

# Niagara Escarpment **ViEWS**

WINTER 2016-17 (DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY)

INCLUDES PHOTOS BY  
CONSERVATION HALTON HERO  
MIKE DAVIS

## **CHRISTMAS TREES** FOR THE BRUCE TRAIL

ANNUAL FOCUS ON HOUSES:

## **RURAL ROOTZ** HOMEMADE HOME

## **ROADS THAT PROTECT ANIMALS**



## **WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY BY** **ANN BROKELMAN**

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PM 41592022

# BEEF & MUSHROOM STEW *with blue cheese*



Prep Time: 15 min.  
Total Time: 110 min.  
Makes: 2 batches (4 servings each)

## Ingredients

- 1 carton Beef broth, 25% less sodium (900 mL)
- 1 cup Dry red wine (250 mL)
- 1 pkg Dried mixed mushrooms (15 g)
- 3 tbsps Canola oil, divided (45 mL)
- 1/4 cup All-purpose flour (60 mL)
- 1 tsp Each salt and pepper, divided (5 mL)
- 2 lbs Lean Sterling Silver® Premium Stewing Beef (1 kg)
- 1 Large onion, chopped
- 3 cloves Garlic, minced
- 5 tsp Chopped fresh rosemary leaves, plus more for garnish (25 mL)
- 5 Carrots, peeled and chopped
- 2 pkgs Whole Mini Bella Mushrooms, trimmed and quartered (454 g)
- 1/2 cup Crumbled blue cheese, divided (125 mL)

## Directions

1. Heat broth and wine in a saucepan set over medium heat until simmering. Add dried mushrooms; cover and let stand off heat for 10 min. Strain out mushrooms, reserving broth mixture; cool mushrooms slightly and chop finely.
2. Heat 2 tbsp (30 mL) oil in an ovenproof pan set over medium-high heat. On a plate, combine flour and 1/2 tsp (2 mL) each salt and pepper. Toss beef in flour mixture and brown evenly in hot oil, working in batches. Remove from pan and set aside. Add remaining oil, onion, garlic, rosemary, carrots, salt and pepper to pan; cook, stirring often, for 10 min. or until vegetables are softened. Add fresh and dried mushrooms and brown for 5 min.
3. Return beef to pan along with any leftover flour. Stir in broth mixture, scraping up any browned bits from the bottom of the pan, and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer 1 hour, stirring occasionally until very tender. Pour the stew into bowls and garnish each with 1 tbsp (15 mL) blue cheese and rosemary.

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Winter 2016–17  
(December, January, February)

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Photo by Ann Brokelman

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# Wild Animals in Winter

I am not the most patient of people. I am so busy with this magazine, my forest property, garden and two dogs, that I feel that I am on the go all the time, until I'm exhausted. Then I rest until I can go again. Waiting quietly for things to happen is not at all easy for me.

I was astonished, then, to see Ann Brokelman's photographs of wild animals. Note: animals in the wild. Not in a zoo. Not at a rehab centre. Roaming freely. She says that much of her photography is done from her car.

Mike and I frequently spot wild animals and large birds while we're out driving in Escarpment areas. One of the wonderful things about this biosphere reserve is that it still provides habitat for plenty of birds and animals. Yet we are usually haring off to get to some meeting on time, or to finish a set of tasks for the day, or to make important deadlines, and we rarely can afford to stop, pull over and start taking photos. I think we're missing great opportunities.

Judging by Ann Brokelman's photos, which are on the cover and in an extensive feature in this issue, there are animals all around, if we only take the time to stop and pay attention, and wait. To practise patience

in other words. The results can be astonishing. Do you agree?

## Animal Passages

While we're on the subject of wild animals roaming wild, it's great to see attention being paid to road ecology and how roads can be made safer for wildlife. Sue Horner has looked into the complex subject that is being explored by a large number of people and organizations, and she reports on some of the projects being undertaken in Escarpment countrysides.

## Home & Holiday

This winter issue is our special focus on homes, and Sandra Howe has knocked on the door of Rural Rootz, a fascinating house built near Wiarton. Sustainability was the guiding principle behind every decision, and the result is a totally unique residence completely suited to its location on the rocky forest land of the southern Bruce Peninsula.

If you'd like a fresh Christmas tree for your celebration and feel like taking a drive to the country around Mono, you can do a good deed by buying one from Hockleycrest, supporting the Caledon Bruce Trail Club at the same time. Dan O'Reilly shares a great story about how the



owners became committed to sharing their farm's resources with the Bruce Trail.

These are only the large features in this issue. There's more to explore with this magazine and keep you occupied while you get cozy inside this winter. As always, drop us a note about what's on your mind and send us your photos and story ideas. I'm especially interested in your snapshots of Escarpment wild animals, because they might motivate me to slow

down on those dangerous roads and enjoy the views outside the car windows. The Niagara Escarpment is a great safe haven for wild animals, which of course as I always say, need wild spaces. We need to keep them safely that way.

*Gloria*

Gloria Hildebrandt

## LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK!



Write us at [editor@NEViews.ca](mailto:editor@NEViews.ca) or *Niagara Escarpment Views*, 50 Ann St., Georgetown ON L7G 2V2

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## ■ EVENTS ALONG THE ROCK

Photos by Mike Davis except where noted.



▲ Sean James of Fern Ridge Landscaping was given an honour award in the landscaping category by the Perennial Plant Association on Aug. 2, for designing Oakville's Anderson Parkette Biodiversity Garden, right, which contains more than 50 native plant species. PHOTO SUBMITTED.



▲ Acton's annual Leathertown Festival was held on Aug. 14. PHOTO BY CHRIS MILLER.

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for more photos & listings!

## EVENTS ALONG THE ROCK

Photos by Mike Davis except where noted.



◀ Halton Hills' former mayor Kathy Gastle and current mayor Rick Bonnette cut the ribbon to open the Children's Garden of the Senses on Sept. 10 in Norval. The garden was inspired by the works of L.M. Montgomery, author of *Anne of Green Gables*, who lived in Norval for more than a decade.

# Test Drive

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## EVENTS ALONG THE ROCK

Photos by Mike Davis except where noted.



▲ On Sept. 10 Mountsberg Conservation Area in Campbellville hosted the opening of a new barn for its farm animals and a new building of raptor enclosures, shown above. PHOTO COURTESY OF CONSERVATION HALTON.



▲ On Sept. 17 Communities in Bloom Ontario announced that Orangeville won a five-bloom rating, making it eligible to enter the national competition in 2017. Judge Sandy Barnes Cairns presented the award to Orangeville committee members Kathryn Macdonald, Ted Zarudny and Jane Blears. PHOTO COURTESY OF TOWN OF ORANGEVILLE.

