

MUSKOKA
CONSERVANCY



Muskoka Steward

FALL 2021



The Secrets of Clubmosses

As we head into fall, green gives way to the reds, yellows, and brown of the changing leaves. However, if you know where to look, there's always a bit of green in the forest. One of the most overlooked group of plants is clubmosses and they have a lot of interesting features that can be explored if you decide to take a closer look.

In Muskoka, we have a number of clubmoss species, and some of the properties Muskoka Conservancy protects boast at least six different species of clubmoss. Many of the species stay green into the fall and early winter, so fall is one of the best times to do a little bit of clubmoss investigation.

Originally, all clubmosses were in one genus, *Lycopodium*, with *Lyco*— translating roughly to wolf and *podi*— translating to foot or paw. A few years ago they were split into several different genera, four of which are common in Muskoka. Probably the two most common ones that you will find are ground cedars and tree-clubmosses, both of which look somewhat like small trees, hence the names.



Blue clubmoss, *Diphasiastrum tristachyum*



Flat-branched tree-clubmoss, *Dendrolycopodium obscurum*

We have three tree-clubmosses in Muskoka, all falling under the genus *Dendrolycopodium* (*Dendro* translating to tree). They are distinguished by the shape of their leaves and the way in which the leaves on the main stem fan out. They look close to a small conifer tree, and while they are vascular plants like conifers, they aren't related to that group of plants.

Our other common clubmoss group is the ground cedars in the genus *Diphasiastrum*. These look almost identical to small cedar trees, with flat, scaly leaves and branches that fan out. Despite their appearance, they are also not related to their namesake.

As mentioned above, all our clubmoss species are vascular plants, meaning they have nutrient flow through their stems, unlike true mosses. So despite looking like trees, they aren't trees, and despite being named clubmosses, they aren't mosses. They truly are their own group of plants! And although identifying them to species is challenging, it is still very worth your while to go out and take a look at these very unique and interesting plants.

Aaron Rusak

A can of worms to go with your light-action fishing pole

Sometimes it's the straight-shooting question that can be a real challenge to answer. Recently, when I was speaking with a member of the media, I was singing the praises of Muskoka Conservancy's new Sage Creek Nature Reserve. Muskoka Conservancy's 47th conservation property is a pretty, 166-acre property featuring a beautiful cold-water stream.

"It's Brook Trout habitat!" I trumpeted to one reporter, and was well on my way to describing the potential hiking options before he asked:

"Why is it important to protect Brook Trout?"

Well, that's a good question, and there's more than one answer.

For instance, if you're interested in Brook Trout and you search on the Ontario government web site Ontario.ca, you'll be advised to choose a light-action 7-foot rod with 4 to 8-pound test. That's one perspective!

Here at the nature conservancy of Muskoka, we aren't opposed to fishing, but we are more interested in biological diversity. Here's a fact: Brook Trout is a sensitive fish and approximately 80% of Brook Trout populations in Southern Ontario have been lost, according to Trout Unlimited.

Why are Brook Trout sensitive? It's because this fish evolved to live in the meltwater of glaciers. They have adapted over thousands of years to spawn, feed and thrive in cold, clean water.

Since glaciers long ago retreated and southern Ontario has been heavily developed, Brook Trout habitat is becoming scarce. But in Muskoka, we still have Brook Trout. How can that be? It's because we still have some impressive natural creeks that are partially fed by cold upwelling spring water, and many of these creeks remain sheltered by mature forests that provide shade.

But there's no time to celebrate. Muskoka's remaining cold-water streams are at risk. Just like what has happened to the south, more people are coming to Muskoka, driving more development. More people and development mean less space for nature, less forest to shade the streams. More demand for paved roads means less opportunity for groundwater recharge. It all results in warmer stream temperatures. Then there's climate change compounding everything.

If you find all that terribly overwhelming, just remember this: it's important to support Muskoka Conservancy because we protect nature. And if we all don't protect nature, all the Brook Trout are going to die. It's that simple.

And there it is, a can of worms to go with your light action fishing pole.

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:



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!

Project Protect Wrap-up

2021 was another successful year for Project Protect! Despite some setbacks due to COVID, we still had around 30 volunteers our surveying for both frogs and amphibians. In total, 15 different sites were surveyed across Muskoka. 10 species of frogs and toads were recorded and 59 species of birds were recorded over the many surveys.

The data provided by Project Protect helps Muskoka Conservancy understand the species and habitats that we protect. If you're interested in helping, email info@muskokaconservancy.org.



Jaxx & Marbles Campaign

Support Muskoka Conservancy with your holiday shopping! For the second year, Jaxx & Marbles are running the 12 Days of Giving Campaign to support local environmental non-profits. Muskoka Conservancy is pleased to be one of the featured non-profits that are supported through the campaign. 10% of all sales made over the '12 Days of Giving' that include the **MC** donation code will be donated to Muskoka Conservancy, so be sure to check out jaxxandmarbles.com for Christmas gift ideas!



