



# MINESING REEDS

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF MINESING WETLANDS

Volume 37

Spring 2013

## New Focus for Friends

Since being founded almost 15 years ago, Friends of Minesing Wetlands has provided an important foundation in having local residents as well as visitors to the region acknowledge the importance of this unique, internationally significant wetland habitat. FOMW was formed as part of a comprehensive management plan of the wetlands undertaken by the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority. The Minesing Wetlands are recognized under the RAMSAR convention.

Visitors to various access points of the Minesing Wetlands may enjoy marked trails, interpretive signage, viewing platforms, or canoe route launch facilities. This kind of infrastructure has been made possible by the efforts of volunteers who have been involved with FOMW. As the demand for accessing natural areas increases, and as effects of development and other pressures increase, the pace of FOMW activities

must also continue. The group undertakes fundraising activities, encourages awareness at community and environment-based events, and hosts excursions into the Wetlands, including canoe and snowshoe tours.



**FOMW Directors met this past season to discuss priorities and new projects.**

In recent months, FOMW directors have been putting efforts into a long-envisioned plan to improve accessibility along the Mad River. Canoe access and trail establishment are two key goals of the plan, which will start being implemented in spring 2013. With this new focus, FOMW is looking forward to attracting new

volunteers who can lend a hand with project tasks, marketing, and liaising with other community groups.

For more information on the Mad River project, or to become involved in this project or other initiatives, please contact Chair Adam Scott at [ascott@nvca.on.ca](mailto:ascott@nvca.on.ca) or call 705-424-1479.

## KEEPING YOU INFORMED

FOMW meets on the third Tuesday of each month at Tiffin Centre. All members and interested public are welcome to attend to keep up to date on current initiatives and see about becoming involved in various projects.

Look for FOMW at the Reel Paddling Film Festival March 22 and 23 at the Uptown Theatre, 55 Dunlop St. in Barrie. Hosted by the Barrie Canoe & Kayak Club, the event will showcase the best paddling films of the year. Please visit [www.bckc.ca](http://www.bckc.ca) for more information.

### Inside this issue:

New Focus for Friends	1
Keeping you Informed	1
A Wetland for All Seasons: Ecotourism	2
Partnering with NCC	2
Creature Feature: Lake Sturgeon	3
Upcoming Events	3
Advocating for the Nottawasaga River	4
Membership Information	4

For more information on the Minesing Wetlands or for Friends of Minesing Wetlands membership information, please contact the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority 8195 Line 8, Utopia, ON, L0M 1T0, (705) 424-1479  
*please visit [minesingwetlands.ca](http://minesingwetlands.ca)*



### Your Directors

Adam Scott	<b>Chair</b>
Jim Anderson	<b>Vice-Chair</b>
Byron Wesson	<b>Acting Secretary</b>
Byron Wesson	<b>NVCA Liaison</b>
Richard Bowering, Tina DesRoches, Harold Parker,	<b>Directors-at-Large</b>
Lyle Wood	

## A Wetland for All Seasons

It is said that the best way to appreciate nature is to get out in it! A not-for-profit group, the Friends of Minesing Wetlands (FOMW) promotes awareness of the importance of protecting the treasured Minesing Wetlands, including providing recreational opportunities to experience firsthand what a wetland is and how it can be enjoyed.

Examples include paddling in the summer, snowshoeing in the winter and year-round bird watching. The meandering Willow Creek is a great entry point for paddlers looking to explore the wetlands during the spring floods or any time during the summer months when the flora and fauna of the wetlands are at their most wondrous. A hike along the Ganaraska Trail is also a great way get into the wetlands by foot and provides expansive views of the wetland complex. A visit to Historic Fort Willow will enlighten visitors about the culturally significant role the site played in the area's history.

The cold, frozen months of winter are a unique time to explore the wetlands. Whether by snowshoes, skis, or on foot, care and precaution should be taken when exploring the area in winter because ice conditions can be variable year to year. There are several access points that can provide winter adventurers the

opportunity to enjoy the peaceful, frozen landscape and spot winter migratory birds to the area including the Snowy Owl, Bald Eagles, and flocks of Snow Buntings.



