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NIAGARA ESCARPMENT **Views**

Winter 2012-3
(December, January, February)

On the cover: Kailey Preece of Niagara College Teaching Winery at Niagara-on-the-Lake Icewine Festival. PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS.

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Photographer of Featured View

Greg Coman, whose mantra is "Capturing the moment," is a photographer in Halton Hills, with more images at www.gregcoman.com.

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ESCARPMENT** Since Jan. 2008
Views a division of
1826789 Ontario Inc.

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Niagara Escarpment Views is published four times a year.

Subscriptions in Canada:

Annual: \$22; Two years: \$39.50

HST included. HST Number 80712 0464 RT0001.

Subscriptions to the U.S.:

Annual: \$35; Two years: \$65 Canadian funds.

PayPal available at www.NEViews.ca



Delivered by Canada Post
Publications Mail #41592022

The publishers of *Niagara Escarpment Views* are not responsible for any loss or damage caused by the contents of the magazine, whether in articles or advertisements. Views expressed might not be those of its publishers or editor.

Please contact us concerning advertising, subscriptions, story ideas and photography. Your comments are welcome!

Letters to the editor may be edited for space and published in the magazine, on the website or in print materials.

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ISSN 1916-3053



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NIAGARA
ESCARPMENT
Views



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Winter
2012-3



Views of the NIAGARA Escarpment

Before riding the Thunderbird Twin
Zip Line near Collingwood..

PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS.

As we begin our sixth year of publishing this magazine, we are modifying our name slightly to *Niagara Escarpment Views*. We have always covered the entire Niagara Escarpment in Canada, from Niagara Falls to Manitoulin Island, and our new name should make that distinction clear to everyone.

This issue demonstrates that range of coverage once again. Our cover story shares the pleasures of Niagara-on-the-Lake's annual Icewine Festival. In another feature, professional writer Dan O'Reilly takes us inside an energy-efficient house in Mulmur near Creemore. My co-publisher Mike Davis shows his photos of what it's like to fly the new Thunderbird Twin Zip Line at Scenic Caves Nature Adventures near

Collingwood. There I am, in Mike's photo above, having second and third thoughts about what I'm about to do. Also in this issue, I am honoured to describe a Bruce Trail Side Trail in Halton Hills that has been renamed after my father. Greg Coman has taken a beautiful photo at Mono Cliffs Provincial Park that is our featured centre photo, another great image for those of you who collect each one we publish.

In addition, our knowledgeable columnists continue their valuable contributions. Misty Ingraham, a trained and experienced chef, restaurant owner and caterer, explores the use of icewine as a culinary ingredient. Sean James, professional gardener and landscaper, presents his techniques for getting houseplants to thrive through the winter.

Please let us know what you think of any aspect of the magazine, our name change, its content, or what's happening in your part of the Niagara Escarpment. We love your messages and letters. Write us at editor@NEViews.ca or Niagara Escarpment Views, 50 Ann St., Georgetown ON L7G 2V2.

Gloria

Gloria
editor@NEViews.ca

P.S. Wild animals need wild spaces.

There's more online at www.NEViews.ca:

- ▶ Review of Halton Region's children's book *Wings and Thingamajigs*
- ▶ Tributes to Hamilton's Honourable Lincoln M. Alexander & photos of Alexander at Warriors' Day Parade 2010
- ▶ 200th Anniversary Ceremonies for the Battle of Queenston Heights, including photos of Shaun Majumder of CBC's 22 Minutes
- ▶ Amazing Door Prizes for *Escarpment Views*' 5th Anniversary Celebration
- ▶ Downtown Hamilton's Launch Party for Localicious
- ▶ Inside Meldrum Bay Inn, Manitoulin Island
- ▶ Review of Walker Aggregates Decision



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Ontario Government Abandons Land Conservation

Land Trusts attempt to continue to conserve nature reserves, despite the virtual stop of all such work by government and Conservation Authorities. MNR has now stopped the Ontario Land Trust Assistance Program, their program of funding such expenses as appraisals and legal work to receive donated properties. This means a loss of 1/3 of the revenue for many conservancies like EBC. This will reduce the acquisition of sensitive lands that provide not just public access but ecological services like improved water and air quality.

Ontario looks bad internationally. Despite agreeing to the International Convention on Biodiversity which sets 12% as a minimum for parks and protected areas in each eco region, Ontario south of the Canadian Shield has never reached higher than 3.79%. Just as our Environmental Commissioner has drawn our attention to the International Convention standard being raised to 17%, the provincial government makes this cut.

The Ontario government has made heavy cuts to the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR). From 1956 to 2011, MNR funded efforts to conserve land. With its help, Mac Kirk, our recently deceased board member, was able to buy 19,000 acres for Grey Sauble Conservation Authority. Now, Ontario has ceased all funding for land acquisition, but increased funding for health and education.

Please join us in asking MNR Minister Michael Gravelle to restore funding.

Hon Michael Gravelle
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Hi Sean,
I just read your article in Escarpment Views and found it very interesting.
We live up on the Bruce Peninsula and because there is so much rock and grass wouldn't grow, we decided to put in a perennial garden (with lots of rocks). The garden when finished was topped with the dark brown wood chips.
The leaves were very hard to rake/blow last fall but we did that and now after reading your article I'm wondering if we can get away with lifting just the excess leaves before winter. Next spring we could possibly put on another layer of wood chips?? There is a plastic ground cover under the chips to cut back on the weeds.
I'm curious as to what the large leafed plant at the corner of the house would be. Looks something like a banana tree.
I'm looking forward to your reply and hope to read some more articles written by you in Escarpment Views magazine.

Sandy Price, Dyers Bay

Hi Sandy,
I've never had great luck using plastic to keep weeds down. It always ends up poking through the mulch and looking ugly and the weeds seem to find a way through anyway. Mostly, what it seems to do is stop me from being able to effectively weed. More importantly it prevents organic matter from getting into the soil. We often think about fertilizing but we don't think about adding organic matter. Compost should be applied every year and if Mother Nature is willing to do the job, I say let her. A soil rich in compost is actually easier to weed and holds moisture better. I would actually remove the plastic and put the mulch back. Then as far as the leaves go, you have a couple of options. I either gently blow most of the leaves out onto an open area and mow over them, squirting them back into the bed or I use a leaf vacuum but without the bag on the back. I make sure no one's standing behind me, suck them up and squirt them back out into the flower bed, letting the blower chop them up as I do. This way they will be all broken down and worked in the soil by spring. It's an easy and effective way to deal with them and help nature do her job. Leaves like maple and birch will be gone by mid May and, believe it or not, even oak leaves will be done by mid June. Hopefully that helps.
The large leaf plant in the back corner is *Musa basjoo*, the reputedly "Hardy Banana" which I've never successfully overwintered although I've tried several times. Hardy or not, it makes a great point of interest for texture.

Sean James
President of Fern Ridge Landscaping & Eco-consulting

Hello from Chatsworth Township. It looks like you may have a *Russula paludosa*, although it is difficult to tell by a picture. *Russula* varieties are not uncommon, but neither I or my 91-year-old Mother have ever found any of these in my bush, but we have lots of their relatives – *Lactarius deliciosus*. Mind you we have found three different varieties of *Russula* in the Haliburton/Minden area. Most are edible, some are not. My Mother lives on her own in Hamilton, but visits for weeks at a time to "hunt mushrooms." We feast and freeze the edible varieties she finds.

I love your magazine and the Niagara Escarpment. Always something new to discover.

Tricia Selbie, Markdale

I believe the mushroom in your *Escarment Views* of Autumn 2012 on page 50 is an orange *fungomon*.

