

# *Leeds County Stewardship Council*

## *2010 Annual Report*



Leeds Community Pasture



## Leeds County Stewardship Council Annual Report 2010

### Message from the Coordinator

I hope you enjoy this Annual Report, the last of the Leeds County Stewardship Council (LCSC). Effective January 1, 2011, we have amalgamated with the Grenville Land Stewardship Council to form the 22 member strong Leeds-Grenville Stewardship Council.



We are moving forward together to continue the great work carried out by the two previous councils.

LCSC is a group of thirteen dedicated local residents who volunteer their time to work on environmental projects throughout Leeds County. The Council focuses on projects in four main areas: healthy aquatic ecosystems, sustainable forests, education and awareness, and species at risk.

Our stream restoration activities have expanded from our traditional and ongoing partnership with the Charleston Lake Environmental Association. Our efforts have broadened to include stream restoration upstream of two more of the major headwater lakes of the Gananoque River watershed, Upper and Lower Beverley. In this regard we are partnering with the Leeds Community Pasture Association to complete projects on Soperton Creek.

Tree planting remains as the critical focus of our sustainable forests strategy. As a delivery agent for Trees Ontario LCSC planted 45,000 trees for eight landowners in 2010. We also worked with four local schools and 135 students to plant 2350 more trees as part of our riparian restoration efforts.

Our education and awareness activities have grown as we support and grow the Species at Risk Curriculum program for grade four and seven teachers initiated by the Lennox and Addington Stewardship Council. In 2010 we carried out eight "Woodworking for Wildlife" workshops, helping children to construct over 200 nest boxes. The Irish Lake Conservation Day remains as a community and Council favourite activity.

The Council continues to monitor gray ratsnake nesting boxes and produces several new ones each year for distribution to interested and committed landowners. Two boxes were incredibly successful this year, yielding a catch of 80 hatched eggs. We installed three new Bald Eagle platforms at Lower Beverley Lake, Landon Bay and Davis Island. The latter platform was installed to provide an opportunity for the eagles to return to the Island: their nest tree was blown down in a severe winter storm two years ago.

LCSC has worked with a long list of partners again this year, which has helped us to be part of many more projects than we could deliver on our own. To all those partners we say thank you, and look forward to their continued cooperation.

Thanks to all,

Martin Streit  
Stewardship Coordinator

## **Leeds County Stewardship Council Mission Statement**

### **Serving the Land, Lakes and People of Leeds**

The environment of Leeds County is by and large in good shape, especially when compared to many other jurisdictions in the highly developed landscape of eastern North America. The county is approximately 50% forested and has close to 50% of its original wetlands still intact. Many parts of the natural ecosystem are still able to function reasonably well. Development pressure and unsustainable land management practices of farmers, woodlot owners and cottagers are local concerns although most of the significant threats to the integrity of our environment come from outside. A strong, if latent, stewardship ethic exists with most landholders. Sustainable land use practices can be achieved through education and demonstration combined with some degree of help and ongoing support for the individuals who have to bear the costs of change.

### **Our Vision**

- To have our land produce to its fullest sustainable potential,
- To preserve the rural character of our county for future generations, and
- To have local citizens make the right choices for their environment.

### **Stewardship**

To the members of the Leeds County Stewardship Council "Stewardship" means

- Working with landholders to promote Responsible Land Care.
- Using our natural resources in ways that will not diminish the ability of future generations to enjoy the same benefits and life style we have today.
- Changing the way people think. Land ownership is only temporary, we are actually land holders not land owners, we need to take a long term view, we need to think holistically, we need to think about our neighbours and we need to think about our children's children when we make decisions that affect our soil, water and air.

### **How We Operate**

The Leeds County Stewardship Council has proven to be an effective organization in carrying out a wide range of projects that improve our environment and promote stewardship ethics.

- We place a high value on our volunteers time and effort.
- We take a strategic approach to work planning by designing projects that meet specific priority needs in our community.
- We have earned and enjoy a reputation in the community as an organization that gets things done.
- We take advantage of opportunities that come up.
- Our strength is in carrying out modest projects that actually get done although we recognise the need to support the work of others in larger scale undertakings.
- We share everything.
- We seek out partnerships and co-operative ventures and try to touch as many people as possible with each project we undertake.
- We manage our affairs by consensus.
- We enjoy this work immensely.

