

DUC'tario

SPRING 2023 – VOLUME 30

NEWS FOR YOU FROM DUCKS UNLIMITED CANADA



NORTHERN WETLAND REBUILD: A HIDDEN GEM

INVADING
INVASIVES

VOLUNTEERING FOR DUC
RUNS IN THE FAMILY

BUILDING A LITTLE
PIECE OF HEAVEN



Bowling Green land purchase saves wetlands, grasslands and forest

Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) is celebrating the recent acquisition of 96 acres, (38.84 hectares) of vital wetland, grassland and forest habitat in Amaranth Township. The land is in the Upper Grand River portion of the Lake Erie Watershed and its protection will support a variety of positive community and conservation outcomes.

About 93 percent of the acquired property is part of a Provincially Significant Wetland known as the Bowling Green Swamp. The property provides valuable habitat for a variety of species including threatened, endangered and/or species of special

concern like the eastern meadowlark, the eastern wood-peewee, the terrestrial chimney crayfish, snapping turtles and three species of bats.

The property was acquired from private landowners and purchased with the financial assistance of Environment and Climate Change Canada's Nature Smart Climate Solutions program, and international contributors including Ducks Unlimited Inc., funding from North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) grants administered by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and state agencies through the Fall Flights Initiative. The DUC purchase extends the conservation

of vital wildlife habitats in the region, including the adjacent property which is owned by the Grand River Conservation Authority.

The ECCC administered Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund is a \$1.4 billion, 10-year fund aimed at reducing between five to seven megatons of greenhouse gas emissions annually in 2030. The fund supports projects that conserve, restore and enhance the management of ecosystems such as wetlands, forests, and grasslands, in order to help tackle climate change and biodiversity loss.

People with purpose, united together

I'M so pleased to be part of the Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) team here in Ontario! Since joining DUC in September, I've been learning about all our wonderful projects and spending time meeting staff, volunteers and funders working to advance our mission to conserve, restore and manage wetlands across this great province.

My experience in conservation work has been mainly on the forestry side, but wetlands and birds were never very far from my heart. I worked on ornithology research studies for many summers and my family has volunteered at DUC for close to 20 years.

Some of the great hands-on learning opportunities I've had in the first few months on the job include visiting our Atocas Bay property in eastern Ontario, touring Holland Marsh near Bradford, speaking with landowners on projects completed with our partner South Nation Conservation Authority, and visiting a naturalized stormwater pond in Ottawa to understand how our Conservation Pro (fee-for-service program) can deliver these and other projects to a multitude of clients. I had the opportunity to speak to volunteers – including Ontario board members and Ontario Volunteer Council members – to get their perspective on why they give their time, and how they want to do more, including bringing more passionate conservationists like themselves into the fold.

Looking back at 2023 on what could be characterized as a time of transition, as our team experienced a significant change to our staff complement with four retirements, I see many positives. Some staff moved into new roles, taking on the rewarding challenge of mentoring new people. Our new team members learned at a quick pace, contributing to us staying on track to meet all our funding goals – an impressive accomplishment. We put 75 new small wetlands into the ground through conservation agreements with dedicated landowners; we com-

pleted maintenance on existing infrastructures on 24 wetlands (rebuilt), providing a place for waterfowl to breed as well as clean water and creation of habitat for many more species. We delivered five projects under our Nature Force program with partners in the Washington Creek watershed. Our Conservation Pro program created a modelling exercise with Ontario Power Generation that supports the feasibility of nature-based solutions (wetlands) to flatten the hydrograph of a watershed by creating natural storage systems to shift water from the spring to subsequent periods of time (i.e. summer) in hydro dams.

In 2024, our team will continue to build on its successes, innovations, and partnerships. We will continue to stay true to our decades-long expertise in wetland restoration, while implementing conservation projects guided by a lens of sustainability. Through innovation and forward thinking, we will focus on how our strengths – our people, our partnerships, and our ability to steward the land contributes to supporting communities and the environment for years to come. We will be part of innovative science-driven projects that leverage technology and partnerships to support the fight against invasive species. We will position wetlands as nature-based solutions with more partners to grow the case that “we need more wetlands”.

On behalf of the entire Ontario staff, thank you to all our volunteers, partners and funders who help DUC achieve more acres on the ground, more revenue opportunities and more programming activities.



Marie-Paule Godin
Ontario Manager of Provincial Operations,
Ducks Unlimited Canada

DUC'TARIO: NEWS FOR YOU FROM DUCKS UNLIMITED CANADA

DUC'tario is a newsletter for Ducks Unlimited Canada volunteers, project landowners and other partners in conservation in Ontario. We strive to inform and engage our valued supporters with stories and news about the people, projects and events that make up our Ontario community.

ducks.ca/ontario



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Like-minded neighbours create a little piece of heaven in eastern Ontario

While chance may have made them neighbours, a shared love of nature has made Jeff Kelso and Doug and Claire Cowley both friends and passionate environmentalists. The two own adjacent properties in Leeds and Grenville County and, with the help of Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC), their vision of building a large, productive wetland was brought to life.

