



## CONFLUENCE AND CONSERVATION

Newsletter of the Alton Grange Association/AGA

### Presidents Message – Deb Wilson

Greetings!

The mosquitoes are biting and the tall grass along the boardwalk is chewing up our legs – it must be summer in the Grange! Due to an urgent situation elsewhere, the Ministry's Summer Rangers have not had a good opportunity to brush out our trails yet but they will be along soon to make your Grange walk more like hiking and less like bushwhacking.

### Another successful Annual General Meeting in April!

We trust everyone enjoyed our raptor guests and their handlers from WEEP (Wildlife Education and Environmental Program). It was great to see so many children out and we hope some have found their way to the Junior Grangers workshops. After several years serving on the AGA board, Moreen Miller (outgoing President) and Kevin Trimble are moving on and their input will be missed. Both have been involved since the inception of the Association and provided valuable contributions to many aspects of our work, including the partnership agreement with the MNR, trail development and maintenance, data collection and file creation, to mention only a few things. We look forward to their continued feedback and involvement as Association members. Thank you both for all your hard work!

Our new board is comprised of Deb Wilson (President), Ray Wand (Vice President), Debby Storr (Secretary), John Cartwright (Treasurer), and directors Linda Lockyer, Tony Williams, Joanne Whyte, Karen Henderson, Paul Newall, and Richard Paterak. In September, we will start planning our

“Next Five Years” so please pass on any suggestions you may have.

### Summer 2008

Two summer students with our partner, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, have used GPS to map our trails. This will be great news for any of you who have lost your way in the Grange. We will be using their results to create a few strategically positioned route maps along the trails.

We look forward to seeing everyone at our fall barbeque – details are on the back of the newsletter!

Have a wonderful summer!

### Litter - The Bane of Our Throw Away Society Raymond Wand

Having recently joined the Board of Directors as Vice President of the Grange I volunteered to provide articles of interest for the Grange Newsletter. Well... having little knowledge of the property I was quickly brought up to speed about the property and its mandate. It's quite an undertaking for the members to maintain the property year-to-year, insurance, maintenance, and improvements. We as residents of Alton have a unique ecosystem right in our backyards. One of the first tasks I participated in was the annual clean up of the property. In that regard I was amazed at the amount of garbage that was picked up by the volunteers, some 12 bags of garbage collected from within and outside the property! Concerning is the fact that the people doing the litter/dumping have a negligent attitude as to the ramifications of their abuse/laziness, no civic pride and likely are trying to save a few bucks from having to pay a dumping fee at the local dump.

Wikipedia defines litter as:

*Litter is waste disposed in the wrong place by unlawful human action and can vary in size of incident, occurrence or items. It can occur as small items like wrappers, large collections of waste or scatterings of litter dispersed around public places outdoors. Litter can be occasioned by malicious, careless, or accidental intent and is generally disposed of illegally rather than lawfully. Litter has the potential to cause harm to human health, safety, and welfare, it harms wildlife and causes environmental impact. Waste abandoned in a private space is not considered litter.*

Wastes found in and outside of the property consisted of tissues, plastic bags, coffee cups, clothing, construction debris, yard wastes and fast food containers, straws, candy wrappers, napkins, beer bottles and cans, cigarette packages and the omnipresent water bottle.

As you can appreciate not all litter is harmful but rather more of an eye soar, while other waste is an environmental hazard, such as oil cans, windshield washer fluid containers to name a few. These containers contain remnants of chemicals that are known toxins and given the proximity to the watercourse and marshes of the Grange are of concern, because the Granges ecosystem is nature's detoxifier. However, the natural ability of the property and its ecosystem to absorb these contaminants is limited, as much of the toxins do not readily break down, and remains in the soil or trapped water. This affects all life forms reliant on the ecosystem in the property and downstream from the property and as the property is part of the aquifer of the Oak Ridges Moraine much more needs to be done to stem the misuse and the attitudes that persist both inside and outside the property.

Why do people litter? Research points to several factors that may influence littering behaviors:

- Lack of knowledge of the environmental effects of littering.
- Litter has already accumulated. The more litter present the more people are inclined to litter.
- Lack of social pressure to do the right thing.

- Absence of penalties or consistent enforcement.
- Number, placement, and appearance of disposal containers at or near the site.
- People who litter often feel no sense of pride in the areas they are littering.
- They don't view the item as litter. That's often the case with cigarette butts.

Unless someone cleans up litter, its effects may be seen for years. It takes two to five months for paper to biodegrade; five years for a plastic-coated paper cartons; up to 12 years for cigarette butts ; 50 to 100 years for tin cans; 200-500 years for aluminum cans; and one million years for a styro-foam container or plastic jug. Furthermore, cleaning up litter has a cost.

