

MUSKOKA
CONSERVANCY



MUSKOKA STEWARD

**MORE PROTECTED
AREAS**

**SMALL BUT MIGHTY
- INVASIVE
MANAGEMENT**

A RIPPLE IS ENDLESS

**INTRODUCING NEW
BOARD MEMBERS &
SUMMER STAFF**

STREAM TO SKELETON LAKE NATURE RESERVE

QUARTERLY NEWS

SCOTT'S THOUGHTS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

by: Scott Young

>>> SUMMER 2025

It's the height of summer and time is flashing by! If you're like me, you've got fun and projects you want to cram in while the sun shines. And if you're like me, there's not a snowball's chance in July you're going to get to them all.

First of all, it's hotter than the surface of Venus outside, so let's just acknowledge how incredibly fortunate we are to live in a place with lots of big shady forests and cool freshwater swimming. Thanks to nature for that! Personally, I've been squeezing in some sailing, rowing, hiking, and generally just splashing around in Muskoka's amazing lakes and rivers. It's great to have a nice swimming hole nearby because I've also had some yard work to do.

The March ice storm combined with a July microburst left our yard an absolute shambles with dangerous limbs hanging and debris everywhere. As I'm cleaning up the mess, it's hard not to think about the climate science that for decades has warned us of more frequent more intense weather events. Part of the climate science I recall is that future Muskoka will likely not have a few things we think of as iconic. One of these is White Pine trees.

It's hard to imagine how that could happen, and harder to picture Muskoka without the majestic windswept conifer in literally every scenic view. But when you see what that one ice storm did to the White Pines around Bracebridge, you realize this is not just some doomsday prediction by killjoy nerds, it's actually happening in front of our eyes.

When these realizations hit me, I try to balance the following points to remain hopeful:

1. Climate change is real.
2. Human activity is the primary driver.
3. All the solutions are right under our noses.
4. Among the best solutions is nature conservation.

Nature conservation through your local land trust like Muskoka Conservancy is among the best solutions because it leverages immediacy and provides people an opportunity to contribute in their own neighbourhoods. Muskoka Conservancy offers a nature-based solution—protecting land—that acts as a natural carbon sink, absorbs winter snowmelt and stormwater to prevent floods, then slow-releasing moisture to mitigate against drought and potential wildfires. Multiply this local activity by all the local land trusts across Canada, and it really adds up!

I thank you all for supporting Muskoka Conservancy and remind you, once again, that you are part of the solution and should feel great to be involved in an organization that protects nature. We are closing in on 1,000 newly protected acres this year alone! So, dear friend, go jump in the lake and feel good about it! You deserve it!

-Scott



INTRODUCING....

TWO NEW NATURE RESERVES!

We're thrilled to announce the addition of two ecologically significant properties to our network of protected lands: Trussler Nature Reserve and Wood Lake Wetland Nature Reserve. These new acquisitions represent a major step forward in our mission to conserve Muskoka's natural heritage.

➤➤➤ TRUSSLER NATURE RESERVE - A GIFT FROM THE HEART

Thanks to the generous donation from Ronald, Shirley, and Brian Trussler, 20.59 acres of pristine land on the shores of Buck Lake have been permanently protected. This property, which also safeguards part of Axe Creek just outside Huntsville, features sensitive wetlands, forests, and riparian areas surrounding a beautiful estuary.

The Trussler family's love of nature and desire to preserve the beauty of Buck Lake inspired their donation. We extend our heartfelt thanks to them for their incredible contribution.

This nature reserve will be accessible to the public through our Nature Quest series of expert-guided hikes, offering a unique opportunity to explore its ecological richness. In fact in August we have a Paddle Quest planned giving our members a first look at the protected area.

➤➤➤ WOOD LAKE WETLAND NATURE RESERVE - A WETLAND WONDER

Acquired in July 2025 through donor-supported funds, the Wood Lake Wetland Nature Reserve spans 100 acres east of Bracebridge, with approximately 75% of the land consisting of vital wetlands. These wetlands play a critical role in water purification, flood mitigation, and provide habitat for numerous species at risk.

This property could serve as the foundation for a larger protected corridor connecting to the Muskoka River, enhancing regional conservation efforts.

We are deeply grateful to all of our supporters whose contributions made this acquisition possible. Like Trussler, Wood Lake Wetland Nature Reserve will be featured in upcoming Nature Quest hikes.