▼ Georgetown Thai Cuisine celebrated its 10th anniversary on Sept. 11 with a parade, Thai dance performances, Thai massage, free lunch and more. Donations were encouraged to benefit Cancer Assistance Services of Halton Hills.



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▲ The Town Crier gave a welcome to Eden Mills Writers' Festival on Sept. 18.



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## EVENTS ALONG THE ROCK

Photos by Mike Davis except where noted.

► Deborah Serravalle had many books to autograph at the launch of her first novel *How We Danced*. A party was held at The Spice Factory in Hamilton on Sept. 21.



► Heather's Bakery of Georgetown celebrated its 15th anniversary on Oct. 1 by giving away free pieces of, naturally, cake.



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▲ Isaiah Aguonie of Sheguindah, Manitoulin Island, was one of six Indigenous writers who won a James Bartelman Aboriginal Youth Creative Writing Award. "Isaiah is a wonderful example of how sharing our stories can further our understanding of the varied perspectives and experience of Indigenous youth in Ontario," stated Michael Mantha, MPP for Algoma-Manitoulin. The award was presented at Queen's Park on Oct. 7. From left, Dr. Shafiq Qaadri, Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, The Hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, Isaiah and James Bartelman. PHOTO COURTESY OF ONTARIO MINISTRY OF CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION.



▲ Prime Minister Justin Trudeau included Picone's Fine Foods in Dundas in his visit to Hamilton and Niagara on Oct. 21. Here he is surrounded by shop owners, employees and eager visitors.



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A photograph of a beaver in a field. In the foreground, there is a large, light-colored rock. Behind it, a wire mesh fence is visible, with some red string tied to it. A beaver is standing in the field to the right of the fence. The background shows some green foliage.

# RISKY ROADS:

Road ecology measures step in when animal instincts and urban sprawl collide

■ WRITTEN BY SUE HORNER



**F**ENCING GUIDES ANIMALS AWAY from dangerous roads and onto a bridge, which takes them safely over a road, or into culverts or underground passages that Ontario Parks likens to “a critter-sized subway tunnel passing under the road.” ►

Ecopassage in use at Killbear Provincial Park west of Parry Sound. PHOTO COURTESY OF ONTARIO PARKS.

**N**ature's programming is strong. After the first rainfall following spring thaw, Jefferson's Salamanders emerge from underground dens, determined to migrate to the ponds where they were born to lay their eggs.

In Burlington, that means crossing King Road. Some 1,500 cars a day use this road to wind their way up the Niagara Escarpment. The salamanders, small enough to fit in the palm of your hand, have little chance of being seen on the dark, rainy

nights they favour for the trip.

In 2012, while the City of Burlington was studying King Road improvements, Conservation Halton proposed a radical idea. What about closing a section of road on the Escarpment face for a few weeks to allow the endangered Jefferson Salamander a chance to get to the breeding areas? Burlington agreed, and the closure has been an annual tradition ever since.

Lesley Matich, terrestrial planning ecologist with Conservation Halton, can't

## WHAT IS ROAD ECOLOGY?

Road ecology is a science about the interaction between roads and the natural environment, especially effects of roads on wildlife.

estimate how many salamander lives have been saved by the closing. However, she says, "Once the physical barriers were used to close the road, no amphibians have been killed due to cars within the footprint of the closure."

### Official Planning is Key

The King Road closure is an example of road ecology

at work. This growing field studies the intersection of wildlife, the environment and roads, and looks for low-cost but effective ways to avoid harming wildlife. Preventing collisions with larger animals also improves driver safety.

Road ecology is an emerging need prompted by urban sprawl encroaching on migration and breeding



▲ On Tremaine Road in Milton, new fencing and an underground tunnel provide safe crossing for wildlife. PHOTO COURTESY OF CONSERVATION HALTON.



▲ Wildlife fencing was installed during the widening of Neyagawa Road in Oakville, to direct small animals to a safe crossing. PHOTO COURTESY OF CONSERVATION HALTON.



▲ Close up of the Tremaine wildlife crossing. PHOTO COURTESY OF CONSERVATION HALTON.



▲ A long, slow, perilous journey. A Snapping Turtle crosses a road through the Niagara Escarpment north of Georgetown, in the middle of a large wetland. PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS.



▲ Close up of the algae-covered Snapping Turtle. It made no attempt to cross the road while humans approached it. Hours later, there was no sign of it, likely indicating a safe crossing on this dangerous road. PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS.

areas. Over the past 60 years, roads in southern Ontario have multiplied from 7,000 km to more than 35,000 km. Some 14,000 wildlife/vehicle collisions happen every year in Ontario. Many more collisions with small reptiles, amphibians and birds go unreported.

"It's a huge issue that's just beginning to find its way into planning," says Tys Theysmeyer, head of natural lands for Burlington's Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG), which includes the Cootes Paradise wetlands.

"The Escarpment is a key connector for animals crossing watersheds and we have a long list of species affected," he adds. "Turtles, snakes, foxes, deer – if it's an animal, it's crossing a road, and there may be no specific design to account for its safe crossing."

### Protection by Design

Matich says the environmental assessment stage is the time for municipalities to build in road design that protects wildlife specific to the area.

"If several wetlands within

known wildlife movement corridors are divided by a proposed road project," she explains, "specially designed culverts targeted at frogs and turtles could be considered."

Sometimes referred to as "ecopassages," wildlife fencing, bridges and culverts are best practices used in Banff and Jasper, Alberta and elsewhere, but they are relatively new to Ontario.

In Milton, Halton Region and Conservation Halton are partnering to install fences in strategic spots and build wildlife culvert crossings into the design of the road corridors in several locations, including Tremaine Road.

"Culvert sizes vary along this stretch of road, with smaller ones designed to provide passage for mammals up to raccoon size, and larger ones able to accommodate deer," says Matich.

Similar wildlife passages have been installed in other areas of Ontario, including provincial parks like Killbear and Algonquin. In

Brampton, two ecopassages protect turtles crossing Heart Lake Road, which bisects a wetland complex. Another two in Oakville help small mammals and amphibians in the North Oakville Natural Heritage System get across Neyagawa Boulevard north of Dundas Street.

### Citizen Action

Turtles are ponderously slow, both in movement and in reaching maturity. They don't reproduce until they are about 15 years old, if they can make it that long. Seven out of eight turtle species in Ontario are considered at risk, due mainly to road deaths and habitat loss resulting from development.

