

# Natural DRAWINGS

**S**OUTHERN ONTARIO NATURE AND SCIENCE ILLUSTRATORS (SONSI) is a group for anyone interested in nature and science illustration. Members meet every few months for presentations, hikes, and visits to zoos and museums. One of the goals of SONS I is to educate the public about science and nature through their work. Since 2011 they have held an annual exhibition of their work in various locations in Ontario.

Last October, Giant's Rib Escarpment Education Network (GREEN) hosted an exhibition of SONS I art at the Discovery Centre at Dundas Valley Trail Centre. People were invited to vote for their favourite art works. Here are the works that won the People's Choice awards.

## FIRST PLACE

**Great Horned Owl on Silver Maple in Winter**  
*Bubo virginianus/Acer saccharinum*  
by Kathryn Chorney, 2011

Matted size 30" x 22"  
Archival Giclee Print/original is watercolour & graphite on paper.  
(original not for sale).

### Artist Statement:

This portrait of Alex, a female Great Horned Owl, is from a series I have created of the raptors and owls at the Canadian Peregrine Foundation (CPF) north of Toronto. A member of the CPF's Education Team, Alex helps raise awareness of the challenges facing wild birds of prey, and the importance of habitat conservation. I have gotten to know Alex and her teammates via educational drawing sessions I arrange at Sheridan College (Oakville), where I teach scientific illustration.

Following a snowfall, I noticed that the pattern of fresh snow, drifted

into fine crevices in the Silver Maple bark, closely resembled Alex's plumage pattern — a vivid demonstration of the concept of camouflage. Both species share a wide geographic range in North America, including the Great Lakes area, so this seemed the ideal setting for Alex's portrait.

The original of this piece was juried into *Focus on Nature XII*, a leading international exhibit of science and nature illustration, and subsequently accepted into the permanent collection of host institution The New York State Museum.







## SECOND PLACE (THREE-WAY TIE)

### Bracket Fungus on Stump *Ganoderma applanatum* by Kathryn Chorney, 2011

Matted size 20" x 16" Archival Giclee Print/  
original is watercolour, graphite, and ink on paper.  
(original not for sale).

#### Artist Statement:

I found this majestic (about 14 inches in diameter) bracket fungus growing on an old tree stump in Wellington County. The species is well known in southern Ontario and throughout North America. I completed the composition by referring to a collection of other bracket fungi as well as self-collected references of wild plants and tree textures. Tree fungi such as the *Ganoderma* are very important to nature, as they break down dead plant material and return the organic nutrients and inorganic elements to the soil to nourish new life. They are also incredibly beautiful life forms.



### Red Trillium *Trillium erectum* by Emily Damstra, 2010

Watercolour and gouache painting.

#### Artist Statement:

When I walk through a woodland area in the spring, I enjoy looking for all types of spring wildflowers, but I take particular delight in encountering these deep red flowers. Perhaps they appeal to me because their striking colouration seems to contradict their shyly nodding habit. Another surprise is the way these demure beauties attract pollinators: not with a pleasant fragrance and sweet nectar, but with a fetid odour that makes carrion flies come calling and then turn away disappointed. My painting of a Red Trillium is based on photographs I've taken in various Ontario woodlands.



### Davisville: A First Nations settlement along Ontario's Grand River in 1825 by Emily Damstra, 2012

Graphite drawing with digital colour.