## HEALTHY AQUATIC ECOSYSTEMS

### Charleston Lake Watershed Stream Restoration Projects

The Charleston Lake Environmental Association (CLEA) annually provides generous funding to the Leeds County Stewardship Council (LCSC) for projects to improve water quality on the Lake. One of the objectives of the Charleston Lake Plan is to reduce excessive nutrient supply to the lake from all sources to prevent further enrichment and loss of oxygen. There can be a varying degree of nutrient runoff into the streams which feed Charleston Lake, depending upon the kinds of agricultural use.

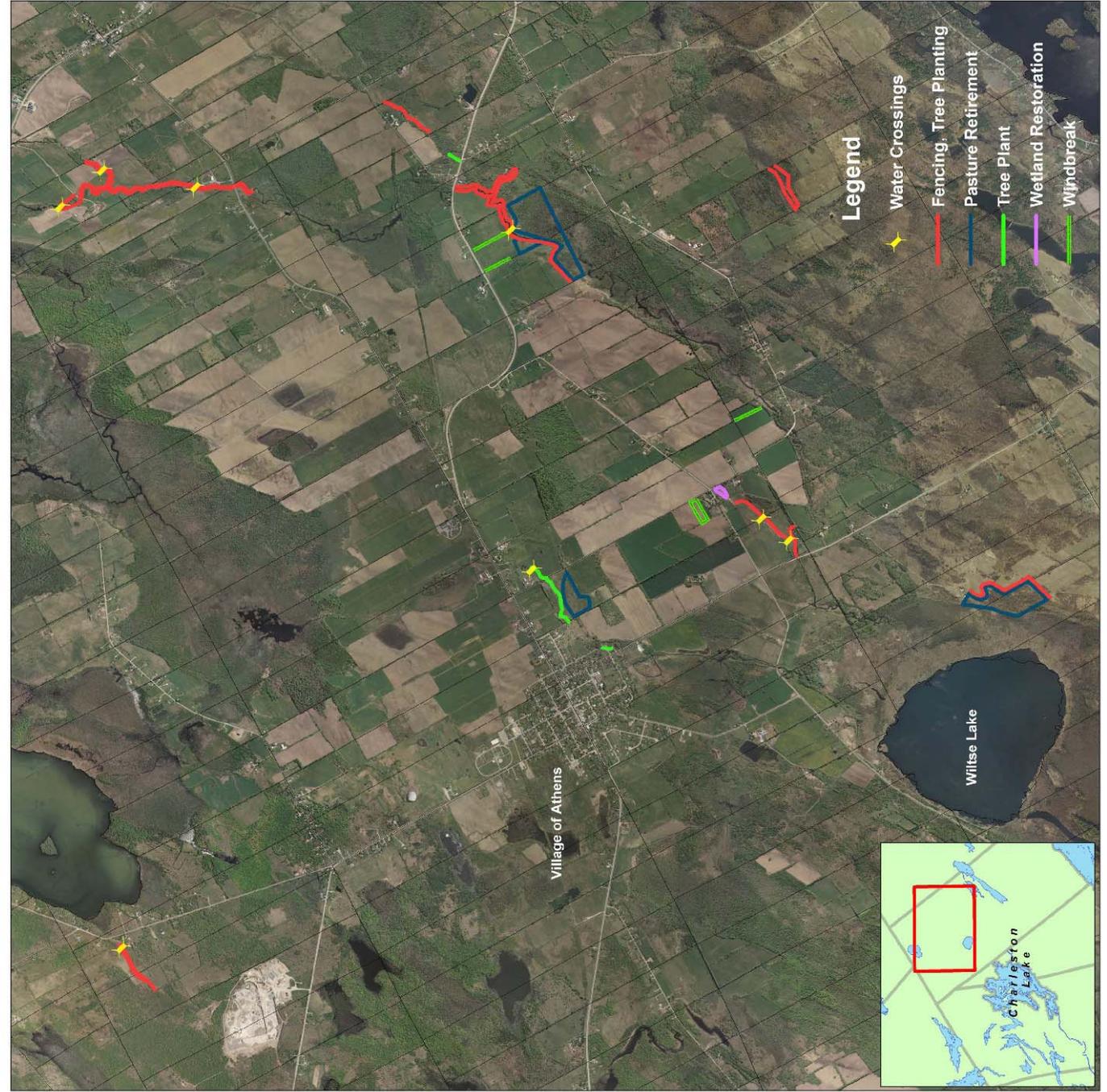
LCSC works with the Leeds Soil and Crop Improvement Association and local landowners to exclude livestock from creeks, develop alternative watering sources, improve water crossings, restore trees and shrubs to shorelines, install nest boxes and rehabilitate wetlands and pastures. This work started in 2004 on Fosters Creek. Since 2006 LCSC has been focussing on the Beales Creek watershed. A landscape view showing the Beales Creek projects is shown on the following page. The following activities have been completed, resulting in the exclusion of more than **1000 cows from the waterways:**