As the Cowley family joke goes, Doug and Claire ‘bought the farm’ in 1988, a 51.4-acre (20.8-hectare) property near Delta. Prior to the sale going through, the previous owners worked with DUC to increase the open water habitat in the densely vegetated wetland, intermittently controlled by beaver activity. In finalizing the purchase, the Cowleys went all in, getting fully behind the DUC work.

Jeff Kelso, a self-described “retired teacher turned gentleman farmer,” bought the property beside the Cowleys in 2022. He

shares their love of the wetland and a deep desire to preserve it. The two landowners joined forces again with DUC in 2023 to upgrade the control structure, and refurbish the project by downgrading the original concrete dam structure to a more natural-looking fixed-crest spillway, eliminating the risk for downstream systems. Work was funded through the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks’ Wetland Conservation Partner Program (WCCP).

“DUC is all about putting the landowners first,” Doug said. “Their approach is ‘what can we do for you?’. We went all in on the project because we believe in conservation and are eager to do our part in our corner of the world.”

For Kelso, land has always been his preferred form of investment. An avid outdoorsman, he hunts ducks, deer, moose and elk and understands the importance of keeping his footprints on the environment as light as possible.

Above: Leeds and Grenville County neighbours and landowners Doug and Claire Cowley (top) and Jeff Kelso (above) worked with Ducks Unlimited Canada to restore a wetland on their properties.

Mikayla Stinson, a conservation program specialist with DUC, is thrilled – not only for the positive outcome of the most recent work done on the wetland, but for the enthusiastic attitudes of both Kelso and the Cowleys. She said passionate landowners are a pleasure to partner with.

“What makes our job easier is when landowners are all-in,” Stinson said. “Doug, Claire and Jeff jumped on board without hesitation and the results have been gratifying. It’s been a win-win.”

Both the Cowleys and Kelso understand the vital partnership that exists between landowners and DUC across the province. Working together on wetland projects helps counter the effects of an ever-changing climate, improves water quality and provides critical wildlife habitat.

“One of my favorite things about living beside a wetland is the magic of wildlife it attracts,” Doug said. “I start my day with a cup of coffee watching our family of swans take flight for their morning exercise. There are tons of deer, gray rat snakes, all kinds of ducks and other waterfowl and we’ve even seen a bobcat. There are bald eagles, ospreys, hawks and owls. The wetland is alive with all kinds of species, and that never gets old.”

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Northern Ontario wetland rebuild a labour of love for landowner

About 10 kilometres north of Hearst is one of the largest wetland projects Ducks Unlimited Canada's (DUC) Ontario team has ever undertaken, but few would even know it exists. Located near Lac Ste-Therese, this wetland is the pride and joy of Gilles Guindon, who owns the property adjacent to it and is passionate about protecting the habitat of several species who call it home.

Originally created by beavers who regularly dammed the watercourse, DUC reinforced the 31-acre (12.5-hectare) wetland in 1991, building a control structure to maintain water levels. With time, the structure began to show signs of deterioration so Guindon turned to DUC for help. The function of the wetland was assessed and determined it was due for a rebuild.

"We rely on landowners like Gilles to flag issues and then alert us," Graham Janson, DUC project engineer says. "The water control structure wasn't functioning properly and needed to be replaced. The 70-metre-long earth berm needed upgrades to improve the function of the wetland and safety of the structure."

Funded through the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, the project required the coordination of both equipment, personnel and time management. Located deep in the bush, excavators were delicately brought onto the site and a work area was created using metal sheet pile

to hold the water back while the existing structure was removed and the new one installed. While the design and preparation took months, construction took only about five days to complete. The work will keep the wetland intact while improving the quality of water that feeds into Lac Ste-Therese.



Top: A construction team moved into Lac Ste-Therese during the winter to replace an aged water control structure. **Above:** DUC's Lac Ste-Therese project in winter is a picture of tranquility.

The result is a source of pride for Guindon.

"Working with DUC was something new for me," he says. "I was glad to see the culvert repaired. It was rotting and no longer doing the job it was designed for. This place means a lot to me and my

family. We love to hunt here, snowshoe, hike and four-wheel and we see all kinds of wildlife from beavers to martens, ducks, moose and deer. It's great."

Guindon has owned the 75-acre (30-hectare) property for more than 20 years and is thankful to DUC for enhancing the wetland. He says it is the centerpiece of his land and a great treasure.