These new reserves are a testament to the power of community and conservation. Stay tuned for more updates as we continue to protect Muskoka's wild spaces!

SMALL BUT MIGHTY

MUSKOKA CONSERVANCY'S FIGHT AGAINST INVASIVE SPECIES



Muskoka's forests, wetlands, and shorelines are not only beautiful—they're vital to our region's identity and economy. But these natural spaces are under threat from a growing list of invasive species, including Giant Hogweed, Dog-Strangling Vine, Garlic Mustard, and the particularly aggressive Invasive Phragmites.

Invasive Phragmites, a tall wetland grass native to Eurasia, forms dense monocultures that crowd out native plants, disrupt wildlife habitats, and threaten biodiversity. Its spread across Muskoka's ditches, wetlands, and shorelines has become a serious concern.

>>> OUR INVASIVE SPECIES PROGRAM

At Muskoka Conservancy, we've taken action. Our Invasive Species Program focuses on education, early detection, and hands-on removal. Using a method called selective spading, volunteers carefully cut Phragmites stalks below the soil surface during their growth period—before flowering—to prevent regrowth. The stalks are then bagged and left to decompose safely on site.

>>> VOLUNTEERS ARE VITAL TO ACT

This year, extreme heat and poor air quality have made fieldwork difficult. Multiple events were held at the end of July and early August focusing on invasive Phragmites and Purple Loosestrife. We targeted Bert and Mille's, Nelson Head and Indigo Marsh Nature Reserves for this year's efforts so far. Despite these challenges, our volunteers have shown incredible dedication. Their efforts have kept the program alive and impactful, proving that even a small team can make a big difference.

To everyone who has joined us in the field this season: thank you. Your time, energy, and care for Muskoka's environment are deeply appreciated. You are the heart of this program, and your work is helping protect the landscapes we all love.

Another big thank you has to go out to the Land Steward at Bert and Millie's Marsh Nature Reserve, Karen Mason, who has attended almost every cut and is a huge force in making sure this protected area is maintained well.

>>> THE FIGHT CONTINUES

We're always looking for more helping hands. If you're interested in volunteering or supporting our invasive species efforts, please consider joining our invasive species Volunteer squad in 2026 or keep an eye on our social media for open invitations to join us. Together, we can keep Muskoka wild and wonderful.

RESOURCES – KNOWLEDGE IS KEY!

Invasive Species Centre:
<https://www.invasivespeciescentre.ca/>

Learn about invasive species and get
technical information

•Ontario Invasive Plant Council:
<https://www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca/>

Providing expertise for Ontarians to
take action on invasive plants,
report a sighting

A RIPPLE IS ENDLESS

FROM A DROP OF KINDNESS

>>> ANNUAL FUNDRAISER FOR NATURE

This year's Ripple event made quite the splash! The day started with some thunderstorms but come the evening the skies cleared and the energy lingered in the air.

With just over one hundred spirited attendees and \$40,000 raised, Ripple 2025 was a heartfelt success. We're incredibly grateful to everyone who showed up, donated, danced, and made ripples with us. Your support means the world.

This year's new venue for our annual fundraising event brought a refreshing change of scenery, warmly embraced by guests. A huge shoutout to Turtle Jack's for the stunning décor and to Hidden Habitat for the lush greenery that transformed the space into a natural oasis. With a fabulous spread from our hosts and fresh shucked oyster station to get the night going from Stephen's Butcher we were set for a naturally social evening gathering in the name of nature. Familiar faces, new friends and old acquaintances.

The evening flowed beautifully—from a concise and compelling presentation by our Guest Speaker Shelly Spence, Auditor General of Ontario, to the live music that carried us into the night. It was a celebration of community, conservation, and connection. We must thank Mike Olivieri with his guitar and voice for warming up the crowd. We thank the Brightsides as well for bringing the evening to a crest when they heard the crowd for an encore.

Earlier in the night guests perused the silent auction tables. We are so thankful to the numerous item donors. There was definitely some exciting back and forth bidding!

Taking a moment as well here to thank the many staff supporting the evening, volunteers who planned the event, and the sponsor who supported the event. Our hearts are warmed.

Thank you for riding the Ripple with us. Here's to even bigger waves ahead!



WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS!

A FRESH CHAPTER BEGINS...

We're thrilled to announce the appointment of three outstanding individuals to our Board of Directors, officially welcomed during this year's Annual General Meeting. Each brings a unique blend of experience, passion, and dedication to conservation and community, and we couldn't be more excited to have them on board.

