Summer is the busiest season in terms of usage and the work Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA) does on these properties. To assist in the completion of our work plan we are happy to announce that we have just received a grant from the Species at Risk program through the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. The financial support will allow us to obtain updated inventory data on the flora and fauna species within the East Duffins Headwaters (EDH) properties and continue our work on the treatment of invasive terrestrial plants. We are working to control invasive plant species from out-competing native species. Wherever possible TRCA chooses not to spray chemicals, but some species, such as dog-strangling vine, respond to little else. Prior to any spraying we will post signs indicating affected areas.

We have recently posted bright new signs to help users identify entry points and help distinguish the lands that make up the EDH properties.

Toronto and Region Conservation is also pleased to inform you that the management plan update is moving forward nicely. The project was introduced to the public on June 25 at an open house to promote public participation. The actions outlined in this new plan will guide management of the property for years to come. It is therefore very important for you to become involved and have your voice heard. To obtain updates, provide feedback or join the mailing list for future meetings, please contact Mike Goodyear at mgoodyear@trca.on.ca.
Hooving with hooves

As summer progresses TRCA is getting closer to starting the parking lot expansion planned at the former gravel pit. Equestrians wishing to use the trailhead, which is located on the 6th Concession a few kilometres north of the Pickering-Uxbridge Townline, will be able to take advantage of increased space in which to maneuver and park their horse trailers once the project is complete.

This spot gives centralized access to enjoy the extensive EDH trail network. Viewing areas that were added last year will further enhance riding experience by giving users a place to stop, rest and enjoy the spectacular views.

The funding that made this project possible was due largely to the generosity of TRCA, the McCutcheon Foundation, and private equestrian supporters. We truly appreciate the efforts of all those involved!

Both the Uxbridge Horsemen’s Association (UHA) and Ontario Trail Riders Association (OTRA) have plans to participate in an interpretive ride to take place on the EDH lands. These rides have been organized to make riders aware of the various vegetation and environmentally sensitive areas that exist within the forest. It is hoped that these rides will not only serve to educate, but will help us see the forest through a different set of eyes. Those that have participated in one of these rides can then help pass the knowledge onto others.

The next time you are out for a ride you may notice new signs in the forest. Pictured below, the sign designates a single track trail. Though a cyclist is depicted on it, the trail remains multi-use. All trails in the EDH lands are multi-use and will remain that way at this time. The sign is there to alert users that it is a single track trail (and is therefore narrower than the majority of trails), that it represents more of a challenge (it may have steep grades or a lower ceiling and is therefore not the trail of choice for a novice of any user group) and that you are likely to encounter cyclists on it. Again, this does not mean that others can not use it, but you can expect a more demanding experience should you choose to use it. TRCA will be installing signs explaining this at entrances and trail heads and a new system of comprehensive signage is part of the management plan currently in development.

This is the perfect time to go out and enjoy this resource at your doorstep. It is also the busiest time of year for most equestrians with showing, haying and farm maintenance eating away at what little free time you have. If you find or make time to take your horse out for a nice relaxing ride in the forest, you’ll both be glad you did.

Happy Trails!

Free wheeling - A message from the Durham Mountain Biking Association

Earth Day 7th Concession Clean Up

Every year the Durham Mountain Biking Association (DMBA) recognizes April 22 as Earth Day and its importance of preserving the state of this fragile planet that we all call home. This year, to mark Earth Day, DMBA organized a cleanup of the East Duffins Headwaters (EDH) and Durham Forest trail heads and the shoulders and ditches of the Uxbridge 7th Concession from Goodwood Rd. south to Glen Major. Twenty-four club members, working for three hours, in teams of two to four, gathered 25 bags of garbage including construction refuse, 15 bags of recyclables, four tires, two box springs, a mattress, a broken picnic table and a boom-box. What a tragedy of trash!

This is something the DMBA community does every year to show its appreciation to the conservation authorities and the local community that share their trails and neighborhood with us. Sadly, we seem to have to re-do this every year. So DMBA is entering into an agreement with Uxbridge Township to formally adopt this section of road and organize annual events to keep it clean year round. We will be inviting the 7th Concession residents to join us for the next clean-up day so we can get to know each other better and share in the feeling of accomplishment at the end of the day.

In the meantime: please help us keep the parking areas and trails litter free. Let us all think of every day as Earth Day and do our part to pack out everything we take into the forest and pick up any litter we notice in the parking areas or on the trails. Then we can all enjoy our beautiful part of the earth looking its best every day.
Living Classroom Gravel Pit Restoration Program

History
The former Timbers Brothers gravel pit (100 acres) was purchased in 1998 and includes an abandoned sand and gravel pit, along with meadow, hedgerow, forest, and wetland communities. Rehabilitation of the pit has occurred in three phases, 1998-2000, 2000-2002, and 2007-2009. This work included grading to 3:1 slopes, berm construction, seedings and plantings, habitat creation, trail and look out construction, and installation of interpretive signage. The rehabilitation of the site has been relatively successful; however, slope stabilization and vegetation establishment remain a challenge.