While wetlands remain under threat in most of southern Ontario, the province's vast northern region is fortunate to have wetlands in abundance. There aren't the same pressures to drain them for the purposes of development or agriculture. Yet, what remains must still be protected, which is why DUC carries out wetland rebuilds like this one.

Mikayla Stinson, a conservation specialist for DUC, said that the fact the north is blessed with numerous wetlands is something to applaud, and DUC will continue to construct or rebuild wetlands in the north whenever opportunities arise.

"Southern Ontario is where habitat fragmentation and wetland losses are happening," she says. "Luckily, that's not the case in northern Ontario. We will pursue any opportunities to construct or rebuild in the north, whenever and wherever possible."

Conservation by the numbers in Ontario

In Canada's most populous province, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) provides conservation solutions that leverage nature and the power of healthy ecosystems like wetlands to protect communities, improve infrastructure and safeguard a sustainable and biodiverse future. Our efforts are helping to restore the health of natural gems including the Great Lakes and our many partners are lending their support to maximize our impact on key landscapes throughout the province — from the fertile farmlands in the south, to the rocky, mineral-rich Canadian Shield, to the grassy lowlands of the north.

FUELLING OUR MISSION IN ONTARIO

DUC is backed by a conservation community of more than 20,000 dedicated individuals actively supporting our conservation mission across the province. This includes:

22 staff members who advance conservation every day.

714 volunteers who raise funds and awareness for wetland conservation.

3,792 landowners who protect vital habitat on their property.

8,420 attendees at the 61 annual fundraising events across Ontario.

And of course, DUC's ability to deliver large-scale environmental programs is the result of a strong network of **trusted partners** that we are fortunate to collaborate with every day — including conservation authorities, stewardship councils, local governments and landowners to implement wetland conservation projects.

OUR CONSERVATION SUCCESS

(CUMULATIVE, AS OF MARCH 31, 2023)

In Ontario, Ducks Unlimited Canada has conserved more than **one million acres**, influenced **373,901 acres** and enhanced an additional **3,242 acres**. Currently there are **6,584 conservation projects** under our care across the province.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2024

DUC is planning to conserve **4,064 acres** (including restoration of **934 acres**), and enhance an additional **1,000 acres** in Ontario.

CONSERVED ACRES – Areas DUC has directly impacted through habitat programs that extend for 10 years or more. Examples include land purchases, management agreements and conservation easements.

ENHANCED ACRES – Areas DUC is directly impacting through habitat programs that extend for fewer than 10 years. Examples include invasive species work, nest box activities and winter wheat seeding.

INFLUENCED ACRES – Areas DUC impacts through partnerships and advocacy work not tied to a length of time. Examples include sustainable land-use actions and wetland policies.





Invading invasives: Why these species threaten wetland health

Invasive species are plants, animals or other organisms that are transported — generally by people, often accidentally—to a new region and manage to survive and thrive there. They spread quickly, can displace native wildlife, are costly to remove or manage, and can change the landscape, causing environmental, economic and social harm. Climate change is also creating paths for many species to move northward, with new and potentially negative effects on our northern ecosystems.

Invasive species are a major cause of biodiversity loss in our wetlands. At more than 400 species, Ontario hosts more invasive plants than any other province in Canada. Invasive aquatic plants degrade habitat for waterfowl and other wildlife, impact Ontario's species at risk and block waterways for boaters, anglers, hunters and swimmers.

Here are some invasive species to be on the lookout for:



European water chestnut
(*Trapa natans*)

First discovered in Eastern Ontario, invasive water chestnut has now been found in the Welland River in central Ontario. The rooted plant has sharp-toothed, floating green leaves that form a dense rosette typically found in shallow, sheltered bays amongst white or yellow pond lilies in lakes and ponds. Watch out for the nut seed's sharp, barbed spines underfoot in the sediment.



Flowering rush
(*Butomus umbellatus*)

Flowering rush is easiest to identify when in bloom and has been reported along the shores and coastal wetlands of the Great Lakes and throughout Ontario's inland lakes and waterways. Growing in clusters, each flower has three white to pink petals on a leafless stalk up to 1.5 metres (5 feet) tall. Single flowering rush plants can develop into dense stands that crowd out native plants and block shorelines.



European frog bit
(*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*)

Introduced in 1939, European frog bit has spread across wetlands in eastern Ontario and coastal wetlands of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario. This free-floating plant grows in slow-moving waters such as sheltered inlets, ponds, slow-running rivers and ditches. It has a white flower with three petals and a yellow centre and small leaves that cluster in a rosette at the water's surface.



Eurasian water-milfoil
(*Myriophyllum spicatum*)

Eurasian water-milfoil is a submerged plant that is widespread throughout North America and can be found in all the Great Lakes and along the St. Lawrence River. While very similar in appearance to native milfoil, the Eurasian milfoil has reddish flowers that rise out of the water and has 12 or more segments on its leaves. Dense colonies out-compete native vegetation, impede recreational activities and create habitat for mosquitoes.