Lynne Liptrap, email





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Readers & Viewers

Continued
from page 6



The other day I picked up a copy, luckily, of your *Escarpment Views* and it's magnificent. I never saw such photography. I can't get over it. It's just a fascinating magazine. It's so beautiful. It's beyond description really. I thought I've got to phone you and thank you for this beautiful, beautiful magazine. **Marg Seifried, Georgetown**

I read with interest the recent edition of *Escarpment Views*. I'm part of a trail-oriented website called Geotrail and we promote hiking and outdoor activity in a number of locations, many of which are close to, or within, the Niagara Escarpment. We highlight interesting places to go, including waterfalls and historical destinations along the trails. I was very impressed with the magazine and congratulations on your 5th anniversary. Keep up the good work! **Paul Shaker, Geotrail**

Although I am a new subscriber having seen only three issues, I enjoy your magazine very much. I wish I had picked up the first copy a few years ago. I think I've missed a lot. The photography is wonderful. I love the centerfolds. As an older man with eyesight not too good, I wonder if some other people out there would be happy if the type size was a little larger? Just a thought. Keep up the good work. **John Browett, St. Thomas**

Lots of people have been by the gallery – the response has been wonderful! And Babe is now a celebrity :) My husband was the first to see the magazine. He was sitting in the waiting room at a medical clinic in Collingwood – when he looked down there were his two favourite women! Everyone who comes into the gallery wants a copy. **Suzanne Steeves, Creemore**

Just wanted to take a moment and congratulate you and your team on completing your fifth year of publishing. Interesting to read about how you have persevered through tough times. I for one am very glad you did, and your efforts to raise the awareness of the importance of the Niagara Escarpment are very much appreciated. As an "end-to-end" hiker, I can testify that it is indeed a hugely valuable natural asset to Ontario. Keep up the good work in putting out this beautiful magazine. **Laurent Thibault, Georgetown**

Congratulations on the 5th year anniversary of *Escarpment Views*, which is a great magazine. The articles in the magazine always have interesting facts about place relatively close to home, and the pictures remind us again and again of the beautiful area we live in. **Marg Megelink, Georgetown**

Congratulations on the current issue. It is a wonderful read! Photography is great! Thank you. **Helen Buckton, Georgetown**

Many thanks for the great article you did on me. A fantastic shot of the studio and of me at work. This should make me famous, ha ha ha. A BIG THANKS. **John Reid, Alton**



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Angela Meyer, centre, a Royal LePage Credit Valley Real Estate agent, presented Roger Vanderham with her gift certificate to The Terra Cotta Inn on Sept. 4, as a prize won at Le Tour de Terra Cotta in August. Photo by Tanya Laidlaw. ►



▲ Brent Beacroft in a 1812-era uniform of the 104th New Brunswick Regiment, Pam Belgrade of Tourism Burlington and Stephanie Danek of The Heart of Ontario promoted tourism at the annual joint Chamber of Commerce event on Aug. 8 hosted by Halton Region.

At the annual Feast of Fields on Sept. 9 at Cold Creek Conservation Area, the chefs stepped away briefly from their cooking for a group shot. Photo by Ron Ivany. ►



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Events Along the Rock

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Photos by Mike Davis except where noted.



▲ From left, Cecil Simpson, Danielle Decloe, Matthew D'Oliveira were three of many volunteers who helped at the Bike It to the Farmers' Market in downtown Georgetown on Sept. 15. Cyclists were treated to a free pancake breakfast by Rotary Club of Georgetown.

A barn raising was held at the Internation Plowing Match at Roseville on Sept. 20. The barn originally belonged to the McPherson family of Glen Morris. ►



▲ The launch party for the Downtown Hamilton Localicious Experience, held on Sept. 18 at the Art Gallery of Hamilton, was sold out. The festival ran from Sept. 21 to Oct. 14 at restaurants in downtown Hamilton.



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▲ On Sept. 17, enjoying the first harvest of the Acton Community Garden, located in Rotary Park, are from left, Bill Switzer, Dan Harmer, Sharon Mashinter, Rishia Burke of Community Development Halton, Reverend Brian Galligan of St. Alban's Anglican Church and Bill Service.



▲ Some of the guests at the 5th Anniversary Celebration for Escarpment Views hiked a Blue Side Trail in Silver Creek Conservation Area on Sept. 30.

As part of Creemore's Purple Hills Arts Festival, the group with the palindromic name Drawnnonward exhibited some of their work. On Sept. 22, five of the seven artists in the group stood in front of Christopher Roberts' unfinished work. From left, Steve MacDonald, Paul Mantrop, Christopher Roberts, David Marshak and Gordon Kemp. ▼



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Events Along the Rock

Please see www.NEViews.ca for more photos & listings!

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◀ Gathered in front of Jan Zimmerman's cheery acrylics, from left, Herta Hajek, George Perdue, Jan Zimmerman and Eileen Simpson celebrated the opening of their show "Innerscapes Personified" on Oct. 4 at Williams Mill Visual Arts Centre, Glen Williams.

▲ Justin Trudeau met Liberal Party supporters in Georgetown, Burlington and Hamilton on Oct. 10. Here, he speaks to a packed hall at St. Alban the Martyr Anglican Church, Glen Williams.

Re-enactors gather round the fallen figure of Sir Isaac Brock during the 200th anniversary commemorations of the War of 1812 battle on Oct. 13 at Queenston Heights. ▼





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◀ Members of the Orangeville Art Group held their 43rd annual art show on Oct. 13 & 14 at Tony Rose Memorial Sports Arena.



▲ The exhibition "For the King's Shilling: Militia Life During the War of 1812" continues at Burlington's Joseph Brant Museum until Dec. 21. Visitors are encouraged to touch and explore the displays.



◀ On Oct. 14, The Bruce Trail opened a Side Trail named in honour of Charles Hildebrandt of Georgetown. Celebrating the opening were friends from Toronto and Halton Hills, as well as Charles' daughters.

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Worth the Visit: Scandinave Spa Blue Mountain

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WHY IT'S WORTH THE VISIT: For anyone looking for the ultimate in relaxation & wellness, this is a must see & do. The only outdoor spa concept in southern Ontario, in the winter the Spa actually becomes a soft adventure for guests donning their bathing suits in the frigid cold outdoor temperatures.

◀ With ski runs on the Niagara Escarpment in the distance, Scandinave Spa offers relaxing heat at the end of a strenuous day.



▲ Hot in the cold: the heated pools at Scandinave Spa contrast with the snow & ice of winter.

◀ Sunbathing in swimsuits outdoors in winter is luxurious after having been warmed by the sauna or thermal baths.

Photos courtesy Scandinave Spa.





▲ Daughters Barbara Jennings and Gloria Hildebrandt cut the ribbon to open the new Charles Hildebrandt Side Trail.

The Bruce Trail's Charles Hildebrandt Side Trail

By Gloria Hildebrandt Photos by Mike Davis

A Side Trail of the Bruce Trail has been named after my father, Charles Hildebrandt of Georgetown, and his friends are pleased while his family is honoured.

The naming of side trails is the prerogative of the Bruce Trail club responsible for the section of main trail where the side trail is located. This section of trail is supervised by the Toronto Bruce Trail Club.

"When a new side trail is created, it is an opportunity for the club to honour a special individual," says David Tyson of Toronto, past president of the Toronto Bruce Trail Club and chair of the land management committee. "Some trails are named after a particular feature, such as the Black Creek Side Trail in Limehouse Conservation Area. To get a side trail named after a person, someone has to prepare a case and present it to the board of directors of the club involved. The decision on naming lies with the club."

"Charles Hildebrandt had recently passed away," says

Maureen Smith of Georgetown, the Toronto club's director of landowner relations, "and it seemed fitting to give his name to a trail in view of his many years of volunteering with the Toronto Bruce Trail Club. I suggested the name. My regret is that we did not do it while he was alive."

Maureen herself has had a Side Trail named after her, at Scotsdale Farm in Halton Hills.

Bruce Trail Side Trails

Side Trails have been part of the Bruce Trail network of trails since before 1965, when they were shown in the first trail guide book.

