



Friends of
Mashkinonje

The Wetlands Observer

Volume 11 Issue 1

January 2011

Home of the Red Eft and Grey Wolf



*It is our
10th Anniversary!!!*

**“Not bad – actually a great achievement for the first 10 years”
Surprise! – The Friends of Mashkinonje are 10 Years Old.**

by Chuck Miller, Superintendent

Killarney / French River / Mashkinonje / W. Sandy Island /
Manitou Islands / Daisy Lake Provincial Parks

In 1998 the Sudbury East Board of Trade (SEBOT) approached Ontario Parks about starting some trails in Mashkinonje Provincial Park. To that end, SEBOT started the resource inventory work to begin park planning and planted the seeds to establish the Friends of Mashkinonje (in 2000), a not-for-profit co-operating association that forwards the objectives of the Park.

The Friends then picked up the lead in park management planning, education, conducting outdoor activities, raising funding, creating partnerships, and developing over 30 km of (hiking / snowshoe / barrier-free) trails and access points in this “non-operating” Provincial Park.

A “not bad – actually a great achievement for 10 years” of hard work, fun and community spirit by committed partners, local businesses and individuals.

“Congratulations” on a very successful “first 10 years”.

Turtles / Trails / Trees
By Chuck Miller, Park Superintendent
Killarney / French River / Mashkinonje / W. Sandy Island / Manitou Islands Provincial Parks

Turtles
Turtle populations across Ontario face many threats including habitat loss, increased rates of adult mortality from traffic and elevated rates of nest predation from “subsidized predators” such as raccoons. A significant reminder of the need for protected wetlands such as Mashkinonje.

Five turtles basking on logs in the wetland are revealed in a single scan by binoculars from the lookout at the intersection of Atakas and Bobcat Trails. These turtles are the lucky ones as they will likely never see motorized traffic, and have protected habitat.

Many turtles migrate to nesting areas in mid June and frequent sandy road embankments, so watch for them and yield the right-of-way.

Trails
Last year’s July 17 severe thunder storm brought down many trees in the park but also weakened others. Despite the light winter snowfall this year – some early wet snows did bring down several trees onto park trails. Crews have been out and cleared trails and hardened additional trail sections along the Samoset Trail near the intersection with the Lapin’s Beach Trail. Watch for poison ivy near the Lapin’s Beach Access. Plans are underway to improve access to the trail network on the west side of the park at the Martin Pond and Blanding’s Access in late summer or early fall.

Trees
Restoration of damaged environments by youth with community partners is always a good news story. Vermillion Forest Management currently has 500 red pine trees growing in a nursery for planting in Mashkinonje in late August. The plan is to utilize Ontario Rangers, an MNR youth employment program, and volunteers to complete the planting. The planting will restore red pine trees to the old quarry near the London Postland Access.

Some highlights

2000-2003 — Developing the SEBOT vision for a regional eco-tourism attraction, incorporating, achieving charitable status, supporting park boundary expansion, incorporating, achieving charitable status, supporting park boundary expansion, supporting the draft planning documents, community involvement, fundraising, establishing partnerships, and conducting archeological surveys. Starting of the ongoing annual activities and education that include a web based newsletter, annual picnics, bird counts, guided hikes, snowshoe excursions and boat and canoe trips.

2004-2006 — Management Plan approval, Loudon Trailhead / Access development, major boardwalk across the first marsh, Loudon Trail official opening with the Minister of Natural Resources, Memorandum of Understanding between the Friends, Municipality of French River and Ontario Parks, financial feasibility plan, facility development plan.

2006-2007 — 30 km of new trail developed, entrance sign, Coastal Trail Bridge, trail hardening by Municipality of French River / Job Creation Partnership, recovery from micro-burst storm damage, restoration tree planting in quarry.