Floating primrose-willow
(*Ludwigia peploides*)

While native to the southern United States, floating primrose-willow is considered invasive in Canada and may be present in the Lake Erie basin. Forming dense mats in the water or growing flat on mud, the plant can be either rooted in the ground or to the stems of other plants. The primrose-willow has alternate leaves and yellow flowers with five petals.



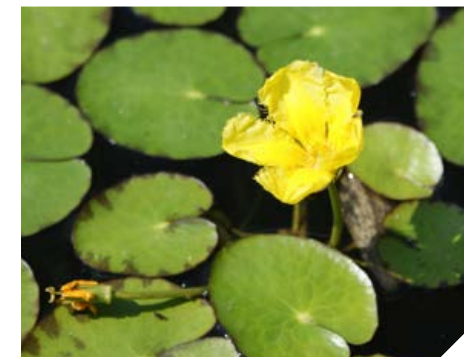
European common reed
(*Phragmites australis subsp. australis*)

This fast-growing perennial grows up to six metres (18 feet) tall in a wide range of conditions, often found in wetland habitats and along roadsides or ditches. The reeds grow very close together and reduce open water in wetland habitats and impede water movement within ecosystems. Under the right conditions, stands of invasive Phragmites can spread up to 30 per cent in a single year.



Water soldier
(*Stratiotes aloides*)

Water soldier is underwater until summer when it becomes buoyant with its sword-shaped, bright green, serrated leaves like an aloe plant or the top of a pineapple. This plant was introduced as a garden species and has been found in the Trent River, Red Horse Lake, Black River and various isolated ponds.



Yellow floating heart
(*Nymphoides peltata*)

This floating-leaved plant was originally introduced from Asia and Europe for use in water gardens. It grows in slow-moving waters within similar conditions as native lily species. Yellow floating heart can be easily identified by yellow, five-petal flowers and round floating leaves that grow up to 10 centimetres (4 inches) in diameter.



Parrot feather
(*Myriophyllum aquaticum*)

Parrot feather is an emergent plant from South America that is popular for aquariums or water gardens. The plant grown in shallow water and the stems become rigid as they emerge. The leaves are whorled and feathery underwater but bluish-green where they emerge. This plant has been discovered in Ontario but is not established here.



East Elgin student Ash Ecclestone wins DUC scholarship

Great leaders are those who push themselves outside of their comfort zone and work to change for the better. For Ash Ecclestone from Arthur, Ont., she fought through a difficult transition to high school and became a well-known mentor for other students, thanks to Ducks

Unlimited Canada's partnered Wetland Centre of Excellence program.

Ecclestone joined the Luther Marsh Wetland Centre of Excellence program. The program is focused on outdoor skills, leadership-building, and community stewardship. Students go on

"I wouldn't be where I am without the WCE program. It has truly changed me. I am grateful and proud of everything that I learned."

— ASH ECCLESTONE

camping trips through the semester to practice wilderness skills and develop an appreciation of nature. At the end of the year, they lead wetland field trips for elementary school students.

"The trips were amazing," Ecclestone said. "I remember once we were making dinner and we looked over and saw a painted turtle and snapping turtle, one foot apart, laying eggs at the same time. That is probably one of my favourite memories ever."

Ecclestone is now in her third year at Western University, majoring in climate change and society.

"I wouldn't be where I am without the WCE program," Ecclestone said. "It has truly changed me. I am grateful and proud of everything that I learned."



For more information on DUC campus clubs, visit ducks.ca/campus-clubs.

Calling all post-secondary students!

After launching our campus club at Acadia University, we're looking to support a new club in Ontario. If you're passionate about the environment, love the idea of strapping on waders and want to make a real difference for wetlands in Ontario, we want you. All our campus clubs receive equipment and annual funding to lead their own wetland projects like invasive species removal, nest box building, water quality monitoring and more.

The idea for our campus clubs was started by one of our Youth Advisory Council members, Mark Maddox. Mark wanted to bring together students who share a passion for nature, conser-

vation and community. His vision was a university or college club that connected like-minded peers, where students could learn from science and conservation experts and take action for the environment.

"I wanted a DUC club that was hands-on," says Mark. "I wanted students to get outdoors, explore wetlands and make a difference for conservation. The DUC campus club program provides funding, employee time, and structure so that students can do all that. It's amazing."

Interested in starting a campus club in Ontario? Contact Jessica Needham, DUC's youth engagement coordinator, at j_needham@ducks.ca.