Phragmites Removal

Muskoka Conservancy has continued its work treating the invasive Phragmites at the Bert and Millie's Marsh Nature Reserve. Our efforts appear to be making a difference as the two Phragmites stands are starting to thin out and native plants are growing up and filling the area.

A big thank you goes out to the many volunteers who came out on our five cutting days to help remove the invasive species. An extra big thank you to the property's Land Steward, Karen Mason, who comes out for every single day and works hard to make sure the property stays a gorgeous natural area.



Muskoka Conservancy's 47th Property!

Muskoka Conservancy is pleased to announce the acquisition of its 47th property, the Sage Creek Nature Reserve! This nature reserve was generously donated by Fowler Construction Ltd and totals 165 acres. This nature reserve will protect some of the Sage Creek Subaquatic Fan, which was identified as a recommended Heritage Site in the District of Muskoka.

The Sage Creek Nature Reserve protects one of the inputs into the North Branch of the Muskoka River. It is an undisturbed representative of a subaquatic fan, a landform that is quite rare in Muskoka. Many of these fans have been disturbed as they are a source of aggregate in Muskoka District, so this is a fantastic representative of an undisturbed subaquatic fan.

The river has created a steep western and southern flank to the creek and has exposed bedrock along the edges of the fan. The fan itself consists of both sand and gravel, which were probably the result of water levels falling in the Huron basin.

There are small wetlands that surround the creek and the majority of the rest of the property is covered in mixed upland forest. Breeding bird surveys conducted nearby have revealed the presence of species-at-risk, so



there is a chance that the nature reserve will protect important habitat for these species. With any luck, other rare species will also be found.

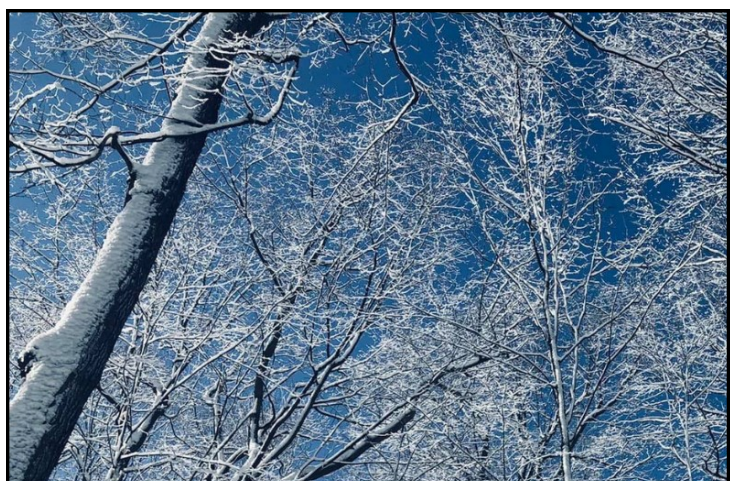
Muskoka Conservancy would like to thank Fowler Construction Ltd again for this generous donation. We have been working towards this for around 10 years, so we're both happy to have the donation completed.

Upcoming Nature Quests

Our last Nature Quest of 2021 is quickly approaching! On December 14th, we'll be hiking the Upjohn Nature Reserve trails and looking at animal tracks and learning about how animals prepare for winter. The hike will be lead by Aaron Rusak, the Muskoka Conservancy's Land Stewardship Coordinator. We will be meeting at the snow plow turnaround at 9 am and hiking in to the nature reserve from there.

If you want to learn more about upcoming *Nature Quests* or register for this one, call the office at 705-645-7393 ext 200 or email Aaron at info@muskokaconservancy.org.

Aaron Rusak



WINTER HIKE NATURE QUEST

Upjohn Nature Reserve
December 14, 2021 - 9 am to 11 am
Call 705-645-7393 ext 200 or email
info@muskokaconservancy.org to
register



Photos from the Field



Autumn Meadowhawk



Interrupted Clubmoss



Canada Warbler



Spotted Tussock Moth



Eastern Newt

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

MUSKOKA CONSERVANCY OFFICERS

PRESIDENT	BOB WEEKES
PAST PRESIDENT	JOHN BURTON
VICE PRESIDENT	BARB MASON
VICE PRESIDENT	JANE YOUNG
TREASURER	RICHARD ONLEY

DIRECTORS

MARG MCLAREN	SUE SEDGWICK	ELSPETH WOOD
PETER LOVE	MAR MCBRIEN	

HONORARY DIRECTORS

RUSS BLACK	JOHN FINLEY	ELIZA NEVIN
WILLIAM CLARK	PETER GOERING	ROB PURVES
BILL DICKINSON	ELIZABETH MASON	GEORGE SNIDER

MUSKOKA CONSERVANCY STAFF

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	SCOTT YOUNG
LAND STEWARDSHIP COORDINATOR	AARON RUSAK

Thank you to our official partners!

UNIQUE
Muskoka