2008-2010 – Development of Blanding's Trailhead and Access, establishment of washroom facilities, printing of a park trail map, Loudon Lookout Tower, Species at Risk trailhead signs, trail hardening continues by Municipality of French River / Job Creation Partnership, Biodiversity surveys, new benches, and Loudon Barrier Free Trail.



The Friends are not alone and have major contributing partners that include the Municipality of French River, Ministry of Colleges and Universities Ontario – Job Creation Partnership, Sudbury East Board of Trade, Economic Partners of Sudbury East – West Nipissing, Shell Environmental Fund, FedNor, the Ministry of Natural Resources – Species at Risk and Ontario Parks.

Is there more to do? – Develop Martin Pond Access, barrier free trail interpretive signs, local promotion of trails, ongoing annual activities, publications, research, securing headwaters ... highway signs ... management plan review ... moving toward “operating” park status.

Another Surprise! – Mashkinonje Provincial Park (originally named Haddo) was first established in 1963 – and will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2013! 🐢

Appreciation

When we started to work on Mashkinonje in 1998, it was a local initiative. Nothing has changed; most of you have been on board for our whole journey. We still need and appreciate your support. We could not have created what we have today without you and we should all be very proud of our accomplishments.



Thank you **Ontario Parks** for allowing us to make Mashkinonje an integral part of our life.

Thank you **Economic Partners – Sudbury East West Nipissing** for supporting many of our projects.



Thank you to the **Municipality of French River** for administering the Ontario Job Creation Program for us for 4 years including this winter. You help us with the administration not possible by the Friends.

Thank you **Shell Environmental Fund** for contributing to our bridge and tower.



Thank you **Daniel D. Longlade, FCA, Collins Barrow** for completing our financial statements and tax return, you are a life saver!



Thank you **Due North Marketing** for hosting our website and spreading our joy to the world.

Thank you **Jay Tee Graphics Ltd.** for finalizing the page layout and pdf creation.



Thank you to the **silent auction donors**. Ontario Nature, Mountain Co-Op, S.C. Johnstone, Euraka, Coleman, Harley Lang, Claude Bouffard, Cathy McManus, Peter Beckett, Diane Furchner, Sheldon Macgregor

Thank you to the **provincial government** and the **Ontario Job Creation Program**. Your funds allow us to make boardwalks across the many wet areas, making it possible for hiking.

Thank you **Sudbury East Board of Trade** for supporting Mashkinonje from inception.



2010 Donors

Muskrat Marsh (\$50)

Gerard & Colleen Carrier
Bob & Nicole Wilson

Tamarac Swamp (\$100)

Klaus & Elaine Drobeck
Bent & Bonnie Greflund
Gail Geis
Ted & Grace Price
Dan Busch & Cendrine Gemberling
Brenda & Rusty Van Exan

Cottongrass Fen (\$250)

Moose Bog (\$500)

Chuck & Karen Miller
Harley & Liz Lang
Welcome Lodge
Barbara Parkinson- Collins Barrow
Due North Marketing

Universal Design Trail

The Universal Design or Barrier-Free Trail along the first half kilometer of the Loudon Trail is shaping up to be one of our best projects, if not the best to date. We are very proud of what we have accomplished, although there is more to be done. We need to fine tune the trail and add interpretive signage.

There were so many people helping us. The first part of the Universal Design Trail could be done with machinery but the last part involved moving 6 loads of fines gravel across the boardwalk and up the trail by wheel barrows. The wood for the lookout was carried across the boardwalk and to the lookout site. Sometimes the weather was good, other times it was inclement but the hardy volunteers worked with high spirits and having fun, knowing the value of their contribution.

