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www.muskokaconservancy.org

2022-2023 Annual Report



A message from our Executive Director

Nature Conservation is the clear solution

"Difference of opinion leads to inquiry, and inquiry to the truth," said Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson was a lawyer, architect, philosopher, and the third president of the United States, but clearly, he rolled back in the day before a search for truth ended in a string of amusing cat gifs.

1960's Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan was much closer to reflecting today's reality when he said, "a point of view can be a dangerous luxury when substituted for insight and understanding."

Fast forward to 2023, and a difference of opinion doesn't lead to inquiry, but leads to more opinions that reinforce our own opinion. It's called an algorithm. So here we are with our opinion-verified opinions, and we each have a connected worldwide platform in our hand seven hours a day. What is one to do?

"Any fool can make something complicated," said folk artist Woody Guthrie.

There's a lot to be said for keeping it simple, but if you are at all involved in the environmental movement, you know that can be easier said than done. The climate crisis, biodiversity loss, mass extinction, ocean plastic, GMOs, pesticides, overpopulation, over development... Absolutely right there should be noise and outrage, but there's so many differences of opinion, even McLuhan may have found it distracting. Jefferson's head might have exploded.

That's why I am grateful and honoured—relieved, even—to belong to an organization like Muskoka Conservancy, where thoughtful leaders over the years have tightened our focus on nature conservation. We have come to learn that conservation is a simple, nature-based solution to a lot of serious environmental problems. Plus, Muskoka Conservancy's efforts are mirrored by many similar organizations across Ontario, Canada, the U.S. and beyond. This is local action having a global impact! When our supporters make a contribution, they don't have to guess how their money will be spent, they know it will go towards an effort to physically protect land for its ecological values. They know because that's what we do and our track record shows it: 4,000 acres of land protected, 60,500 feet of natural shoreline on our big lakes, 700 acres of species-rich wetlands. Protecting nature mitigates climate change, protects biodiversity, and provides a counterbalance to economic development. We are a team of directors, staff, volunteers, members and donors all dedicated to a clear cause: every year protecting more land. MC supporters are making Muskoka better, and they are helping to solve global challenges.

To all of you who support Muskoka Conservancy's simple purpose, whether in time, skills, dollars, or land, your collective resources are making it happen! We thank you!

Scott Young, Executive Director



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Emily Landry, Summer Program
Ayden Veitch, Summer Program

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By: Tammy Nash, 2023 Michael Foster Photo Contest Winner

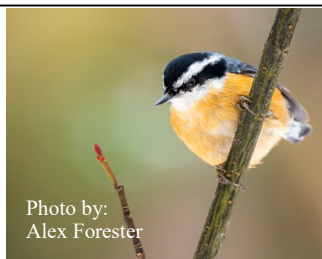


Photo by:
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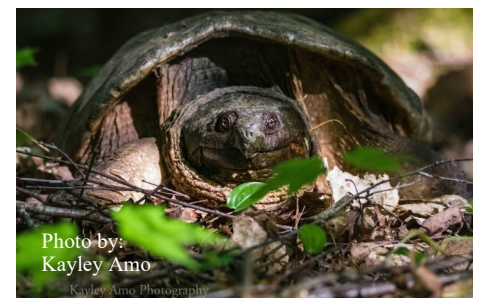
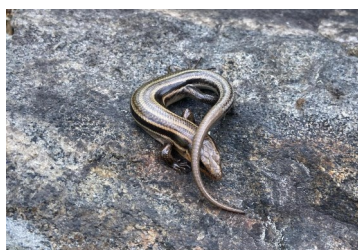


Photo by:
Kayley Amo

Kayley Amo Photography

A message from our President

I am delighted to tell you that we have had another highly successful year since the last AGM. Four additional properties that have come to us in that time: Bear Cave, Monck Meadows, Barkway Lake, and Old Bangor. For those of you haven't been keeping a running total, I have the numbers. Total acreage of these properties is 662.71 of which 121.5 are wetland.



We are saying goodbye to two members of the Board. John Burton (JB) has served the maximum 9 years on our board. He became involved back in the Muskoka Heritage Trust days as a volunteer and also served as president during his time with us. JB will continue to serve on at least one committee as a non-Board member. Marlene McBrien will also be leaving us due to work constraints. We like to think of Marlene's departure as "until we meet again." We thank both JB and Marlene for their service.

