

Friends of the Coves Subwatershed Inc. 2008 Annual Report



An egret fishing in the West Pond of The Coves (Photo courtesy of Bob Winter)

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Mission Statement

The quality of life in our community is enhanced through the protection, rehabilitation and wise stewardship of the Coves Subwatershed.

Goals and Objectives

The Friends of the Coves engages the community - residents, businesses, community organizations, agencies and all levels of government - in the protection, rehabilitation, and stewardship of the Coves Subwatershed.

The Coves Subwatershed Plan recommendations and Friends of the Coves Subwatershed projects are categorized into four main focus areas:

- ✔ Public Greenspace
- ✔ Stewardship
- ✔ Education
- ✔ Rehabilitation & Monitoring

Public Greenspace

Public Greenspace includes:

- Increase and protect public greenspaces in and around the Coves ESA.
- Enhance community enjoyment and appreciation of the Coves and protect sensitive natural features by establishing managed trails

Elmwood Gateway to the Coves ESA

On November 17, 2008 London City Council voted to support the rezoning of the property at 201 Wharncliffe Road S to Open Space. The western part of the property is zoned Open Space (Class 5) which designates it conservation land where only trails are permitted. The eastern portion is zoned Open Space (Class 1) which allows for only development related to park features, such as interpretive signs, benches, paths and parking. The site is currently undergoing an assessment by the Ministry of Environment to appropriately guide the project due to its former use as a landfill. This future Gateway to the Coves ESA will soon offer much-needed public greenspace along Wharncliffe Road as well as provide an entry point to The Coves. The Friends of the Coves Subwatershed will promote public involvement in the planning of the gateway through a public meeting once all approvals are in order and the City of London is ready to proceed with a site plan.

The East Pond Woods

The protection of this property has long been a priority of Friends of the Coves Subwatershed. The swampy woods, wetlands, and wet meadows of the East Ponds eastern floodplain have high plant diversity and provide refuge for frogs, birds and other animals. Amphibian monitoring done on the property for several years by Friends of the Coves Subwatershed, as part of Bird Studies Canada's Marsh Monitoring Program, confirms it is a breeding site for at least 4 amphibian species, including the Northern Leopard Frog. It's woods are also known to be used by species that are sensitive to urban pressures, such as the White-breasted Nuthatch, which is considered an Area-Sensitive Species. The property also contains a trail that has been passively used by the public for decades although it has always been on private property. It is sheer luck that it has remained largely pristine, a rarity indeed only seconds away from the whizzing cars of

Wharncliffe Road and Springbank Drive and minutes from the downtown core.

To everyone's delight these lands were recently acquired by the City of London with the largest portion (over 9 acres) coming from owner Chata Holdings and a smaller portion coming soon after that from another private landowner. The parcels are adjacent and connect

other public greenspaces completing a continuous natural corridor from Greenway Park to 201 Wharncliffe Road S. Les Bachorz, Chata Holdings Principal, recently attended a party to celebrate the conservation of the property where he spoke of his original dreams to develop the property, how much he's learned over the years and how happy he is to know that it will be protected.



Les Bachorz of Chata Holdings with Ian Cousins and Thom McClenaghan, Directors of Friends of the Coves Subwatershed at a party to celebrate the property

160 Emery St. W

In negotiations to gain condominium status, the owner of the apartments at 160 Emery St. W, offered the title to their property that spanned Southcrest Ravine, just north of Emery St. W, over to the city. These negotiations were recently completed and the ravine lands were added to the Coves Greenspace network. This will hopefully lead to greater protection of the ravine which is suffering considerably from erosion caused by various factors, including encroachment on the top of the bank and illegal dumping.

65 Duke St. (The Paint Factory/Fruit Orchard)

The nearly 70 acre property which lies at the heart of the Coves has long been all but abandoned and now only failing fences, a few concrete pads and old signs hint at the sites industrial past. A relatively small part of the property once held a factory and associated buildings while the remainder of the land was occupied by a fruit orchard. Most of the fruit trees have now died and the area has gone wild and is now home to many birds, foxes and other animals.

In recent years, King & Benton Development Corporation, a company experienced in redeveloping contaminated sites, have been working on a proposal for the former paint factory site and surrounding apple orchard at 65 Duke Street. The property lies in a Special Policy Area due to it being highly flood prone which has very strict regulations for any development.

After years of trying to work with King & Benton on a proposal for a low-density residential development, Valspar Inc. recently listed the property for sale. Friends of the Coves Subwatershed Directors have urgently communicated the potential of this opportunity to finally see the property rehabilitated and conserved to politicians, City of London representatives and Upper Thames River Conservation Authority staff.

Stewardship

Stewardship includes:

- ✔ Community involvement in planning and implementing projects
- ✔ Engaging local landowners in adopting ecologically-friendly practices in their home and yard
- ✔ The active involvement of area schools, community groups, and service clubs in ecosystem conservation and protection

Coves Cleanup

Around 100 Friends of the Coves Subwatershed participated in the 18th Annual Coves Clean-Up. They planted native trees and shrubs along the West Cove, put up bird nestboxes in Greenway Park and picked up more than 80 bags of garbage, tires, and shopping carts around the Coves Subwatershed.



Volunteers gather around their bounty of trash gathered in Euston Park during the Coves Clean Up

Coves Swallowtail Grove

Swallowtail Grove is a native plant butterfly garden in Greenway Park that was planted by and is maintained by Friends of the Coves Subwatershed volunteers. The garden provides the natural habitat required by our local butterflies and other species. Many of the native plant species thriving in Swallowtail Grove have become rare in this region, especially within the city limits yet they are required by some species for survival. Everyone is invited to join the group of volunteers that meet a few times throughout the summer to care for and learn from the garden. The City of London completed a paved trail last fall which passes by the garden connecting the Thames Valley Parkway Trail and Springbank Drive. This paved trail has brought new traffic and community interest through the Grove and we welcome all considerate visitors to stop and enjoy the garden. A mowed trail connecting the East Pond with the West Pond passes through the garden.