	<u>2010</u>	<u>Total- to-date</u>
■ Projects	1	17
■ Cattle exclusion fencing (kilometers)	0.8	15.3
■ Alternative watering systems	1	15
■ New/ improved water crossings	--	9
■ Retired pasture hectares (acres)	--	24 (60)
■ Restored wetland	--	1
■ Tree planting (trees)	--	31,050
■ Windbreaks/shelterbelts	--	4
■ Bluebird boxes installed	--	90

Beef farmers Kim and Charlie Sytsma of Eighth Line Farm were awarded the Ontario Cattlemen's Association Environmental Stewardship Award in 2010. Charlie and Kim have worked with LCSC to install over 3.0 km of cattle exclusion fencing and five solar watering systems for their herd of 220 Red Angus cow/calf pairs.



The Water Quality Reports for Charleston Lake by Ontario Lake Assessments indicate that “water quality continues to improve, total phosphorous values continue to decline and oxygen concentrations have improved considerably.” Stream restoration projects and other CLEA initiatives appear to be contributing to the improvement of water quality on Charleston Lake.



**Charleston Lake Stream  
Restoration Project 2007-2010**

**Elbe and Wiltse Creeks**

9 Farm Properties  
3 Non-Farm Properties

**Partners**

Charleston Lake Environmental Association  
Leeds County Stewardship Council  
Canada - Ontario Farm Stewardship Program  
Catawqui Region Conservation Authority  
Ducks Unlimited  
Eco-Action (Environment Canada)  
Eastern Ontario Model Forest  
Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve  
Leeds Federation of Agriculture  
Leeds Soil and Crop Improvement Association  
Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources  
Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges,  
and Universities  
Trees Ontario  
Wildlife Habitat Canada



## Leeds Community Pasture

The Leeds Community Pasture Association (LCPA) owns and manages a 607 hectare (1500) acre property, one of 11 Community pastures in Ontario. Grazing rights on the property are leased to 25 local farmers with over 500 cows. This pasture includes grasslands, woodlands and wetlands, and borders a highly



productive shallow water lake and provincially significant wetland complex known as Upper Beverley Lake (UBL). The streams, lake and adjacent Lower Beverley Lake form the headwaters of the Gananoque River watershed, which drains south to the St Lawrence River. The LCPA and LGSC are working together to improve the riparian habitat along Soperton Creek and the adjacent wetlands.

In 2010 we completed the first project on the property. This included the construction of 2550 meters of traditional cedar rail cattle-exclusion fencing, and installation of a solar watering system and two bed-level creek crossings. As part of this effort, an Environmental Stewardship Plan was prepared to identify all potential stream and wetland restoration projects on the Pasture. We anticipate that with full funding these projects can be completed by 2014. A program of this magnitude is only possible with the support of many partners. These include Environment Canada, Wildlife Habitat Canada, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, Trees Ontario, Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority and local schools. The work was carried out by LCSC employees Donna O'Connor and Martin Streit, LCPA pasture manager Craig Gifford, fencer Ron Bennett, the Ontario Stewardship Ranger crew, and LCSC volunteers George Sheffield and Lloyd Stone.



## Gananoque Watershed Study

The Centre for Sustainable Watersheds (CSW) and Algonquin to Adirondack Conservation Association (A to A), in cooperation with Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority and supported by a number of partners (including LCSC) has been coordinating Species at Risk and shoreline inventory projects on the Gananoque Watershed for several years.