Wetlands on either side of busy Cootes Drive in Dundas make it a dangerous place to be a turtle. Driven by instinct, female turtles leave Cootes Paradise in June, looking for a south-facing slope to lay their eggs in sandy soil or gravel. Volunteers with a group called Dundas Turtle Watch protect turtles

as they cross the road from the marsh to nest, and again when the hatchlings emerge.

"We rescue turtles that are in danger of being killed by traffic, helping them across the road," explains Joanna Chapman, one of the group's founders. "We also put protective netting over nests, and keep records of every turtle seen, alive or dead."

In 2015, that included 93 turtles killed along the road, plus 57 amphibians and assorted birds and snakes.

The group relays the data collected to the Royal Botanical Gardens. Starting in 2014, the data also goes to Ontario Nature, which tracks the distribution of reptiles and amphibians across the province.

### Protection Takes Teamwork

Hamilton Conservation Authority (HCA) is working closely with Dundas Turtle Watch and RBG to make change happen, including lowering speed limits and adding warning signs. RBG



▲ Dundas Turtle Watchers like Joanna Chapman put out this sign when they patrol the roads, hoping to save turtles. PHOTO BY SUE HORNER.

also installed silt fencing, fabric staked to the ground that prevents animal movement and soil erosion, at hot spots along the Cootes Paradise side of the road in 2012. Permanent fencing followed in 2015.

Lesley McDonell, terrestrial ecologist for HCA, says, "We're fundraising with various organizations to install a low-profile fence along Cootes Drive that's the Cadillac of animal exclusion fencing." The knee-high fence has a tilt on top that prevents turtles from getting over.

McDonell adds that "a whole group" is working on the Cootes area, including

Conservation Halton, Hamilton Conservation Authority, City of Hamilton and McMaster University.

"There's a push to take this road ecology project in Dundas to the larger city of Hamilton, and to other parts of Ontario," she says.

It's a start. As resilient as nature can be, creatures both small and large need humans to help. As Chapman says, "We're only monitoring a small area, but the roadkill is horrific."

*Sue Horner wrote "Community Garden Movement Growing Like a Weed," Niagara Escarpment Views, Spring 2014.*

## WORKING ON ROAD ECOLOGY IN ONTARIO

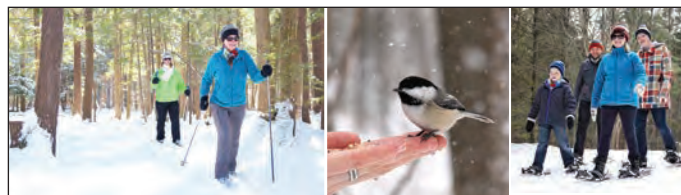
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# Hockleycrest's *Trees for the Trail*

WRITTEN BY DAN O'REILLY ■ PHOTOGRAPHED BY MIKE DAVIS



**T'S A LONG WAY FROM ARIZONA** to a tree farm nestled away on the Niagara Escarpment in the Mono Township hills, but a Grand Canyon backpacking trip can be considered the genesis of David Moule and Sally Cohen's commitment to the Bruce Trail through the sale of Christmas trees on their farm, Hockleycrest. ►

David Moule in one of the tree plantations at Hockleycrest with Airport Road in the background.



In the 10 years from 2005 to 2015, approximately \$25,000 or \$2,500 a year has been raised at Hockleycrest for the Caledon Bruce Trail Club, one of nine clubs comprising the Bruce Trail Conservancy. Along with wreaths and planter boxes, the \$30 pesticide-free trees are sold over three or four weekends in December by a contingent of Caledon and other club volunteers who also guide purchasers to the tree plantations and help load the trees on cars. Other members help prune the trees, a rather tedious task which has to be conducted in mid June.

"This wouldn't be possible without volunteers," says David.

Asked to explain how the farm came into being, he says its history stretches back to the early 1980s, when as a Ministry of Transportation engineer, he joined a group of fellow employees planning a Grand Canyon backpacking trip.

"We thought we better get in shape," says David of the group's decision to do some preparatory hikes on the Bruce Trail.

That was his introduction to the trail and the Bruce Trail Association, now Conservancy, and he was hooked. A year later he became a part of a trail captain group tasked with rebuilding the Bruce Peninsula trail section. Eventually he proposed and later flagged

the route of the panoramic Gun Point Loop Trail overlooking Georgian Bay in Lion's Head. It had previously been an inland trail only.

On his drives to the Bruce Peninsula work parties he began spotting a particular property marked by a white gate and picket fences. "It was quite noticeable because this was the route of the 1984 tornado and there was quite a bit of damage on the other side of the road."

A few years later he met Sally at a ski club they belonged to and in 1992 they got married. Shortly afterwards he learned the property was for sale and he persuaded her they should purchase it as a weekend retreat.

### Trees Planted

After taking possession of the 75-acre property in 1993, they undertook a number of improvements to its circa-1847 log house and the land which had been denuded by years of cattle grazing. "We didn't want that, so we started growing trees," David says.

In 1994 they hand planted 1,500 trees with the help of friends. It was, Dave admits, a rather laborious endeavour, so they decided to take advantage of the Ontario Forestry Association's low-cost Project Tree Cover and had approximately 20,000 trees of various species machined planted in the following two years.

▼ David and wife Sally Cohen with some of the wreaths for sale to benefit Caledon Bruce Trail Club.



► Wreaths and greens: David with Club members David Sarginson and Louise Carberry and natural products for sale.



▼ Louise Carberry with a couple of the approximately 18 urns she helped make with eight other volunteers.





▲ Customers taking home the tree they chose and cut themselves.

▼ For those who don't want to cut their own tree in the field, there are trees ready to choose from near the barn.



"But then we started noticing all these cars with Christmas trees on their roofs coming from a tree farm just to the north of us."

That observation was the inspiration for a successful proposal to the Caledon Bruce Trail Club in which the couple offered to allocate a section of land to the club to grow Christmas trees, eventually receiving the proceeds from future sales. Over a three-year period in the late 1990s the couple and the club volunteers planted approximately 1,200 Scotch pines.

"We just had to wait for them to grow."

By 2005 the trees had reached the right height for cutting and selling. Initial

sales, however, didn't go well. "The trees weren't quite perfect and this really was a no-frills operation."

### Popular Decisions

But sales began to improve after he erected a sign informing passersby that all proceeds would be going to the Bruce Trail Association. Word of mouth and a notice in the association's magazine also helped, he says. And the no-frills operation began morphing into one with some embellishments after David asked the club to sell hot cider and cookies.

Since the 2005 opening some changes and adjustments have had to be made to meet changing consumer tastes.

▼ The sign on Airport Road points to the weekend Christmas sales.