We would like to give our heartfelt thanks to:

Claude Bouffard – Sudbury East Board of Trade

Neil Fox – Economic Partners, Sudbury East West Nipissing

Harley Lang – Project Coordinator

Chuck Miller – Mashkinonje Superintendent,

Ontario Parks: Doug Innes, Ed Chevrette, Trevor Gibb, Bob Burke

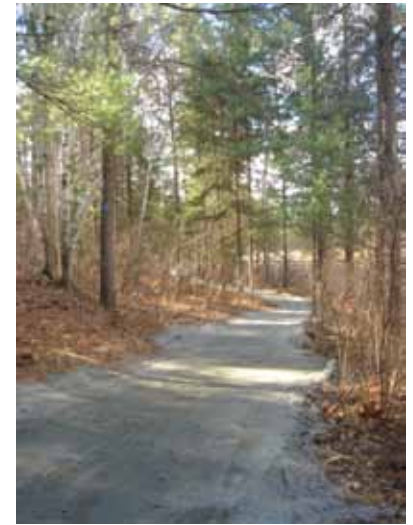
Friends of Killarney: Kris Puhvel, Mike Lavin

MNR Fire Crew

Friends of Mashkinonje: Board of Directors, Elizabeth Lang and Gary Martin

On November 4 & 5 2010, École secondaire de la Rivière-des-français teachers:

André Gareau and Monique Touchette with their students: Brandon Lacasse, Mathieu Roy, François Labelle, Stéfane Cust, Rodney Lachance, Jeremy Lafrenière, Jordan Lemieux, Tyler Carrière, Eric Trottier.



Chuck Miller, Ontario Parks; Claude Bouffard, Sudbury East Board of Trade; Angela Martin, Friends of Mashkinonje



École secondaire de la Rivière-des-français students and teachers



Left to right: Harley Lang, Nicole Wilson, Diane Furchner, Angela Martin, Neil Fox from Economic Partners-SEWN, Brenda Tunney, Peter Beckett, Chuck Miller

We will keep you informed of our progress and the grand opening. If anyone would like to make a financial contribution, please make cheque payable to:

The Friends of Mashkinonje

and mail to

496 Musky Island Rd.,
Lavigne, ON P0H 1R0



2010 Mashkinonje-North Monetteville Christmas Bird Count

by Angela Martin

This year was the 111th **Christmas Bird Count**, organized by the National Audubon Society and Bird Studies Canada. Every year, about 12,000 Canadians take part in this event through more than 380 counts across the country.

The Mashkinonje-North Monetteville Christmas Bird Count was held January 2, 2011. After the rain of two days previous, we were lucky that the roads were in great shape for our Christmas Bird Count. The sky was overcast and a light wind was present. Eight field observers and ten feeder watchers took part in the area between Eugene Rd. to the East Rd. and Lake Nipissing to St. Charles.



We would like to give a big thanks to those who feed the winter birds. Your feeders are the best places to find birds, not to mention helping the birds through the winter. Some of the feeders had a dozen species of birds, a joy to watch.

The highlight was an adult Bald Eagle observed by Randy and Kyra Moratz in the St. Charles area. This is the second time a Bald Eagle has been recorded on our count. There were no hawks found.

Most of the Ruffed Grouse were found by Carmelle Girouard north of Lavigne. Carmelle also found the only Rock Pigeons for the count. Mourning Doves were found at 2 feeders: Carmelle and Gary & Angela Martin. Another had a Black-backed Woodpecker and Hoary Redpoll in the West Arm area. Gray Jays frequented 4 feeders.

Six Northern Shrike were discovered, four of which were found by the Moratzs. The only Snow Buntings were found in the Musky Island Rd. area, a flock of 25. Usually flocks are seen along the highway and in fields and found numbering in the hundreds.

The Martins had 2 Pine Grosbeaks visit their feeder. Terry and Cathy Armshaw on the East Rd. had the only American Goldfinches. Liz Lang had the only Pine Siskin coming to her feeder.

