

**MUSKOKA
CONSERVANCY**



Muskoka Steward

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IN THIS ISSUE

FALL UPDATES



CANADA JAY RESEARCH PAGE 2

NEW PROPERTY PAGE 4

PHRAGMITES CUT PAGE 5

Algonquin Canada Jays in Decline

The Canada jay, previously known as the Gray jay, is a resident songbird of Ontario's boreal forests. Curious of human activity and supplemental food, Canada jays are regularly visit campsites, snowshoe trails, and logging sites. Even though the Canada jays are not listed as a species of conservation concern at the national level, the population at the southern edge of their range in Algonquin Provincial Park, Ontario has a much less promising future.

Canada jays maintain year-round territories, which usually are located in bogs and conifer forests made up of black spruce and balsam fir. The jays spend their fall caching food items such as insects, scavenged meat, mushrooms, and berries throughout their breeding territory. Canada jays rely on these caches for overwinter survival and to give to their offspring in late-winter. However, this food is only useful for the jays if it can stay frozen and preserved in the natural "fridge" that is the winter boreal forest. But what happens when the fridge breaks? Unfortunately, research led by the University of Guelph on the Canada jays in Algonquin Park over the past 55 years has shown that the population along highway 60 in the park has declined by over 50% in the last three decades. This rapid decline has been suggested to be due to the warming climate in Ontario, which is causing more frequent thawing events in fall and winter. The food that the jays have stored rots and becomes damaged when these thawing events and overall temperatures become more frequent and warmer. What will become of the Canada jays in Algonquin Park? Will they stay in the park and adapt or perish? Or will they move north to higher-quality habitat and colder conditions? It is unclear. However, in order to further knowledge about



the ecology of this species, a continuing project has been shedding light on the movements of juvenile and adult Canada jays.

Radio-telemetry is a wildlife technique that uses radio signals to determine the location of highly mobile animals. A radio telemetry system is usually composed of three items: a radio transmitter, an antennae, and a radio receiver. This technology gives ecologists such as University of Guelph PhD candidate Matthew Furst, the ability to track animals from afar in order to determine their movements. Since 2017, researchers from the University of Guelph including Furst, have tracked 54 radio-tagged juveniles and 12 adults as they forage and disperse. By tracking the jays on the ground and in the air, individuals can be followed as they move long distances, sometimes outside of the park boundary.

So how can you help?...

The long-term study on the Canada jays in Algonquin Park has been possible due to the unique colour-bands put on each of the jays being studied. This has allowed for individuals to be monitored over large periods of time. However, since the Canada jays are so mobile, it is sometimes difficult to relocate the banded birds. If you happen to be spending time in Algonquin Park, bring a camera or a pair of binoculars along! Opportunistic sightings by local birders, hikers, and anyone that encounters a jay during their time in the park are extremely valuable. If you do encounter a jay in Algonquin Park, or the surrounding area, try to see if it has bands on its legs and if so, what colors they are. If you are interested in learning more about the Canada jay research, have an observation to report, or are curious about other ways to help, you can contact Matthew Furst at

mfurst@uoguelph.ca

Matthew Furst



2020 Bizarre, but a good year for nature conservation in Muskoka

More Muskoka nature is protected this year than there was last year. In fact, thanks to a broad mix of donors large and small, volunteers and nature lovers in general, 2020 is shaping up to be a very good year for nature conservation in Muskoka.

The Muskoka Welcome and Silver Doe are two new nature reserves acquired earlier this year. By the time our newsletter is published, we are working hard to add two more gorgeous natural properties to the list and will likely close on another two before year end. In a strange year with no shortage of difficult news due to the pandemic, protecting nature is certainly something to celebrate!

MC's conservation lands are a mix of big lake shoreline, islands, open water wetlands, rock barrens, mature forest, bird-nesting meadow, and habitat for species at risk. Not only that, Muskoka Conservancy is representing nearly every corner of Muskoka. We started out 30 years ago with a nature reserve on Lake Muskoka, thanks to JP McVittie. Twenty years ago, we entered our first ever conservation easement on Lake of Bays thanks to Peter & Beryl Goering. Now MC has many properties on Lake Joseph and Lake Muskoka, Lake Vernon and in the Skeleton Lake watershed. We are in the Torrance Barrens. We are in the Kahshe Barrens. Our four most recent land acquisitions have been in Gravenhurst, Huntsville, Muskoka Lakes, and Bracebridge. Overall, MC has collected 44 properties that are an excellent representation of what nature in Muskoka is all about.