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▲ Purchases that do good. Christmas baskets from Hockleycrest help protect the Bruce Trail.

▼ David checks the tip of a growing tree.



▲ Some families make tree cutting part of their festivities



Flagging Scotch pine sales prompted a decision to cut those trees down and plant spruce and fir trees which are now more popular and not as much work to prune.

As those trees are now just coming to maturity, there was a two-year shortfall in stock. Fortunately, club executive member and commercial tree operator Fred Somerville of Somerville Nurseries bridged that gap by selling trees to the club at a very low cost the first year and donating them the second year.

There will be an ample supply of balsam fir and white spruce on hand for this Christmas season, David points out.

Some time ago he handed over supervision of the sales and pruning to club leaders. "I don't have to be here at the farm in December. But I am still in the background if needed."

So is the rest of the family, says Sally, recently retired and with more time now to devote to the farm. "Our children have grown up with the trees," she says, pointing out that the cookies sold at the pre-Christmas sales are baked by their daughters, Lauren and Alison, who raised \$100 one year. Their son Peter also helps out with sales, pruning, and guiding purchasers to the trees.

Asked if the family ever resents the purchasers, most of

whom are strangers, tramping around on their property for three or four consecutive weekends, she says no. "This is helping the Bruce Trail and we're committed to the trail."

### Trail Protected

That commitment includes allowing the trail through the rear of their property, which is protected by a conservation agreement registered on title, and which will stay in place even if the property is sold. David also serves on several Caledon Club and Bruce Trail Conservancy committees. David and Sally's contribution draws strong praise from Caledon club president Bob Ferguson, noting the tree sales have been its major fundraising activity for several years.

"I have found an incredible level of commitment and a strong spirit of co-operation to support a common goal. Dave and Sally are examples of this, and there are many others," says Ferguson, emphasizing the critical role volunteers perform in building and maintaining the trail along the Niagara Escarpment.

The tree farm is located at 933445 Airport Road, a few km north of Highway 9. **NEV**

*Dan O'Reilly's last feature for Niagara Escarpment Views was "Award-Winning Retreat In Clearview," Winter 2015-16.*

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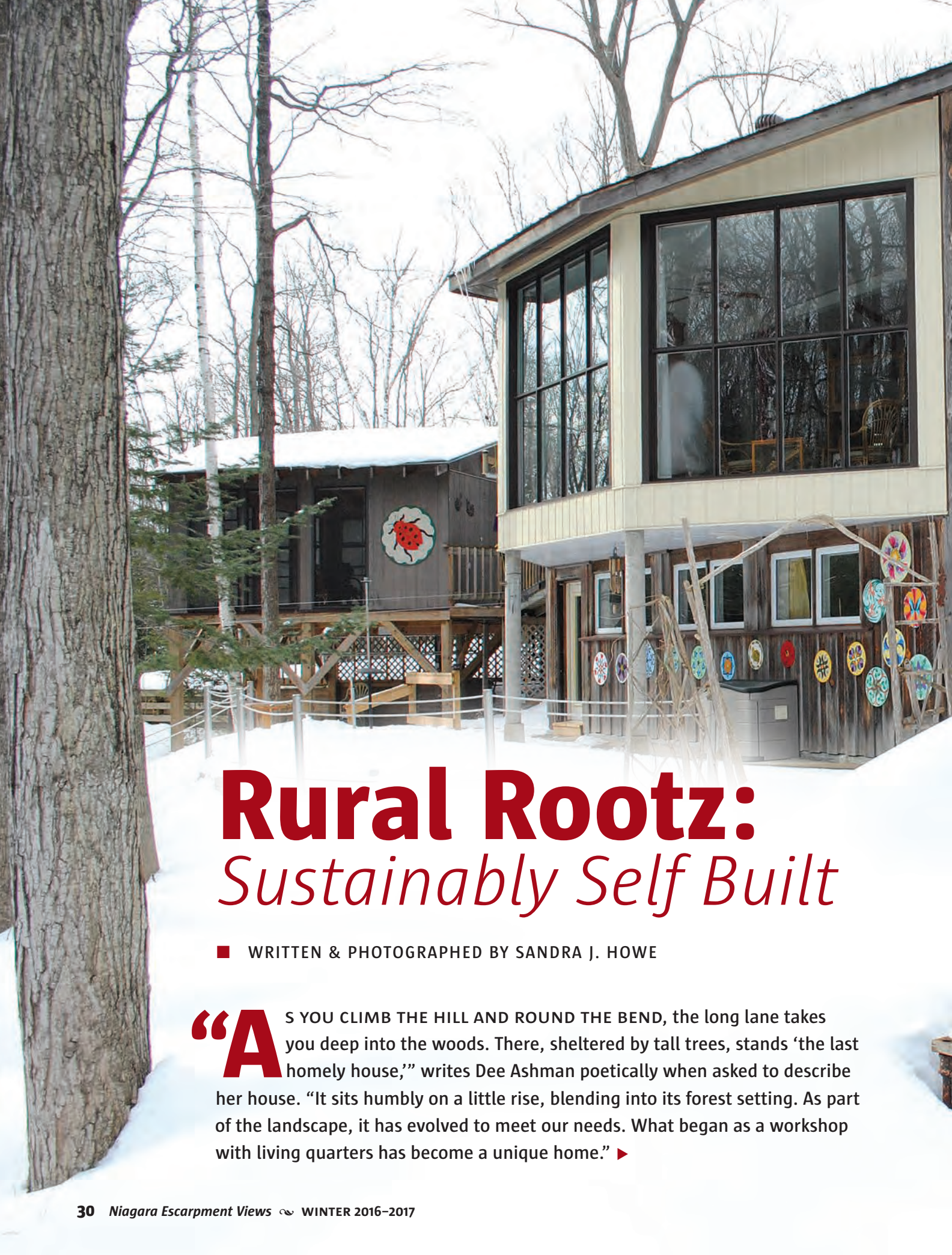
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Pond in winter, north of the  
Escarpment near Georgetown.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MIKE DAVIS.



# Rural Rootz: *Sustainably Self Built*

■ WRITTEN & PHOTOGRAPHED BY SANDRA J. HOWE

**“A**S YOU CLIMB THE HILL AND ROUND THE BEND, the long lane takes you deep into the woods. There, sheltered by tall trees, stands ‘the last homely house,’” writes Dee Ashman poetically when asked to describe her house. “It sits humbly on a little rise, blending into its forest setting. As part of the landscape, it has evolved to meet our needs. What began as a workshop with living quarters has become a unique home.” ►



The house at Rural Rootz Nature Reserve has been handcrafted with love out of salvaged materials.