"They provide access to special features and look-out points, offering hikers a chance to leave their transportation at one point and return via a





▲ Blue Side Trails of the Bruce Trail are sometimes named after volunteers who have made significant contributions.

◀ David Tyson and Maureen Smith of The Bruce Trail Conservancy at the opening of the Charles Hildebrandt Side Trail.

Some of the many people who regularly hiked in Charles Hildebrandt's global excursions. ▶



▲ The trail passes some outcroppings of the Niagara Escarpment.

different trail, providing a loop hike," says Maureen. "They also provide access to the main trail from parking areas."

All Side Trails are shown in the Bruce Trail Reference Guide, marked with dotted red lines instead of the solid line for the main trail. There is also information about the length and distance of the Side Trail loops. Any changes to trails are shown in the quarterly Bruce Trail magazine.

Features of the Hildebrandt Trail

The Charles Hildebrandt Side Trail is on property owned by The Bruce Trail Conservancy in the Town of Halton Hills. It is a 650-metre stretch that goes from the dead end of 3rd Line south of 22nd Sideroad, to the Canada Goose Side Trail which connects to the main Bruce Trail. It is properly called an access trail, and has roadside parking on the 3rd Line.

This side trail is not as well travelled as others in the Bruce Trail system, so the blue blazes marking the way are useful in the rougher stretches. Yet at 3rd Line, the trail is a wide, obvious track through a mixed hardwood forest. There's a steep dip in the track that looks used by dirt bikes or mountain bikes, and the sharp drop is alarming, but this is not the way the trail goes. Keeping north avoids the dangerous dip and takes the proper trail.

There's a healthy patch of wild ginger that was clearly visible in October. The trail goes through a forest of various hardwood trees of all ages from young to fully mature. Fallen trees are allowed to remain, forming habitat for plants and animals until they decompose fully.

The Niagara Escarpment appears in a moderate way here, with many small moss-covered rocks but some large outcroppings of boulders and a few stretches of rock "fingers,"

those layers of rock that glaciers long ago pushed onto their sides. The narrow rocks and ridges make walking a challenge. Good supportive footwear is advised even for this short walk.

The trail follows a slight ridge to the north, which provides shelter from winds. Then it turns south and descends slightly over rocky ground until it reaches the Canada Goose Side Trail at 2.9 km from a parking lot on the 22nd Sideroad. This trail connects to the main, white Bruce Trail.

Sign Unveiled

Maureen organized a ceremony to open the newly named trail on Oct. 14. Dave spoke about Charles' involvement with the Bruce Trail. Charles' two daughters unveiled the sign and then cut the green ribbon to formally open the trail.

Maureen provided a table of refreshments including apple cake made by her daughter, which was especially appreciated by a group of Charles' friends who hiked the



trail to the ceremony from the 22nd Sideroad.

There is some irony in this honour. After hiking the Bruce Trail for a few years, Charles became more interested in exploring natural wilderness around the world. He led groups on extended orienteering trips, which involve hiking through unmarked areas for a weekend to two weeks, carrying a tent, sleeping bag, clothes, stove, food and sometimes all your water, and following compass bearings to your destination.

He and his friends have bushwhacked in northern Ontario, hiked the Grand Canyon, the Sonora Desert, the Gila Wilderness, part of South Africa and crossed the Alps. He also led groups on weekend

snowshoe hikes, although they usually, not always, stayed overnight in cabins rather than tenting outdoors.

His skill with a compass was so reliable that one of his hiker friends, Ron Ferguson, once joked "Tell me, Charles, was it your plan to come out at the front or back wheel of your car?"

So when Richard Longley of Toronto, another longtime friend of Charles, invited hikers to the Side Trail opening, he wrote "Please join in this celebration and memory of the life of Charles Hildebrandt (and in our prayers that the most off-trail person we ever knew, will forgive us for remembering him with a trail.)"

Charles would have liked that. **NEV**

Bruce Trail Info

www.bruce-trail.org 1-800-665-4453

The Bruce Trail Conservancy head office is in Raspberry House at Royal Botanical Gardens, Burlington.

All nine clubs have their own websites.

Toronto Bruce Trail Club: www.torontobruce-trail-club.org

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17
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2012-3



▲ A house for the 21st century. "Winters here are incredibly cold and windy," say the owners. An energy-efficient house can keep costs down. Yet even in the hottest parts of summer, no air conditioning is needed at Black Bank Hill. Photo by Andrea Hunniford for Solares Architecture.

Energy-Efficiency at Black Bank Hill

By Dan O'Reilly Photos by Mike Davis except where noted

Located on a high plateau overlooking the Mulmur Township hills, a 1,756-square-foot L-shaped bungalow offers its owners scenic views, a comfortable lifestyle, and low energy bills.



Known as Black Bank Hill after its location, the house could be considered a testament to sustainable design and construction and an example of how in-depth planning can keep building projects on time and

budget, meet all the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC) approvals, as well as keep energy consumption costs to a bare minimum.

"It uses 60 per cent less energy than a typical Canadian home of an equivalent size and has achieved an Energuide

Rating of 86 through a combination of design and construction techniques and building materials," says Christine Lolley, a designer and co-principal of Solares Architecture Inc.





▲ Pass through the large mudroom entry, turn the corner and you're in the large, open heart of the house. The concrete floor with electric heating coils adds to the moderating effect of the house's thermal mass.

Some examples include the use of 18-inch-thick insulated concrete form blocks for the exterior walls, triple-glazed fibreglass frame windows, a steel roof which reflects the sun's rays, and a concrete floor slab with in-floor electric heating.

"This reduces wild swings in temperature," says Lolley. "During the day the slab absorbs heat and slowly releases it at night." Other factors include the simplified floor plan which reduced the number of wall corners. "It's the corners where you get the air leakage," she adds.

The southeast orientation also contributes to its energy efficiency. High windows in the kitchen and main living areas allow the low winter sun to stream into those areas, while deep roof overhangs diffuse the high summer sun.

Lolley operates Solares Architecture with her architect husband Tom Knezic, and two intern architects. The Toronto-based firm specializes exclusively in the design of energy-efficient homes. Beside their design focus and philosophies, the husband and wife team have considerable expertise in dealing with the NEC.

"We've worked with the NEC on two previous projects and subsequently worked with them on two other projects since this one," she explains.

As this house is on the Niagara Escarpment, Lolley had to guide the owners through the regulatory, as well as the design process. The owners are a semi-retired Toronto couple who eventually intend to live



◀ The cosy living area focuses on the view outdoors and an efficient wood-burning stove.



◀ Dining, kitchen and living spaces that are open to each other help keep temperatures comfortable and make for great party spaces. "A passive solar home is more efficient if it's small," say the owners.