*Friends Corne, Sean, and Patti are ready to enjoy the day exploring the Minesing Wetlands by snowshoe.*

The Minesing Wetlands is a year-round mecca for bird watchers because of the great diversity of bird life that uses the wetlands as breeding grounds during the spring or as a corridor during migration to areas further south or north of Central Ontario.

A sensitive area of great ecological and social importance, the Minesing Wetlands need to be respected. Because of the value that these wetlands play in the health of our everyday lives through essential flood and erosion control, nutrient recycling, and biodiversity, safe, responsible recreation is encouraged within the boundaries.

Conservation lands, managed by the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA), are open to the public for a small fee of \$2 per person per visit. The area may be safely enjoyed by guided tours organized by FOMW. Please contact FOMW and NVCA for information regarding ecotourism and other cultural activities for any season.

*Submitted by Sean Rootham*

## Upcoming Projects: Partnering with NCC

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) plans to acquire for conservation a 180 acre (73 hectare) property at the southeast border of the Minesing Wetlands.

NCC must raise \$87,500 to complete this purchase in mid-2013. Once acquired by NCC, ownership of the property will be transferred to Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) and cooperatively managed for continued conservation and public access.

Donations for this ambitious project may be made by cheque, stock transfer or credit. Cheques should be made payable to "Nature Conservancy of Canada" and mailed to 400-36 Eglinton Avenue West, Toronto, ON, M4R 1A1. Please indicate either in the memo portion of your cheque, or in a note accompanying your donation, that your gift is for "Minesing Wetlands."

For more information, please contact Kristyn Ferguson at [kristyn.ferguson@natureconservancy.ca](mailto:kristyn.ferguson@natureconservancy.ca).



## Creature Feature: Lake Sturgeon

The Minesing Wetlands is a hub of ecological activity in the Nottawasaga Valley Watershed. The Nottawasaga River is the main watercourse in the system that collects water from an array of tributary rivers and creeks from across the watershed. The Nottawasaga River eventually drains into Georgian Bay and Lake Huron, but not before it reaches the Minesing Wetlands, where several important wetland functions and processes happen.

For people living in the watershed, the functions and processes that the Minesing Wetlands perform are extremely valuable and beneficial to society. These include flood attenuation, erosion control, nutrient cycling, recreational opportunities, habitat for wildlife, and acting as a corridor for animals moving to areas further north or south.

When you think of movement corridors you might typically think of large flocks of waterfowl congregating on the open wetlands, or other bird species migrating to summer or winter mating grounds, or land animals like deer using the connected forests for foraging. One of the least-known species that uses the Minesing Wetlands as a movement corridor is the endangered Lake Sturgeon.

An ancient fish species of the Great Lakes, the Lake Sturgeon has suffered great population losses due to overfishing and lack of suitable spawning habitat. This great fish can reach up to three meters in length and weigh greater than 150 kilograms with a life span that matches that of humans.

The Nottawasaga River has been identified as important spawning grounds for Lake Sturgeon. Every year the select few that are capable of reproducing will instinctively travel upstream in hopes of carrying on their lineage. The success of this exercise is greatly dependant on the safe passage up the river and the quality of the water conditions.



Fisheries Biologists Fred Dobbs of the NVCA (left) and Jeff Spears from the MNR handle a Lake Sturgeon at the mouth of the Nottawasaga River in Wasaga Beach. Conservation efforts are attempting to better understand how this Species at Risk use the river for spawning.

The Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority has been tracking Lake Sturgeon spawning habits in an effort to better understand the life history and dynamics at play between the Lake Sturgeon and its environment. The Minesing Wetlands is an important piece of this puzzle because they act as a natural filter of human pollutants and excess nutrients that can determine the health and reproduction success of this endangered species.

Conservation efforts rely on stewardship and good science, which can stem from an understanding of the processes and connections between man and nature. So the next time you pass by the Minesing Wetlands or any river in your neighbourhood, think of the connections between what you are seeing and the benefits that protecting these treasures are for yourself and threatened species such as the Lake Sturgeon.