During the count day 26 species of birds were observed, an average number. The number of individual birds was down. Our nine year average including 2010 is 1,570 individual birds. Last year the number of individual birds counted was 931 and this year 688. Generally the numbers of individuals in most species declined. Black-capped Chickadees in particular, in 2005 we counted over 1,000, this year we counted 186. Many of the species were found at feeders, some species in very low numbers. In past Redpoll years, which this year was forecast to be, there have been a few hundred Redpolls at any given feeder. This year we counted 24 Common and one Hoary Redpoll. Some years over a hundred Evening Grosbeaks might be at a single feeder, keeping feeder-watchers busy filling their feeders. This year, we counted 5 Evening Grosbeaks. The times are a-changing.

The consolidated, worldwide Christmas Bird Count results will give an indication of how dispersed this trend is. These surveys are very important, allowing us to be aware of what is happening in our natural world. Our count results will be posted to the National Audubon Society website <http://www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/> for your review. The Canadian Christmas Bird Counts are organized by Bird Studies Canada. If you wish to get involved in this or other data gathering, there are many organizations including Bird Studies Canada at www.bsc.org. 🐦

Did You Know?



Gray jays are also called "Whiskey Jacks". The nickname is derived from the Algonquin name, **wis-kat-jon**; other names include "Canada Jay" and "Camp Robber".

Bats of Ontario

by Angela Martin

Celestin Marchand shared his vast knowledge on bats at a Nipissing Naturalists meeting.

Bats have a worldwide distribution with the majority of species in the tropics. They are the only mammal capable of true flight and they are the second largest order of mammals next to rodents. The reason bats don't usually hunt during the day is the warmth and sunshine dehydrates their wings. The larger bats are fast flyers and hunt along forest edges, clearings and over water bodies. The smaller bats inhabit wooded areas.

There are several misconceptions about bats: they are evil and attack people, they spread disease, blind as a bat and a rat with wings. Bats don't prey on people. Less than 2% carry rabies. They navigate by radar as opposed to sight.

There are many benefits derived from bats: insect control; pollution, particularly in southern areas; seed distribution, better than birds and economically beneficial from the insect control perspective.

There are eight species of bats in Ontario: Little Brown, Big Brown, Silver-haired, Hoary, Eastern Red, Northern Long-eared, Eastern Small-footed and Tri-coloured Bats. The latter three species of bats are followed by the Natural Heritage Information Center, NHIC under the MNR. If you discover any of these three species, please report them through <http://nhic.mnr.gov.on.ca/nhic.cfm>. Most of the previously mentioned species have been recorded in Northern Ontario. Two of the greater populations in our area are the Little Brown Bat and the Big Brown Bat.

Little Brown Bats are glossy, evenly coloured with darker dorsal and paler ventral, length 80-95 mm and weigh 6-12 grams. They are found throughout the province and are considered common. They are year round residents. Their winter hibernaculum is typically mines and caves. They live in colonies. In the summer the females form maternity colonies often in man made structures. During the summer, the males roost singly or in small groups in caves, mines, hollow trees and man made structures. The Little Brown Bats forage among trees in fairly open areas but more often hunt over water bodies.

The Big Brown Bats have brown fur with a short, broad, blunt tragus with naked wings, ears and tail

membrane. They are the second largest bat in our region with a length of 110-130 mm and weigh 15-24 grams. They are found as far north as Sioux Lookout. Their species is considered common. The Big Brown Bats live in the province year round: wintering hibernaculum is typically buildings, mines and caves; summertime females form maternity colonies typically in man made structures while the males roost singly or in small groups in caves, mines, hollow trees or structures. This larger bat typically hunts above meadows, pastures, creeks, rivers and tree lined streets in urban areas.

The main threats and concerns for bats are habitat destruction and fragmentation, toxins, wind power and White Nose Syndrome.

- **Habitat:** Destruction of historical roost sites, sealing and capping of mines and timber harvesting.

- **Toxins:** Bats are affected by pesticides, environmental toxins and wood preservatives.

- **Wind Turbines:** During migrations, some bats get killed by contact with wind turbines. Other bats are affected by the change in air pressure caused by the blades which in turn causes their blood vessels to rupture, resulting in death. This is like the bends, when a diver returns too quickly

to the surface of the water.

