

SPRING - 2021

# LAND CARE NIAGARA

Official Newsletter

## Message from the Stewardship Director

Greetings,

We have had a very busy Spring season! It has been an exciting time as announcements have been rolling out over the past few months regarding grants that we had submitted over the winter. There are always funding challenges as a non-profit and we are fortunate to have been successful in securing funding to further our environmental efforts in Niagara! Be sure to follow us on our social media platforms and website to keep up to date.

We are very happy to have continued working through the pandemic and are proud of all our supporters, board members, and staff for safely pushing through challenging times to place the environment first. We were able to hire two new staff members, including a Wildlife Technician through funding provided by the Ministry of Environment Conservation and Parks as well as an Environmental Technician through the Government of Canada's, Canada Summer Jobs program. Our Technicians will be working on many of our programs including the Species-at-Risk Bat & Gray Ratsnake project and Rural Tree Planting Program for 2021/2022. If you are a past landowner or a new interested landowner, you may just cross paths!

Our team worked tirelessly through the spring planting season to plant thousands of trees across Niagara, in partnership with many long-standing partners such as Forests Ontario, Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, Niagara Region, and the Ontario Trillium Foundation! Thank you to all of the landowners who have worked not only with us but for those of you who took it upon yourselves to make a change in our environment on your own. Every little bit helps and we encourage everyone to do what they can to make a positive change in our environment.

Please enjoy a safe, and happy summer!

Barry Porter

Stewardship Director  
Land Care Niagara



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# Welcome New Members

**We are very excited to welcome Emily Simmons & Megan Punter to our Team of Staff!**



## **Emily Simmons (BSc. (Hons), CERPIT) - WildLife Technician**

Originally from Toronto, Emily moved to Guelph where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Zoology with a minor in Nutrition. Upon graduation, Emily worked in a variety of industries and gained experience in construction, carpentry, design, and hospitality, but her passion for wildlife and the environment encouraged her to go back to school. She then moved to Niagara to complete a post-graduate certificate in Ecosystem Restoration at Niagara College. Emily's desire to get involved in environmental initiatives led her to volunteer with Land Care Niagara. Now working as a Wildlife Technician at Land Care Niagara she hopes to apply her academic knowledge to promote sustainable land use and help implement projects that restore biodiversity in the Niagara Region.

## **What To Do When You Find a Rabbit Fledging Nest?**

### **I found a rabbit's nest in my yard today. *What should I do?***

Spring is upon us which means rabbits have begun nesting for the season! Rabbits may choose to nest in many different areas, and often we can find them right in the middle of our own lawns!

Prior to pulling the lawn mower out, it is important to inspect your lawn for any patches that look like dried grass - there could very well be young rabbits beneath! But what should you do if you find a nest and are unsure whether the mother is still around? One option is to place a string across the nest in an "X" shape - if it has been disturbed at all within 24 hours, it is likely the mother has returned to care for her young. Another option is to sprinkle flour around the nest and look for tracks from the mother the next day.

If after 24 hours the area remains undisturbed it is important that you call your local wildlife rehabilitation centre or SPCA branch to handle the situation - remember to never touch or remove young wildlife, even if you suspect neglect!





# Welcome New Members



## Megan Punter (BSc. Env., EPt) - Environmental Field Technician

Megan was born in the Niagara Region and currently resides in Niagara-on-the-Lake. She graduated from the University of Guelph in 2019 with a Bachelor of Environmental Sciences. In 2020, she completed a post-graduate certificate in Environmental Management and Assessment at Niagara College. She is currently completing a certificate in Geographic Information Systems at Durham College. During the past year, Megan has been working on the project, Secure the Food Mississauga, partnered with the City of Mississauga, to help address food insecurity and climate change within the city. In her spare time, Megan loves hiking and gardening. Megan feels fortunate for the opportunity to contribute her skills and time to Land Care Niagara's mission and sustainability initiatives within her community as an Environmental Field Technician.

## World Environment Day: June 5

### **This year's theme:**

Ecosystem Restoration:  
*#GenerationRestoration*

World Environment Day is a United Nations Day for encouraging awareness and action to protect our environment. The theme for World Environment Day 2021 is Ecosystem Restoration and calls for urgent action to revive damaged ecosystems. This year's event will also see the launch of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

Ecosystem Restoration can help combat climate change, improve ecosystem integrity, increase biodiversity and restore habitat for endangered species. Ecosystem Restoration is a key component of the work done at Land Care Niagara. This year LCN Board Members celebrated World Environment Day by planting trees with the rural tree planting program at a property in Wainfleet.

For more information about World Environment Day and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration please visit [www.worldenvironmentday.global](http://www.worldenvironmentday.global) or check out *#GenerationRestoration*.