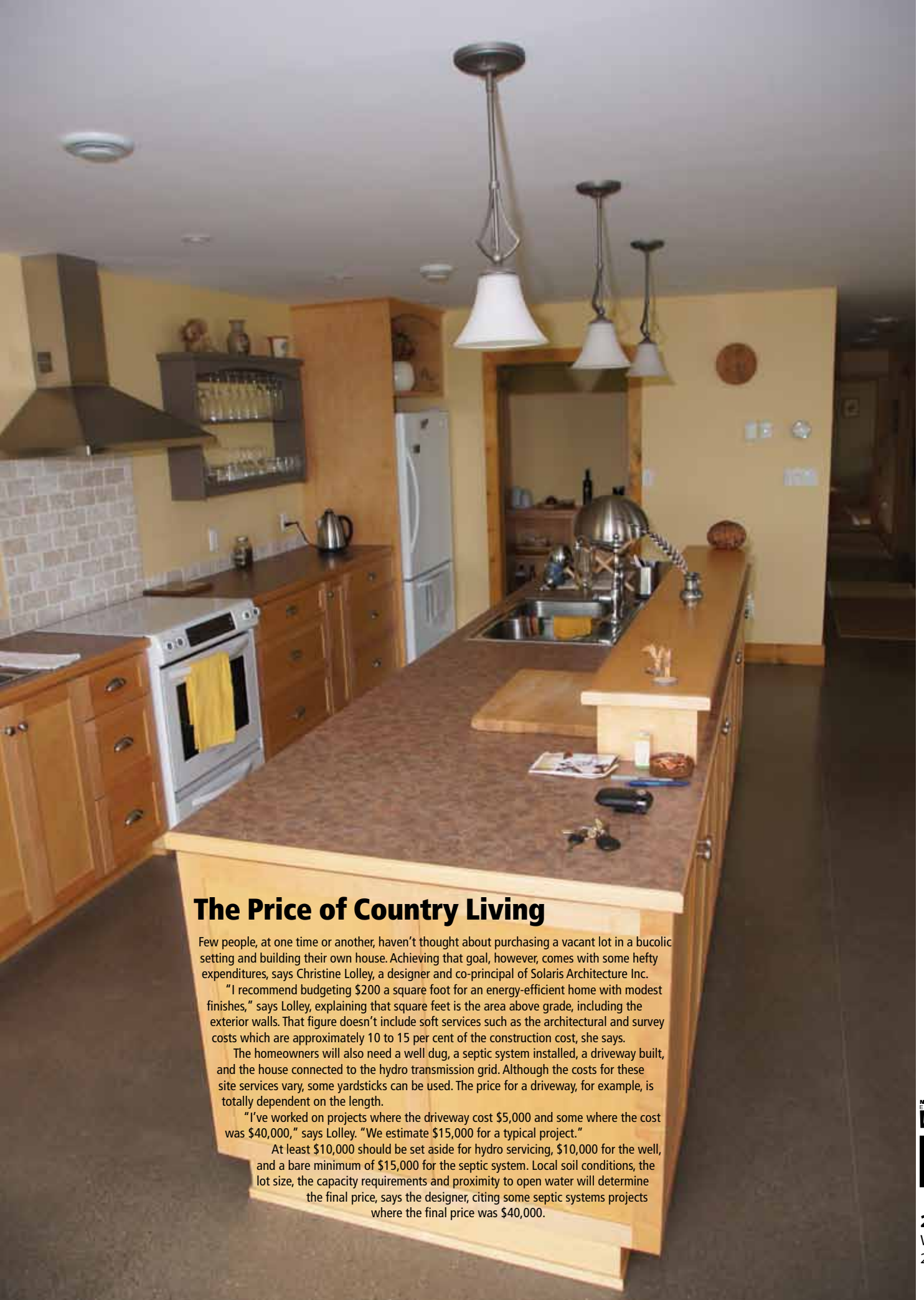
Clean, tidy, everything in its place, makes an open kitchen sociable. Beyond, a pantry for storage. ►



◀ One of the three bedrooms in the house.



◀ Luxury where it counts. A deep, cast-iron soaker tub for indulging in hydrotherapy, and a separate shower stall for getting the job done quickly. Owning 40 acres means curtains aren't necessary. Photo by Andrea Hunniford for Solares Architecture.



The Price of Country Living

Few people, at one time or another, haven't thought about purchasing a vacant lot in a bucolic setting and building their own house. Achieving that goal, however, comes with some hefty expenditures, says Christine Lolley, a designer and co-principal of Solaris Architecture Inc.

"I recommend budgeting \$200 a square foot for an energy-efficient home with modest finishes," says Lolley, explaining that square feet is the area above grade, including the exterior walls. That figure doesn't include soft services such as the architectural and survey costs which are approximately 10 to 15 per cent of the construction cost, she says.

The homeowners will also need a well dug, a septic system installed, a driveway built, and the house connected to the hydro transmission grid. Although the costs for these site services vary, some yardsticks can be used. The price for a driveway, for example, is totally dependent on the length.

"I've worked on projects where the driveway cost \$5,000 and some where the cost was \$40,000," says Lolley. "We estimate \$15,000 for a typical project."

At least \$10,000 should be set aside for hydro servicing, \$10,000 for the well, and a bare minimum of \$15,000 for the septic system. Local soil conditions, the lot size, the capacity requirements and proximity to open water will determine the final price, says the designer, citing some septic systems projects where the final price was \$40,000.



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▲ Located near the pantry, the mechanical room houses an energy recovery ventilator which exhausts hot, stale air from the air-tight house and supplies cool, fresh air. While making this exchange, heat and moisture from the stale air is transferred to the fresh air, reducing energy waste with a 95 per cent heat recovery rate.

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there full time. Their original idea was to have the house built on the highest peak of a hill on the southwest edge of their property.

After fleshing out the couple's vision and reviewing their budget, Lolley had a "very informal" telephone discussion with the NEC area planner. The purpose was to gauge the agency's initial reaction.

"The planner said the house couldn't go on the hill because it would interfere with neighbouring residents' views," she says. That was an opinion, not a ruling, and could have been appealed. Rather than doing that, Lolley and her clients decided the house should be built on the plateau below.

"Initially our clients were upset. But they definitely respect the important role the NEC plays in protecting Ontario's natural landscape and ultimately building on the plateau was a better move, for design and cost reasons. If we had built on the hill the house probably would have

had to be larger and there would be additional expenses such as constructing a driveway up the hill." And, she, notes, the plateau is still 470 metres above sea level.

Altering the location was just the start of the project's next phase which was the preparation of the very detailed architectural drawings. "The more detailed the plan, the more chance of approval," she advises. Eventually a myriad of documents were submitted to the NEC including site plans, floor plans, elevation drawings and drawings of the building's various sections.

If there are no complications, it usually takes the commission 10 weeks to review a development application. If the project is approved, the applicant still has to wait another two weeks which is the review period area residents have to file an objection, she says.

Not only were there no objections, the detailed planning also paved the way for a relatively straight-forward construction.



▲ Apologies for the view. A cloudy day limits the views which can reach to Barrie and Lake Simcoe. "At night Alliston lights up like a Christmas tree," the owners say.

Shelburne-based Metz Homes started building in July 2010 and completed construction in March 2011, with Solares acting as the contract administrator as well as the architect.

The construction cost was approximately \$150 a square foot, which doesn't include the design fees, site servicing, building permit, and other associated costs. "But these clients, like all our clients, wanted a different house, a super energy-efficient house requiring little maintenance and low utility bills. In a way they invested more money now as a way of future-proofing against rising energy costs."

For anyone wanting to build in the NEC planning area, one of the lessons they can learn from the couple's experience is the need for patience. Almost a year transpired from the time planning and design commenced until they obtained a building permit. Says Lolley, "People shouldn't contact us in January and expect to start construction by summer."

"The NEC works closely with applicants to ensure that their proposed developments are in keeping with the policies of the Niagara Escarpment Plan, which are intended to minimize ecological and scenic impacts on the landscape," says its communications officer, Karen Carruthers. "Residents of the Niagara Escarpment Biosphere Reserve are drawn to the area for its spectacular scenic beauty, and they are important Escarpment stewards." **NEV**

Dan O'Reilly is a Caledon-based freelance writer who covers construction, real estate, and historical preservation issues. He is a frequent contributor to the Daily Commercial News and his articles have also appeared in Toronto Star's New In Homes section, Ontario Home Builder, and Engineering News Record. His previous articles for Escarpment Views were "The Best Burn in Winter," Winter 2008, and "Devereaux House: Restoration in Progress," December 2008.

