



MINESING REEDS

NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF MINESING WETLANDS

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A Public Evening of Science and Stewardship

Friends of Minesing Wetlands presents a special event this fall, hosted at the Tiffin Centre for Conservation. On Thursday, November 13th, the public is welcome to attend a series of presentations from local specialists in various fields of conservation.

Following a welcome by Naomi Saunders, FOMW Chair, NVCA Ecologist Dave Featherstone provides an ecological overview on the Minesing Wetlands. Chris Evans, President of the Brereton Field Naturalists will introduce attendees to the unique Hine's Emerald dragonfly. NVCA

Hydrogeologist Ryan Post gives a presentation on the hydrogeology of the Wetlands, followed by a discussion by FOMW's Sean Rootham on forest decline. The evening includes information on stewardship presented by Sarah Campbell in the NVCA Stewardship department before wrapping up with an opportunity to ask questions and engage with the speaker panel.

The event starts at 6:30pm. With limited seating available, pre-registration is encouraged. Please contact Naomi Saunders to RSVP: nsaunders@nvca.on.ca.

Join Friends of Minesing Wetlands for an evening of presentations about the Minesing Wetlands that will inform and inspire.

Annual Curling Funspiel

Friends of Minesing Wetlands combines work and play with their annual AGM and curling funspiel Saturday, November 1st at the Stroud Curling Club. The evening starts at 6:30pm and participants will enjoy a night of curling, yummy food, prizes, a cash bar, and learn about this important ecological area. Entry is \$100 per team of four, or \$25 per individual registrant, and all proceeds are directed to conservation efforts in the Minesing Wetlands. Call Naomi Saunders to register your team: 705-424-1479, ext. 263.



KEEPING YOU INFORMED

On Sunday October 19th, approximately 75 people came to the Minesing Wetlands for an educational talk and hike at the Meadow Mouse Trail, located just off the Willow Creek canoe launch on George Johnson Road. The organizer was Climate Action Now, an environmental group in Barrie, along with Midhurst Ratepayers Association. The topic was a shared concern for the Midhurst Development Plan. Speakers included Ontario Green Party leader Mike Schreiner, Gary Christie from the Nottawasaga Steelheaders, the Brereton Field Naturalist Club and the Friends of Minesing Wetlands. Just as children along for the hike took it upon themselves to collect milkweed pods and disperse seeds in the wind (their intention to help set the seeds needed for next year's new growth of host plants for the Monarch Butterfly along with other species in need of food), the information shared among adults is also the setting of seeds in the minds of local citizens on how ecologically significant this habitat is and that the need to preserve it is paramount.

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For more information on the Minesing Wetlands or for Friends of Minesing Wetlands membership information, please contact the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority
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Opinions expressed in these articles are solely those of the authors.

Mad River South – New Property Acquisition

Nestled between County Rd. 10 and the western bank of the Mad River is a property that will take you by surprise. Upon first glance you'll see some species such as Manitoba Maple and Chicory which are typical of disturbed areas. If you walk a few feet further you'll find tire tracks along a rough "driveway" that leads to a place where more than a few people have dumped some garbage over the years. Next to that is a patch of Garlic Mustard, a non-native invasive species that invades forest habitats. However, hiding behind those first several meters of landscape threats and concerns is something truly remarkable: a completely undisturbed, flooded deciduous swamp with standing water year-round with towering Silver Maple and Green Ash trees dominating the canopy.



There may not be a more peaceful moment in time than standing smack in the middle of a largely inaccessible, totally flooded swamp. It's just you, the trees, the rippling water, and the birdsong. Along the eastern boundary of the property, which follows the Mad River for some time, frogs hop delightedly from lushly vegetated riverbanks and garter snakes slither through the tall grasses. Belted Kingfisher swoop across the river and evidence of small and large mammals (e.g. porcupine, deer, red squirrels) are everywhere, from tracks in the snow in February to tiny paw prints imprinted in the moist soil in the late summer. In a larger landscape context this amazing swamp provides a nearly direct connection to the heavily forested Base Borden to the south.

