

MUSKOKA
CONSERVANCY



Muskoka Steward

SUMMER 2022



Photo Credit: Kayley Amo
Michael Foster Photography Award Winner 2022

Damselfs and Dragons

Summer is the best time to observe dragonflies and damselfies! By taking a trip to a nearby wetland, lake or river you will see these highly agile predators.

Although the preferred habitat of dragons and damselfs is near water, you will find them anywhere they can find bugs to eat – not a difficult task with Muskoka’s mosquitos! The Muskoka Field Naturalists have recorded 110 species, of those 77 were dragonflies and 33 damselfies around Muskoka.

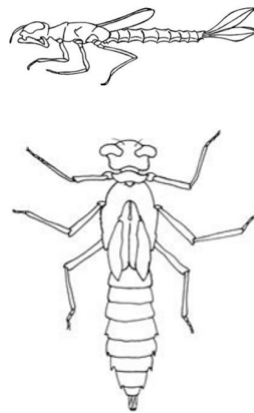


What are the similarities and differences of damselfies and dragonflies? Both insects are in the order Onodota, and aquatic during their larva stage but terrestrial as adults.



In their adult forms you will notice differences such as, the damselfies are more slender and hold their wings together behind their bodies. In comparison, dragonflies who have chunkier bodies and hold their wings to the side.

In their larvae forms, damselfs also have more slender bodies where dragons are chunkier. There are also differences at the tip of their abdomen, damselfs with three gills that resemble tails and dragons with a single tip that is capable of jet propulsion.



Dragonflies and damselfies spend most of their lives in the larva stage, hunting along the floors of lakes and streams. They will molt 5-15 times, growing bigger each time, until they are fully grown. They will spend 1-2 years in the water growing, sometimes up to 5 years.

When warm weather comes in spring and early summer, this signals larvae to emerge from the water and molt into their final stage as a terrestrial adult. This final stage is short, with the adults living only a few weeks or at longest, a couple of months.

During their time as adults they mate and lay eggs to continue the cycle. As shown, damselfies often form a heart shape during mating—because they love each other so much!



Earning Your Time with Loon Babies

Summer in Muskoka is gorgeous! I love it. No big secret, right? Who doesn't love a summer in Muskoka?

A lot of my friends and family who love Muskoka also love their power boats, and I get it. It's a thrill to go thundering over the waves, or to zip off to town to grab a grocery item with the sun on your shoulders and the wind in your hair. The kids love it even more. Let's face it, it really does feel good to go for a ride.

On the other hand, in Muskoka there is a fine balance between noisy action and peaceful quiet.

Remember back in the eighties when the Jet Ski was first introduced to Muskoka? The first thrill for every rider went like this:

1. Find a quiet bay
2. check to see that small children are playing in the water
3. note the elderly snoozing on hammocks in the shade
4. ensure there were plenty of baby loons nearby
5. burn out in circles over-and-over again. For hours. In the same spot.

But over time, things got better. Riders matured and the idiot factor started to go down. People started cruising, like the Sea Doo was the water version of a motorcycle. Then came the 4-stroke engines and the machines became quieter and cleaner.

Then came Safe Quiet Lakes and their Boater's Code which set a welcome standard for ethically sharing our water ways (Go to: <https://safequiet.ca/our-initiatives/boaters-code/>).

Things were really looking good for a while.

Lately, though, have you noticed some erosion of that progress? I've heard plenty of theories that near shore Sea Doo madness is connected to short-term rentals. In other words, visitors who have no long-term interest in neighbourly relations think nothing of how their actions impact others trying to enjoy the lake. Could be.

Or maybe there's a broader explanation. Are toxic levels of individualism eroding the concept of collective wellbeing? Has the freedom-loving streak in democratic society tilted toward destructive selfishness? That seems plausible.

Under the circumstances, there's only a couple viable options. You could talk to your rodeo riding neighbour, but unless you are an extraordinary diplomat, that will be uncomfortable, and it might even backfire. Even if it works, that neighbour may be replaced with a new neighbour next week.

So, here's my recommendation: get the Boater's Code noted above. Share it with the people around you, especially your neighbours who rent their cottage. Make sure it is posted at all the boat ramps in your area. Then, seek out a quiet place in a soft spot when the Sea Doo factor is low (the lake will be teeming with loon babies!) and simply chill out. Mornings, for example. Even better, a Tuesday morning. A Tuesday morning is gold, and you earned it.

Scott Young, Executive Director

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!

Nature Quests

We have had the pleasure of running two Nature Quest hikes this summer with Conservation Coordinator Amanda, and Program Coordinator Ayden leading the way.

One at Upjohn NR, where participants learned about Muskoka's turtles and kept an eye out for them along the ponds.



For the evening quest at Bert and Millie's Marsh NR, participants learned about invasive species and the importance of wetlands. This property is normally closed to the public, making this a great opportunity to see the marshy Nature Reserve with an expert guide.



Paddle Quests

Our July Paddle Quest at Lake Vernon had participants head out to Kitty's Wish NR and nearby Robinson Lake NR.



All ages joined in the paddle and the participants ended up with great weather for their paddle. Thank you to volunteer Sue Sedgwick for helping to lead this adventure. A second quest was lead on Lake Muskoka to Muskoka River Delta NR and J.P. McVittie NR. Thank you to all who attended!