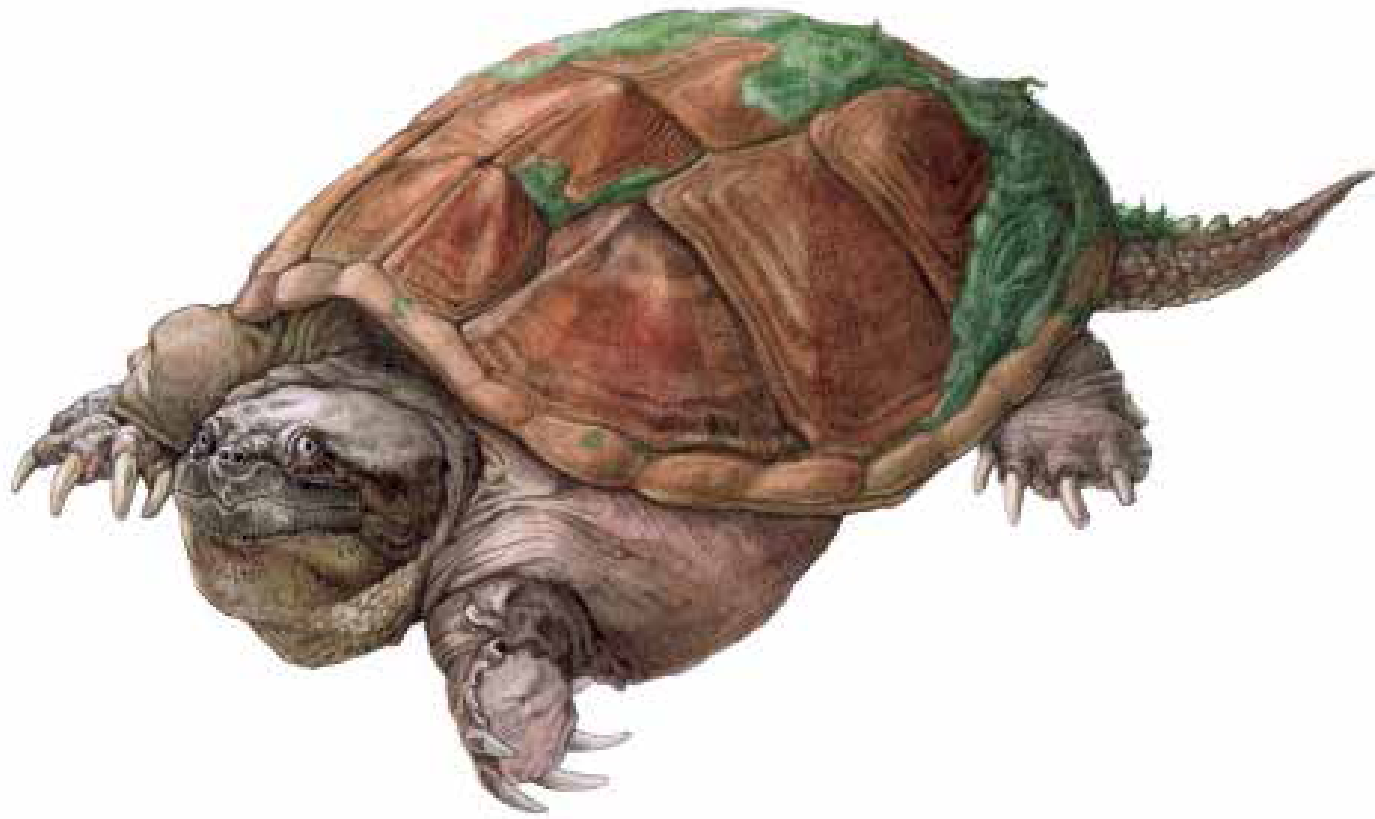
#### Artist Statement:

In this illustration I reconstruct a settlement of Mohawk and Mississauga peoples along Ontario's Grand River. Women are returning from their agricultural fields, located across the river from their homes. I based this reconstruction on the archaeological evidence found at the site, on historical accounts of the settlement and time period, and on advice from local archaeologists. The interpretive sign featuring this illustration says: "The archaeological evidence at the site tells the tale of a people who adopted only those elements of European culture that they saw as useful, while retaining many of their ancient traditions."



▲SONSI artists at GREEN Discovery Centre in Oct. From left, Tarja Barton, Kathryn Chorney, Emily Damstra, Karen Logan, Karen Reczuch, Kathryn Killackey. PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS.





### THIRD PLACE (TWO-WAY TIE)

**Common Snapping Turtle *Chelydra serpentina*  
by Kathryn Killackey, 2015**

Watercolour.

**Artist Statement:**

The common snapping turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*) has a large native range covering much of central and eastern United States and southern Canada, including southern Ontario. It is a member of *Chelydridae* and is one of only two species from this family found in North America. This large freshwater turtle is commonly found near shallow bodies of water and can be aggressive when approached on land. An individual can live on average for 30 years if it makes it past the vulnerable hatchling stage. This illustration is based on a very large and old specimen I came across near Kingston, Ont. Older common snapping turtles are often covered in algae and their ridged carapaces become less pronounced. In order to portray some of the distinguishing features of the species, such as the ridged carapaces, I “rejuvenated” this elder turtle, consulting photos of younger individuals to restore some of the ridges and remove some of the algae. The resulting image is of a “middle-aged” individual.



**White Pine Cone *Pinus strobes*  
by Karen Logan**

Coloured pencil on paper.

**Artist Statement:**

*Pinus strobus* is found in the temperate broadleaf and mixed forests biome of eastern North America. It prefers well-drained soil and cool, humid climates, but can also grow in boggy areas and rocky highlands. In mixed forests, this dominant tree towers over all others, including the large broadleaf hardwoods. It provides food and shelter for numerous forest birds, such as the Red Crossbill, and small mammals such as squirrels.

Eastern white pine forests originally covered much of northeastern North America. Only one per cent of the old-growth forests remain after the extensive logging operations that existed from the 18th century into the early 20th century.

This tree is known to the Native American Haudenosaunee (Iroquois nation) as the Tree of Peace.

For more information on SONSI see [www.sonsi.ca](http://www.sonsi.ca).