



THE TINY COTTAGER

Issue No. 45

A GEORGIAN BAY PERSPECTIVE

Spring/Summer 2015

President's Message

By PAUL COWLEY

Having just come out of one of the harshest winters in memory, I note how quickly it is forgotten now that the first hot days herald the arrival of summer.

This summer marks the 400th anniversary of the arrival of French explorer Samuel de Champlain in Huronia. There will be many events to celebrate this anniversary and you can learn more about them at www.rendezvouschamplain.ca.

Our current water levels are just slightly above their long term average. That said, National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Environment Canada have recently reduced their precipitation forecast and increased their temperature forecast for the summer, a combination which will probably result in lower lake levels. As was the case last spring, these slightly higher levels have lured people and governments into a false sense that the issue with the St. Clair River and our lake levels has gone away. It hasn't.

Restore Our Water International's (ROWI's) ability to fund-raise continues to be difficult as everyone thinks we are fine. We are not fine. ROWI's ongoing lobbying work in Washington costs thousands of dollars a month. In addition, ROWI is trying to get our Canadian government to act, since it has done nothing even though the IJC recommended the installation of measures to slow the flow of the St. Clair River.

ROWI's funding has reached a critical low. Support is desperately needed. Please visit www.restoreourwater.com to keep updated and make a contribution, or contact me if you are willing to arrange a fund-raising event in your area. Georgian Bay water is a resource that we must proactively protect.

Moving from water to land, parking continues to be a focus in Tiny, driven by the concerns of our fire chief about the numerous streets in the township that should be signed "No Parking" as they are too narrow to allow adequate access for fire trucks. This raises safety and liability issues should fire trucks be unable to properly access a fire.

We are pleased to see the collaborative approach our new council is taking with the upcoming Town Hall Meetings which invite input from residents. The first meeting is from 7 to 9 p.m. on the evening of May 27 at Tiny's Community Centre, 91 Concession Road 8 East. Please consult tiny.ca for updates about the other two meetings.

Let us know what subjects you would like to see addressed in articles in the next edition of *The Tiny Cottager*. Also, we welcome the energy of new volunteers to help us with various interesting projects, so do get in touch if you would like to help to improve Tiny in an area interesting to you.

Have a great summer!

Tiny Marsh BioBlitz!

June 27 2015, 6 a.m. to midnight

Tiny Marsh, Ontario's first provincially owned and managed wildlife area, consists of approximately 600 hectares of marsh and 300 hectares of field and forest. A recognized Important Bird Area (IBA), it is now managed by a volunteer non-profit organization, the MTM Conservation Association. The Tiny Marsh BioBlitz is part of the biological inventory program and will start at 6 a.m. Saturday June 27 and end around midnight. One- to 3-hour outings will depart the Nature Centre at various times, led by a group of experts with knowledge in different fields – birds, butterflies, pollinators and other insects, amphibians and reptiles, mammals and plants. Participants can come out for just one outing, or several. To register, call Kate Harries 705-322-2545 or email info@mtm-conservation.org. Advance registration (call or email above) will be required; details of the outings will be posted closer to the time at www.mtmconservation.org. No experience or equipment required (binoculars a help).



Jennifer Howard Photo

Ensuring Our Water Quality by Tending to Our Environment

By ANDRÉ BEAUSOLEIL, FOUNDER & DIRECTOR, HABITAT RESTORATION ASSOCIATION OF LAFONTAINE

As an environmental technologist, I have practical experience in water resource management as well as stream habitat assessment and rehabilitation. The long-term goal of the Habitat Restoration Association of Lafontaine, which was formed in 2011, is to re-establish terrestrial and aquatic habitats and improve water quality by reducing phosphorus and nutrient inputs and bacteria (including *Escherichia coli* [*E. coli*]) into our local watercourses and ultimately our bays and lakes.

One way this goal can be achieved in a sustainable fashion is by re-establishing riparian zone (stream and lake edge) setbacks and planting a variety of native trees and shrubs within these areas to act as buffers. This method has two benefits. Firstly, surface water running over replanted land is slowed, reducing erosion and allowing water to be absorbed into the ground and then filtered, decreasing the amount of nutrients and bacteria that enter the watercourse. A second benefit is that naturalized riparian zones provide much needed habitat corridors for all forms of wildlife.

As director of the Habitat Restoration Association, I seek out landowners who are willing to set aside land for riparian zone buffers along watercourses that cross their property. Next comes the search for partners (governmental granting agencies and private donors) and

applications for funding for livestock exclusion fencing where needed, for the purchase of native trees and shrubs for buffer zones, and for ongoing maintenance. Beyond that, there's a need to find volunteers to help with planting and maintenance.