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"Layered Ontario," showing the Niagara Escarpment in Mono Cliffs Provincial Park
Photograph by Greg Coman

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Celebrating Extreme Wines:



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Views



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2012-3

Niagara-on-the-Lake's Icewine Festival

By Gloria Hildebrandt Photos by Mike Davis

Every winter Niagara-on-the-Lake clears its main street to let tents, bar tables and ice sculptures take over for an icewine festival. Other towns have their own events as part of a Region-wide celebration of Canada's most famous wine export to the world. Niagara-on-the-Lake has around 30 local wineries that produce icewine and the town's Queen St. is the place to be to savour their astonishing variety.

If your first experience of icewine was a sweet, thick taste that you haven't been eager to repeat, you're in for a surprise. Icewine is no longer cloyingly super syrupy. Instead, icewines taste fresh, clear, bright and intensely fruity in particular flavours such as peach, cherry, strawberry or apple, plus complex blends including spice and even chocolate. Yet they are much more like fresh fruit than sugar.

Icewine is wine made from grapes that have been allowed to freeze naturally on the vine. When harvested, the grapes are pressed while frozen, which leaves behind most of the water as ice, and results in very sweet, concentrated juice.

Icewine production is considered to have begun commercially in Ontario by Inniskillin in 1984. In 1991 they won a prestigious international award for their 1989 Vidal Icewine. Inniskillin icewine is now available in 73 countries around the world. To be labelled as icewine, the product must be certified by the authority Vintners Quality Alliance (VQA) Ontario.

"While VQA standards state minus eight as the temperature to harvest icewine in, at Inniskillin we harvest at minus 10 for optimum quality," says Deborah Pratt who handles their public relations. "You can thank



▲ "We like wine. We like to do this on the weekends," say from left, Andrew Sitko, Jamie King, Serena Chassie and the designated driver, Evan Hernder, of Hernder Estate Wines.

Mother Nature for providing us with winters to produce what we like to call extreme winemaking."

Role of the Escarpment

"Our vineyards benefit from the constant circulation of off-shore breezes between Lake Ontario and the Niagara Escarpment, which moderate seasonal temperatures," explains Carly Rupcic, marketing project coordinator for Pillitteri Estates

Winery. "This means that in the fall, breezes from warm Lake Ontario extend the growing season, giving our grapes a longer time to develop their flavours, and holding off frost for a longer period which lowers the risk of losing grapes before the winter's icewine harvest."

Joe Will, owner of Strewn Winery, puts it another way. "The key is the micro climate between the top of the

Escarpment and the shores of Lake Ontario. The interplay of the Escarpment and the lake moderation takes the edge off most winter low temperatures. This allows the vines and the buds carrying next year's crop to survive through the winter, yet some nights still get cold enough, at least minus eight C and preferably minus 10 to minus 12, that the grapes freeze and give

◀ Kailey Preece of Niagara College Teaching Winery pours Prodigy Icewine 2010.





the concentration that makes icewine so intense.”

“The soils have been pushed around by glaciers to create interesting soil combinations,” adds Michèle Bosc, director of marketing for Château des Charmes. “It’s a winegrower’s dream to be able to experiment with so many nuances of growing conditions and taste their impact on the finished wine. Most of the time you hear of the impact of *terroir* on table wines. Icewine is also influenced by the same thing. We have a wonderful location to grow world-class wines and we are guaranteed to get a blast of winter every year. Often, the ideal conditions are in the middle of the night in January or February and the wind is howling along with the coyotes.”

“The microclimate between Lake Ontario and the Niagara Escarpment moderates our winters and in summer, evens out the temperatures,” says Steve Gill, general manager of Niagara College Teaching Winery. “This is friendlier for all types of fruit. We have

◀ Fabian Reis, part of Konzelmann Estate Winery, serving Riesling Icewine.



great farming and growing. But without the Niagara Escarpment, we wouldn’t be able to do it.”

Often, the ideal conditions are in the middle of the night in January or February and the wind is howling along with the coyotes.

Tasting Notes

Château des Charmes

Many varieties of *vitis vinifera* (the noble grape varieties of Europe) have been used to make icewine but the most commonly used is Vidal. Others include Cabernet Franc and Riesling. We also make icewine from a very rare grape variety called Savagnin. Icewine is a rare, explosive, sweet treat for your taste buds.

Michèle Bosc, director of marketing

Coyote’s Run Estate Winery

The 2008 Riesling Icewine has amazing flavours, fantastic aromas, great freshness, and lingers on the palate for a very long time. We like to use exclusively Riesling for our icewines, as we feel that this most noble of white grapes is superior in that it delivers great flavours, but also the zesty acidity needed to provide balance to the wine.

Jeff Aubry, president

Inniskillin

The high acidities in our grapes make icewine production ideal as these acidities are needed to balance the high concentration of natural sugar left in the icewine juice. We use three different grapes, Vidal, Riesling and Cabernet Franc, to produce our current collection of icewines with the Vidal being used for three different styles, oak-aged, non-oaked, and sparkling.

Deborah Pratt, winery public relations

Buy tokens ahead of time, \$3 each. Samples cost one or two tokens each. ►





▲ Enjoying the festival on Queen St.: Janet and Danny Lumiss, Nina Otulakowski of Niagara-on-the-Lake, with Cisco Kid.

Enjoying the Festival

Remember to dress warmly, as this event is outside. Warm, waterproof boots will help as the snow can get slushy. Niagara-on-the-Lake shops

welcome visitors to step inside and warm up, of course preferably browsing and buying something as well. Admission to the festival is free, but sampling requires tokens that must be



▲ Sous chef Danial Tong offering Epicurean chocolate cups with ganache and edible gold.

bought at the entrance. Last year tokens cost \$3 each, and some samples were two tokens. Food samples also cost tokens. Calculate how many drink samples you want to try, but

pace yourself. There are several wineries taking part. It's always possible to go to the first tent to buy more tokens.

Continued on page 34 ►

Lakeview Cellars

The Vidal grape variety lends itself very well to icewine production as it is a very winter-hardy grape with a thick skin and has unique flavours of honey, peach and apricot.

Meagan Bates, acting marketing coordinator

Niagara College Teaching Winery

The Cabernet Franc vines at the college give us dark purple-red dry table wines with dark berry fruit, and smoky and savoury character. When left to hang for icewine the same vines produce intensely tawny-coloured dessert wines with rich notes of strawberry-rhubarb jam and honey.

Gavin Robertson, assistant winemaker

Pillitteri Estates Winery

We have taken chances in producing unique varietals. We get to experiment with these rare varietals resulting in icewines with intense, concentrated flavours ranging from honey, mango and brown sugar, to nutmeg, black pepper spice and red licorice.

Carly Rupcic, marketing project coordinator

Southbrook Vineyards

We are able to produce icewine of exceptional purity, concentration, balance and distinctiveness. We were able to harness great concentration of fruit from the hot 2010 vintage, and with the thick skins in Vidal, capture a rich and perfumed juice within the frozen grapes to create an opulent icewine with freshness and vitality.

Brian Hamilton, winemaker

Strewn Winery

Vidal grapes make for a very rich icewine with a zesty finish when well balanced. Riesling's great acidity allows for an almost refreshing experience even with the residual sugar. Cabernet Franc has strawberry flavours with spicy notes and crispness. Cabernet Sauvignon has more intense berry traits with dark chocolate and spice.

Marc Bradshaw, winemaker

Sunnybrook Farm Estate Winery

We make several iced fruit wines. Currently available are iced apple, iced peach and iced cherry. The tree fruits are tree ripened, picked and frozen to create sweet dessert wines bursting with fruit flavour.

Vivian Goertz, owner



It's important to have a designated driver or to go by taxi or limo, or even to stay overnight nearby in a hotel or bed and breakfast, of which there are many in the area. Remember that it gets dark and cold early in January, so arriving in the early afternoon may be better than the late afternoon.

Servers love to talk about their wines and can help you identify what you're tasting. Ask them questions about their wines and wineries, and you'll have a richer experience than simply drinking your way through the tents. Take notes of your favourite samples, and ask where they can be bought. Many are in such limited supply that they're only available at the wineries.