**REIMAGINE  
RECREATE  
RESTORE**  
*#GenerationRestoration*





# Community News: June Movement

We joined the June Movement this year! The June movement is a community event hosted by the City of Niagara falls that encourages people to get outside and get active by participating in a series of challenges for the chance to win tons of cool prizes! We sponsored two events to encourage people to head outside and monitor their neighbourhoods for Species-at-risk bats and Gray- ratsnakes for a chance to win 2 LCN prize packs!

Due to the popularity of the contest, we have decided to host our own contest to continue the challenges throughout the summer with lots of additional prizes to be won! If you would like to sponsor our challenges by donating a prize from your business please let us know! All additional prizes will be updated throughout the duration of the contest and showcased on our social media channels!

## LCN Summer Species-at-Risk Competition

### Become a Bat Ambassador!



Install a bat box in your backyard & spend some time outside monitoring them and recording any bats you see, or head out an hour before dusk and monitor the night sky for a few hours in your backyard and around your neighborhood. Post a photo of yourself on social media completing the challenge and tag @landcareniagara to earn points! Bonus points if you see a bat!

### Become a Gray Ratsnake Guardian!



Explore local conservation areas, parks, and other natural areas to look for the endangered Gray ratsnake! Look for them basking on logs, along forest edges and in trees! Post a photo of yourself completing the challenge and tag @landcareniagara for a change to win - even if you don't see any snakes!. Bonus points if you snap a photo of any wildlife while exploring!



# Special Feature: Interview With Greg Orouke



Greg and Mary-Ann

Greg and Mary-Ann are two proud participants of multiple partnered and self-driven restoration projects as well as the Species-at-Risk program with Land Care Niagara. They began their journey in 2002, where they sought out to restore their 61 acre property in Wainfleet. They partnered with Land Care Niagara and other local organizations to plant indigenous tree species on their land. Since then, they have continued to manage and plant more trees, wildflowers and other various native plants, as well as implement wetlands. This year, Land Care Niagara installed a nesting structure for the endangered Gray Ratsnake. We interviewed Greg and Mary-Ann and toured their property to see the amazing changes made in the land.

## **What initiated you to get involved in projects with Land Care Niagara?**

Improving the natural habitat features of our property was not something we could do alone.

## **What made you decide to participate in the Species-at-Risk project by installing a nesting structure for the endangered Gray Ratsnake on your property?**

After several years of inaction, this seemed like a simple and exciting way to kick off another round of restoration work on the property.

## **Are you excited to have the structure on your property?**

Several years ago I narrowly missed stepping on a very large, dark coloured snake which was in the process of swallowing a bird. This may have been a Gray Ratsnake but maybe not. There has been one other possible sighting on our property, 19 years ago.

In addition to offering support for the snakes, annual maintenance of these boxes may provide us with definitive evidence of their presence. That would be exciting! We have room for at least six more!



Gray ratsnake nesting structure



# Special Feature: Interview With Greg Orouke

## **What other kinds of restoration projects have you done with Land Care Niagara on your property?**

We first worked with LCN about 18 years ago. We enlarged two small seasonal wetlands that had been created through the dredging of a municipal drain. Berms on either side of the drain had created a situation where water was held back from reaching the drain long enough to support several small but rich pockets of wetland vegetation and these we wished to enlarge. Money for excavation was provided by the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority (NPCA) and Ducks Unlimited while the MNR and LCN provided us with money for plant material as well as Wood Duck boxes and volunteers.



A wetland that Greg created on their property.

## **Can you tell us about the process?**

Our restoration and stewardship activities began with our original Managed Forest Tax Incentive Plan application. The primary objective of our plan is the development of native woodlands for the benefit of songbirds and waterfowl. Ongoing education has been the biggest part of the process. Learning how to identify what we have and conceiving of how we might help to quicken the pace of naturalization.

We have found that there is no shortage of support here in Niagara either for our ongoing education or for the planning and implementation of our projects. The NPCA, LCN, MNRF, and local naturalist clubs are all full of passionate and knowledgeable people willing to help out.

## **How has your land changed over time and what results have you seen?**

It is twenty years older. That alone is responsible for a marked increase in the density and diversity of species but our planting and water retention efforts are also starting to bear fruit.

As a relatively young landscape our property is in a constant state of transition and will be for many decades to come.

## **Do you have any tips for prospective landowners thinking of doing these types of projects?**

Work with what you have. Understand the relevance of your project to the wider world. Make friends, find partners. It's a long road, be patient and enjoy!



A wetland that Greg created on their property.



Greg and his Gray ratsnake nesting structure.



# Project Updates: Species-at-Risk

## **Bat Hibernacula Monitoring**

Half of Ontario bats are endangered, all of which are non-migratory and stay in Ontario throughout the winter by hibernating in areas such as caves and abandoned mines.

