

MUSKOKA
CONSERVANCY



Muskoka Steward

SPRING 2021



Attracting Butterflies to your Yard

Spring is here and wildlife of all types are starting to become active again. Birds are returning, mammals are waking up from hibernation, and flowers are starting to bloom. Flowers in bloom mean that we'll soon be seeing butterflies return. For those of you looking to attract more of our winged jewels, here are a few simple tricks to increase the number of visitors to your yard.

1. Plant native plants. Native species of flowers and shrubs are the best attractants for wildlife of all shapes and sizes. In addition, when species are migrating north, they are looking for plants that they would normally find in Muskoka, not in other areas. So planting species they would commonly find will increase the number of butterflies and birds you have in your yard. Also, make sure to plant a large variety of species to increase the different food types.
2. Plant species that flower in different seasons of the year. Different species of butterflies are active at different times of the year. Our earliest



butterflies are the Compton Tortiseshell and Mourning Cloak, which can be seen as early as March. Butterflies need food throughout the year, so make sure you can provide it for them.

3. Install hummingbird feeders. Not only does this attract our brilliant native Ruby-throated Hummingbird, but I've also seen butterflies feeding from the sugar water. Sugar water can provide a quick, accessible source of energy for some butterflies, especially on days with more extreme weather.

Now that you've got all these butterflies in your yard, how do you go about identifying all of them? There are several really good options for identification, one of the best being iNaturalist. If you can get a photo of the butterfly, post it to iNaturalist and other butterfly enthusiasts will identify it for you. It's a great way to start learning your species and documenting the range of butterflies in Muskoka. There are also several good field guides out there to assist with identification of Ontario butterflies.

Aaron Rusak

For Cottaging Families, Long Weekends are Legendary

Victoria Day weekend has traditionally been a big family weekend at our cottage. We look forward to that time again, when even though there's lots of work to do, everyone shows up to chip in. There's windows to wash, dust and cobwebs to sweep, brush to clear, leaves to rake, and a lot of fun too. We typically have big meals and bonfires, board games and cards, plus the inevitable cold-water challenge: who will take the plunge?

There is a great long-weekend story featuring my father and a few of his favourite things. Back a few decades, Dad was famous for mixing the best Spanish Coffee. He had a big routine for mixing them up that featured a chemical fire known as Sterno. Us kids were endlessly fascinated by the flaming booze! "Me! Me! Can I blow it out!?" Though I never did drink one of Dad's special Coffees, I recall chipping away at the caramelized sugar cooked onto the rims of the brandy snifters, sometimes the next morning (ewww, I know!) Evidently, the coffees were mighty powerful, judging by the late-night laughter and shenanigans. On one such occasion I remember Dad, having distributed beverages to the visiting friends, taking a seat in his favourite swivel-rocker, and in one swift, continuous motion, tumbling the chair backwards and going over in a reverse summersault! That was funny on its own, but what was truly amazing is that Dad, with the grace of an Olympic gymnast completing a gold medal routine, sprung up from behind the prone chair, hoisted his glass and exclaimed: "didn't spill a drop!"

Cottages have a way of building up a cache of incidents that become stories that become better, hairier, and

scarier with each telling. The pure gold, early childhood joy of splashing with siblings at the beach. The smile on Dad's face as he drove his old cedar strip boat with the gigantic green Johnson (Sea Horse!) belching blue smoke. That ill-advised teenage misadventure of tipping the canoe in April. Egad, remember infamous fireworks explosion of 1979? And again (yes, again!) in 2013? Ooh, and the time when the guests stormed off in the middle of the night when the bonfire conversation got out of hand? It is all in the family, and a cottage can be a central feature that binds it all together into a Muskoka family legacy.

Cottages are not simple and a few generations in, it can get ever trickier. But whether we like it or not, Muskoka has a way of becoming so integral to our person that we don't just want to protect it, we feel we must. It becomes a personal imperative.

That is where Muskoka Conservancy comes in. Our organization is dedicated to the long-term protection of Muskoka, and we do that by protecting the very nature of Muskoka—nature itself. Muskoka families are essential to supporting our mission, and we would like to invite more of your family to get on board. Please go to our web site or call us to learn how you can help!

PS: Do you represent a FAMILY FOUNDATION? If so, we want to start a conversation about making nature conservation in Muskoka part of your family legacy. It could be the beginning of a beautiful relationship!