The 2013 Niagara-on-the-Lake Icewine Festival is scheduled for the weekends from Jan. 11 to 27. For information, see icewinefestival.com or call 905 688 0212. **NEV**



On behalf of the board and staff of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation please accept our thanks for visiting our conservation areas and supporting our many special events throughout the year. With the fall and winter seasons upon us, there are plenty of opportunities to enjoy outdoor activities and we invite you to 'get up, get out and join us for a breath of fresh air'. The following events at Ball's Falls are sure to provide you and your family and friends with a delightful experience.

Bart Maves, Chairman

CANADA AT PLAY

*A traveling exhibit from the Royal Ontario Museum
November 10, 2012 to March 25, 2013
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Included with admission to Ball's Falls*

P.A. DAY CAMP

*Friday, November 16, 2012
9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. with extended hours
(Available from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.)
The fee per participant is \$30
for regular hours and an additional \$5
for extended hours*

SOFT BEAR WORKSHOP

*Saturday, November 17, 2012
9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Adult \$12; Adult and Child (ages 10- 17) \$18*

KISSING BALL WORKSHOP

*Sunday, November 24, 2012
12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.
\$15 per person*

CHRISTMAS WITH SANTA

*Saturday, December 1 & Sunday, December 2, 2012
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
\$10 per person
Children 5 years and under are FREE*

Pre-registration is required on all events

**For further information call 905.562.5235
or visit www.ballsfalls.ca**



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▲ Sunnybrook Farms' Iced Cherry Fruit Wine was served at the previous festival. Made of 100 per cent cherries, its taste had a refreshing touch of tartness. Photo courtesy Sunnybrook Farm Estate Winery.

◀ People admire the ice sculptures carved on site for the festival.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake Icewine Festival takes over the retail stretch of Queen St. for a weekend in January. Local wineries offer samples. ▶



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Publishers' Diary: Zipping the Thunderbird

By Gloria Hildebrandt
Photos by Mike Davis

Up to this point, I knew I could always back out. But now that I'm clipped to the zip line, the gate in front of me is being lowered and I'm off, soaring above the trees, the whole wide world open all around me, my destination a tiny, unknown speck in the distance. I am very high, all alone, and I am riding down from the Escarpment on the Thunderbird. I am terrified.



▲ You expect me to go on that? The start of the Thunderbird.

◀ Look up...way up. The 50-foot staircase to the Twin Zip Line platform.

NIAGARA
ESCARPMENT
Views





▲ No turning back. Being hooked to the zip line.

Gloria Hildebrandt on a lonely ride on the Thunderbird Twin Zip Line. ▼



In August Mike and I were invited to a media day to experience the newest attraction at Scenic Caves Nature Adventures near Collingwood. The Thunderbird Twin Zip Line starts high on the Escarpment and extends for almost half a mile, dropping down about 300 feet. It is the longest zip line in southern Ontario, and the longest twin zip line in Ontario. It is also the only zip line in Ontario that lets you control your speed. Believe me, I was working the speed control.

Mike was not able to ride the twin zip line beside me because he is too big. It would be great if this restriction could be changed, because there are plenty of people like Mike who are big, athletic, strong, fit and capable of enjoying it. As a population, we are growing, and there is a market among the heavier end of the spectrum. Mike has plenty of experience rappelling, rock climbing and caving, and would be completely at home on the Thunderbird.

It's a great name for this ride. Ojibwa people who lived here centuries ago referred to Thunderbirds and even a Thunderbird's nest on Blue Mountain. On this ride, you fly like a bird and streak like lightning.

The first thing you have to do is get weighed to make sure that you're not over the weight maximum of 260 pounds. Mercifully, instead of giving your exact weight, the scale shows whether you're in the acceptable range or in the red and can't ride. There is a weight minimum, too, of 50 pounds. Riders must also be between four feet and 6'10" tall. Next, you get suited up with a helmet, harness around the hips and legs and a heavy backpack of equipment to attach you to the zip line.



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So far, no problem. I could get geared up and decide not to go further. I even agreed to do the training run because it was short and not far off the the ground, perfectly safe.

Then I saw the spiral staircase to the zip line platform. 50 feet tall. On top of the edge of the Escarpment. But at least I could climb the stairs and see the view from there. I went up the sturdy steel stairs to the platform.

Are. You. Kidding. Me?? People are taking off from this thing? You don't really expect me to go from here, do you? Yet staff were so calm and matter-of-fact that I let myself



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Winter Moods
Let Debussy, Chopin and Prokofiev fill your soul. Enjoy the cello/piano duo Mary Katherine Finch and Ron Greidanus, then finish the winter's eve with hot stews, homemade bread and aromatic fromages.
Sun. Feb. 10, 4 pm, 157 Main St. Georgetown (\$45 in advance only)

Relics of the Romantic Era
The chorale performs selections of Max Reger, Johannes Brahms's "Neue Liebeslieder" and John Tavener's "As One Who Has Slept." Pianist and conductor Ron Greidanus will be joined by guest Michael Pope, performing Frederick Chopin.
Sun. March 3, 8 pm, Norval United Church Guelph St., Norval (\$30, Students \$10)

Music from the Great Passions
During the Lenten Season of the Eastern Rite Churches, The Georgetown Bach Chorale presents choruses from Bach's Great Passions, music reflecting the suffering, death and resurrection. Sublime instrumental selections from concerti will also be featured in this year-end celebration of the music of Johann Sebastian Bach.
Sun. April 28, 3 pm, St. Elias Ukrainian Church, 10193 Heritage Rd., Brampton (\$30, Students \$10)

www.georgetownbachchorale.com



▲ Hildebrandt, having survived, talks to Scenic Caves Nature Adventures chairman Rob Thorburn.

be taken through the process of preparing to zip the line.

I think I stopped thinking. I just did what they told me to. I didn't ever make a conscious decision to ride the Thunderbird. I just didn't refuse. And with everyone assuming I was doing it, I was carried by everyone else's confidence.

So I was hooked up to the zip line, just as I had on

the training line. But there was no turning back. They secured me to the line and then they lowered the gate and I was off.

I couldn't enjoy the view because at first I had my eyes shut and then I was watching the trees ahead of me, trying to calculate whether I was going to hit them. The end point gradually came into view. I could see two helpers



on the platform encouraging me to stop braking and to come right to where they were. After the two young men disconnected me from the line and I was standing on my wobbly legs, I startled them by flinging an arm around them, thanking them and crying "I'm so glad to be alive!" A man standing on the platform said "You're very brave," as I staggered past him, dazed.

Mike was driven down to the end point to meet me, and when I had caught my breath, he told me that the man on the platform was Rob Thorburn, chairman of Scenic Caves. Back I went to meet him.

Thorburn told me that in designing a new attraction, they make sure it fits within their mandate of appreciating caves, providing great views and excitement, or being surrounded by nature.

"We're excited to be offering a unique shared zip line experience," he stated. "Experienced zip liners will appreciate the majestic surroundings and beauty of the ride, and first-timers will love the ease in which they can control a thrilling experience."

As a first-time zip liner, I didn't exactly love the ride, but because I survived without injury, I'd like to try it again. This time I'll appreciate the view. **NEV**



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Niagara Escarpment Visionary: **Bob Barnett**



Bob Barnett at one of his favourite EBC reserves, Freer Point on Manitoulin Island.

Photo by Ted Cowan.

Bob Barnett deserves to be recognized as an Escarpment Visionary because of his unwavering dedication for 16 years, to preserving and protecting natural lands close to the Niagara Escarpment. He was one of the founders, in 1996, along with Bob Adams, Ted Cowan and Robert Wilson, of the Escarpment Biosphere

Conservancy (EBC), a land trust charity with a mission “to establish nature reserves in the Niagara Escarpment area and to educate the public about conservation and preservation.”