LCN staff and volunteers have been busy conducting preliminary surveys at potential sites throughout Niagara to determine their candidacy as possible hibernation or summer roosting locations for Ontario's species-at-risk bats! We currently have 7 sites that have shown high potential as hibernation spots and acoustic monitoring will be carried out at these locations to monitor bat activity throughout the summer and fall to determine if these sites are being used by hibernating bats!

If you think you have bats hibernating on your property over the winter, or know of a cave that may serve as suitable hibernacula for bats in Niagara, please let us know! Your observations may help us identify valuable Species-at-risk bat habitat and ensure that these areas are better managed and protected.



Shyanne Matone & Megan Punter surveying along the Niagara Escarpment



Michelle Martin, our lead biologist surveying some interesting rock features!



Elyse Panici assisting us survey local Conservation Areas



# Project Updates: Species-at-Risk

## Gray ratsnake Nesting Structures

Over the last few months, we have been busy tree-planting to increase interior forest habitat for the Carolinian population of the endangered Gray ratsnake and Ontario's Species-at-Risk Bats, as well as building and installing four Gray ratsnake nesting structures on suitable properties across Niagara!

The nesting boxes are covered with mesh wire to protect snake eggs against predators and are only big enough for snakes to move in and out off. The boxes are filled with a mixture of mulch, straw, and leaves to mimic natural nesting conditions, and designed to hold a temperature of around 30 degrees which is necessary for successful incubation. We have had 4 awesome landowners across Niagara work with us to install and monitor them for snake presence.

Together, our efforts will help us better understand the habitat preferences and geographical distribution of this species in Niagara, and hopefully provide a safe place for them to lay their eggs year after year!



Emily Simmons installing a Gray ratsnake Nesting Structure

## Volunteer Appreciation - Charlie Dunham!



We would like to take this opportunity to thank one of our dedicated volunteers, Charlie Dunham who has volunteered much of his time to help us build these nesting structures. His attention to detail, woodworking expertise, and passion for conservation has been an asset to us, and his efforts will provide valuable habitat for the Gray ratsnake across Niagara for years to come. Thank you Charlie for all your hard work & dedication, we greatly appreciate it and look forward to continuing working with you on our projects!



# Project Updates: Species-at-Risk

## Acoustic Monitoring

We took members of the Port Robinson community out to listen for bats using heterodynes. Bats echolocate at frequencies that the human ear cannot hear. Heterodynes are specialized bat acoustic equipment that collects and relays bat calls at frequencies that we can actually hear! The sounds we heard were “popping” noises similar to popping bubble wrap.

We heard and saw lots of bats foraging in the area, and our volunteers had a blast hearing and seeing these animals that normally fly around the night sky unnoticed. Check out our Facebook and Instagram channels to listen to our video recording!

If you would like to join us for nighttime acoustic monitoring work or know of an area with high levels of bat activity please contact us at [technician@landcareniagara.com](mailto:technician@landcareniagara.com)

## Bat Ambassadors of the Month

Meet Lynne and Karl Hodgterp, our Bat Ambassadors of the month! Lynne and Karl built and installed their very own bat boxes made from recycled materials to provide valuable habitat for a colony of Big brown bats living on their property. They even put in some decorative decals to spice them up! If you're looking for a fun woodworking project this summer, there are lots of bat house plans available, contact us for the best ones to use for bats in Ontario!



Bat spotted during a night bat listening session



April Fortier-Bosco & Charlie Dunham practice using heterodynes



Lynne & Karl Hodgterp and their homemade bat boxes



# Announcements - Events - Updates

## LCN Swag Now Available!

We are excited to announce the launch of our Land Care Niagara Shop!

Visit [landcareniagara.bigcartel.com](http://landcareniagara.bigcartel.com) to purchase our new 2021 T-Shirts, now in stock. T-shirts will be used as a fundraising initiative, with all funds being used to support the continued delivery of our programs.



## RESTORE NIAGARA NATURALLY

Extremely soft, comfortable tees. Your purchase will help restore Niagara's environment



COLOUR & FIT



DESIGN



Canadian Made, sustainable bamboo /organic cotton shirts.



Support local business: T-shirts designed and created by Presstime Design in Niagara.



Slim fit and true to size. Pre shrunk.

**\$35**

Proceeds will support our important work (see our website for more info)



## Urban Tree Program

Our Re-Leaf nursery is full of native trees ready to be planted on your urban property! There are 25 different species to choose from, depending on your land type, wants and needs. Prices start at \$30.00 a tree, depending on size. All profits go back into running the nursery. Help us increase urban canopy of Niagara! Please contact us for further details.