**L**ike J.R.R. Tolkien's "last homely house" in his work *The Hobbit*, this one offers a hidden refuge and a warm welcome. Dee and Tom Ashman have handcrafted their beautiful dwelling with loving care and creativity.

In 1975, Dee and Tom fell in love with and purchased 100 acres of bush land near Wiarton. At the time, it was

trees and rocks with a few trails. No lane, no buildings, no services. "We brought in a dowsing to search for water," Tom recalls, "and we chose the building site accordingly. We're on a high point of land but we got potable water at 68 ft." They began with a woodworking shop on the main level and accommodations above, keeping their ecological

footprint small. The Ashmans value thrift, self-sufficiency, and living lightly on the land.

Forty years later, their home has changed and evolved to reflect new priorities and circumstances but their values remain consistent. Their home is entirely self built, using reclaimed materials wherever possible. Much of the lumber for construction was salvaged

from old buildings. Tom describes the source of various timbers and sidings with a pioneer's pride. The windows, too, were mainly second-hand.

► The south wall of windows makes the house seem bigger, lets in warmth and offers wonderful opportunities for bird watching.

▼ Hardwood trees let in light during winter and their leaves shade the house in summer.







▲ The neat-as-a-pin kitchen is actually used for home cooking. The cupboards originally were part of a display at Warton's Home Hardware Building Centre.



▲ Dee Ashman at the moveable desk unit/room divider.

► Tom and Dee Ashman in the laundry room near the household mechanical systems that provide on-demand domestic hot water and back-up heat through in-floor heating.





▲ A brass rubbing of The Bishop of Ely, given to the Ashmans in 1967 by friends, holds a place of honour housed in a special church-window-like cabinet lovingly built by Tom.

Both Dee and Tom have developed carpentry and masonry skills, have an eye for beauty and functionality, and think about sustainable design.

"We had a dry compost toilet system for 36 years," Dee explains. "It worked great! When we began to travel more, we switched to flush toilets because dry compost needs regular use."

### Southern Light

Other changes to the original structure include extending the south wall of windows and moving the workshop to an outbuilding. The light is what strikes one first on entering the house.

"Optically, the place feels so much bigger than it is because of the full wall of windows," says Tom. "When the Wiarion Sash and Door went out of business, I picked

up all this glass for cheap. I knew it would be useful for future possibilities. Now it is!"

Because so much of their building was done by hand and small scale, they were able to keep the forest close. The hardwoods let in plenty of light during the winter while the leaves provide summer shade and protection. In the living and dining areas, it really feels like you are standing in a forest.

While the window wall provides light and beauty, it also adds to home heating efficiency. Sunlight heats the indoor air through the day. Heavy blinds roll down electrically to trap the heat overnight. Also, a lovely wall built of quarry-salvaged local stone acts as a heat sink, collecting sun heat daily and releasing it slowly to provide warmth overnight. This kind of ingenuity is evident

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throughout the Ashmans' home and furnishing design.

"We have learned to change, adapt, evolve, rather than move," Dee says with a smile. "Versatility is essential!"

### Creativity

Dee started a career in teaching, became one of Wiarton's first woman carpenters, designed and installed kitchens, and now works as an artist, gardener, and healer. Tom's expertise is equally varied: scientist, carpenter, stone mason,

designer, Summerfolk staff, artist, and general handyman.

"We like to express our creativity," notes Tom. "We have learned to live with this house, not just in it."

The upstairs living area is open concept with high ceilings and wonderful acoustics. The Ashmans have hosted everything from house concerts to weddings to yoga classes to essential oils trainings. Most of the furniture is mobile and multi-functional. A great example is the desk unit which

acts as room divider, single desk, double desk, or can be pushed back out of the way entirely. The small and large dining tables are also interchangeable for intimate lunches or group dinners. No matter the function, the light, trees, and wildlife close by add to the event's charm.

The kitchen is a cozy, working space in the northwest corner of the upper level. This location maximizes early winter morning light. Specially designed windows and mirrors bring in additional light to

make the room warm, bright, and cheery. Delicious fragrances of home-cooked food tend to waft from this corner of the house. The cupboards were part of a display kitchen at the Wiarton Home Hardware Building Centre but found a new life with the Ashmans. Dee did the layout, and they worked together to complete installation.

The lower level, originally the workshop, now houses the master bedroom and bath, and a beautiful healing and meditation room. Mirrors used in the hallway add light and spaciousness. The artist's touch is everywhere in colour and details. The engineer's hand is also apparent in fixture designs such as the large diameter bathtub plumbing to fill the huge tub quickly.

"We live a conserver lifestyle but use technology to our best advantage," Tom explains. "It allows us to live this wonderful life!"

Gratitude shines through in conversations with the Ashmans. They are clearly happy with their home, their land, and their lives. Spirituality also shines through, and Tom credits "The Bishop" for watching over them like a guardian angel. This rubbing of an ancient brass was given to them as a gift in 1967, and finally found a place of honour when Tom built a special window for it. Art and sculpture reflecting First Nations' spiritual traditions are also evident in home and gardens.

"We want to live gentle on the land, and to share what we have learned," both Dee and Tom reflect. Their home, and surrounding property, Rural Rootz Nature Reserve, are indeed a hidden and welcoming refuge in beautiful Escarpment country. **NEV**

*Sandra J. Howe's last piece for Niagara Escarpment Views was "Birds on the Bruce," Autumn 2016.*



▲ Built-in storage offers neatness as well as display space.



▲ The woodstove helps to heat the house.



▲ Next to the main house is the Tree House or Summer Kitchen which is used seasonally for guest accommodations, workshop space, and dinner parties.

# Georgetown's Legendary McGibbon Hotel: A Hollywood Favourite!



Celebrants gather in front of a festooned Hotel McGibbon. COURTESY OF ESQUESING HISTORICAL SOCIETY

There are many hidden gems in and around downtown Georgetown, but nothing beats the legendary McGibbon Hotel. Providing lodging and libation for over 160 years, the McGibbon has been host to some of Hollywood's most

famous A-list celebrities, including Richard Burton, Michael Douglas, Orson Welles and Jim Henson, creator of The Muppets.

When word got out that glamour would soon return to the old hotel with the

help of a new luxury condo development, people started to share their memories about the hotel, and as past owner of the McGibbon, Nick Markou sure has some good ones to tell.

His fondest memory was during the filming of *Follow That Bird*, a full-length movie with Jim Henson filmed inside the hotel in 1985, almost 30 years ago. The plot follows the Sesame Street gang on an exciting quest to find Big Bird after he was sent to live across the country. Nick remembers Henson getting bored on set one day and stepping onto the curb outside of the McGibbon to entertain lucky local youngsters.

