

MUSKOKA  
CONSERVANCY



Muskoka Steward

WINTER 2021

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## Tips and Tricks for Winter Hikes

This year has been a busy one on the trails. Everyone is looking to get out and about and to enjoy the beauty of nature. However, winter can be a duller time, as there are fewer animals active and the daylight is shorter. We've compiled a few tips to keep your winter hikes exciting and to increase your chance of finding a cool sighting.

1. Keep your eyes and ears open. There's a lot less wildlife active in the winter and it's easy to keep your head down to avoid the wind or snow. However, one of the easiest ways to find wildlife is by taking a bit more time to really observe your surroundings. Whether it's a woodpecker drumming, a finch singing, or tracks from an animal in the snow, there's often more around than first appears.
2. Following from the first point, be sure to check the tracks that you see in the snow. The best time to find clear animal tracks is after a clear night with fresh snow the day prior. Most animals are crepuscular, meaning they are active during dawn or dusk. Checking for tracks in the morning will allow you the best chance of seeing clear tracks before the weather potentially erases the tracks. I've found more than ten species of mammals on some of my walks!
3. If there's a trail, stay on the trail. Although it's very tempting to bushwhack around a forest, keeping to a trail is a good way to minimize impacts to wildlife. With food being more scarce, flushing or disturbing wildlife in the winter can cause them to use additional resources to escape. A trail is a regular disturbance, so your chances of bothering sheltering wildlife is much lower.
4. Look up! With leaves off the trees, it's much easier to see anything hiding in the tops of them. Porcupines, owls, woodpeckers, you never know what might be perched on a tree branch above you. Just be sure to not bother anything you find in the trees; they're out of sight for a reason!



Hiking in nature is more important than ever now, so be sure to be taking some time out of your day to get some fresh air outside. Muskoka Conservancy even has a trail system to enjoy. Our Upjohn Nature Reserve features about 2.5 km of hiking trails for snowshoeing. There are several lookouts along the trail and lots of gorgeous scenery and wetland views. If you're looking to find out a bit more about the trails Muskoka Conservancy manages, please give us a call at 705-645-7393 ext 200 or email us at [info@muskokaconservancy.org](mailto:info@muskokaconservancy.org).

*Aaron Rusak*

## Celebrating Champions of Nature Conservation in Muskoka

I did not know Robb Hindson but I am sure I would have liked him. I have learned a bit about Robb recently and it is clear he truly enjoyed life and was drawn to the north. He loved Muskoka and he loved nature. Robb began supporting Muskoka Conservancy back in 2012. Robb was committed to protecting the natural shoreline of Muskoka's lakes and was a regular contributor to the Conservancy in support of the Muskoka Lakes Association Water Quality Program. Robb also gave his time and skills to serve as president of the Lake Rosseau North Association and as Treasurer of the Muskoka Lakes Association. Robb was clearly committed to Muskoka. And when Robb was fighting cancer and planning his estate, he made sure he left his legacy by making a significant gift to Muskoka Conservancy.

Robb died in November 2019. Since that time, Muskoka Conservancy has acquired four new nature conservation properties and we are working hard to add conservation status to even more land. It takes a lot to protect nature. Muskoka Conservancy depends on a team of energetic volunteers who are supported by a small but dedicated staff. Our tiny office is a hub of activity focussed on keeping a steady flow of good candidate properties in the conservation pipeline. Not all work out. Some take years from start to finish. Others zip along like wildfire!

One such case is our new Pinelands Bay Nature Reserve, a 100-acre property between Lake Rosseau and Lake Joseph that in August 2020 was under threat of a major

development. Turns out the neighbourhood did not think that was such a good idea, and with a tiny group lead by Andy Burgess, they were able to rally together to raise over \$1 million to secure this land for Muskoka Conservancy so that by November, it was protected forever.

I am beyond fortunate to be a facilitator of nature saving good deeds, and I can tell you these are powerful experiences. It never gets old. Nature conservation is good news that feels good to be part of, and you can be part of it, too. Robb Hindson and Andy Burgess are two examples of people stepping up and making Muskoka a better place, and believe me, there's more than two ways to do it! If you are passionate about Muskoka and want to advance nature conservation, give us a call today.

*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](https://muskokaconservancy.org) and click donate in the top right:

**DONATE**

### Mail

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!**



## Photo Contest

Muskoka Conservancy's annual photo contest has begun! This year's theme is 'Water's Edge'. In 2021, we want to celebrate rivers, lakes, ponds, and wetlands. Any photos containing some water counts, whether it's a landscape, animal in the water, or something else water-related. Submissions will be accepted until April 1st. Submit your photo to us via Instagram, using @Muskoka\_conservancy and tagging it #mccontest. Maximum of three photos per contestant.

