy, as well as actively participated in the Carden Community Forum, the Integrated Cardin Conservation Strategy, and the Cardin Alva Management Advisory Committee.

He was key fundraiser for acquisition projects including the Cameron Ranch and Windmill Ranch Alvars. He and his wife are in the process of donating most of their land holdings to the Nature Conservancy of Canada, as an addition to the protected landscapes of the Carden Alvar.

**Margaret and Carl Nunn Memorial Camp Scholarship** - Phoenix Jacobs-Parkin; Grace Thornton; William Gardiner; and Cameron Gray.

- 1) Cameron Gray - A member of the Carden Field Naturalists, although living in Oakville, spends his summers and many winters in the Carden area. He is an active member of the site inspection team for the Turnbull property, Couchiching Conservancy.
- 2) Phoenix Jacobs-Parkin- Lives in Peterborough. An active member of the Adam Scott Intermediate School Birding Club for three years and took a leadership role in assisting new and less experienced members with bird identification. He also participates in the Baillie Birdathon, helping to raise money.
- 3) Grace Thornton - Lives in Oakville and is a member of the Junior Naturalists Club in Hamilton (she joined when she was in kindergarten). She rarely misses a meeting and is always an enthusiastic and observant participant. She has a keen interest in nature and a good knowledge base, and is always eager to learn more and share her knowledge with others.
- 4) William Gardiner - Lives in Bright's Grove. He assumed a leadership role within the Young Naturalist group at the Lambton Wildlife Inc. He has actively participated in the annual Lambton Wildlife Inc. (LWI) trail clean-up events, he is a YN fundraiser for the Bluewater Centre for Raptor Rehabilitation in March 2007 and LWI's Annual Native Plant Sale among other activities.

These scholarships are presented to individuals between the ages of 10-15, who display promise and interest in natural history interpretation, or education, and who have the potential to take an increased leadership role in club programs. It is intended to recognize and nurture the development of future leaders in conservation. We had some very impressive nominees, all of whom were truly deserving of this scholarship. We struggled to find a winner and finally came to the conclusion that we could not single out one individual. So this year is special in that we are recognizing not one, but four winners.

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**For more information on the recipients, to arrange an interview, or for photos of the presentations, please contact:**

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*Ontario Nature is a not-for profit that works to protect and restore natural habitats through research, education and conservation. It connects thousands of individuals and communities with nature through various conservation groups across the province (charitable registration # 10737 8592 RR0001). For more information, visit [www.ontarionature.org](http://www.ontarionature.org).*