

MUSKOKA
CONSERVANCY



Muskoka Steward

SPRING 2022



Surviving Winter

In winter, the wood frog goes into a state of suspended death. It freezes almost solid on the forest floor, its organs secreting chemicals that super-freeze its cells, squeezing out excess water so damaging ice doesn't form. There is no brain activity or heartbeat.

Then, once the warmer temperatures arrive, the frog thaws and comes back to life. It can be frozen in the morning and hopping away in the afternoon.

It is one of the more unusual ways the wildlife of Muskoka survives the long, cold, quiet winters, where snow can be on the ground for six or seven months and temperatures dropping to as low as -40 Celsius.

David LeGros, chief park naturalist at Algonquin Provincial Park, led around 100 Muskoka Conservancy participants on a virtual Winter Walk in the Woods, on January 18th, to experience the many incredible ways animals deal with the longest, hardest season of the year.

There are three main winter-survival groups in Muskoka. The migrators, like some of us, leave for warmer climes and more abundant food. The energetic tolerators, like deer and moose, stay active throughout the season in their warm fur coats, eating what they can, mostly twigs. Then there are the hibernators, who spend much of the

year preparing to "skip winter," and slumber through the cold and scarce food supply.

The mischievous Eastern chipmunk can't store fat on its body, so it hibernates in a cozy complex burrow, with separate quarters for sleeping, toilet and an immense food store -- as much as three winters worth. In the fall, the chipmunk is busy stocking up, collecting seeds, nuts and berries for its horde. Once winter sets in, its body temperature lowers, metabolism slows, and the chipmunk goes to sleep, waking up periodically to snack.

One of LeGros' favourite winter hibernators is the snake. The cold-blooded reptile has the same body temperature as outside, and finds a crack, crevice or hole below the frostline, more than a metre below the surface, to wait out winter. Some snakes hibernate solo, others in big groups, emerging all at once in the spring.

The air-breathing snapping turtle hibernates in water, under the ice, because they need the oxygen from flowing fresh water. It was thought they hibernated in the mud, holding their breath, but scientists radio-tracked snapping turtles to make this underwater discovery. Snapping turtles still hold their breath under the ice, LeGros said, taking in oxygen through their cloaca -- their bum.

One of Muskoka's biggest mammals, the black bear, famously goes into a big sleep during winter. After eating non-stop in the fall -- as much as 20,000 calories a day -- to put on a thick layer of fat, the bear will find a spot under a fallen tree or in a rocky crevice, to hibernate. LeGros said you can spot a bear's winter den by seeing a hole in the snow surrounded by a dark stain from its breath. Beware getting too close. "They are still with it and can arise in a couple of minutes," LeGros said. When spring comes, the bear emerges thin and hungry, perhaps with a couple of cubs born during hibernation.

And life begins anew.



Deborah Stokes

It's Springtime in Muskoka and the Air is Fresh

Spring is a promising time of year. Melting snow and ice always leave a bit of mess, but the warmish breeze hints at sunnier days to come. Trees are budding. Green plants are pushing up. Spring is a time of possibilities when we have everything to look forward to.

Seasons change and Muskoka Conservancy is changing, too. This spring we are undergoing an organizational transformation that includes both staff and directors. It feels great to embrace these changes, but first we must acknowledge the contributions of those who are parting ways.

It has been a privilege to watch Aaron Rusak become an expert naturalist and a go-to conservation source since he took on the role Land Stewardship Coordinator at Muskoka Conservancy in 2017. From day one, Aaron worked hard and was willing to learn. He embraced Conservancy mentors, sought out additional training on his own, and raised his game at every opportunity. We congratulate Aaron as he leaves to become Protected Areas Manager at Georgian Bay Land Trust. We know he will be a growing force for conservation, and we wish him all the best.

Barb Mason is a director at Muskoka Conservancy and a self-described worker bee, and her contributions have been transformative. Barb's work on engagement saw MC re-examine old ways and try new things. She leaves us with many fresh improvements, such as a gorgeous new web site! On governance, Barb has provided good advice, financial oversight, and even lead an overhaul of the Board's policy manual. Barb added to the positive governance environment we enjoy at Muskoka Conservancy. We thank Barb and wish her well as she starts a new chapter in Nova Scotia.

"...we often look so long and so regretfully upon the closed door, that we do not see the ones which open for us."

- Alexander Graham Bell

Not Muskoka Conservancy, we have taken the opportunity of change to launch an extensive search process that has netted the organization new staff and new leaders in governance. We are beaming with the promise of what is to come.

Our newest directors have only been on board for a few weeks, but are already asking good questions, getting more involved, and contributing time and wisdom in meaningful ways.

Director Joanne Smith studied Ecology at Western University and worked as a secondary school science teacher with a life-long respect and love of the natural world and its protection. Through extensive volunteer work, notably as a director with the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust, Joanne brings a teamwork approach and a focus on environmental health and sustainability. Welcome Joanne!

Helle Tosine brings over 30 years of consulting, government and not-for-profit experience in strategy development, business planning, government service transformation and organization design, risk assessment, and design of governance frameworks. She has extensive experience in implementation planning, risk assessment, change management, organizational design, and team development in the public sector. Welcome Helle!

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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!

Native Plant Sale

Muskoka Conservancy was pleased to announce the return of the Native Plant Sale. COVID has prevented our sale from happening for the past two years, but we were thrilled to bring it back in 2022.

Thank you to everyone who placed orders. By planting native plants who have evolved in this area, you have created a low maintenance environment that helps to improve the habitat of native pollinators, birds and other wildlife.



Upcoming Webinar

Muskoka Conservancy has another webinar coming up in June.