In 2010 shoreline surveys were completed on Upper Beverley, Lyndhurst, Lost Bay and Singleton Lakes and Lyndhurst Creek. An individualized shoreline property stewardship report has been written for each of the 200 properties. Seine netting was conducted around the perimeter of each of the four lakes. 19 fish species were identified, including the Grass Pickerel, a Species at Risk, which was found in three of the four lakes (Lyndhurst Lake, Singleton Lake

and Lost Bay). LCSC volunteers Karen Brown and Kerry Coleman were active participants in the fish sampling and shoreline survey projects. The long-term goal remains to complete inventories and encourage stewardship plans and activities for the entire Gananoque River watershed.

Another benefit of this partnership project is improved communication leading to new water conservation projects. In 2009, LCSC started projects on two farm properties upstream of Lower Beverley Lake to develop working demonstrations of stream restoration on Farnham Creek. In the spring of 2010 80 students from Rideau District High, South Crosby and Thousand Islands Elementary schools planted 1,950 trees in these protected riparian areas.



## **SUSTAINABLE FORESTS**

### **50 Million Tree Plant**

Trees Ontario and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources have set a goal of planting 50 million trees in Southern Ontario by 2020. This program is designed to help mitigate the impacts of climate change while enhancing the forest cover and biodiversity of southern Ontario. Funding is provided to tree planting delivery agencies (PDAs) such as Conservation Authorities and Stewardship Councils to provide low-cost tree planting services to private landowners.



To help Trees Ontario meet their goal, LCSC has agreed to help plant up to 50,000 trees per year. In 2010, we planted 45,000 trees for eight private landowners. These landowners actively participate in the program by paying a minimal charge for the trees, cutting brush and grass and by monitoring the health of the trees. LCSC works in cooperation with many partners to plant trees, including the

landowners, Adam Zulinski from Trees Ontario, Rick Knapton, Dan Cooper and Scott Danford at the Cataraqui and Rideau Valley Conservation Authorities, Ed Patchell from the Ferguson Forest Centre, and our contractors.

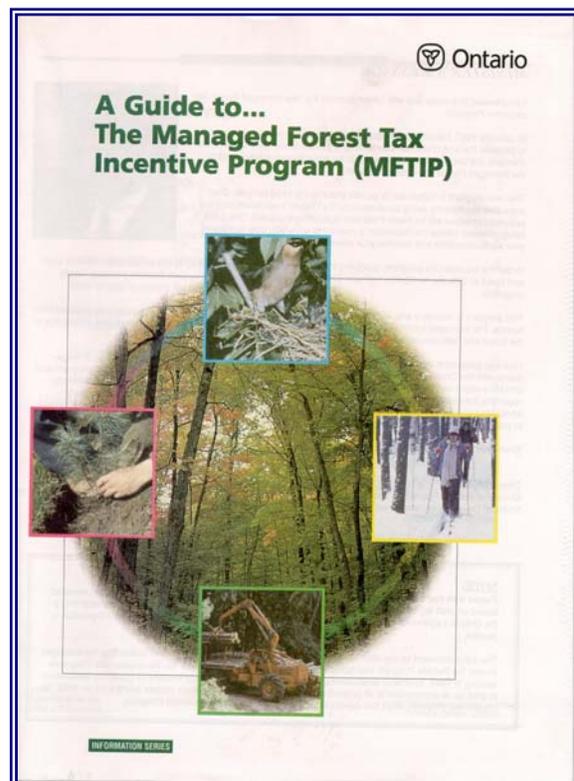
## Bellamy To Irish Lake Connectivity Project (Lake to Lake)

The Bellamy to Irish Lake corridor is a watershed which connects these two provincially significant wetlands in north Leeds. LCSC councillors Dwayne Struthers and Garnet Baker contacted the local landowners to promote the sustainable landscape concept and arrange for the preparation of Management Plans for their properties. Plans were prepared for landowners covering a total of 2915 hectares (7200 acres) using the principles of sustainable land-use. The Stewardship Council continues to partner with the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA), Eastern Ontario Model Forest and Trees Ontario to implement tree planting projects identified in the plans. 8,100 trees were planted by RVCA in 2010; 164,860 trees have been planted to-date. Garnet, Dwayne and the Lake to Lake project were profiled in the June 2010 issue of Canadian Geographic in an article dedicated to tree planting.



