



NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF MINESING WETLANDS

**Friends of
Minesing
Wetlands
Snowshoe
Hikes**

SATURDAY,
FEBRUARY 28TH,
2026 @ 9 AM

TO REGISTER, EMAIL FOMWEVENTS@GMAIL.COM



IN THIS ISSUE:

SNOWSHOE HIKE!

28 FEB @ 9 AM

SIGN UP!

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GANARASKA TRAIL

Learn about this amazing trail in this issue.

IN MEMORIAM

Remembering Harold Parker, a long time Friend of the Minesing Wetlands.

BYRON WESSON

Honouring Byron as he retires from a life of service to the NVCA.

PHOTO PAGE

Shots from MWL!

THE GANARASKA HIKING TRAIL

By Kyra Howes

Seasonal spring flooding, challenging terrain, and mosquitoes seemingly capable of carrying away a small dog can make Minesing Wetlands difficult to access at certain times of year. High water levels throughout the wetland make hiking trails a challenge. The Ganaraska Hiking Trail, however, offers an excellent alternative, skirting the southern edge of the wetland and providing reliable, year-round access.

Often considered the Bruce Trail's younger sibling, the Ganaraska Hiking Trail was officially established in 1968. Stretching more than 500 kilometres, it winds from the Niagara Escarpment north to Midland, through Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Provincial Park, and south to Port Hope, showcasing a wide range of Southern Ontario landscapes along the way.

Marked using a system similar to the Bruce Trail, distinctive blazes guide hikers confidently along the route and into their next adventure.

The [Mad River/Barrie sections](#) of the Ganaraska Hiking Trail pass through open fields and forested areas, offering hikers a safe, well-marked route and a glimpse into the natural wonders of Minesing Wetlands. With few trails leading directly into the wetland itself, this section provides a valuable opportunity to experience the landscape while avoiding the challenges of navigating sensitive terrain.

Much of the Ganaraska Hiking Trail crosses private property, alongside sections that pass through lands owned by the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Simcoe County Forest, and the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority. Staying on the marked trail helps protect these lands by reducing disturbance to sensitive habitats and limiting the spread of invasive species, which can be unintentionally carried on footwear and gear. To help protect these lands and maintain ongoing access, hikers are encouraged to stay on the marked trail and respect private property boundaries. The Ganaraska Trail Association leads regularly scheduled hikes throughout the year; visit their [events calendar](#) to learn more about upcoming hikes in the area.

Keep an eye on Friends of Minesing Wetlands page on Facebook for details on Friends-led activities, including upcoming snowshoe hikes and soon to be announced spring paddle dates!

KEY BIODIVERSITY AREAS AND MINESING (CONT'D)

By David Featherstone

The east portion of Minesing Wetlands (west of George Johnston Road) has been identified as a candidate KBA based on Endangered species present in this area. The Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority, Nature Conservancy Canada and Friends of Minesing Wetlands have contributed to review of this candidate KBA. It is possible that other KBAs may be present in Simcoe County. Nottawasaga (Lighthouse) Island and Tiny Marsh are identified as IBAs and will likely be reviewed. I note that the northwest Collingwood shoreline adjacent to Nottawasaga Island hosts globally rare Great Lakes coastal marsh and possibly this whole area (including the islands) could be reviewed from a KBA perspective.

The KBA approach has the potential to be another “feather in the cap” of the Minesing Wetlands; however, it will not represent another layer of protection for the wetlands. It can, however, be used as a tool by government and non-government organizations to lobby for and support protection of Minesing Wetlands.



HAROLD PARKER (In Memoriam) by David Featherstone

On Monday, September 26th, 2022, Harold passed away at the age of 82. Harold was active in the community having served on Springwater Council and as NVCA Chair. Harold literally grew up in Minesing Wetlands and was always pleased to share his numerous memories including Minesing during/after Hurricane Hazel and some “exciting” beaver dam removals! His input was an invaluable part of the 60 Years of Forest Change in Minesing Wetlands report (2014).

I had the pleasure and honour of touring and discussing Minesing Wetlands with Harold on multiple occasions. I did my best to be a “sponge” and soak in all his knowledge. Over the past twenty years, Harold has been a champion of the Wiidookdaadiwin – Working Together and Helping One Another outlook project (<https://wiidookdaadiwin.org/>; off George Johnston Road). He was truly a friend of Minesing Wetlands and he will be with me whenever I paddle or hike the wetlands.



BYRON WESSON- A Tribute, by David Featherstone



Byron Wesson has been the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority’s (NVCA’s) representative on FOMW for more than two decades! He is retiring from NVCA after close to 30 years of service with many titles including his current role as Director of Conservation Services. As well as providing great representation on FOMW, he has played a key role in developing Management Plans for Minesing Wetlands (as well as other Conservation Areas) and in developing and implementing land securement strategies throughout the watershed. Much of the NVCA land within Minesing Wetlands was acquired under his careful watch!

Upon my arrival at NVCA in 2003, Byron took me on a paddling tour of Minesing. He noted I would see dozens, possibly hundreds of hackberry trees. Coming from Halton Region, where we had less than a dozen hackberries mapped in our more southern watershed, I was intrigued and not disappointed to see so many of the “Carolinian” trees out of their normal range! Just one of many good memories! All the best for a happy, healthy retirement, my friend. And hope to see you on land and/or water soon!



PHOTO GALLERY

Panorama from a recent snowshoe outing.



Photo: Naomi Saunders



Photo: Kyra Howes

Friends of Minesing Wetlands Directors at Large were out on Sunday, February 1, scouting the best snowshoeing route for our upcoming trip later this month. It was a beautiful winter day, with a Northern Harrier gliding past and plenty of animal tracks to pause over—small clues left behind by the wildlife that calls Minesing home.