- **White Nose Syndrome:** WNS is believed to originate in Europe. The bats in Europe have managed to adapt over hundreds of years. On our continent, WNS was identified in 2006, affected bats experience an 80-100% mortality rate. WNS has been found in Ontario, north and southeast of us. WNS is probably in our location but not been found to date. WNS is a white fungal infection affecting the respiratory tract. It is believed to be spread by bat to bat contact and from hibernaculum to hibernaculum by both bats and humans transporting the infection. There have been major die offs recorded in hibernaculas. When a bat is roused out of hibernation it uses precious energy needed to get through the winter. The fungus is irritating and may cause the bat to frequently awaken causing either death or need to search for food that is not available during the cold months.



The Big Brown Bat may survive WNS because it roosts or hibernates singly in man made structures. It is expected that many species of bats will be extinct in the next 20 years.

The USA has engaged scientists to learn more and to try to stem the devastating future for bats. Quebec is also engaged. There needs to be more government

involvement to develop strategies, policies and solutions. Contact Celestin Marchand, North Bay MNR at 475-5602, if you discover a bat with WNS.

What you can do: protect critical bat habitat by leaving snags, riparian areas and buildings that contain bat roosts and learn more about bats, their habits and needs and report species to the NHIC. 🦇

DO NOT TRANSPORT WOOD from one location to another. You may also be transporting non-native invasive species like the Emerald Ash Borer or the Asian Long-horned Beetle. These non-native species can have a devastating effect on our local forests.

Be a Citizen Scientist

Gord Miller, our provincial Environmental Commissioner gave a presentation to the Nipissing Naturalists Club on Climate Change. He encouraged us to take part in citizen scientist surveys. The information that we gather is valuable, in that much has not been documented and provides a benchmark for future years as changes to our environment occur. Your sightings do not have to be of only rare or species at risk, they can be any species. The following are a few programs you may want to contribute to:

Natural Heritage Information Centre – Ministry of Natural Resources collects information on all species at <http://nhic.mnr.gov.on.ca/nhic.cfm>.

Odonata Atlas – To receive a copy of the checklist, contact the Toronto Entomologists' Association at www.ontarioinsects.org. To report sightings of damselflies and dragonflies go to <http://nhic.mnr.gov.on.ca/odonates/atlas.html>.

Reptile and Amphibian Atlas – This atlas is being coordinated by Ontario Nature and sightings of any reptile or amphibian can be made at www.ontarionature.org/atlas.

Toronto Zoo – To learn more about Adopt a Pond visit www.torontozoo.com/AdoptAPond/ and look for Turtle Tally and Frogwatch icons. You can also call 416-392-5999 or email aap@torontozoo.ca.



Bird Studies Canada – BSC coordinates many programs to collect local information on birds and other species. You have to be a member, an individual membership cost \$35 and a family \$50. Membership gives you a quarterly magazine, participation in surveys, other notifications and programs. Go to www.birdscanada.org for more details. Some of their citizen scientist programs are:

Project Feeder Watch	Canadian Lakes Loon Survey
Ontario Nocturnal Owl Survey	Great Lakes Marsh Monitoring Program
Christmas Bird Count	

Report Species at Risk to your local MNR.

North Bay District:	Rebecca Geauvreau	705-475-5502, rebecca.geauvreau@ontario.ca
Sudbury District:	Eric Cobb	705-564-7863, eric.cobb@ontario.ca

We would like to encourage you to become a Citizen Scientist.

It is not only fun but your findings are valuable.

Annual General Meeting and Picnic

The weather on the day of our Annual General Meeting and Picnic was forecast to be changeable, so the location was changed to Gary & Angela Martin's house. This permitted us to hold our meeting, lunch and silent auction without worries about getting wet.