Living Classroom Vision
The vision is for the former gravel pit to function as a Living Classroom that demonstrates enhanced biodiversity through innovative restoration techniques while providing opportunities for sustainable nature-based recreation and interpretive education. This site will be a model for the restoration of gravel pits on the Oak Ridges Moraine made possible through locally-based partnerships with representatives from public, private, and community organizations. The success of this model will be communicated to the broader community and will help to build awareness of the ecological and cultural potential of former aggregate sites.

Living Classroom Partners
A number of different groups have come together to develop and implement the Living Classroom program.

- The John & Pat McCutcheon Charitable Foundation
- Township of Uxbridge
- Durham Conservation Association
- Local aggregate operators
- Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association
- Ministry of Natural Resources
- Canadian Forest Service
- Trent University/Sir Sandford Fleming College
- Reclamation consultants
- Toronto and Region Conservation

Living Classroom Objectives
The Living Classroom program is built on four primary objectives: restoring biodiversity and watershed function, enhancing public use, engaging the local and broader community through education, and advancing reclamation science and technology through experimentation.

1. Biodiversity and watershed function
   - Restore the site to provide enhanced opportunities for wildlife, i.e. prairie habitat
   - Reforest areas of the site, where appropriate, to enhance watershed function and wildlife habitat

2. Public use
   - Develop nature-based recreation opportunities, i.e. bird watching, horseback riding, hiking, and cycling

3. Education
   - Install interpretive signage that outlines the gravel pit restoration process and describes specific techniques used on the site
   - Engage college and university students in hands-on restoration and monitoring opportunities

4. Experimentation
   - Design and implement a test-plot restoration plan that involves multiple, innovative restoration techniques on site and monitors the results of these techniques

For more information please contact Andrée Dubé-Goss at adube-goss@trca.on.ca or 416-661-6600, ext. 5633.

1997, before restoration work started.

2008, after restoration.
Latest News on the Trail from the Oak Ridges Trail Association

On Tuesday, April 28, local residents and drivers witnessed a stirring spectacle as two Uxbridge pipers in their full dress kilts, led a procession through the early morning mist south on Brock Road from Coppins Corners onto the Oak Ridges Trail entrance. This was day five of Harold Sellers fundraising End2End Walk across the Oak Ridges Trail. Harold is leaving Ontario and his position as Executive Director of ORTA after more than ten years of active participation in the organization. Harold’s goal was to raise awareness and leave a legacy for the trail and was joined in this portion of his walk by long term trail supporters from the municipality and local residents. A photo gallery of his nine day trek is available on the ORTA website www.Oakridgestrail.org

On June 21, the Third Annual Moraine For Life Adventure Relay took place. In addition to being a fund raiser for the Oak Ridges Trail organization, with major support again this year from Joey and Toby Tannenbaum, it also serves to educate the public about the resources available for recreation and the importance of greenspace on the moraine. This year more than 25 teams of up to 15 members each paddled, ran or cycled across the moraine on various segments of the Oak Ridges Trail. For more up to date details check out the ORTA website.

New series of Uxbridge Family Walks/Hikes - July/August/September

Are you looking for a great place to take a walk, perhaps with the kids or grandkids, but aren’t sure where? The hike leaders of ORTA can solve that dilemma for you. We have scheduled a new series of Sunday afternoon walks on a variety of forest and countryside trails along the Oak Ridges Trail in the Uxbridge Chapter. These walks will be family friendly, will start at 1 p.m., will last about two hours, and will introduce you to a variety of forest trails, scenic lookouts, ponds and streams in our area. This is a great way to enjoy the natural world around you. Look for the dates in your local newspapers, Cosmos or Times Journal, or on the ORTA website.

Species at Risk Grant

Toronto and Region Conservation (TRCA) has received a grant from the Species at Risk Stewardship Fund to focus on the control and removal of Invasive Species and completion of an inventory of flora and fauna on the East Duffins Headwaters (EDH) properties. We will also be organizing public education events and having opportunities for volunteer days to assist with control. The total grant is for approximately $28,000 which will be matched by TRCA and the Durham Conservation Association to make the total value close to $60,000.

The relevance to ‘species at risk’ is that the EDH has over 1100 species of flora and fauna of which six species are threatened, scarce or endangered. Invasive species exhibit a high “displacement capacity,” meaning they form such dense colonies or compete so aggressively that they force out native vegetation. These invasives not only impact native vegetation but also the insects, amphibians, animals and birds that live in, eat and/or nest in these native plants. The natural balance is skewed.

The approach to control is specific to the invasive plant. With garlic mustard the preference is for pulling and bagging as it emerges in the early spring when other plants are vulnerable. Pulling does not work with dog-strangling vine; the best treatment is spraying with Round Up in June and early July. Areas to spray will be posted in advance. Buckthorn is removed by a combination of mechanic means and spraying in the early fall.

Last year TRCA expanded our invasive program and we have been pleased to see the progress with the work in the areas on which we focused. This will be a long campaign but we are encouraged by the early returns on our efforts.

We would like to gratefully acknowledge the generous and active participation of the Durham Conservation Association. Their generosity on this and multiple other projects has allowed us to leverage their contribution by applying for matching grants. Thanks also to Urban Forest Associates who have proven to be a very reliable private contractor whom we have hired to do much of the work on dog-strangling vine and Buckthorn.