Mission possible: a year of growth and gratitude

Greetings to all our supporters in Ontario! As I type this, the pale and waning daylight of a late winter afternoon reminds me of the transitional nature of our glorious seasons. Nothing remains the same for very long and soon enough, spring will begin another cycle of renewal and growth.

This past year has been one of growth for us. In donations and in impact. We have raised important funding for conservation restoration projects, critical research on biodiversity, high resolution wetland mapping to help us make better decisions and in education – to prepare the next generation of conservation leaders. This only happens when we all work together to achieve a result greater than the sum of our individual efforts. And for that, I thank you.

It's been my privilege to recently hire a new team of talented fundraisers to help Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) grow even more in Ontario. While my new scope is national, my heart and my home will always be right here. With that, I'd like to introduce Karen Ford Swire and Hannah Glover, our newest colleagues in Ontario. Karen is based in Cambridge and Hannah is in Toronto. Both have extensive experience fundraising and both are excited to be with us as we continue the journey that started 86 years ago in a Winnipeg hotel ballroom with the first DUC meeting. Much work has happened since then. Our tent has grown to include a broad base of supporters and yet, the mission remains the same.



Hannah Glover



Karen Ford Swire

We are now faced with a new set of challenges, perhaps ones the stewards of the land before us couldn't have imagined. A warming climate, severe weather events, fires and floods – the frequency of which are increasing. The work we do at DUC by protecting wetlands and uplands, by putting new wetlands back on the land and by reinvesting in existing, high-performing wetlands helps our ecosystem be more resilient in a changing climate.

You have placed your trust in us to continue the mission and continue we will. Thank you for all that you do for DUC, whether that be your time, talent or treasure or perhaps all three! We couldn't do what we do without you.

Enjoy these last weeks of winter however nature inspires you to and keep an eye on the horizon, the birds will be back with us soon enough.

Yours in conservation,



Bill Jones

National Manager of Development,
Ducks Unlimited Canada

In memoriam: Bill Mortlock

Bill Mortlock was a man who believed life was for living. As his friends and DUC colleagues happily point out, 'Morty' was one of a kind in all things. Sadly, Bill passed away at 75 on January 24, and we're proud to honor his contributions to DUC and to his community.

A DUC volunteer, a Silver Teal donor, a sponsor in perpetuity and one of the founding committee members of the inaugural Peterborough DUC dinners, Bill was known for his spontaneity, his joie de vivre and a dedication to conservation. He started the successful Greenwing fishing derby – a rite of spring every

year. Under his leadership, the Greenwing program was adopted in an astounding 35 grade four classrooms in one year.

A successful commercial contractor, he served as a national DUC board member and travelled extensively both for business and pleasure. An avid outdoorsman, Bill went on big game hunts in Africa and closer to home spent time hunting deer and ducks.

For his more than 30 years of conservation work with DUC, Bill received the ultimate honor of having a cairn dedicated in his name at Jubilee Point on Rice Lake.

We remember Bill for his valuable contributions to DUC.





Left: DUC conservation programs specialist Mikayla Stinson (left) and mother Shannon (right) both volunteer with the DUC Haliburton committee. **Above:** Mikayla and Shannon with Shannon's mother Nancy, who served as committee treasurer for a few years as well.

The ties that bind: volunteering for DUC runs in the family

It's been said that the best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others. For Shannon and Mikayla Stinson, proud volunteers with Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC), they've learned that first-hand. Not only have they grown closer to their community, but to each other as well.

Shannon joined the Haliburton committee 14 years ago as a way of connecting with more members of her community. Along the way, Shannon's family all got on board too. Her mother Nancy served as the treasurer for a few years and her two brothers and father would attend the dinners and outbid each other on auction items for bragging rights.

Then came Mikayla. To hear her tell it, she was 'volun-told' by Shannon who started bringing her daughter to annual fundraising dinners when she was 15 years old. There she would act as a 'Vanna White wannabe', displaying the auction items to attendees and pitching in wherever she was needed. Her duties grew as she matured until she was a full-fledged contributing member of the Haliburton committee. Working side-by-side with her mother, she had no idea where volunteering would lead her.

For years, the Haliburton committee has worked hard to make their annual dinner a signature event within the community. Shannon explains that every year, the headaches of finding a venue, collecting donations, securing a caterer and selling tickets vanish once the event is underway.

"The month leading up to the dinner, we're all putting in more than 40 hours each, and that's on top of our regular jobs," says Shannon. "It's all worth it when you know you've raised a lot of money for an important cause."

Growing up in the area, Mikayla learned about our natural world first-hand and gained a real appreciation for conservation work. Her connection to forests, lakes and all manner of wildlife, coupled with her volunteer work with DUC made quite the impression on her. That's why it was no surprise when Mikayla chose to pursue post-secondary studies in conservation biology.