## Management Planning (MFTIP)

The first step towards woodlot certification is to prepare a management plan, which lays out a landowner's objectives and helps to organize management activities. By registering their Plan in the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program (MFTIP), landowners also receive a substantial reduction in the property taxes on their woodlands. When talking to landowners at the International Plowing Match in 2007, we were surprised to learn how few people had heard of the program. As a result, the Leeds and Grenville Stewardship Councils decided to provide advice and assistance to interested landowners to help them develop a Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program Plan. In 2010 Donna O'Connor assisted 13 landowners in Leeds and Grenville to prepare plans that covered 660 hectares (1634 acres).

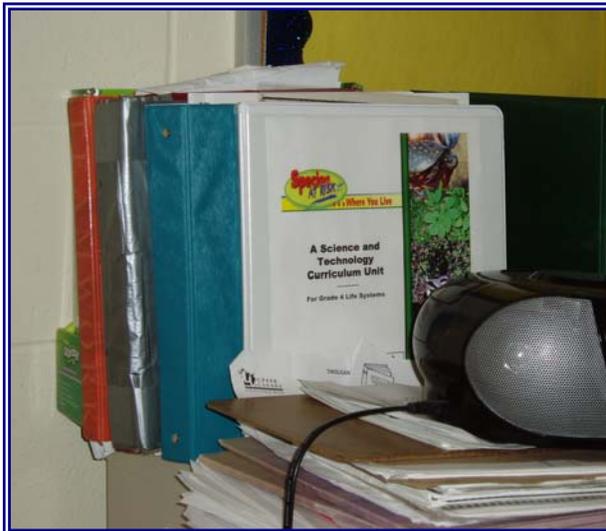


## **EDUCATION AND AWARENESS**

### **Species at Risk (SAR) Curriculum**

Lennox and Addington (L&A) Stewardship Council produced Species at Risk Curriculum Units for grade 4 and 7 teachers with support from OMNR's Species at Risk Stewardship Fund. In 2008 a partnership was formed between volunteers on LCSC and L & A Councils to adapt and transfer the curriculum to Leeds County.

The adaptation was completed by two Leeds County teachers, Rich Tamblyn and Lianne Swann, who incorporated information on species at risk in Leeds County into the curriculum. By the end of 2009, 22 teachers in Leeds and Grenville had received training and a copy of the curriculum binders and were implementing it in their classroom. Two more workshops are scheduled for early in 2011, with anticipated attendance of another 25 teachers. Cathy Sawyer-Griffin and Corinne McCaffrey have provided the critical support from the Upper Canada School Board.



A summary of the alterations required to adapt the curriculum to a new County was prepared as part of the project. The modifications are minor and can be accomplished quickly, illustrating the adaptability of the original project produced by L&A. L&A and LCSC are now working together to spread the curriculum to a wider audience.

## Woodworking for Wildlife



Leeds County Stewardship Council volunteers actively support the teachers who are instructing using the Species at Risk Curriculum. They provide both in-class and in-field learning opportunities that illustrate SAR concepts and other wildlife habitat conservation issues to children.

The program starts early in the winter in the Stone Shop, as Garnet Baker, Dwayne Struthers and their many helpers convert their supply

of Ottawa Valley white pine lumber into hundreds of pre-sawn and drilled bird box kits. Then they go to the classrooms. After listening to a short presentation, each child in the class gets the opportunity to construct and take home a blue bird box. Council members and the teacher are always near at hand to offer advice, but the children do the work. In 2010 LCSC volunteers carried out eight “Woodworking for Wildlife” workshops, helping children to construct 220 nest boxes.



## Irish Lake Conservation Club



Shari Hunt's Grade 7/8 class from Commonwealth School in Brockville came to the Irish Lake Conservation Club in June for a day of outdoor education and fun. Garnet and Dwayne organized a great day for the kids, and the weather was perfect. Five topics were presented: wildlife habitat (John MacKenzie and Kerry), species at risk (James Page), tree identification (Martin and Bud), wildlife identification (Dwayne and Rhonda) and history

(Garnet). Lorna, Jane, Karen, Lloyd and Donna all helped to keep the kids on track. In keeping with the history theme, the kids enjoyed snacks of dried apples and beef jerky between sessions. This annual event is also incredibly popular with the Council volunteers

The competitive nature of the children emerged as they vied for top prize in the tree identification contest. By the number of smiles on the children's faces, it was apparent that the day was an outstanding success.