Lets all help mother nature and put litter in its place and help the property and our community look clean and be clean, report any dumping and demand that our politicians act to ensure the litter problem doesn't make us look like a third world country.

### **The Red Squirrel - Joanne Whyte**



I am sure this has happened to all of us. You are out for a quiet stroll through the Grange, when suddenly the peace and tranquility of your surroundings are shattered by a litany of cursing and obscenities, chirrs, chucks and chatters raining down on you from above. You have inadvertently offended the American Red Squirrel, *Tamiasciurus hudsonicus* or "the steward who sits in the shadow of his tail. Unfortunately, this is not difficult to do.

The Red Squirrel has an enormous range extending in boreal forests from Alaska continuously across Canada to the northeast U.S., south to the Appalachian states and northern Rocky Mountains. One of the smallest of North America's tree squirrels, the red squirrel has a head and body length of 16.5-23 cm and a tail length of 9-16 cm and weight of 140 - 280 grams. Fur colour is quite variable and even varies between winter and summer. The back coat is usually brownish or

olive-red in colour. During the summer, a black stripe can be seen on the side. The belly is white or cream colour. The tail is often edged with white and not as thick or bushy as other squirrel species. There is a white band encircling the large, black eye.

Completely solitary, active by day, and at home in the treetops, red squirrels race up and down trunks, gripping bark with curved claws and keeping balance with bushy flattened tails. Going down a tree trunk is no problem since they can rotate hind feet 180 degrees, allowing for a good grip. They cling to the undersides of branches, dash through the canopy, and leap spread-eagled to branches below or to the ground. Some fall tens of metres from the tops of trees, yet scamper away unhurt. On the ground, they stick close to trees, running quickly from the base of one to another until it gets where it's going. It occasionally takes to the water and swims strongly. The Red Squirrel dens in old woodpecker holes, tree hollows, or any other small crevice where they build a nest of dried grasses near their home range of usually 1/2-2.4 hectares. In the northern part of their range, red squirrels often spend the winter in a system of underground tunnels.

In warmer climates, there are two breeding seasons, late winter and mid summer. In colder climates, there is only one taking place in late winter. Female squirrels allow males into their territory for only one day during a breeding season. After mating, they separate, leaving the female to care for the young. She gives birth after a 38-day gestation period in a lined den to 1-8 young. The young develop quickly and are weaned 7 - 8 weeks after birth. At 18 weeks, they leave the nest. Juvenile mortality is high, with owls, hawks, and martins taking many. About 25% survive to sexual maturity, which is achieved around one year. Red squirrels can live about 7 years in the wild.

While their favourite food is conifer seeds (of which they can harvest up to 16,000 cones in a season and eat 40 to 50 cones a day in winter when their metabolic rate increases threefold) red squirrels are not fussy eaters. They also consume other seeds, fruit, nuts, bark, and buds, shed antlers, reptiles, insects, tree sap, fungi (including mushrooms that are poisonous to humans), eggs, young birds, mice, and young rabbits. They store seeds and nuts underground in piles for the winter and locate them

with their tremendous sense of smell. Not all stockpiles are discovered, however, and red squirrels are a key tree planter and seed disperser.

Bold and brazen, red squirrels often invade camps and yards, where they steal objects both edible and inedible. They chew up clothing, and can pull out cabin insulation to line their nests.

So next time you are the victim of one these foul tempered little creatures' tirades, do not take it personally, they can't even stand each other - just be thankful it isn't bigger!

## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

### **Fall into the Grange**

**Hot Dog Day - Sept. 27 12 – 2 pm.**

**Cardwell St. Entrance**

**Hot Dog and Drink \$2.00**

**Two Hot Dogs and Drink \$2.50**

### **Junior Grangers**

**October 4th @ the Alton public library from 1-3 pm**

**Register with Nancy @ Alton Public Library or**

**Karen Henderson @ [kahenderson@rogers.com](mailto:kahenderson@rogers.com)**

### **Our Mission**

- To protect, restore and enhance the natural, scenic, educational and cultural values of the Grange Property.
- To promote public responsibility, understanding, and stewardship through the wise management of the natural resources of the Grange Property.
- To compile and manage natural resource information on the Grange property.
- To promote partnerships to assist in accomplishing these goals.
- To manage and maintain the Grange property in accordance with the goals and objectives of the Alton Integrated Resource Management Plan.

To find out more about upcoming events, share your ideas or become a member:

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