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

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

This year's winner of the Michael Foster Photography Contest is Christine Andrews. We saw a number of stellar entries this year, but Christine's gorgeous photo of an otter was picked from the top three most liked photos on Instagram.

Thank you to everyone who participated this year! This year saw a large number of high quality entries. We had 25 photos from 10 different entrants!



Upcoming Webinars

Muskoka Conservancy's June webinar will be held on June 15th at 10 am. Join David LeGros, Algonquin Park Naturalist, to find out more about these amazing reptiles and some of the findings of the long-term turtle research project that takes place in Algonquin. David will share some insight into the lives of these misunderstood creatures and why we should all want to protect them.

To see our past webinars, you can view the recordings on our website at www.muskokaconservancy.org/webinars.



And the winner of the 2021 Wayland Drew Award is...

Bill Dickinson! Bill is recognized in Muskoka and beyond as one of our best environmental visionaries. Bill is a champion of wilderness, of wetlands, of forests, lakes, and streams with healthy natural shorelines. Bill is a highly knowledgeable field biologist whose personal mission is to share what he knows. Muskoka would be a lesser place without Bill, whose vision, energy, and leadership has impacted so many of us.

Wayland Drew (1932-1998) was a teacher, author, and a passionate advocate for the preservation of wilderness. The driving force behind Earth Day activities, environmental conferences and heritage projects, Drew earned the respect of his peers both locally and in the wider environmental community. In 1991 he received the Lieutenant Governor's Conservation Award for his lifelong work on behalf of the environment.



Janet Dickinson and Dory alongside Bill on Turner Island, Lake Muskoka.

Muskoka Conservancy's Wayland Drew Award recognizes individuals who exemplify environmental leadership by promoting stewardship, conservation, environmental education, or awareness of Muskoka's natural heritage.

Bill Dickinson and Wayland Drew have a lot in common, and there could not be a more deserving recipient of this award. Congratulations Bill!

Volunteer Opportunities

Despite the challenges of the COVID situation, we are still hoping to offer opportunities to volunteer with Muskoka Conservancy this summer. Here are some of the opportunities that will hopefully be available. Note that all these are dependant on COVID restrictions, so will be modified to make sure all health guidelines are being followed.

Starting in June, there are several properties that require a detailed species survey to be conducted. We will be taking volunteers out to these properties to get an accurate idea of the species present. These surveys will most likely take the whole day, but will allow volunteers to increase their identification skills and knowledge of species at risk. No experience is required, just a willingness to get a little dirty.



Invasive species clean up at Bert and Millie's Marsh Nature Reserve



Land Stewards at Aufheben Nature Reserve

Starting in July, we'll be running property monitoring outings to many of our properties. These are yearly surveys to make sure there is no damage done to our properties. The outings will continue for much of the summer and some of the fall and no experience is required.

Throughout the year there are also other volunteer opportunities available like invasive species removal. If you are interested in volunteering with Muskoka Conservancy, email Aaron at arusak@muskokaconservancy.org or call the office at 705-645-7393 ext 200. Hope to see you in the field!

Upcoming Nature Quests

With the current COVID restrictions in place, we've had to postpone all our upcoming Nature Quests. However, we're still planning on holding some in the future, when COVID restrictions begin to ease. Our first of those will be a July Paddle Quest at Lake Vernon. The date and time will be announced later, as we will decide on a date once it becomes clearer when we can hold it. We are looking forward to once again be able to hold our guided tours and we hope everyone finds ways to safely enjoy the outdoors until then.

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.

Aaron Rusak





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

Join MC's AGM on June 11th at 9:30 am

Douglas Tallamy has been described as a quiet revolutionary, an inspiring visionary, and as a leader of one of the great conservation projects of our time. He believes that change starts in our backyards, and that every homeowner can play a part in creating conservation corridors that provide crucial wildlife habitats. It's grassroots conservation; go natural – one yard at a time! Join us on Friday, June 11th at 9:30 AM, when Doug Tallamy will be the featured speaker at Muskoka Conservancy's Zoom-AGM, and learn some practical, effective, and simple steps for taking environmental action in your own backyard. Doug is a professor in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware, and a New York Times best-selling author of three books, *Bringing Nature Home*, *Nature's Best Hope*, and *The Nature of Oaks*. To receive the Zoom invitation to this event, please email info@muskokaconservancy.org or call 705-645-7393.

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Muskoka