>>> MARCIE ANDERSON

Marcie Anderson joins us with a deep-rooted love for Canada's wild spaces, shaped by years of cross-country travel and a career that spanned continents. With a background in management consulting, Marcie has worked closely with leadership teams across diverse industries, helping them navigate the delicate balance between economic growth and environmental stewardship. Her previous board experience with Seneca College, Young People's Theatre, and the Ladies' Golf Club of Toronto adds a wealth of governance insight. A longtime supporter of the Muskoka Conservancy, Marcie is passionate about preserving nature for future generations—and she brings that commitment to every initiative she touches.

>>> VICTOR D'SOUZA

Victor D'Souza, CPA, is a seasoned entrepreneur and board leader with a strong track record in business and conservation. He founded and took public a TSX-listed company and currently chairs Canlan Sports. His board service includes roles with Aspen Valley Wildlife Sanctuary and Festival of the Sound, reflecting his dedication to protecting wildlife and wild lands. With degrees in Biophysics and Finance from Western University and McGill University respectively, Victor blends analytical rigor with a heartfelt commitment to environmental causes. His experience in corporate turnarounds and strategic leadership will be a tremendous asset to our board.

>>> ANNE LINDSAY

Anne Lindsay brings a vibrant energy and grassroots perspective shaped by nearly three decades of environmental education in Muskoka. As a bilingual teacher, Anne transformed science lessons into outdoor adventures, inspiring students to connect with nature. Her community involvement is equally impressive—most recently as Environment Chair of the Lake Vernon Association, where she spearheaded shoreline restoration and multi-stakeholder projects. Anne also played a pivotal role in securing two land trusts for the Muskoka Conservancy, ensuring their protection for generations to come. Her creativity, organizational skills, and ability to rally people around a cause make her a powerful force for conservation.

As we welcome Marcie, Victor, and Anne, we also want to extend our heartfelt thanks to Joanne Smith, who has chosen to retire from her board position while remaining an integral part of our Engagement Committee. Joanne's contributions have left a lasting impact, and we wish her all the best in her next chapter.

With these new additions and the continued dedication of our returning board members, we've never been stronger. The combined expertise, passion, and vision of our board will guide us confidently into the future, as we continue to protect and celebrate the natural beauty that surrounds us. Here's to new beginnings and a thriving future!

GET TO KNOW...

>>> OUR SUMMER STAFF

This summer, we've been fortunate to welcome two passionate and hardworking Conservation Technicians to our team: Cameron McGee and Taylor MacLean.

>>> CAMERON MCGEE

From St. Jacobs, Ontario, he brings a strong background in ecosystem restoration and wildlife assessment. With years of outdoor experience through Scouts Canada and the Canadian Armed Forces Reserves, he's been a key contributor to our invasive species removal and species inventory efforts. Cameron's enthusiasm for gaining hands-on experience is evident in every project he tackles.

>>> TAYLOR MCLEAN

From Corunna, Ontario, she is currently completing her fifth year in Environmental Sustainability at Lakehead University. Her love for Muskoka's natural beauty and her commitment to protecting species-at-risk have made her a natural fit for our conservation initiatives. Whether leading nature quests or helping plan trail signage, Taylor's energy and dedication shine through.

Thanks to the support of the Canada Summer Jobs program, we were able to offer Cameron and Taylor full-time employment from May through the end of August. This program was instrumental in solidifying the resources needed to bring them on board and support their meaningful contributions to our conservation efforts.

Together, they've been busy with trail clean-up days, building bridges, leading nature quests, removing invasive species, conducting species inventories, and assisting with trail planning and signage creation. Their work has made a lasting impact, and we look forward to sharing a wrap-up of their experience in our next issue!

OUR TEAM

Chair: Peter Love

Vice Chair: Elspeth Wood

Treasurer: Martine Brouillet

Directors: Helle Tosine - Laura Thomas

Sue Sedgwick - Samantha Hastings - Bob Weekes

Stephanie Grant - Dana Richardson - Stephen Fahner

Derrick Hammond - Marcie Anderson

Victor D'Souza - Anne Lindsay

OUR STAFF

Executive Director - Scott Young

Conservation Coordinator - Amanda Porter

Engagement & Office Manager - Franceska Downes

Conservation Technician - Cameron McGee

Conservation Technician - Taylor McLean



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