With directors leaving, we decided early in the year that we needed to increase the total number of Directors on the Board. I am pleased to say, we were unanimous in recommending that the following seven amazing individuals be put forward at the AGM for election to the Board:

Dana Richardson; Derrick Hammond; Jenna White; Martine Brouillet; Samantha Hastings; Stephanie Grant; and Stephen Fahner. They will be amazing!

We have a wonderful group of volunteers who support the Conservancy in myriad ways, from leading Little Sprouts Eco-Club, a program for young naturalists, to organizing Ripple, our major fundraising event that will take place on June 24th at Muskoka Lakes Golf and Country Club. I am not going to name all of you but, on behalf of the Board, I thank you for all that you contribute to this organization. Preserving land in its natural state is a team effort and you are all a part of the team.

Before I conclude, I want to say a word about our wonderful staff. Amanda Porter and Emily Brown joined us in the spring of last year. They are both hard working and intelligent young women. I also want to say what pleasure it is to work with Scott Young. Scott is knowledgeable, diligent and friendly. On behalf of the Board, I thank you the three of you for all you do.

Last year I concluded my remarks by saying that we were excited about the future with the added energy of the new directors. Those sentiments are equally applicable today. We are a strong team. Muskoka Conservancy has a bright future.

Bob Weekes, President

Muskoka Conservancy: 2022 Impact by the numbers

We are protecting...

- **37** Nature Reserves
- **15** Conservation Easements
- Over **3,900** acres
- **60,480** feet of shoreline
- **708** acres of wetland habitat

We are supported by...

- **550** Members
- **25** Visionaries
- **24** Guardians
- **41** Conservators



Our community outreach was...

- **500 +** Volunteer hours
- **60+** Nature Quest participants
- **651** Little Sprouts followers
- **2723** Facebook followers
- **1823** Instagram followers



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and Janice Gibbs**

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**John Fitzmaurice and
Eve Richardson &
Kent and Susie Phillips**

SPECIAL THANKS TO:
**Don and Karen Lang &
Seth and Theresa Mersky**


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**Rick Kojfman and
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SPECIAL THANKS TO:
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2022 Operating Highlights

Revenue And Expenses (\$ thousands)

	2022	2021
Donations	286.7	372.0
Fundraising	0.6	133.9
Membership	70.5	33.5
Sales	8	2.3
Grants	41.3	52.3
Other (investment income, etc.)	10.1	36.0
Deferred Contributions	35.4	8.0
Total Revenue	359.3	794.7
Total Expenses	307.9	278.1
Surplus/Deficit	51.3	516.6

- Fundraising: No major fundraiser held in 2022, as Muskoka on the Edge returns as Ripple 2023.
- Investment income varies with the market, MC investments consistently outperform market indicators.
- Net expenses above prior year due to increased staff levels.
- Year-end result is a surplus of \$51,389.

Reserve Accounts 2022

	Maintenance and Defense	Property Acquisition	General and Grants	Dyer	TOTAL
Open Balance	106,776	387,192	49,333	792,939	\$1,336,240
Contributions and Investment Income	-	100,000	21,335	-70,720	50,615
Draws	-	-14,432	-24,987	-10,382	-49,801
Closing Balance	106,776	472,760	45,681	711,837	1,337,054

- Increase in Property Acquisition Account is due to Kenneth M Molson Foundation donation.
- There were some investment losses in the Dyer Account.
- Year end balance was slightly up to \$1,337,054.

Protected Assets (\$ millions)

	2022	2021
Nature Reserves	20	13.5
Conservation Easements	6.6	6.6
Value of Protected Assets	26.6	20.1

- There were two new land acquisitions in 2022: a second lot was donated to the Highlands Island Nature Reserve, and five lots were donated that compose the Bear Cave-Koetitz Nature Reserve.
- Protected assets have increased to \$26.6 million.

Stewardship and Outreach

Little Sprouts Eco Club

What a year for the Little Sprouts! We were fortunate to receive a grant from Patricia's Fund through Muskoka Community Foundation for \$5,000 to help with our 2023 outings. This has been an immense help as it offers opportunities for hands-on learning experiences for the kids without limiting our numbers due to financial constraints.