Now that so much of the Minesing Wetlands has been successfully conserved, the Nature Conservancy of Canada has focused some effort in securing parcels such as these which will ensure that the Minesing Wetlands will remain part of the larger forest and swamp complexes in the area rather than just a discrete island of green. The deal to purchase these 86 acres, known as the Mad River South property, closed on July 31, 2014. This property will be transferred to NCC's partner the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority for continued management under the joint Property Management Plan.

Submitted by Kristyn Ferguson, The Nature Conservancy of Canada

Hunting Orchids in the Minesing Wetlands

As an intern with the Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC), I often find myself walking a fine line between work and play. Even the toughest days are balanced by the realization that my workplace typically consists of wetlands, grasslands and forests. A couple of interesting days in the Minesing Wetlands this past July represent the perfect example of this ongoing "struggle" (and I use that word lightly).

This is a short "day in the life of" story for anyone out there interested in pursuing conservation science as a career path, in the hopes that it will keep you motivated.

My supervisor, Kristyn Ferguson, informed me one day of some upcoming field work in the Minesing Wetlands. Work in Minesing is certainly nothing new but the goal of this particular adventure was to locate and map endangered orchids in the heart of the wetland complex!

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Minesing Wetlands Property Management Plan

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) and Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA) are pleased to announce the completion of the 2014 – 2019 Minesing Wetlands Property Management Plan (PMP). This plan was a collaborative effort led by these two groups which included input from a variety of sources including NCC staff, NVCA staff, and the Minesing Management Committee.

The new plan was built based on excellent experiences and knowledge gained while implementing the 2009 – 2014 Minesing Wetlands PMP. The plan includes recognition of a number of key conservation targets for the Minesing Wetlands such as Deciduous Swamp Forests, Open Fens and Reptiles and Amphibians. The plan also recognizes key threats to the conservation of these targets including aquatic invasive species such as

Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*) and incompatible recreational activity such as ATVs on conservation lands. Finally, the plan prescribes a remarkable list of thirty conservation actions to be implemented over the next five years by NCC,

NVCA and our incredible group of partners, volunteers and supporters who are tireless in their efforts to help maintain and improve the condition of the Minesing Wetlands. These actions include a number of ways for volunteers to get involved, such as participating in annual Marsh Monitoring programs, bird monitoring, and streambank stabilization and restoration initiatives. NCC and NVCA are confident that this plan will be an excellent means to deliver key stewardship work, as well as public outreach and communication, and the building and maintenance of valuable partnerships.

TD Tree Days: Volunteers in Action

On September 14, more than 100 volunteers came out to help plant 789 native trees in the Minesing Wetlands, a 15,000 acre internationally significant wetland. The planting, which was part of TD Tree Days, will help enhance bird, fish and wildlife habitat in the Nottawasaga watershed and work to reverse the forest loss.

“The Minesing Wetlands are an ecological gem, and I am so excited to join my colleagues and members of the community to help with this important work,” shared volunteer Site Leader, Suzanne Philbin, branch manager at TD Canada Trust in Barrie. Since TD Tree Days launched in 2010, over 135,000 trees have been planted nationwide.

“We are grateful to have the generous funding support of TD Tree Days, the volunteers and other partners like Not So Hollow Farm Tree Nursery, which donated 29 trees for the event,” said Shannon Stephens, NVCA’s Healthy Waters Program coordinator.

NVCA is already looking ahead to the spring 2015 tree planting season. Landowners interested in planting should call now to ensure the most appropriate tree species are available. Cost-share funding is available for eligible projects. For details contact Shannon Stephens at 705-424-1479 x239 or ssstephens@nvca.on.ca.