Claude Bouffard from the Sudbury East Board of Trade presented us with a \$5,000 cheque. This donation was appreciated and was spent on gravel for the new Universal Design Trail. Angela baked a cake decorated as this cheque so all could become a part in the festivities.

The 2009/10 Board of Directors was voted in for the 2010/11 term. Thank you to our Board members and Chuck Miller, you are integral to Mashkinonje.



New Universal Design Trail Lookout – railing to be completed in spring

A highlight of the picnic was the silent auction. Everyone crowded around to hear of their success. There were many wonderful deals and folks left very happy. We hope to see you again in August of 2011. 🍂

Future Events

Across the Park Snowshoe

Sunday February 13, 2011

10 a.m. Loudon Trailhead, Hwy 64

1 km south of Musky Island Rd.

There will be a short and long snowshoe.

Earth Day Hike

Sunday May 1, 2011

10 a.m. Loudon Trailhead, Hwy 64

1 km south of Musky Island Rd.

Annual General Meeting & Picnic

Sunday August 21, 2011

Halloween Hike

Saturday October 29, 2011



Book Review

by Chuck Miller

Grass, Sky, Song — Promise and Peril in the World of Grassland Birds

Trevor Herriot

273 pages

HarperCollins Publishers

Paperback edition 2010

Canopy of Song to Pastures Unsung!

What I learned from this book is that knowledge of a very specific patch of nature is an inspiration of the wonders of nature and it can be important when species suddenly and abruptly disappear. Trevor Herriot is a Saskatchewan naturalist who has observed grassland birds near Regina for a period of over 20 years. In the late 1980s the skies fell silent following the widespread spraying of insecticide to manage grasshoppers on a province wide scale — what had

started as a canopy of song turned to pastures unsung. Even in the age since Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring" – Western civilization is still capable of massive error in the name of unconstrained reasoned self-interest.

If the book was just about environmental destruction it would be of little interest in a world with too much bad news. Herriot's book instead is a source of inspiration of the wonders of nature. In a world that idolizes rationalism, Herriot makes the case for the need of self restraint by human kind; and to have reverence and reciprocity with the mysteries behind Creation.

When driving to Mashkinonje it is always a thrill to observe a bobolink, hear a meadowlark or listen in the evening to the call of a whip-poor-will. May they become part of your field of dreams – and may the pastures of West Nipissing never fall silent. 🍂

Snowshoeing in Canada

by Chuck Miller

At coffee break we were talking about global warming and its impacts on winter activities. We were thinking of 2009–10 with a short mild winter — we did not yet have the December 2010 snows.

Off trail cross country skiing in the forest can often be limited in the early winter, and spring by lack of snow. In 2009 the snow limited season was extended into mid winter. 2009 was a year to get out on the modern, light weight, go anywhere, safe, easy to use snowshoes. This had many of us thinking about the future of winter trails.

Snowshoeing in Canada began with the aboriginal peoples as a necessity for winter travel, later European traders and trappers adapted the technology. By the 1840s recreational use of snowshoes was starting with the first snowshoe clubs forming in Montreal. The popularity of snowshoeing for recreation grew until the turn of the century.

In the present day snowshoeing is back as one of the fastest growing winter sport in the world! As easy as hiking, it is a great way to experience nature in the winter, snow or limited snow – it does not matter — what a great way to spend a winter's day.

If you are thinking it is about time to go see an otter sliding across the ice or you want to look for that deer trail in the forest – strap on those new snowshoes and go! And if you are planning a trip in the Sudbury — North Bay region there is no better place to explore than the trails at Mashkinonje Provincial Park. They are snowshoe friendly and the future of winter trails. These trails are here now! Enjoy. 🍂



CONTACT US

We hope you enjoyed our newsletter. To view past editions, visit our website

www.mashkinonje.com

or contact us at:

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Vice President: Dr. Peter Beckett

Secretary: Nicole Wilson

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Park Liaison: Chuck Miller, Ontario Parks
Superintendent

Thank you for being a Friend