## Legacy Tree Project

The Prince Edward County Stewardship Council created a poster of heritage trees as a means to highlight the importance of trees to County residents. Rhonda Elliott is leading a similar project for Leeds County Stewardship Council. Trees can be nominated by local residents based upon their uniqueness, size or history and will be considered for inclusion on a Legacy Tree Poster. We have received many nominations for interesting trees and plan to continue accepting nominations in 2011 to allow for new entries from Grenville County. We hope to feature a diversity of trees and/ or forests that are special in the United Counties of Leeds and Grenville. The local newspapers have done a wonderful job reporting on this project and raising the profile of our legacy trees.



One example of a nominated tree has come from the Sheffield Family's property on Red Horse Lake. The tree is a very large red oak tree growing in a valley: it is particularly significant because the Sheffield Family is working with a number of conservation agencies to facilitate the transfer of the lands into public ownership. We anticipate that this will be a major topic for the 2011 Annual Report.

## Envirothon

The annual Envirothon competition was again organized in partnership with the



Grenville Land Stewardship Council, Limerick Forest, St Lawrence Parks Commission, and Charleston Lake Park. The training workshops were held at Limerick Forest (forestry and soils) and Landon Bay (wildlife and aquatics). The final competition for Leeds and Grenville was hosted at Charleston Lake Park and won by St Michael Team 2 from Kemptville. Teams from Athens District High School and Brockville Collegiate Institute placed second and third.

## Burn Barrels

A burn barrel exchange was another great idea originally initiated by the L&A Stewardship Council. Environment Canada identifies burn barrels as the 3rd largest national source of dioxins. Dioxin emissions impact the population when they land on feed crops and are concentrated in the bodies of farm animals. Open burning also contributes to wildfires. Burn barrel exchanges were hosted by Elizabethtown-Kitley Township at their Toledo Office and Greenbush landfill site. Approximately 30 barrels were exchanged for rain barrels or Township garbage stickers in 2010.



## Student Bursary

LCSC offers annually a \$500 bursary to a graduating Leeds County high school student who plans to enter post-secondary studies in the environmental field. This year the bursary was awarded to a student from Rideau District High School.

## LCSC Website ([www.ontariostewardship.org/leeds](http://www.ontariostewardship.org/leeds))

Karen maintains the official website on behalf of the LCSC. It contains up-to-date information on the Stewardship Council and our projects, and links to other Stewardship agencies.

## SPECIES AT RISK

### Bald Eagles

Bald Eagles were once quite common in southern Ontario. A combination of human disturbance, loss of habitat and lake pollution led to a dramatic reduction in nesting pairs. From the early 1980s, coincident with a significant reduction in the use of toxic chemicals, the eagles' natural reproduction rates began to recover. Today, while Bald Eagles have recovered in most regions they have been slow to return to some historic nesting locations in Leeds County. In Ontario the Bald Eagle remains a species of special concern.



LCSC Councillors have been actively installing nesting platforms in Leeds County to encourage bald eagles to return to their traditional nesting grounds. Since 2007 we have installed platforms in supercanopy white pine trees on Red Horse, Gananoque and Charleston (2 platforms) Lakes. Three new platforms were installed in 2010 at Lower Beverley Lake, Landon Bay and Davis Island. The latter



platform was installed to provide an opportunity for eagles to return to the island: their nest tree was blown down in a severe winter storm two years ago.

The platform at Lower Beverley Lake was installed by tree climbers from Hydro One. A private tree service contractor, Cary Gibson installed the platforms at Landon Bay and Davis Island.

Our Council eagle expert, Bud Andress speaks regularly on the return of the Bald Eagle to the 1000 Islands. Bud was a featured speaker at this year's Stewardship East conference near Mallorytown and on the Grenville Land Stewardship Council's geology tour.