On June 14th, Marg McLaren will be speaking for our Songbird webinar. Spring comes with many amazing noises, and birds are among the most noticeable. Learn more about this topic by joining in on this webinar.

For more information or to register in advance, please contact info@muskokaconservancy.org or call the office at 705-645-7393 ext 200.



April was Earth Month

April was Earth Month. At the Muskoka Conservancy we like to think of every day as Earth Day, but in April there we highlight the ways that you can help to protect the planet.

- Pack it in, pack it out. When you go out on the trails—or any other outing. Make sure any food wrappers and garbage come home with you.
- Walk, bike or take transit to work instead of driving. Bike to work day is May 20th!
- Take a walk to pick up litter. The snow melt has uncovered trash from winter. Go to your favourite area to help clean up.
- Support local conservation efforts. By donating or volunteering, you help to protect the local watershed as well as native plants and wildlife.



Join Us for Our Annual Meeting on June 10th via Zoom

Muskoka Conservancy's Annual meeting (AGM) will be held on Friday June 10th at 9:30 am! During the AGM, we will be discussing updates on conservation efforts, giving awards, electing your board of directors and approving financial statements.

RSVP to info@muskokaconservancy.org

We are happy to welcome our Keynote speaker, Sharma Sapna. As well as our honorary patron, RH Thomson.

Sapna Sharma will be giving her talk:

On Thin Ice: are lakes feeling the heat?

Sapna will show how recording the timing of ice-on and ice-off in lakes worldwide can help us understand how climate is changing and highlight the ecological, cultural, and public health ramifications of losing lake ice.

Sapna is an Associate Professor in the Department of Biology and York Research Chair in Global Change Biology. She studies how lakes worldwide respond to climate change, including rapid ice loss, warming water temperatures, degrading water quality, and changing fish distributions. Sapna is a dedicated science communicator, generating millions of media impressions by clearly conveying complex research, and as founder of SEEDS, an outreach program for refugees.

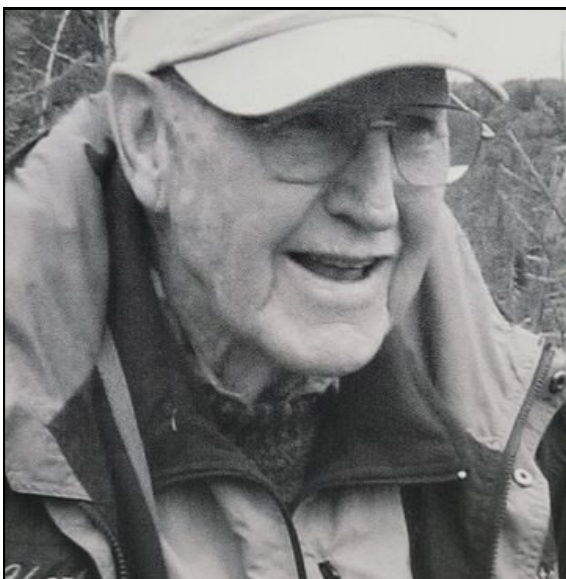


Sapna Sharma, Associate Professor in the Department of Biology

Muskoka Conservancy is a member-based organization, anyone is welcome to attend the meeting, however only members are eligible to vote.

Please make sure that your 2022 membership is active. You can also purchase memberships the website under **Become a Member.**

For any further questions please contact us at info@muskokaconservancy.org or by phone at 705-645-7393.



Charlie Esson Stewardship Bursary Award

Muskoka Conservancy encourages young people to successfully complete a post-secondary school education related to the Natural Sciences (Biology, Forestry, Environmental Studies) or related Technologies (Wildlife, Forestry, Environmental Engineering). In support of this, Muskoka Conservancy is offering a \$2,000 bursary, known as The Charlie Esson Stewardship Bursary, to assist a student in achieving academic qualifications in these disciplines.

Applications can be found on www.muskokaconservancy.org under Awards. Deadline is May 24th at 4pm.

Charles Esson (left) purchased 400 acres of scrub forest in Lake of Bays in 1967, spending much of his time there camping and fishing.

He educated himself on good forest management practices and over 50 years watched the property change from a scrub forest to a woodlot that was recognized as a jewel in the District's woodlands.

He became very involved in local stewardship, and strongly believed in building and planning for the long term. In 1998 he passed the property to his children but remained actively managing it until his death. It was his favourite place in the world.

It's Springtime in Muskoka and the Air is Fresh

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Fresh staff members are just getting started, and we are certain they will soon become go-to sources for nature conservation expertise and advice.

Conservation Coordinator Amanda Porter comes to MC from the U-Links Center for Community Based Research, where she was a field work associate. Amanda has experience working with volunteers from lake associations and land trusts, including biomonitoring fieldwork. She has an advanced diploma in Ecosystem Management Technology from Fleming College, a benthos biomonitoring certificate, and is currently studying amphibian and reptile ecology and identification. We will be pleased to welcome Amanda on May 2.

Our new admin assistant Emily Brown comes to MC with education in fitness, health, and entrepreneurship. Her work experience includes both managerial and administrative responsibilities. She is smart, capable, an excellent communicator and a friendly face to greet visitors who call or visit our office. Emily is already proving to be a valuable addition and a great fit with the MC team. Welcome Emily!

Change is a fact. It can be challenging and tumultuous, but the new energy and renewal is worth it. Good people have helped bring us this far, and we wish them all the best. We look forward to days ahead with fresh perspectives and spring in our step.

Scott Young



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

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VICE PRESIDENT	JANE YOUNG
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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	SCOTT YOUNG
CONSERVATION COORDINATOR	AMANDA PORTER
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT	EMILY BROWN

Thank you to our official partners!

UNIQUE
Muskoka