American Lady caterpillars hatch from eggs laid on Pearly Everlasting in Swallowtail Grove where they will take their first meals

Pollution Solutions Rain Barrel Orders

60 rain barrels were sold at a special subsidized rate by the Friends of the Coves Subwatershed in our spring and fall sales. The use of these rain barrels will reduce surface runoff pollution in the Coves Subwatershed and therefore help protect water quality in The Coves.

Education

In 2008, Friends of the Coves Subwatershed staff visited several classes at Westminster High School to spread awareness about the Coves ESA and how to protect it. Students then took part in planting and mulching in a naturalization area along Silver Creek which is near their school and a popular hangout for students.

In 2008, Friends of the Coves Subwatershed staff and volunteers planted a tree for the Western Day Care on Emery St. The children gathered round to watch the native Red Maple planted in the middle of their playground. They watched the planting of their new play friend and protector with pure wonder.



The youngest Coves residents gather round to see a native Red Maple planted in the middle of the yard where they play every day.



This demonstration rain garden was installed at Tribal Mountain Trade on Springbank Drive by Friends of the Coves Subwatershed staff and volunteers.

In 2008, Friends of the Coves Subwatershed hosted a Rain Garden Workshop as part of the Pollution Solutions program. Attendees learned to make their yards more eco-friendly by reducing their surface runoff pollution by intercepting it in a rain garden.

In the summer of 2008 Friends of the Coves Subwatershed staff embarked on a door-to-door informational campaign to talk to homeowners along Southcrest Ravine about surface runoff pollution and how it contributes to erosion in the ravine. We offered resources materials, answered questions to those interested and invited all to take part in a community tree planting day along Silver Creek.

The Friends of the Coves Subwatershed continued to maintain a display of resource materials at the Landon Branch of the London Public Library as well as displays at various forums and events (such as Gathering on the Green in Wortley Village) where resources were available and someone was on hand to answer questions.



Various displays in the community spreading awareness about the Coves ESA

Rehabilitation

Enhancing aquatic and terrestrial habitat and establishing natural corridors that connect greenspaces within and adjacent to the Coves Subwatershed.

Euston Park Naturalization

In 2008, 100 shrubs were planted and maintenance work was done to control invasive species in the naturalization area. This work was done with the help of local students, Girl Guides, Pathfinders, and Friends of the Coves volunteers.

Silver Creek Naturalization

Over 200 native trees and shrubs were planted along Silver Creek as part of the Pollution Solutions program. Trees planted in previous years were mulched and Garlic Mustard was removed from the naturalization area to promote the survival of the native woody vegetation, whose growth is known to be adversely affected by Garlic Mustard.



West Pond Naturalization

The naturalization area on the eastern shoreline of the West Pond is quickly growing into a natural buffer with thousands of trees and shrubs planted since 2004 now growing there. This site enhances the wildlife corridor between the Thames River and The Coves, improves shoreline habitat, reduces erosion and protects water quality. 120 trees and shrubs were planted and maintenance work was done to control invasive species in the naturalization area. This work was done with the help of local students and Friends of the Coves volunteers.

Volunteers from the University of Western Ontario planting a Sugar Maple by the West Pond

Monitoring

Monitoring ecosystem health to assist in prioritizing projects and evaluating project success.

Amphibian Monitoring

Friends of the Coves Subwatershed continued participation in the Great Lakes-wide Marsh Monitoring Program organized by Bird Studies Canada through monitoring of breeding amphibian populations. Amphibians are highly sensitive to environmental conditions and are a good indicator of habitat quality making them a prime candidate for monitoring. The mating calls of frogs and toads are used to identify species and their abundance. A second monitoring station was added in 2008 to provide more thorough coverage of the Coves area.

Nestbox Monitoring

The nestbox program to provide habitat to native cavity nesting birds continued in Greenway Park. More nestboxes were put up by volunteers at the Coves Clean-Up. The nestboxes have provided nest sites as well as refuge to overwintering birds.

Water Quality Monitoring

The Friends of the Coves Subwatershed contracted the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority to perform a special water testing regime that goes beyond the usual testing performed by them as part of the Coves Aquatic Rehabilitation Program. The sampling regime will help provide greater insight into variations in water quality between the ponds and between the largest tributaries that outlet to the Coves ponds.

Bird Monitoring

Friends of the Coves Subwatershed volunteers participated in the Christmas Bird Count, a multinational effort to monitor bird populations. The Canadian participants in the program are organized by Bird Studies Canada. Volunteers count and identify every bird they see within a designated area over a 24 hour period.

Our 2008 Partners

Community Investors

City of London

London Community Foundation (The Beryl Ivey Environment Fund)

EcoAction, a community funding program of Environment Canada

Government of Canada's Job Creation Program

Reforest London

Community Supporters

Landon Branch of the London Public Library

Middlesex Stewardship Council Ontario Junior Stewardship Rangers

Ministry of Environment

Old South Community Organization

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources

Upper Thames River Conservation Authority

Urban League of London

Westminster Secondary School

Hillside Church

University of Western Ontario

Business Sponsors

Cram & Associated Barristers & Solicitors

Davis Martindale Accountants

Echidna Solutions Corp.

John's Valu-Mart

Kensal Rental Services Ltd.

Spectrum Communications

Springbank Garden Centre

Ontario Grower's Supply

Pizza Pizza

Starbucks

The Little Red Roaster

Tuckey's Home Hardware

Wild Birds Unlimited