When she graduated, fate stepped in. Kevin Townsend, a former DUC fundraising manager who worked alongside the Haliburton committee, encouraged Mikayla to apply for the recently-posted DUC conservation program specialist job—and she landed it.

"There I was, fresh out of university and I didn't think I stood any chance of getting my dream job," Mikayla said. "What I know now is that volunteering with DUC is the reason I got it. What I learned on the committee and all I've learned since then about wetland conservation, it's helped me become the person I am today. In 2022 I stood up at the podium as both a committee member and a DUC staff member. That was a real full-circle moment for me."

Since her daughter joined the DUC staff in Ontario, Shannon has noticed a deeper understanding and connection between

"The month leading up to the dinner, we're all putting in more than 40 hours each, and that's on top of our regular jobs. It's all worth it when you know you've raised a lot of money for an important cause."

— SHANNON STINSON

the fundraising dinners and the critical work DUC carries out every day in Ontario. She believes knowing what the money raised goes to has made a real difference.

"When Mikayla explains where the funds go to, she gets through to them," Shannon said. "They understand the rewards for their generosity are found in the wetlands DUC builds and restores. All of us on the committee are so proud of Mikayla and our community here."

Every year, the Haliburton committee tries to build on its past success to make the dinner even better than the previous one. Mikayla is amazed by her mother's hard work and commitment to the community.

"By now, mom and I have a pretty good idea about what works and what doesn't," she said. "She's so organized and puts her heart and soul into making the event a success. She's the chair for a reason."

Plans are already underway for the 2024 DUC Haliburton committee fundraising dinner, held traditionally between moose- and deer-hunting seasons, since many guests are large game hunters and only have a few spare days in between.

Volunteers are the heart of Ducks Unlimited Canada.

That's why the story of Shannon and Mikayla resonates so powerfully with us. We do know of many other families who regularly dedicate their time and passion to DUC. We are grateful beyond words to all our cherished volunteers.



Long Point Ladies are blazing trails together

This past October the Long Point Ladies chapter celebrated their 39th annual banquet in Port Rowan. They were the first ladies chapter established in Canada.

Over the past five years, the ladies have committed to reinforce the entrenched history in the community by setting some hefty goals. In that time, they managed re-energize their event to a continuously sold-out event in the community. Their last event raised over \$50,000 for wetlands conservation in Ontario.

The ladies continue to make a positive impact in their community by running a successful youth program in the summer named The Future Wetlands Protectors. They are also active participants in the annual Bay Fest in Port Rowan and the annual Christmas parade.



Answer the call

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE ONTARIO VOLUNTEER COUNCIL TODAY!

Are you passionate about moving DUC's mission forward? Do you have ideas about making the DUC volunteer experience even more fulfilling?

If the answer to both these questions is **yes**, reach out to learn more and see if the Ontario Volunteer Council (OVC) is right for you. With your help, the OVC can grow and improve the DUC volunteer experience.

Contact OVC chair Craig Lalonde for more information at ovc.duc@gmail.com





Guts, grit and friends in high places

THE SECRETS OF DUC'S MOST SUCCESSFUL ANNUAL FUNDRAISING EVENT

In 1977, Burt Myers was an ambitious 28-year-old magazine editor. A lover of nature and Chesapeake Bay retrievers, Myers had been invited to the first Ducks Unlimited fundraising dinner held in Canada by Dick Moore, a Bay Street chartered accountant and DUC national board member.

The Tillsonburg, Ont., event was organized by Dr. Duncan Sinclair and Jack Rice, in concert with the DU fundraising chapter in Buffalo, N.Y. Myers and Moore had a lot in common: dogs and ducks specifically. The two would meet regularly to chat about their shared interests when one day, Moore told Myers, “We should start a Ducks dinner in Toronto,” and Myers agreed.

That same night, on the walk back to the subway, Moore introduced Myers to a friend, exclaiming, “This is Burt, he’s going to put together a Toronto DUC dinner.”

“Suddenly the ‘we’ became ‘me,’” Myers recalls.

“I called my best friend Manfred Duenisch and told him about the dinner and how we needed to recruit a committee. We were definitely in over our heads. We just didn’t know it.”

Duenisch worked as an elevator mechanic in many of the high-rise corporate towers in Toronto and, as luck would have it, he became friends with Tom Newman, a highly connected lawyer, in one of those towers. Another Chessie lover, Newman had friends in high places. With his help, the dinner leaped from conception to reality.

In the end, the first Toronto DUC dinner raised an astounding \$20,000 (equivalent to \$100,000 today). Both then-DUC president Hugh MacKay and executive vice-president Stewart Morrison attended. Since then, it’s grown into a preeminent event, in recent years held at The Ritz Carlton.

Looking back, Myers is amazed that they were able to pull it off. Now in its 47th year, the annual tradition is DUC’s highest-earning event.