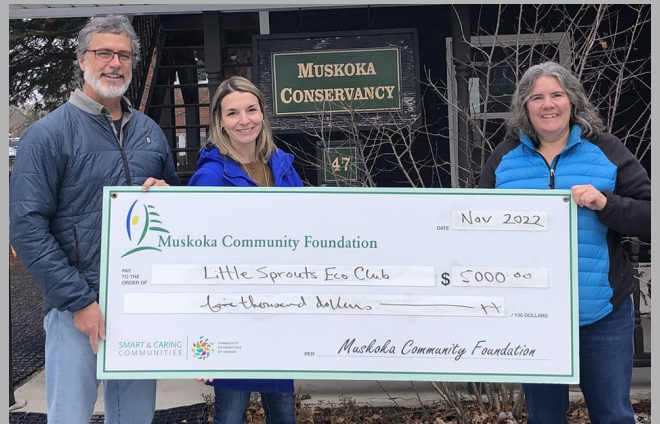
So far in 2023, we have welcomed many new Eco-Club families! In February the kids participated in a night ski at the Nordic Ski Trails in Gravenhurst, a very popular maple syrup taste and talk that saw 40+ children attend over two days of fun, tree planting at Muskoka Bay Park and an upcoming forest bathing event at Morrison Meadows.

We have many outings planned for the summer and into fall and winter as well including; learning about the ash project with Friends of Muskoka Watershed, berry picking (always a favourite), harvest hikes and more.

Our Facebook group is growing too with over 650 people following along and attending outings when they can.

We look forward to an incredible rest of 2023 and welcome community collaboration and ideas for future events.

Christina Hunter



Acquired Properties

In the last year Muskoka Conservancy acquired several new nature properties. We are very thankful for the donors who helped us to acquire the new nature reserves: **Bear Cave-Koetitz**, **South Monck Meadows**, **Barkway Lake** and **Old Bangor**.

Bear Cave-Koetitz Nature Reserve marks the acquisition of our largest ever nature reserve at an amazing 419 acres. The nature reserve includes part of the Shadow River, large wetland areas, and is nearby to Cardwell Township Old Growth Conservation Reserve. We are very thankful for this donation made by Rose-Marie Koetitz, which special thanks to Janis Gibbs for helping to facilitate the donation.

South Monck Meadows is a milestone as our 50th property! This nature reserve is home to several meadow species at risk, including bank swallow, barn swallow, wood thrush, bobolink, and Eastern meadowlark.

Thank you to Mr. John Fitzmaurice & Mrs. Eve Richardson, as well as Dr. Kent & Mrs. Susie Phillips. Their donation made this nature reserve possible.

Barkway Lake Nature Reserve, was acquired with help from OLTA and their Nature Smart Climate Solutions Program supported by ECCC. An impressive 173 acres, this nature reserve directly borders Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands PP on two sides! By adding more protected land to the area, wildlife benefit from connectivity of their corridors. One of these species is the Five-lined Skink, which is endangered!

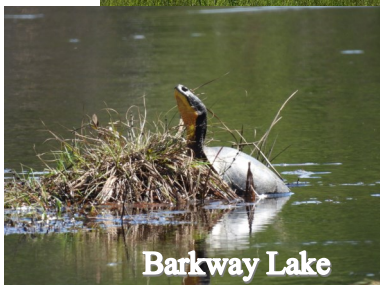
Old Bangor Nature Reserve, Muskoka Conservancy's newest protected property, contains 64.2-acres of field habitat, swamp ecosystem, and a portion of creek that flows into Lake Muskoka. The field ecosystem provides important breeding and foraging habitat for several grassland birds including the threatened bobolink and Eastern meadowlark. Many reptiles and amphibians can also be found across the fields and in the stream and swamp ecosystems. This Nature Reserve was made possible by donation from Rick Kojfman and Dani Cohen, and generous stewardship fund donations by the neighbouring community.



Bear Cave – Koetitz



South Monck Meadows



Barkway Lake



Old Bangor

Stewardship and Outreach

Nature Quests and Webinars

Over the last year, we have hosted 12 Nature Quest guided hikes, and 6 Educational Webinars, engaging hundreds of individuals within Muskoka and beyond!

Many of our hikes and webinars have been led by Conservation Coordinator, Amanda Porter. These hikes and webinars have covered topics including Mammal Tracking in the winter, and Salamander and Frog Identification in the Spring. On a few occasions we were thrilled to be joined by amazing, expert guest speakers who taught participants about Muskoka's Native Plants and Fall Bird Migration.