Through Barnett, EBC is achieving their goal. Since 1998, 114 reserves totalling 8,768 acres have been protected from Caledon East to Manitoulin Island. Barnett has done this by

convincing landowners of the importance of conservation.

“This and unceasing effort by Bob is what underlies EBC’s acquiring a property a month for eight years in succession, with what would appear to be minimal resources,” declares Ted Cowan, a co-founder and former chair of EBC.

Barnett first became aware of the Niagara Escarpment in 1968 as an architecture student at University of Toronto, when he joined their Outing Club, which hiked, climbed and caved near Metcalfe Rock in the Escarpment south of Thornbury. Barnett and friends even designed and built the cottage that is still used there by students.

He also became involved with the Bruce Trail, hiking from end to end in the mid ‘80s with his wife Anna and their two young children. “This really solidified my interest,” he says.

In 1996 his group “decided that an ecological corridor was needed to protect the whole Escarpment,” he adds. “Now our mission has expanded beyond the rivers and forests of the Escarpment itself to the Huron shore, through the Saugeen Valley and up to the Manitoulin’s escarpment, which is the whole island.” EBC has secured 3,000 acres on Manitoulin alone.

“Bob has acquired jewels such as the Cup and Saucer feature and created a hiking trail system and guide to 20 trails on Manitoulin Island,” says Robert

Patrick, president of Coalition on the Niagara Escarpment (CONE).

“I remember acquiring the Cup and Saucer and thinking ‘This can’t be real,’” notes Barnett. “Here we are a hundred reserves later.”

“Several of the EBC nature reserves were in areas that made them open to potential resort or cottage subdivision development,” adds Patrick. “Upon acquisition of properties such as these at Cape Chin and Dyer’s Bay, Bob had the lands re-evaluated through the Ministry of Natural Resources and re-designated to Escarpment Protection or Escarpment Natural where applicable. EBC is the only agency I know of, that has reduced the amount of Niagara Escarpment Plan land designated Recreational. CONE commends EBC for this very valuable deed. Many of the EBC acquisitions are wetlands now under protection from inappropriate development.”

Gunter and Vicky Springer are landowners who have worked with EBC. “Bob made it possible to protect our land without any bureaucratic fuss,” they say. “His work conserves thousands of acres of Escarpment and related lands and retains them in as natural a state as possible. Future generations will thank him for his initiative.”

Barnett is not yet content, though. “Southern Ontario only has 3.8 per cent of its land protected as a park or reserve. That should be brought up to 12 per cent to fulfil Ontario’s and Canada’s commitment through the International Convention on Biodiversity. Ontario’s Environmental Commissioner wants that raised to 17 per cent by 2020. I believe that people will create the political demand to expand Ontario’s commons, places we can all visit, places where our children can learn to love nature. Our commons will make life in our cities and developed lands more healthy, less expensive and way more attractive.” **NEV**

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Misty's View of Icewine

If you get lemons, make lemonade. If you get frozen grapes, make icewine?

That's what some very smart vintners figured out. The origin of icewine, like the origin of the dessert wine Madeira, is a happy accident. Grapes froze then thawed then froze again in an unexpected cycle creating grapes rich in sweetness yet full of the requisite acidity. The exact details of the icewine story is one worth learning about from the experts since their genius in taking happenstance to a level of wine perfection is, I suggest, unprecedented.

Another star in this story is of course, the Niagara biosphere, a climate haven for icewine since it is never too hot to grow grapes and never too cold to kill off the grape vines. In fact, **the Niagara region is the only place in the world where this perfect storm of climate phenomena occurs and icewine is the delicious result**, albeit one that requires enormous skill and craftsmanship from Niagara's winemakers to produce.

During the late 1980s, my husband and I, in our Toronto restaurant, Chez Bear Bistro, hosted an icewine tasting held by wine writer Tony Aspler. He arrived with several bottles, and 70 or so glasses. Guests learned about this new product and enjoyed its unique qualities. At the end of the evening we poured out what was left in the bottles and decided that there had to be a culinary application for icewine.

We reduced and concentrated the wine into syrup and incorporated it to our classic baked cheese cake recipe, adding less sugar to compensate for the blast of sweet fruit qualities furnished by the icewine. We paired the cake with a tart berry coulis to act as a foil for its richness. It was decadent. The wine added a special intensity of flavour that made this dessert worthy of a special occasion!

Since then, **icewine has developed into an even more sophisticated product** and now features Cabernet Franc, a red version that challenges the Riesling and Vidal



strongholds in the market.

So it is Cabernet Franc that is my focus in the kitchen today. Recently, I made a nectarine, apple, and black plum crumble to which I added a reduction of this red icewine. The result was a very grown up, adult dessert not suitable for children but deliciously reminiscent of the comfort of the nursery and childhood dishes.

Nostalgia made current is a trend many chefs have adopted. I saw this idea in action when I ran a kitchen in Oxford, England at the oldest pub in town, The Duke of Cambridge. It was transformed by its new owners into a beautiful, hip, modern place with mahogany bar, comfortable seating and a menu that featured upper class dishes from the Edwardian era. Add well-heeled Oxford students who remember the smoked haddock kedgeree that was served on the hunting breakfast buffet table and you get comfort food elevated in a new context. Think Downton Abbey descendants looking for the past in the present.

So for me, **the judicious addition of icewine to classic favourites works**, especially where fruit is concerned. Roasting peaches with icewine and then serving them over ice cream is a simple way to create a modern dessert that resonates with childhood memories of fruit and cream. Simply cut peaches in half, remove the pit, and roast them on a tray in a hot oven topped with a mixture of Demerara sugar and red icewine.

You can even **use a little icewine in your salad dressings**, especially if your salad features strawberries, raspberries or mango. Cut the recommended vinegar amount in half and substitute icewine for the other half.

Many Niagara wine producers have asked their resident chefs to create wonderful recipes that you should check out as well. These chefs have been tasked with the fascinating job of creating inventive, delightful dishes that feature icewine.

Get to know icewine. It is a national treasure and one that my French brother-in-law packs in his suitcase every time he returns to his home in Burgundy. Enough said. **NEV**

Misty Ingraham and husband Bill Sharpe of Ancaster own the catering business The Portable Feast at Home. Misty has been our delightful, informative food columnist in every issue since the premier of this magazine five years ago.

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View of Sustainable Gardening

Clean and Healthy: The Whys and Hows of House Plants

Written and photographed by Sean James



House plants clean the air of carcinogens and beautify the home.

Many of us love house plants. If pressed, most of us could not give a real reason. We might say "They make the house seem more welcoming," or "I just like plants!"

There are many reasons that we should have plants in the house. Plants make a house feel warmer, both emotionally and literally. Emotionally they

satisfy our need to connect with nature and give us much-needed green during a barren winter. Physically, plants humidify the air, making it feel warmer. This can even help with breathing problems for many, although people with asthma or allergies may have issues with spores from soil-borne fungi.

A fascinating thing about houseplants is that they clean

the air of carcinogens remarkably effectively. Research done by NASA shows that a spider plant can remove 80 per cent of the available carcinogens from the air in one day. Chemicals such as formaldehyde which are released from our textiles, can cause severe long-term illness. Dieffenbachia is also a very good air cleaner although it is poisonous if eaten. The surprise plant is Gerbera Daisy which is the most effective of all air-cleaning plants despite its diminutive size.

Moisture is a very important issue for house plants, and one which many of us get wrong. Never put your plants on a weekly schedule. The only way to tell if the plant needs water is to stick your finger in the dirt. If it's cool and moist, it doesn't need water. If the soil's warm and dry, then give it a drink. More plants die from overwatering than under-watering.

Keeping soil moisture low also helps reduce populations of a tiny brown fly called a fungus gnat, and it also means that fewer fungal spores will be in the air. Fungus gnats rarely injure plants, usually feeding on decaying organic material only, but they are annoying.