“I learned that only a team of dedicated people can make things happen,” Myers said. “When I look at those early days, I think we were crazy, but that crazy paid off.”

Ed Seagram, a former Ontario DUC Volunteer of the Year co-chairs the current Toronto committee with Mike Brouwer. He applauds the work of Myers, Duenisch and countless others who blazed the trail in 1978 organizing the inaugural Toronto dinner. He is grateful for their hard work and perseverance in establishing what is now an annual signature event, widely recognized as a model of collaboration and philanthropy.

“To understand where we’ve come from is vitally important,” says Seagram. “These men got together and made it happen. They didn’t have a roadmap, but they worked for a common goal and led the way. We carry on their tradition of teamwork with pride, knowing what we can accomplish, together.”

Going above and beyond for wetland conservation

IRENE JARDINE NAMED DUC'S ONTARIO VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

Anyone who has ever planned, hosted or attended a fundraising event understands the work and dedication needed to see it through to success. Imagine then, the effort required in planning not one or two, but three sold-out fundraising events in eight months!

Irene Jardine of Brigden is a volunteer who accomplished this (and more). Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) is recognizing Jardine for her remarkable dedication in spearheading these events which raised almost \$80,000, as well as for conservation work she’s done in her community.

Jardine first found out about DUC back in the mid-1990s when she was volunteering for the Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary and making water safety presentations for the annual Green-wing Days event chaired by DUC volunteer Wayne Giberson. “It was a wonderful event that I took our four children to for a number of years,” she says. While DUC no longer hosts these youth-focused events, Jardine is keen to resurrect the tradition. “It’s something I would love to host again in Lambton County.”

This experience helped Jardine build friendships and connections both around and directly to DUC. “It was through these relationships that I’ve



been able to expand my knowledge of what wetlands can do for us all environmentally, and the benefits they have as animal habitat,” she says.

Using what she learned, and working with DUC, she and her husband Neil created a wetland pond on their property which she’s proud to say, “now has two sets of wood ducks calling it home.”

Friends volunteering on DUC’s Sarnia Committee encouraged Jardine to join them and take part in their event. “They (the committee) were small, and we were excited to help. Neil and I have been volunteering ever since,” Jardine says, noting she

and Neil became DUC members eight years ago.

In 2022/23 Jardine helped pull the extraordinary feat of hosting three successful fundraising initiatives in just eight months. “We started with an August fundraising banquet, something that is sometimes tricky but we thought we would try and, thankfully, it was a sellout crowd. Then we set up a booth (which had never been done before) at our local Farmers & Friends Big Buck Day held in Oil Springs in March to promote Ducks Unlimited and ended up selling out the April banquet!”

Then came another first for the Sarnia-Lambton committee: the inaugural Annual Sporting Clay Shoot at Twin Creek Shooting Preserve. “We hoped to get 50 to 75 shooters,” Jardine says. “But instead, we sold out with 100 registered shooters.”

Aside from bringing both awareness and funding to wetland conservation, for Jardine, it all comes down to one thing: community. “I am truly blessed to have developed a great group of friends and volunteers within the Sarnia-Lambton committee and beyond. It’s an honour to be recognized for doing what I enjoy, spending time with people who enjoy being involved with Ducks Unlimited and supporting wetland stewardship.” Jardine says she’s thankful for the help of everyone who gets involved.

Jardine’s passion and dedication inspires us all at DUC, and we are so pleased to recognize her as our Ontario Volunteer of the Year.

Remembering Dr. Duncan Sinclair

In November 2023, Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) past-president Dr. Duncan Sinclair passed away. A retired family physician, he was the last surviving member of the “Magnificent Seven,” a group of hunter-conservationists who formed DUC’s Long Point Chapter in 1973 to host the first Canadian fundraising dinner in Tillsonburg, a small town north of the Long Point wildlife preserve.

Dr. Sinclair attended his last dinner in Alymer on October 11, where he received special recognition as a 50-year DUC volunteer.

He was exceptionally proud of his annual hometown event. In 40 years, he never missed a single dinner.