Education and engagement play an extremely important role in nature conservation. The connections that individuals create and have with our plants, waters, birds, wildlife etc. are what inspire action and change.

Muskoka Conservancy is committed to continuing to connect the public with the creatures and nature of Muskoka whenever possible through our Nature Quests and Webinars. You can hear about upcoming events by signing up for our e-bulletins and newsletter here: [Newsletter](#) | [Muskoka Conservancy](#).



Invasive Species

Tackling the spread of invasive species has been a priority at our Bert and Millie's Marsh Nature Reserve over the past several years. The Nature Reserve contains important wetland and forest ecosystems that provide homes to hundreds of plant and animal species. Being located along Highway 11, the nature reserve has also proven to be a convenient home for invasive *Phragmites australis*, a competitive, monoculture forming wetland grass.

Several amazing volunteer groups, headed by the Nature Reserve's Land Steward, Karen Mason, have been vital in the removal of the plants, prevention of spread, and encouragement of native plants to reclaim their home. We couldn't do it without our dedicated volunteers!



Fishing Line Recycling Program

Ayden Veitch, Muskoka Conservancy's 2022 Summer Program Coordinator, launched a fishing line recycling program that was so successful we've had requests to expand the program across Muskoka.

Current locations include: Bracebridge Wharf; George Road Landing; Gull Lake; and Gravenhurst Wharf.

During the year, fishers can deposit their old, worn out, and tangled fishing line in these distinctive white recycling tubes.

At the end of the year Muskoka Conservancy will collect the fishing line and send it to Berkley Fishing for recycling.

"With 1.5 million anglers in Ontario there is a lot of fishing line that can be disposed of improperly," said Veitch, who also studies Marine and Aquatic Biology at University of Guelph. "Now with the new recycling program, fishing line can be disposed of properly."

Emily Landry, the Conservancy's 2023 Summer Program Coordinator, is now towards new installations in Huntsville and Muskoka Lakes. Look for an announcement soon!



Thank You Volunteers!

Meghan Taylor
Lynne Chynoweth
Connor Ryan
Claudine Finch
RH Thomson
Jane Spencer
Greg Padulo



Adam Brown
Lesley Hastie
Tamsen Tillson
Sue McKenzie
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Thank You Volunteers!

Wayland Drew Award Winner – Christina Hunter

The Wayland Drew Award was named in honour of a man who loved natural places. Drew was a teacher of English and Native Studies at Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School, a gifted writer and an active environmentalist. In 1991 he received the Lieutenant Governor's Conservation Award in recognition of his lifelong work on behalf of the environment – an honour presented by the Conservation Council of Ontario.

The Wayland Drew Natural Heritage Award is presented to individuals who have consistently demonstrated environmental leadership by promoting stewardship, conservation, environmental education or awareness of Muskoka's natural heritage.

Much like Wayland Drew, Christina Hunter is a gifted writer, passionate environmentalist and tireless community advocate and volunteer. A long-time resident of Muskoka, Christina is committed to making Muskoka a more sustainable place through her work as a Councilor with the Town of Gravenhurst, to her volunteer roles with the Muskoka Conservancy and other not-for-profit organizations, to being a community role model, Mother and writer.



*Christina Hunter
Planting trees with the Little Sprouts*

Christina, a long serving volunteer with the Muskoka Conservancy has been an active volunteer, assisting with events, programs and served as a Director from 2016-2022. In 2015, Christina founded the Little Sprouts Eco-Club program, which has become a meaningful program for the Muskoka Conservancy to connect with the Muskoka community. Since 2015, Christina has grown the program to include over 500 members, with 50 to 100 children of all ages attending the monthly outings. Every month Christina organizes fun and engaging outings that inspire and educate youth on the importance of land stewardship.

Christina is also the recipient of the Paul Harris Fellowship award and nominated for the Women of Distinction award. As a zero-waste promoter she inspires Muskoka to clean-up and pick up litter, even if it's just one cup at a time.

Christina's passion for protecting and conserving Muskoka's natural environment is seemingly never-ending in her work as a zero-waste promoter, Climate Reality Leader, and nature education leader. Christina's commitment and enthusiasm for improving her community is inspiring to anyone who works alongside her.

Laura Thomas—Director

UNIQUE Muskoka

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