Two years earlier in 1983, Orson Welles filmed the movie *Hot Money* in this same hotel. Playing the drunken Sheriff Paisley, this film was a little different than the Muppets' adventures a couple years earlier, to say the least.

Welles investigates a

robbery in his small, upstate New York town, but locals would immediately recognize it as downtown Georgetown. The McGibbon façade is featured in numerous parade scenes and car chases, with police cars barreling past the hotel and screeching to a stop at police headquarters, better known as Georgetown's old post office building on Mill Street. Bar scenes, as well as the infamous basement safe bust, were filmed in the McGibbon itself.

In 1888, the original hotel was destroyed by a fire and replaced by the present brick structure of The McGibbon Hotel. While most businesses from that time have gone, this landmark hotel continues to dominate Main Street Georgetown, and with news of the new redevelopment, we're sure there will be another 160 years of amazing stories to come.

— Kate McGowan

## Respect the Beauty of The Bruce

Visitors to the Bruce Peninsula will see this green slogan posted throughout the area. Keeping the Bruce Clean & Green reminds us that the beauty of our peninsula should be respected by all who visit or live here so that it will remain healthy and friendly for all future generations.

Started as a grassroots response to the large visitor influx to the area, Keep the Bruce Clean & Green volunteers promote ecological citizenship around the peninsula. The need to support the natural environment to keep it beautiful has the people of the peninsula banding together. Look for folks wearing the white t-shirts with the slogan on it and stop to chat with them. They will happily point out places for proper disposal of trash along with directions to areas of interest.

In preparation for your trip to the Bruce it might be helpful to keep in mind that we all can help to keep the environment healthy. Plan to take along



refillable liquid containers for drinking water; there are a number of water filling stations around the various villages. Pack your picnics with reusable containers to decrease the amount of waste that ends up in landfill sites. Always ensure that you have eco-friendly disposable items and that they are placed in the appropriate container for waste and recycle.

Remember that we share our space with many other animals that forage for food in our waste areas so closing the trash containers is essential. We encourage you to plan your visit well and remember that we should "take only pictures and leave only footprints" so that not only you but all future generations will also be

able to enjoy the beauty of "The Bruce."

As you visit the National Parks on the Bruce pick up a green bag and you can support the "clean & green" spirit. Litter is the number one violation to our environment. Please use the bag and dispose of your litter appropriately in larger trash and recycle bins. In the village of Tobermory, many of the most visited areas are in residential areas. On long weekends throughout the summer you may find that there are "tomato cage garbage bins" along private property for those water bottles and pop tins that need to be disposed of on long walks. Everyone helps.

With the opportunity to visit the National Parks here on the Peninsula our hope is that you will take time to marvel at how beautiful and fragile our environment is. Throughout your travels please remember to "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Respect."

— Article and image by Keep the Bruce Clean & Green



## **WINTER WILDLIFE:**

# The Photography of Ann Brokelman

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#### ◀ Red Fox

Ann Brokelman notes “I have been so lucky to have amazing fox shots all over Ontario. I love to watch foxes in snow as you get to then take photos of the footprints he leaves. In a parking lot down by the water this fox casually strolled past me without a care in the world. I followed his tracks all the way to a hole in a fence.”

*Ann Brokelman takes great photographs of an amazing variety of animals in the wild. Here are some questions and answers about how she does it.*

#### **Most people never get to see so many wild animals. How do you get such photos of them?**

I am a dedicated watcher of wildlife and birds. I love being out in the woods or in my car driving and looking for animals. Most of my photography is done in the car. If you turn off the engine and just watch you will see the behaviour of the animal

and hopefully get some great shots. I have a Canon 400mm lens and it takes great photos without disturbing the wildlife. It takes time and patience to find these beautiful creatures. Animals are there but many people are not looking for them. I watch and look for odd shapes or something moving in the bush. You need to do your research and learn when the animals are out and about.

#### **Are you a professional photographer?**

I take photos for the love of it. I teach photography to youth, adults, seniors and adults with

special needs. I teach privately and people can buy prints.

#### **What is it like to photograph wild animals in winter?**

Cold and totally amazing! You can track animals by their unique footprints. Snow creates a mood and is a huge photography challenge. I especially love it when the snow is falling.

#### **What volunteer work do you do with animal rescue groups?**

I am a volunteer member of the rescue and release team for

Toronto Wildlife Centre. I also donate all photos taken on their behalf for them to use in any way they like.

I help with driving injured animals to The Owl Foundation in Vineland, and releasing owls back into the wild. This is a very special hospital.

I am on the advisory board of Coyote Watch Canada. I am saddened by the way coyotes, wolves and bears are treated. Working with Lesley Sampson who works hard to educate people on the coyote, is making a huge difference in people's perspective of coyotes.



#### ▲ White-tailed Deer

Most photographs of deer show the side of the animal or its rump as it leaps away. This unusual photograph is of a White-Tailed Deer eating what looks like Highbush Cranberries. Ann says "While on a drive on a back road just east of my house I saw a movement in the berry tree. I really thought it would be a bird but to my surprise it was a deer. I was the only one on the road so I turned off my car and sat there for half an hour watching the deer. By the end of the watch there were over six deer in the field. This photo is not cropped."



#### ▲ Opossum

Ann explains "Up to last year I had never seen an opossum in the wild. I have seen them at Toronto Wildlife Centre, injured and also with frostbite. On a back road to nowhere I saw something from the corner of my eye. I did a double take as it was an opossum. The sun was shining but there was lots of snow on the ground. He had just come down the tree and was looking around. Soon after he disappeared in the woods. To this date I have not seen another one."



#### ▲ Northern Hawk Owl

Northern Hawk Owl, classified as scarce. For Ann, "The most amazing owl I have ever seen was at Grimsby on a back road. I went there and was lucky enough to see a Northern Hawk Owl. The owl was flying from tree to tree when he suddenly swooped down and got a vole. He mantled the vole and was looking around to make sure no one was coming close. One of the best birding days of my life."

Ann explains that mantling is a bird's "hunching or arching shoulders and spreading wings over a recent kill to conceal it from other birds and predators who would be potential thieves. In this posture, the wings are mostly spread and drooped to the ground, exposing the bird's upper back, also called the mantle, which gives the action its name. The head is usually bent down to feed, and the tail is often spread to provide additional cover and counterbalance. Many birds of prey practise mantling after a kill."