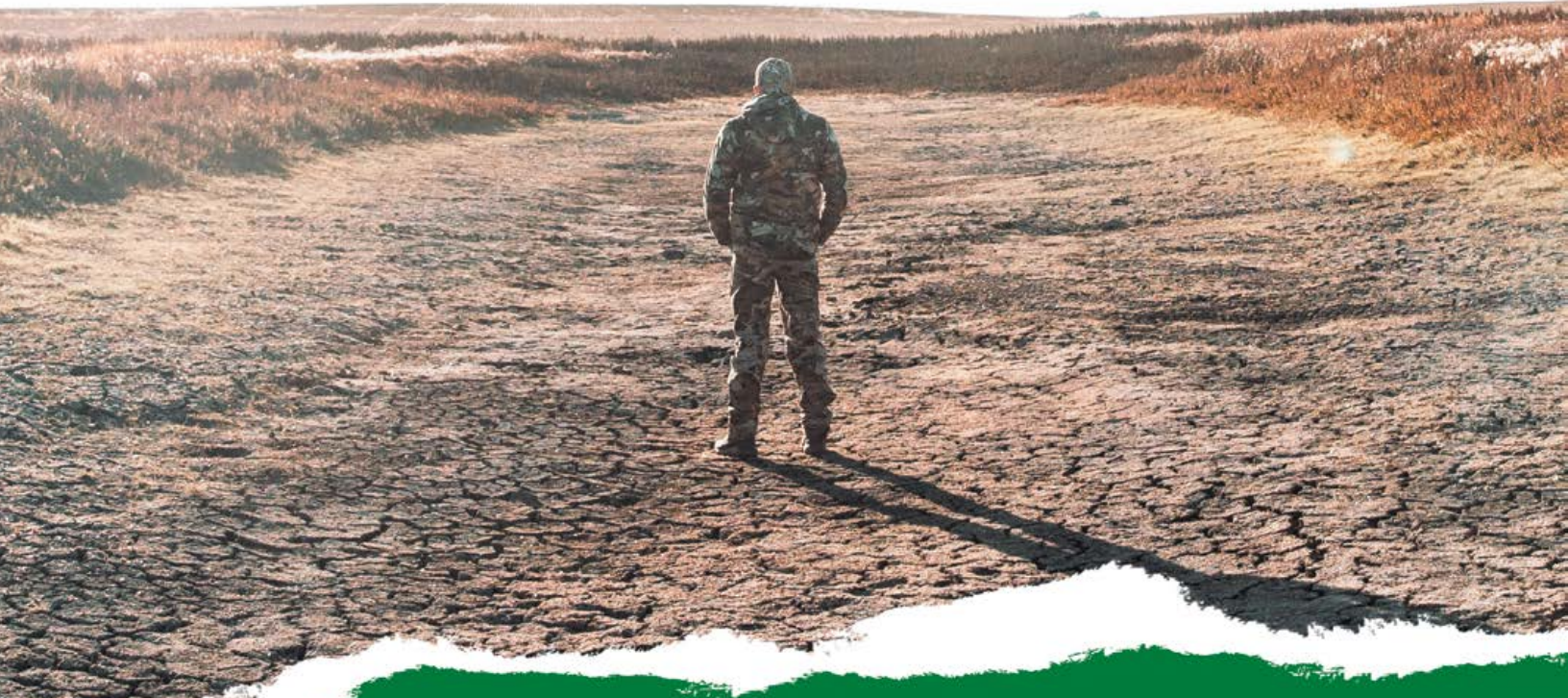
Just two months after Dr. Sinclair passed away, his wife of 63 years and his best friend, Marg died as well. A celebration of her life was held in early January 2024.

Dr. Sinclair’s legacy will live on not only through our events, but also in the lands, waters and wildlife he has conserved for all of us.

2023 Ducks Unlimited Canada Volunteer Milestones

Percy Whitcroft	50 Years	Aylmer	Paul Skuce	25 Years	Sudbury
Duncan Sinclair	50 Years	Aylmer	Cory Brooks	25 Years	Napanee
Herbert Kebbel	50 Years	Aylmer	Daryl Hutton	25 Years	Mount Forest
Burt Myers	45 Years	Toronto	Mary Lou Krestel	25 Years	Long Point Mens
Peter Kruuk	45 Years	Markham Sponsor	Sylvio Lesperance	25 Years	Lighthouse Cove
Linda Landriault	40 Years	Terrace Bay	Julie Atkinson Bloeme	25 Years	Lighthouse Cove
Muriel Millar	40 Years	Long Point Mens	Kristin Bishop	25 Years	Haliburton
Rick Robb	35 Years	Frontenac	Scott Stewart	25 Years	Cambridge Sporting Clays
Gary McCall	35 Years	Lakefield	Dieter Rieckermann	25 Years	Cambridge Sporting Clays
Cameron Thompson	35 Years	Brantford	Scott Wood	20 Years	South Huron
Douglas Ashby	35 Years	Brantford	Bryan Brooks	20 Years	Napanee
Gregory Weeks	30 Years	Uxbridge	Shannon Brooks	20 Years	Napanee
Jeffrey Lloyd	30 Years	Napanee	Gerald Gilroy	20 Years	Cambridge Sporting Clays
Rob Elliott	30 Years	Napanee	Michael Herbison	20 Years	Brockville
William Walker	30 Years	Haliburton			

Without ongoing support for conservation, these may be the good ol' days we tell our kids about.



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