Thank you to all our supporters and all those that love Muskoka nature! We could not do this without you! We cannot wait to get out on our new properties and share some photographs. And soon after that, we hope to start arranging regular Nature Quests so you can visit these wonderful new places too! We hope you will join us!

Please stay in touch!

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

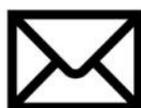
Visit muskokaconservancy.org and click donate in the top right:

DONATE

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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 43rd Property!

Muskoka Conservancy is pleased to announce the conservation of its 43rd property, the Silver Doe Nature Reserve. Many thanks to the Kenneth Molson Foundation for helping secure this 75-acre property using the new Quick Strike Fund. The property is dominated by rock barrens and large marsh areas. Rock barrens habitat is very significant habitat in Muskoka and often provides habitat for several species at risk, including several turtles and the five-lined skink, Ontario's only lizard species. Additional monitoring on the property should turn up several significant species.



The property is adjacent to the Jevins and Silver Lake Conservation Reserve and offers additional protection for the reserve from human incursion and development.. The acquisition of the property means that Muskoka Conservancy protects a over 2,700 acres of land in Muskoka, including habitat for over 20 species at risk.



**GIVING
TUESDAY
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Double your donation
with matching donors
on December 1st!



**COME DROP OFF YOUR ASH AT THE
FOTMW ASH DRIVE**

DECEMBER 19TH, 2020
ROSEWARNE TRANSFER STATION
9 AM TO 3 PM



Muskoka on the Edge of Your Dock

This year we were not able to host our biennial boathouse party, so instead we encouraged supporters to host a COVID-friendly dock party and bid in our online auction. We offered up some tasty recipes and a quiz to celebrate land conservation and the natural spaces of Muskoka. The event was a tremendous success, raising over \$58,000 in total!

A huge thank you goes out to our organizing committee and to our presenting sponsor, Ewing Morris Investment Partners Ltd. Without their support, this event would not have been possible. We'd also like to thank all our auction donors for donating items to the auction. There were some amazing auction items donated this year. Finally, we'd like to thank all who participating. Your support is crucial in continuing our work protecting natural areas in Muskoka.

Aaron Rusak

Thank You to our Presenting Sponsor

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THANK YOU!

From the MotE'20 Organizing Team:

Karen Lang	Hope Thomson	Cathy Gibson
Allyn Abbott	Susie Drinkwater	Scott Young
	Rob Jennings	



Together we raised over \$58,000 for nature conservation in Muskoka!

Thanks auction donors!

Allyn and Rob Abbott	Steve Mann	Sky River Meadow
Chris Cape	Rob Clark	Gordon Bay Marine
BubblerBuddy	Bob Weekes	Marie McFarlane

Phragmites Cut

Controlling invasive species isn't easy, but it's a necessary task when we have invasives present on the property. We've spent a fair bit of time this year at our Bert and Millie's Marsh Nature Reserve to make sure that the Phragmites and Purple loosestrife on the property is kept under control.

We've managed to cut both stands of Phragmites. We have to give huge thanks to Muskoka Brewery and several other volunteers for volunteering their time and effort to make this possible. With the size of the stands, it would be impossible to manage this without volunteers. Another big thank you has to go out to the property's Land Steward, Karen Mason, who has attended almost every cut and is a huge force in making sure this property is maintained well. If you'd like to hear more about our invasive species control program, please email info@muskokaconservancy.org.

Aaron Rusak



Photos from the Field



Phantom Crane Fly—Bert and Millie’s Marsh Nature Reserve



Striped Hairstreak—Upjohn Nature Reserve



Porcupine—Stream to Skeleton Lake Nature Reserve



Spring Peeper—South Monck Nature Reserve

Muskoka Conservancy’s shop items available all the time online (muskokaconservancy.org/shop) or at the Muskoka Conservancy Office, 47 Quebec Street, Bracebridge or in Toronto from Elizabeth 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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Thank you to our official partners!

The bottom section features three logos. On the left is the Muskoka Brewery logo, which includes the text 'UNIQUE Muskoka' and 'ALL NATURAL, PREMIUM AND PURE' above a circular emblem with 'MUSKOKA Brewery' and 'EST 1996'. In the center is a red maple leaf logo. On the right is the Muskoka Roastery Coffee Co. logo, featuring a small maple leaf above the text 'MUSKOKA ROASTERY COFFEE CO.' and '100% CERTIFIED · HANDCRAFTED'.