Two other frustrating insects that effect indoor plants are whitefly and spider mite. Whitefly is a very tiny flying insect which sucks juices from plant leaves, slowly causing the decline of the plant. Spider mites are very difficult to see. Look for leaves having a slight grayish tinge and fine webbing near the branch tips and where the leaf joins the stem, (the leaf axil). If the specimen is worth enough to you, biologic controls can be purchased, even through mail order. The parasitic wasp called *Encarsia formosa* can be purchased as parasitized whitefly eggs on a paper card which is hung in the plant canopy. The wasps are so tiny you will never see them once they're released. They can't even sting. They hatch and hunt down other whitefly eggs until the populations are brought down. Predatory

spider mites can be purchased to hunt and destroy two-spotted spider mite. Neither of these processes is inexpensive so you have to decide whether the plant is worth saving. Tropical Hibiscus and a few others are effected by these pests but many plants are almost bullet proof.

If you're worried that you don't have a green thumb, start slowly. Get yourself a cactus which requires so little care as to be practically self maintaining. The Spider plant mentioned earlier is also almost impossible to kill. Generally, the only way you can kill these is by caring for them too much, e.g., by overwatering. If you manage to keep these alive, try something like a Chinese evergreen, cast iron plant, Mother-in-law's tongue, (one of the all-time best common names EVER), or Dracaena, which are all easy to look after and very useful. Eventually you may get yourself all the way up to an African violet or orchid.

Orchids are actually easier to grow than African violets, usually needing only a weekly soaking. Not much beats the pride of bringing an orchid back into bloom year after year. African violets tend to be much more sensitive, especially to changes in watering. Just baby step up the ladder of green "thumbness." You'll be glad you did, and you might even inspire one of the youngsters in the home to embrace nature and horticulture! **NEV**

Sean James is the owner of Fern Ridge Landscaping and Eco-consulting and is the Chair of Landscape Ontario's Environmental Stewardship Committee. He's also a past president of the Milton Horticultural Society and sits on the Perennial Plant Association's Environmental Committee. If you have questions or comments, email him through editor@NEViews.ca or reach him through www.fernridgelandscaping.com/forum.



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Dec. 1, 8, 15 **'Twas the Night Before Christmas**

Westfield Heritage Village, Rockton. 1-800-883-0104 westfieldheritage.ca

Dec. 4-18 **12 Days of Christmas**

downtown St. Catharines. 905 685 8424 mydowntown.ca

Dec. 6 **Holiday Magic on Main** downtown Georgetown

downtowngeorgetown.com/events

Dec. 8 **A Canadian Christmas** Georgetown Choral Society,

Georgetown Christian Reformed Church, Georgetown. georgetownchoral.ca

Dec. 15 **Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra Gala** Hamilton Place. hpo.org

Dec. 16 **A Christmas Day in the Country**

Westfield Heritage Village, Rockton. 1-800-883-0104 westfieldheritage.ca

Dec. 16 **Messiah Sing-a-long** Georgetown Choral Society,

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Feb. 1-3 **Warton Willie Festival** Warton wartonwilliefestival.com

Feb. 2 **Get Out There NordicFest**

Scenic Caves Nordic Centre, Town of Blue Mountains. sceniccaves.com

Feb. 5-7 **Canadian International Farm Show**

International Centre, Mississauga

Feb. 8-10, 14-17, 21-23 **Frozen Dreams**

Georgetown Little Theatre, Acton Town Hall Centre.

905 877 3700 georgetownlittletheatre.ca



Feb. 9 **Tubbs Romp to Stomp**

Scenic Caves Nordic Centre,
Town of Blue Mountains.

tubbsromptostomp.com

Feb. 10 **Winter Moods**

Georgetown Bach Chorale,

157 Main St., Georgetown. georgetownbachchorale.com



Feb. 18 **Snowfest 2013**

Caledon Fairgrounds, Caledon Village. caledonfairgrounds.ca

PHOTO BY CORY TREPANIER



March 3

Relics of the Romantic Era

Georgetown Bach Chorale,
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April 28 **Music from the Great Passions**

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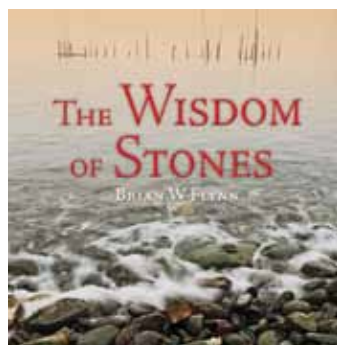
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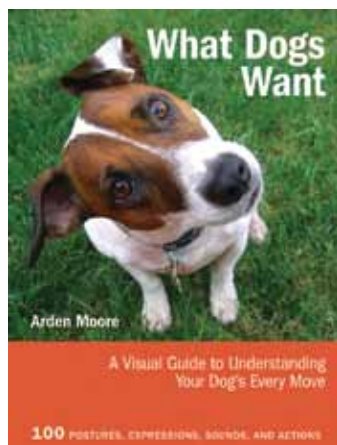
The Wisdom of Stones

By Brian W. Flynn

There is beauty in stones. Some beaches along the Niagara Escarpment have signs telling people not to remove

stones from them. This little picture book of meditations uses amazing images of stones to show life in encouraging ways. Gorgeous photography makes this a treasure. Author/photographer Brian W. Flynn, a trauma psychologist, writes "there is comfort and value in taking time to connect with the world around us in ways that help us understand this world and our place in it." For many of us, nature seems to speak to the deepest part of us.

Sea Hill Press, \$14.55, 2012



What Dogs Want: A Visual Guide to Understanding Your Dog's Every Move

By Arden Moore

It's unjust that people expect dogs to understand spoken commands when we

can't understand the subtle meanings of various barks. Yet most dog lovers claim to understand their dogs completely. Their language is made of gestures and vocalizations. Here are 100 photos of dogs in action, with the meanings explained, along with veterinarians' cautions that signal the need for medical attention. Most illuminating for me: that small dogs sneeze as an expression of delight when playing with their favourite people.

Firefly Books, \$19.95, 2012

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The seeds of our future are taking root right now, for better or worse. This page shares better, forward-thinking ideas and celebrates significant environmental achievements that can help us lead the way in creating the Niagara Escarpment as a healthy, sustainable example of a thriving World Biosphere Reserve.

NEC OPPOSES WIND TURBINES

According to the Niagara Escarpment Commission (NEC), "The Niagara Escarpment is internationally recognized for its spectacular scenic landscapes. Large scale **industrial wind turbines are not in keeping** with the preservation of its unique scenic areas."

AVOID NEW WRAPPING PAPER

According to Gift it Green, a U.S. company selling reusable gift boxes, "if every American family wrapped three presents in reused materials, it would **save enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields.**"

HAMILTON OPPOSES APARTMENT BUILDING NEAR ESCARPMENT IN DUNDAS

Hamilton councillors voted against a six-storey apartment building to be built at the base of the Niagara Escarpment in Dundas. Concerns include the height of the building, its compatibility with the neighbourhood, and **how close it is to the Niagara Escarpment.** Nearby residents have formed the citizens' group Heritage, Escarpment and Responsible Development (HEARD). Councillors expect the proposal to go to the Ontario Municipal Board.

BIKES WELCOME IN HALTON HILLS

The Town of Halton Hills has formed a **Halton Hills Bicycle Friendly Community Committee** and has begun organizing pro-bike events.

Thomas in late snowfall

Photo by Mike Davis

ONTARIO'S ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FAILS

In his 2011/2012 Annual Report Part 2, Gord Miller, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario states "In this reporting period we saw **no bold new legislation to tackle the challenges of our time...** We are no longer a jurisdiction that the world looks up to... With the formidable challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss facing us, it is not a good time to let this capacity wither... It really is a matter of the people of Ontario expressing their expectations to government..."



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