The Habitat Restoration Association, its volunteers and contributing partners have brought several projects to fruition to date. These include:

- Five livestock exclusion fencing installations totalling 4,077 linear feet of high quality fencing.
- The creation of two wetlands within livestock exclusion zones, complemented by riparian buffer zone plantings of native trees and berry-producing shrubs.
- The planting of approximately 9,500 various trees and berry-producing shrubs along with weed suppression mats and stem protectors.
- Completion of eight permanent, riparian-buffer-zone, agricultural set backs totalling over sixteen acres in surface area.
- The stabilization of two eroding banks utilizing such techniques as coco meshing with live willow tree staking and red dogwood shrub plantings.

E. coli inputs to the Nottawasaga and Thunder Bays are not limited to outflow from creeks. Although the

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LAFONTAINE CREEK...continued from page 1

creeks are significant contributors because of the size of the land area they drain, it is important to look at the “big picture” when considering methods to remediate factors contributing to occasional high *E. coli* counts, phosphorus and nutrients in our bodies of water. It is critical for all residents to understand that our watercourses, bays and lakes function as an integrated, unified system called the hydrological cycle.

Also, occasional intense rainfall events cause rain-water to quickly wash over land picking up soil particles. That abnormal volume of water then enters a watercourse and, flowing at high velocity, stirs up sediment in the substrate of ponds, creeks or rivers flushing them into our bays and lakes. This soil-laden water contains elevated levels of phosphate and nutrients and high levels of bacteria such as *E. coli* because these tend to “stick” to sediment and soil particles. This is one reason why *E. coli* counts in bays and lakes are abnormally elevated after significant rainfall or snowmelt events.

The culmination of these factors can severely impact water quality in our streams, bays and lakes. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, if favourable conditions are present, *E. coli* may be capable of prolonged survival and growth in nutrient-rich environments such as soils, beach sand, floating mats of blue-green algae blooms, even in the absence of recent fecal contamination.

My personal experience (as distinct from the views of funding organizations) leads me to believe that the following are the most significant, remediable sources of high *E. coli* counts and poor water quality:

1. **Improper application of human and animal sewage as top dressing on fields and the failure to incorporate this matter into the soil immediately after application.** The negative aspects of applying sewage to fields are drastically reduced if best management practices guidelines are followed to prevent overland runoff into streams. Applying sewage to agricultural soil is actually beneficial and more environmentally sustainable than use of man-made fertilizers. It is a cost-effective and efficient way to make use of this by-product of our human existence. For more details go to www.omafra.gov.ca click on Nutrient Management then Manure Management or research The Nutrient Management Act 2002.

2. **Faulty and/or outdated privately owned septic systems, especially those along watercourses and the shorelines of our bays and lakes.** Currently there is

funding available through the Lake Simcoe South-eastern Georgian Bay Community Stewardship Program to assist homeowners in upgrading outdated or faulty systems.

3. **The fecal matter left by Canada geese.** This matter enters into lakes and the bay when geese defecate directly into the water, or onto beaches and also, to a lesser extent, onto agricultural fields where they feed.

4. **The fecal matter of livestock.** Cattle, horses and all other domesticated animals are a source but it is a somewhat less significant simply due to the lesser volume of their feces compared to sewage, faulty septic systems and geese.

5. **The feces of pets such as dogs and cats.** Not to be overlooked, and so it is important to “scoop the poop”. Wild animals such as ducks, seagulls, raccoons and so on are factors too.

The quest for funding and private land for habitat restoration projects is ongoing. Grants never cover the whole cost, so private donors must be found to make these projects possible. The long-term goal is to eventually re-establish natural riparian zone habitat along Tiny’s shorelines and the full length of Lafontaine Creek.

As director of the Habitat Restoration Association, I strive to rally and involve all members of our community in achieving these goals and ensuring good water quality for the generations to follow by practising “green” habits and environmentally sustainable practices on their properties and in their households. Using biodegradable soaps and cleaning products and not applying traditional herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers to lawns and gardens make a difference. Removing impermeable surfaces around the home allows surface water to penetrate the ground and be filtered prior to entering a watercourse or lake.

Landowners and homeowners who reside close to watercourses are directly affected by poor water quality. Equally, they have a key role to play in mitigating sources of negative impacts to our water quality. Whether it is water molecules in a stream, pond, lake or a drinking water well, it’s all the same water. Ultimately, water quality affects us all. To improve and preserve this invaluable resource we must work together towards the common goal of clean, plentiful water.

Funding and technical assistance are currently available for a variety of water quality improvement projects through the Lake Simcoe South-eastern Georgian Bay Community Stewardship Program. A map of the Lafontaine Creek watershed is available at: <http://tinyurl.com/nw4zyo8>

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