*Submitted by Sean Rootham*

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### Minesing Wetlands 2013 Spring Canoe Tour

The popular, annual FOMW Spring Canoe Tours are scheduled for Saturday, March 30th and Saturday, April 6th. Follow the Willow Creek through the flooded wetlands to the Nottawasaga River. The exit point is always a surprise! Fee is \$15 per person, plus \$5 for a day pass for non-members.

*Pre-registration is mandatory. Please supply your own canoe and safety equipment.*

Please contact:  
**Adam Scott**  
705-424-1479 x259  
or [ascott@nvca.on.ca](mailto:ascott@nvca.on.ca)



### FOMW Roadside Cleanup

Friends of Minesing Wetlands do their part each spring to keep local roadsides free of refuse. All members and friends are encouraged to do their part and "pitch in" to maintain George Johnston Rd., north and south of the canoe access point. Please meet there on Saturday, May 4th at 9am.

# A River Runs Through It: Advocating for the Nottawasaga River

AWARE Simcoe, a citizens' group that works to protect water and farmland, has launched a petition to ask the federal government to list the Nottawasaga River under new legislation.

Until December, 2012, each and every Canadian had the right to travel on 40,000 lakes and 2.5 million rivers across the land. Last year we lost these ancient rights, born of a long history of travelling the waterways. The federal Conservative government's omnibus budget bill abolished the Navigable Waters Protection Act and replaced it with the Navigation Protection Act, which applies only to a list of 97 lakes and 63 rivers.

The Nottawasaga River is not on that list. We feel it belongs there. It is a key Southern Ontario waterway running through Dufferin, Grey and Simcoe Counties. Wasaga Beach, located where the Nottawasaga flows into Lake Huron after passing through the internationally recognized Minesing Wetlands, is the world's longest freshwater beach.

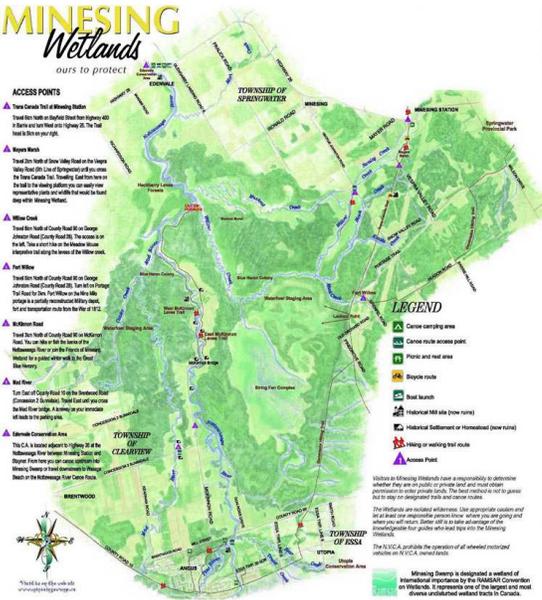
From the time the first humans reached its shores, the Nottawasaga River has been a vital travel corridor. Fishing, trade, exploration, war, commerce, science, recreation — the placid currents of the river have carried people intent on all these pursuits, leading many to find their place in history. Navigation on the Nottawasaga has played a central role in the economic activity of the region.

Of course, the river is much more than a transportation route: it nurtures countless species of plant and animal life whose well-being is directly linked to our own in ways we are just beginning to realize.

Sign the petition and ask Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Transport Minister Denis Lebel to extend full protection under the Navigation Protection Act to the Nottawasaga River.

For more information, please visit [aware-simcoe.ca](http://aware-simcoe.ca).

By Anne Learn Sharpe  
and Kate Harries



Are you interested in becoming a “Friend of Minesing Wetlands?” Do you frequently visit the Minesing Wetlands, or would someone you know appreciate the gift of a membership and annual pass? Funds raised are directed to the Conservation Lands Reserve. Members receive an annual pass for all Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority lands, and receive “Minesing Reeds” (by post or by email). Memberships are valid for the current calendar year.

*Please check the appropriate box for your pass and membership category:*

- \$20 for an individual      \$50 for a family      \$200 for a Club      \$400 for a corporation

*Please return this form, with a cheque payable to Friends of Minesing Wetlands, to the N.V.C.A., 8195 Line 8, Utopia, ON, L0M 1T0.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address/Phone/email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_