#### ▲ Star-nosed mole

"While watching a Red-tailed Hawk in a tree I noticed something moving on the snow," Ann says. "It was the strangest thing I have ever seen. Once I got home I looked at the photos to realize it had a star-looking mouth. Sure enough it was a Star-nosed Vole, and a favourite meal of a Red-tailed Hawk. This one safely made its way across the ice and back deep in the snow."



▲ **Skunk**

Ann notes “Last winter while looking for coyotes on a back road I came across the skunk. I wanted to watch it to make sure it was ok. The snow was not deep but it was warm out. We figured it got hungry and decided to go for a stroll in the cornfield looking for food.”





#### ▲ Ruffed Grouse

Ann was mystified by this. "I was up by Sudbury in a small town called Noelville," she explains. "While wandering on foot following ravens up a quiet road my friend noticed this amazing sculpture on the snow. We took many photos and sent them to friends to see what it was. Being owl crazy we hoped it was an owl but the next morning we walked down the road again and there perched on the tree were two Ruffed Grouse. Some suggestions that came back to us were grouse and pheasants."

#### ◀ Coyote

"I love coyotes," says Ann. "I love watching them and learning about their behaviour. I respect the coyote. I am very proud to be a member of the advisory team for Coyote Watch Canada. With most photos I take they are on a back road in the middle of nowhere. I was with another nature lover when she spotted this beauty in the open fields. We watched him for a matter of minutes but he spotted us immediately and took off. Every brief encounter with a coyote is very special. Coyote Watch Canada is a federal, not-for-profit, community-based wildlife organization, which advocates positive wildlife experiences through education, research, mediation, intervention and conflict resolution." Ann provided the photographs of coyotes for a feature in *Niagara Escarpment Views* in Winter 2014.

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► **Mink**

Ann was lucky with this photo:  
“I love going to the lake to  
watch the gulls and find a few  
eagles. I did see a few eagles  
way out on the ice but my eyes  
looked to the right and there  
was a mink wandering on the  
ice and he came up beside me  
on the snow. He took a look  
at me and then ducked into  
the rocks on the water edge.”



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#### ◀ Sandhill Cranes

"It is amazing to drive to Long Point during the winter when the Tundra Swans and Sandhill Cranes arrive," says Ann. "There are thousands of them in the fields. I love the sound they make and the way they fly."

*Ann Brokelman's photographs of coyotes were published in "Co-existing with Coyotes" in Niagara Escarpment Views, Winter 2014-15. Her website is [naturephotosbyann.blogspot.ca](http://naturephotosbyann.blogspot.ca). Prints of her photography are available for sale.*



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# Winter Walks

By Gloria Hildebrandt

**I**N WINTER the highlight of my typical day is a midday walk around the back of my property with my dogs. This is the warmest time of the day and usually the brightest as well. I like getting fresh air and sunlight as a break. As long as I'm dressed properly, I enjoy being out in winter. I dress for function, not fashion. I need big tall boots that keep my feet warm and dry. Long johns under my pants help. A long parka with hood or my old knitted hat with scarf attached means there is no place for wind or snow to hit my bare neck or go down my back. Proper mittens, sometimes one pair inside another, are important. Icy fingers and

toes can be a dangerous sign of impending frostbite.

A winter walk is usually free from thoughts of outdoor work. No plants to pull out, branches to move, bridges to repair. Unless a tree has fallen down. Winter work tends to be close to the house: firewood to bring inside, the front porch and walk to be shovelled, as well as the large back verandah and herb garden paths. Actually, I can ignore the verandah and paths, but I like them better cleared of snow. Sitting on the long rear verandah can feel like being at a ski lodge, and my dogs like to mill around on the paths through the herb garden. What can be hard work is just walking through the snow if it's deep, if there's been no trail broken.

Snowshoes make it easier to get around, and after they've packed down the trails, I can walk there in my boots alone. The dogs use the trails, and I've noticed that wild animals do, too. Signs of wildlife can be easier to see in winter. Deer, rabbits, grouse, Great Blue Heron, racoons and moles can all leave clear tracks. I can't distinguish the tracks of dogs, coyotes and foxes, though.

Winter birds that I can often see in the forest away from the bird feeders include Chickadees, Blue Jays, crows, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers. I come across fresh gashes in trees with piles of big wood chips below, made by Pileated Woodpeckers, but I rarely see the birds themselves. The heron stalks the open end of the pond where some springs are, and it will fly up and away with a terrific squawk. Its three-toed tracks often lead to the water's edge and I have seen it all through winter.

## Sitting in Silence

I enjoy sitting on the bench at the pond where the sun can hit my face. On a bright cold day the sky is brilliant blue. I never want to bash swiftly through natural spaces. I like to be there for a while, taking in the silence, the smells, the views. I may have to clear the benches of snow and ice with my walking stick.

A stick is particularly useful in winter, for testing the depth of snow or water, turning things over, clearing an overhanging branch of snow, drawing smiley faces... and especially for helping you get up if you've fallen and there is no tree nearby. When you're in the snow up to your armpits, a sturdy walking stick can support you in getting on your feet.

Before the trails have been packed down, when the snow is deep, the dogs can be up to their "armpits." As they churn through the snow, the heat of their bodies can create clumps of icy snow in their fur. They can get snowballs on their paws and ice between their toes. My small dog Thomas often stops to lick the ice off his paws, not realizing that he's making it worse by making them warm and damp.

## Cozy House

Coming home after the 45-minute walk is pleasant, with the fire in the woodstove heating the house and the prospect of a mug of hot tea. I've learned that if I feel cold inside the house, the best way to warm up is actually to step outside for a bit. Coming in, I realize how warm and cozy the house actually is.

After the walk, I unwrap myself from my outdoor clothing and then have to deal with the dogs' snowballs in the fur on their bellies, legs and paws. I used to try rubbing them off with a towel, combing the snowballs out, then clipping them out of the fur. All of this was time consuming and ineffective. Last year I had a brainwave. Now I run warm water in the bathtub, put the dogs in the water and the snow melts off rapidly while their bodies warm up instantly. They are even eager to step into this bath.

A dog cookie each and they are happy to snooze in their favourite spots all afternoon, while I go back to my desk work. With tea in hand, the afternoon feels a bit like the start of a new day. A walk in winter can be energizing, not tiring.

*Gloria Hildebrandt is the co-founder, co-publisher and editor of Niagara Escarpment Views.*



▲ My dogs in the forest beneath Pileated Woodpecker holes. PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS.

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▲ Georgetown Yarn fills several rooms in a former residence. There is a vast selection of wool & fibres as well as examples of products to make.

◀ Owner Betty-Anne Whipp with just some of her inventory, wearing a Canada-Day-inspired shawl made for her by customers.