Invasive Species Removal

This summer we had two invasive species management days for volunteers to join us on Bert and Millie's Marsh Nature Reserve removing two invasive phragmites stands growing there.

The volunteers (Thank you!) helped MC's staff Amanda and Ayden in digging and cutting these stands, and then putting the vegetation into black garbage bags for a couple of months to "solarize". This makes the plant unviable and therefore cannot continue to grow.

The invasive phragmites spread aggressively, quickly outcompeting native species for water and nutrients. These plants grow underground by roots via rhizomes (shown right), and through seed dispersal. The hard work is shown below.



Before



After



Fishing Line Recycling Program

Muskoka Conservancy has launched a fishing line recycling program. The pilot program will test three locations for anglers to recycle line, two in Bracebridge and one in Gravenhurst.

The program launch was held at The Wharf in Bracebridge Bay Park, a popular fishing location, and was attended by Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, Graydon Smith, and Bracebridge Deputy Mayor, Steve Clement.

“With 1.5 million anglers in Ontario there is a lot of fishing line that can be disposed of improperly,” said Ayden Veitch, Program Coordinator at the Muskoka Conservancy. “Now with the new line recycling program, fishing line can be disposed of properly.”

The other two locations will be the George Road boat launch and the boat launch at the Gravenhurst Wharf. If the pilot project is successful, Muskoka Conservancy would like to expand the program across Muskoka.

During the year the old, worn out, and tangled fishing line will be collected in distinctive white recycling tubes. At the end of the year Muskoka Conservancy will collect the fishing line and send it to Berkley Fishing for recycling.



Ayden Veitch, with Fishing Line Recycling tube

Once Berkley Fishing receives the fishing line, they melt it down into plastic pellets and turn it into new plastic products, such as fish habitats.

For any further questions please contact

info@muskokaconservancy.org or by phone at 705-645-7393

Seth&Theresa Mersky with Karen&Don Lang in front of Highland's Island NR



Celebration of Success!

Over 3,000 feet of natural shoreline will be protected forever in one of Lake Rosseau's busy bays, thanks to the generosity of the Lang and Mersky families. Muskoka Conservancy hosted a small champagne toast on Sunday to celebrate the recently donated Highlands Island Nature Reserve, located near Minett.

“Highlands Island Nature Reserve is about 25 acres with over 3,000 feet of waterfront,” says Scott Young of Muskoka Conservancy. “What makes Don and Karen Lang and Seth and Theresa Mersky extremely special is that their lots were zoned for development. They purposely chose to protect nature over the millions of dollars they could have gained by selling the land on the open market.”

Muskoka Conservancy now owns the property and is in the process of rezoning it environmentally protected. While the Conservancy protects 49 conservation prop-

erties in all corners of Muskoka, this is its first property on Lake Rosseau. “Hopefully just the beginning,” says Young. “This is an example for other landowners that you do have a choice.”

Highlands Island had once been the subject of a development proposal featuring 14 to 20 cottage lots ringing its shores. To prevent this, Lang and Mersky purchased the island and divided it into 6 lots, donating the two largest to the nature conservancy. Four cottage lots are located along the southwest shore in areas previously developed by cottagers.

Conserving natural shoreline protects against erosion, benefitting water quality and the overall health of Muskoka's lakes. It provides habitat for fish and other wildlife, and is cherished by neighbouring cottagers who enjoy natural views and reduced boat traffic.

“Our members greatly appreciate what Don and Seth have done here,” said Nick Nicalao, president of the Royal Muskoka Island Association.

Joining in the celebration were Don and Karen Lang with son Trevor and partner Nadreyh; Seth and Theresa Mersky with son Zane and wife Katherine; Muskoka Lakes Councillor Barb Bridgeman, Nick and Sue Nicolaou and Bob Peacock from the Royal Muskoka Island Association; and from Muskoka Conservancy, Director Peter Love, Executive Director Scott Young, long-time volunteer Allyn Abbott, and local supporter Julie Vaughan Sharpe.

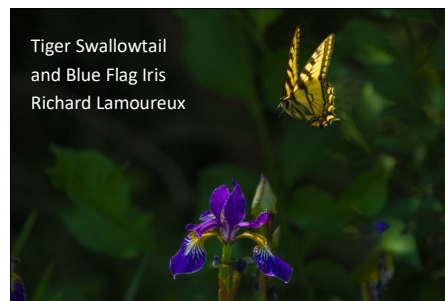
Michael Foster Photography Contest

And the winner is.....

Kayley Amo!

We loved all the submissions. Thank you to all that participated!

Other honourable mentions:



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
VICE PRESIDENT	ELSPETH WOOD
TREASURER	PETER LOVE

DIRECTORS

JOHN BURTON	SUE SEDGWICK	MARLENE MCBRIEN
ELSPETH WOOD	JOANNE SMITH	PETER LOVE
HELLE TÖSINE	LAURA THOMAS	

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
CONSERVATION COORDINATOR	AMANDA PORTER
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT	EMILY BROWN
SUMMER PROGRAMMING	AYDEN VEITCH

Thank you to our official partner!

UNIQUE
Muskoka