### MICHAEL FOSTER PHOTO CONTEST 2021

Theme: Water's Edge



The Michael Foster Photography Award is presented annually to the photographer whose image best represents the beauty of Muskoka. The image that receives the most "likes" on Instagram will be the winner and the photographer will receive a mounted enlargement of their photo and will be celebrated at our Annual Meeting.

Submit your photos via Instagram to:  
@muskoka\_conservancy  
and tag #mccontest



DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS: APRIL 1, 2021

## Upcoming Webinars

Muskoka Conservancy has two exciting upcoming webinars planned for February and March. Our first webinar will be on Seeding Native Plants and will be held on February 23rd at 10 am. Join Laura Thomas for a discussion on how to start native plants from seed. The second webinar on March 23rd, will be on Winter Botany. Jane Young will be leading the talk and teaching about how to identify plants species without the leaves. Sign-ups will start soon, so be sure to subscribe to our newsletter to get regular updates. You can subscribe on our website: [www.muskokaconservancy.org](http://www.muskokaconservancy.org).

## SEEDING NATIVE PLANTS WEBINAR

February 23rd | 10 am

Muskoka Conservancy is pleased to announce a Zoom webinar on seeding native plants. Laura Thomas, from Hidden Habitat, will be presenting. For more information, call 705-645-7393 ext 200 or email [info@muskokaconservancy.org](mailto:info@muskokaconservancy.org)

## Little Sprouts Update

With the current restrictions many of the Little Sprout programs have been put on hold. However, there is still some good news to share while we wait for the ability to resume activities. The Little Sprouts Eco-club has recently received a grant from the Vancouver Foundation to help fund future activities. Although activities are currently on hold, they will be resuming as soon as we can safely conduct them.

If you're interested in the being a part of the activities once they resume, please contact Christina Hunter or call the office at 705-645-7393 ext 200. You can also follow the Little Sprouts Eco-club on Facebook to stay up to date on their activities. Even though the activities are on hold, we can still provide information on the program and how to go about becoming involved once we begin again.

Aaron Rusak





## Project Protect Training

Project Protect is continuing this year, despite the setbacks of the past year. Project Protect is our citizen science initiative aimed at gaining us a better understanding of the species diversity present on our properties. Volunteers conduct either bird or amphibian surveys and submit the data. The data allows us to look at population changes on our nature reserves and also feeds into a larger data set that makes up the entire Great Lakes region.

To help our surveyors prepare for the upcoming season, we'll be offering three training sessions through Zoom. These training sessions will focus on bird and amphibian species identification. They're open to anyone looking to learn more about the program or just increase their species identification skills. The training sessions are listed to the right.



Sample survey site

Amphibian Training 1: February 18th from 10 am to noon

Amphibian Training 2: March 18th from 10 am to noon

Bird Training: March 25th from 10 am to 2 pm

The amphibian trainings will cover the same material, so it's only necessary to sign up for one. The bird training will be longer as there is more material to cover. It will include a short break (~15 minutes).

If you're interested, please let Aaron know by emailing [arusak@muskokaconservancy.org](mailto:arusak@muskokaconservancy.org).



Project Protectors returning from a bird survey at Muskoka Delta Nature Reserve

## Upcoming Nature Quests

We have some entirely **NEW** *Nature Quests* and *Paddle Quests* coming up, starting in May. Details coming soon! In the meantime, and depending on COVID restrictions, we are still hoping to hold our February (or early March) *Snowshoe Nature Quest*. Check our website and social media for updates on what that will occur.

If you want to learn more about upcoming *Nature Quests*, call the office at 705-645-7393 ext 200 or email Aaron at [info@muskokaconservancy.org](mailto:info@muskokaconservancy.org).



Aaron Rusak

# UPCOMING EVENTS

**Feb 18**

**PROJECT PROTECT TRAINING**  
*Zoom, 10 am to noon*

**Feb TBA**

**SNOWSHOE NATURE QUEST**  
*To be announced if restrictions permit*

**Mar 18**

**PROJECT PROTECT TRAINING**  
*Zoom, 10 am to noon*

**Mar 25**

**PROJECT PROTECT BIRD TRAINING**  
*Zoom, 10 am to 2 pm*

**Apr TBA**

**POND EXPLORERS NATURE QUEST**  
*Location and time TBA*

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**LET'S STAY CONNECTED!**



"Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better" - Albert Einstein

**Our Nature Quest program runs year-round, so be sure to check our website and social media for updates on upcoming events!**

**Muskoka Conservancy's Shop Items Available 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.

For shop inquiries, email [info@muskokaconservancy.org](mailto:info@muskokaconservancy.org)

**MUSKOKA CONSERVANCY OFFICERS**

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PAST PRESIDENT	NORM MOFFAT
VICE PRESIDENT	BARB MASON
VICE PRESIDENT	JANE YOUNG
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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	SCOTT YOUNG
LAND STEWARDSHIP COORDINATOR	AARON RUSAK

**Thank you to our official partners!**

UNIQUE  
**Muskoka**