▲ Ready for Canada's 150th anniversary: this fabulous design of a maple leaf wrap is available, if you have the counting skills needed!

# Recreating the Commons

By Bob Barnett

**M**y Dad could never figure it out. Whenever we talked about Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy's (EBC) nature reserves, he'd say, "What are you going to do with all that land?" He was an architect and for him, land was for building something on. Leaving it for nature was an alien concept. He died 10 years ago at 93 and just never understood.

In 1998, Cameron Smith, a Toronto Star columnist asked me "Why are you doing this?" I replied "I want a place for my grandchildren and their grandchildren to appreciate what we grew up with."

## Commons Concept

Towns in England often had a central public green commons. Outside of town there was a larger commons where those with no land could graze their sheep. The clearances, when the aristocracy took over the common lands, caused the great migrations to North America. Europe retained a legacy of public access; landowners cannot block paths that have been used for hundreds of years.

In Ontario, land was surveyed into 100-acre blocks and granted or sold in a huge rush to settle and exploit the land. There was no concept of the commons, but there was a lot of land and landowners were pretty easy going about their neighbours wandering through the woods or swimming in the river. Urbanites, moving to weekend estates, were much quicker to fence the land and post no trespassing signs.

Ontario set up a few parks starting in 1885 including Algonquin, Quetico and Rondeau. The first idea was

to protect the forest and wildlife resources, later to allow cottages, but soon the idea of preserving nature took over. By the 1950s there were still only a few parks. Less than one per cent of southern Ontario is protected as a park today. After Hurricane Hazel in the early '50s there was a push, not for parks, but to protect people from floods.

Conservation authorities were given funding to buy up valley lands and today they own 2.1 per cent of southern Ontario. While there are now often parks and campgrounds along those rivers, flood prevention was the idea at the time.

Charities protecting land started with the Federation of Ontario Naturalists, now Ontario Nature, in 1962 with the push to acquire Dorcas Bay near Tobermory. Mac Kirk, one of EBC's first directors, was instrumental in publicizing this effort and raising money. Nature Conservancy of Canada started up just a few years later. Today, they've protected over 40,000 acres in southern Ontario.

## Land Trusts

Land trusts started in the 1990s. EBC was one of only seven in Ontario when we started in 1997. Today, 40 land trusts including Nature Conservancy and Ontario Nature have protected 100,000 acres or about seven per cent of southern Ontario. That's more than the federal government, almost as much as the provincial government and a third that of the



Bob Barnett checking signs on a trail on Manitoulin Island. PHOTO BY MIKE DAVIS.

conservation authorities.

In 2012, Canada and Ontario joined the International Biodiversity Agreement to protect 17 per cent of our land. EBC is conserving a new donated property each month! We expect to register 1,200 new acres before year end. But our funds are running out and soon we will have to stop accepting such generosity unless more stable funding arrives. Unfortunately, the land trusts are virtually the only contributor to that 17 per cent goal.

## What You Can Do

Back to my Dad's question, "What are you going to do with all that land?" We think we must follow the lead of the Bruce Trail and encourage people to get out and walk on the land. We know that seeing the land up close encourages people to appreciate it. We expect it will bring volunteers and donors. What other charity allows you to donate \$50 and protect \$1,000 worth of land? That \$50 spent on land protects \$1,300 worth of ecosystem services every year, preventing floods, protecting rare species, sequestering carbon, cleaning

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EBC is ramping up our trails program so you can get out and visit YOUR nature reserves. We have brochures on our southern trails and those on the northern Bruce Peninsula. We distribute a free map showing Manitoulin trails. We discussed trails with another land conservation organization. I said, our goals must be the same, "to promote trails and don't allow hunting." I was surprised to hear him say, "We're the opposite. We don't want trails and we do encourage hunting on our lands."

It is clear that even the land conservation community is struggling with "What are you going to do with all that land?" For EBC, it's clear. We invite you to join us on YOUR nature reserves.

*Get brochures and maps from Bob Barnett of Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy at 888.815.9575 or through [www.escarpment.ca](http://www.escarpment.ca).*

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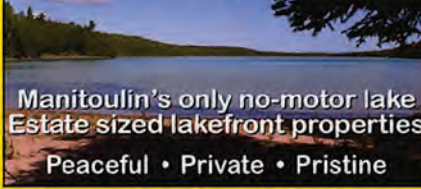
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# FORESIGHT

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. **Send us your recommendations for good achievements!**

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are hibernating. If bats  
awake before their spring  
foods area available, they  
can starve to death.

## SAFE CYCLING

Burlington and Oakville Members of Parliament Pam Damoff  
and John Oliver support a federal task force to **increase safety  
for bicycle riders and pedestrians.**

## ECOLOGICALLY SIGNIFICANT LAND PROTECTED

Thanks to a donation from Barney and Helene Dutka, Hamilton  
Naturalists' Club purchased **six hectares of land**  
in the Sassafras Woods Environmentally Significant Area in Burlington.  
To be called Anita Dutka-Buchin Nature Sanctuary, it is part of  
the Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System.



## YOUR STYLE ON YOUR WALLS

Beauti-Tone Paint and Canadian Fashion Designer Simon Chang bring the colours of the runway to your home with this year's 35 exclusive trend colours.



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**United Lumber Home Hardware Building Centre**  
333 Guelph St., Georgetown  
905 873-8007

**Westcliffe Home Hardware**  
Westcliffe Mall, 632 Mohawk Rd. W,  
Hamilton  
905 388-6268

**Milton Home Hardware Building Centre**  
385 Steeles Ave. E., Milton  
905 878-9222  
miltonhomehardware.ca

**Rockwood Home Hardware**  
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519 856-9551

**St. Catharines Home Hardware**  
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**Vineland Home Hardware**  
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Bolton Thai Cuisine

**Burlington**  
Conservation Halton  
Todd Neff, Edward Jones

**Caledon**  
Caledon Fireplace

**Campbellville**  
Mountsberg Conservation Area

**Collingwood**  
Georgian Triangle Tourist Association  
Pretty River Valley Country Inn  
Scandinave Spa  
Scenic Caves  
Toronto Ski Club

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**Erin**  
George Paolucci, Edward Jones  
Stewart's Equipment  
Tim Hortons

**Georgetown**  
Adam's Equipment  
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Foodstuffs  
Genesis Pharmacy  
Georgetown Pharmacy  
Georgetown Thai Cuisine  
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Niagara Escarpment Commission  
North Halton Better Hearing Centre  
Red Door Gallery  
Silvercreek Coffee House  
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Copper Kettle Pub  
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