## Black Rat Snakes



The Black Rat Snake is listed as “threatened” on the Ontario Species at Risk list. In 2005 with funding support from CFWIP, Garnet and Dwayne designed and built 12 wood framed, wire mesh nesting boxes to provide protection from egg predators. The structures have been deployed throughout Leeds County. They are filled annually with a variety of compost substrates designed to maintain a temperature around 30 degrees

Celcius, which is necessary for egg incubation.

In 2010 LCSC refilled six of the nest boxes with a mixture of hay, wood chips and leaves and installed temperature monitors to maintain our long-term temperature data set. The remaining boxes were refilled by the landowners. In the fall, 80 hatched black rat snake eggs were found in two structures at Dr Ross's and Landon Bay.



## Butternut

Butternut is an endangered tree species, threatened by a fungal disease called Butternut Canker. The climate and soils of Leeds County are excellent for butternut, making it an important area for butternut conservation. In cooperation with Rose Fleguel of the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority and the OMNR Species at Risk Stewardship Fund, LCSC participates in butternut recovery activities. Many Leeds landowners have had their butternut trees catalogued by Rose as she searches for trees which show resistance to the disease.



Each year we receive and distribute butternut seedlings to private landowners. These seedlings are monitored by the landowners for signs of butternut canker, in the hope that some individuals will exhibit resistance to the canker. 200 Seedlings were planted by 13 landowners in 2010. Although we see many dead butternuts, we remain optimistic that we are contributing towards the species' conservation and potential recovery.

## OUR COUNCIL



### **LCSC Council Members 2010**

The strength of Leeds County Stewardship Council is the group of volunteers who work tirelessly to make a difference on the ground. These are the people who make Stewardship so rewarding.

Chair:	Andy Mannseichner	Brockville
	Bud Andress	Hill Island
	Garnet Baker	Toledo
	Karen Brown	Delta
	Kerry Coleman	Elizabethtown-Kitley
	Rhonda Elliott	Chantry
	John MacLeod	Gananoque
	Margot Miller	Rockport
	Donna O'Connor	Elgin
	George Sheffield	Chantry
	Lloyd Stone	Forfar
	Dwayne Struthers	Toledo
	Jane Topping	Athens



## Staffing and Support



The field work of the Stewardship Council is completed by a variety of people.

First and foremost, it is no secret as to how LCSC helps so many landowners with stewardship projects on their properties. Meet Donna O'Connor, our Resource Technician. Donna has a farming and forestry background, and is responsible for delivery of our field programs, including stream restoration, tree planting and MFTIP preparation. Donna gets our projects done despite numerous challenges with the weather, computers and program funding: thanks from all of us.



For the second year Leeds and Grenville Stewardship Councils received funding to hire a Stewardship Ranger crew. Stewardship Rangers are a Provincial student employment program designed to give 17 year olds an opportunity to work on local environmental projects. Our crew was supervised by Ben Dopson. The Rangers did an excellent job, and were involved in many projects including fencing for stream restoration, trail maintenance, and construction of wildlife nesting structures. They provided labour support to help many of our partner's complete their projects.



We also hosted a Co-op student from Athens District High School for one month. Brad was enrolled in Jim Wilson's and Linda Ross's environment high-skills major program. He was involved in a variety of indoor and outdoor activities and got a first-hand opportunity to experience Stewardship Council projects. Brad went on to join the Stewardship Ranger crew.

## LCSC Financial Statement: January 1 to December 31, 2010

LCSC has structural and accounting controls to ensure that funds are appropriately allocated to projects that provide the optimum benefits to the community. The Council approves the Annual Workplan and meets regularly to review project progress. In addition to Martin the Council has two signing officers, Andy Mannseichner and Jane Topping who must authorize all cheques. In addition, Andy reviews all income and expenses of the Council on a regular basis.

In 2010, project expenses exceeded income by \$9,435.45 as shown below. The Council maintains a healthy bank balance, which will ensure that we have resources to meet the deliverables of our multi-year projects.

Our ability to deliver on our objectives is due to the initial funding provided by the OMNR, the generous contributions of our many funding partners listed throughout this Report, and the overwhelming amount of time freely given by the Council Members and other volunteers involved in the programs.

Assets at year End 2009:	\$ 63,404.13
Assets at Year End 2010:	\$ 53,968.68
<b>Net Change 2010:</b>	<b>\$ (9,435.45)</b>