Hunting Orchids (cont'd)

To provide a bit of background, I grew up in Barrie, about 10 minutes east of the wetlands. I accidentally discovered the beauty of Minesing a few years ago while searching for a close location for a spring canoe adventure. I've since been fascinated with the jaw-dropping beauty of the place and I'm always happy to find an excuse to return.

The first morning of our two-day orchid hunting trek started like most other days in the field. I met with the rest of the team, which included Kristyn and myself from NCC, Jessica Poole from the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters and Dave Featherstone from the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority. We took our time to gear up and check our maps. We hiked on a small trail into a beautiful patch of woodlands and quickly began our downhill descent.

Once you reach the swamp forest that borders Minesing, you quickly realize why they call it a wetland: ground turns to mud; mud turns to puddles; puddles turn to pools; and pools quickly turn into hidden ponds disguised as root hummocks and dense vegetation. At this point, the struggle is real! Tripping and falling was inevitable and each of us had our own soaker at least once.

Walking last in line became a luxury, both for seeing the safe footsteps made by those ahead and for avoiding the embarrassment of the occasional stumble. We took the odd short break to catch our breath and get our directional bearings, but not long enough to let the clouds of Minesing mosquitoes carry us away. Our hike consisted of roughly a kilometre of this intense hiking until the dense swamp forest slowly started to thin out and new, interesting life began to emerge.



Tamarack Forest (Photo by NCC)

As the forest thinned, we approached the fen ecosystem in the complex that we'd aimed to monitor that day. Fens are groundwater-fed wetlands that host a variety of interesting plant species. While walking on a fen, you are essentially held up by a dense floating mat of slowly decaying vegetation. One jump sends a ripple through the mat in all directions, like a hard trampoline. It's a lot of fun until the first time your leg plunges through a hole in the mat, giving you a quick wake-up call of what you're actually standing on!



Eastern prairie white-fringed orchid (Photo by NCC)

Upon entering the fen, we were first greeted by an array of pitcher plants, buckbean, stunted tamaracks and a variety of orchid species. The last of these was on the mind of everyone in the group. In particular, we were curious whether we'd find a certain species — the eastern prairie white-fringed orchid (EPWO). Populations of this endangered species are few and far between, since their ideal wetland habitat is in decline. Minesing is somewhat of an EPWO stronghold in Ontario, which is why there is a need to monitor the population to ensure its health and longevity.

At the sight of the open fen, my competitive side began to kick in. I had to be the first to find one! We spread out in a line and began a northward march across the thin band of open wetland, searching for signs of our elusive orchid. Dave was the first to spot one. Then another. And another. It was clear we were in EPWO territory now and we were all on high alert.

It wasn't long before we had each spotted a handful and could relax a bit. I decided that I had to take some pictures, as the orchids are a real sight to see. In my mind, each individual flower resembles a little person with long fingers and toes. Orchid flowers always have such interesting shapes and resemblances!

The trip was a success, having documented approximately 60 individual orchids over the two days and gaining the experience of a lifetime. Though I've tried, it's hard putting the experience into words. If you've never had the opportunity to explore a large intact wetland like Minesing, it is well worth it. Be prepared for bugs, tired legs and directional disorientation; but also for the opportunity to experience the quiet beauty of unique untouched ecosystems and the beautiful and rare life that they hold.

Editor's Note: When entering wilderness areas such as the Minesing Wetlands, make a plan, go with a partner, and carry any navigational or emergency equipment required. Please be reminded that access to certain areas of the Minesing Wetlands—including the fen—is limited to scientific research purposes. Following established trails or taking an organized tour is recommended. Please contact FOMW or NVCA for more information.

*Submitted by Mike Francis
This post originally appeared on www.LandLines.ca,
the blog of the Nature Conservancy of Canada*

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 NVCA c/o Friends of Minesing Wetlands,
to the N.V.C.A., 8195 Line 8, Utopia, ON, L0M 1T0.*

Name _____

Address/Phone/email _____

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