

February 2012
Volume 18
Issue 1

Coming Events.

May 25-28 , May
31- June 3 –
Huron Fringe
Birding Festival

Annual General
Meeting- June 23-
3:00PM Visitor's
Centre

July 14 – North
American
Butterfly
Association
Count

July 21- National
& Provincial
Parks Day

July 21, August 7
& Aug. 25 –
MacGregor's
Mystery
Evening

September 15 &
16- Wild for the
Arts
October 20 –
Witches in the
Woods



Chris Tomsett says Good-bye- speech by Doug Martin for Chris's retirement Gala

"The Friends of MacGregor Point Park"....

The 'Friends of' is a name that is used commonly by many groups in our community : The Friends of the Museum, The Friends of the Library, the friends of a local community park, Because of this overuse, it tends to lose its impact and meaning.

There is another term for this type of group that is not used as much... It is "Cooperating Association". This is a better description of the relationship we had with Chris, Norah and the Park. It is because of 'cooperation' that the Friends have been a success.



Every year, we would be presented with a 'wish list' of projects that the Friends could get involved with. We had to cooperate and work together to achieve these goals. It wasn't one group leading the other. Chris would let us proceed, and as long as we were on course, he would let us do our job without a lot of direction.

Together, we have achieved a lot:

The project I am very proud of happened within a few short years of the formation of the Friends of MacGregor Point Park. That was the Observation Tower at the Ducks Unlimited Wetland. (the D.U. Pond is another fine example of what can be achieved between the Park and an outside group) The Observation Tower proved that if you have a goal, there is very little that cannot be accomplished.

This was followed up with other projects:

- Board walk construction;
- Trail Signage;
- Deer Run Bike Trail;
- and more recently, The Rotary Trail Link to the Saugeen Shores Rail Trail; and the currently under construction, Bird Blind
- Sub Committees of the friends have successfully run the Huron Fringe Birding Festival in the Spring, and the Wild for the Arts program in the Fall.
- There were many other less obvious projects as well including the purchase of computers and printers to sonic bat detectors.
- Each year, we were able to obtain grants and were able to hire a half dozen or so students. This not only helped the park and its visitors; it got many students off to a good start in their careers.
- The only project that has eluded us is the reconstruction/expansion of the Visitor Centre, but , that will come!

All of these projects required the 'cooperation' of many groups and volunteers for funding, construction and implementation.

I remember walking through the tangle of undergrowth with Chris, flagging the final alignment of the Rotary Trail, making pancakes at the maintenance shed at one of the first Friends events and even before the formation of the Friends, going back to the mid 1980's, I organized the construction of the Osprey Tower in Merganser Cove. Chris not only gave his approval, he was there to meet us as we carried our ladder and building materials across the ice to the abandoned hydro pole. No Osprey have ever used the tower, but we tried, and that is what is important.

None of this could have happened without the cooperation of Chris and his staff. He would attend our meetings but was much more inclined to give words of encouragement rather than direction. That is where the 'cooperating association' occurred.

Chris.... It has been a pleasure working with you and I wish you all the best in retirement.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A belated Happy New Year. With the delayed winter a lot of our cross country ski friends are missing one of their favourite pastimes. I understand that the winter of '47' was very similar to this one before the 'big snow' came in March and shut Bruce County down for weeks, so there may still be a chance of skiing before spring. On the other hand the fine weather has been good for walkers and we have experienced more sunny days than usual for this time of year.

Keith Early, our new Park Superintendent, is settling in nicely and has been helping us to review possible projects for the Friends to undertake in the coming year. The first priority will be to provide interpretive signage and donor recognition at the now complete Bird Blind at the Ducks Unlimited pond. The blind, which is designed to be accessible to all, is outstanding and has been receiving great reviews from visitors.

We now hope that the process of replacing our Natural Heritage Education Specialist, Norah Toth, who also retired last year, can get underway. Norah was a key member of the Park staff team and provided tremendous support for the Friends and our activities in her park role. Norah continues to be a great supporter on a volunteer basis.

Matt Cunliffe, Senior Park Naturalist, has now returned from a 10 week hiatus and is continuing to try to support the Friends as well as providing park programming. On the Family Day weekend he led an "Owl Prowl" on Saturday night and a nature hike on Sunday afternoon. With upwards of 30 winter trailer campers and a regular clientele of transient campers and Yurt users, programming is very valuable to have throughout this season. I understand that the Yurts are generally fully booked on the weekends and are often in use during the weekdays as well. So far this season the Yurts have hosted both school and Scouting groups who really enjoy the opportunity they provide for comfortable winter camping activities.

The skating oval has been in service again this year although this has been limited by the weather which has made it difficult to keep a suitable ice surface. A major addition this year has been a heated change cabin which was built using the Santa Claus parade float cabin as a base. The work was largely paid for by a generous contribution from a park cottager.

Michael and Andrea Lablance, who manage the Huron Fringe Gift Shop at the Visitor's Centre, have recently attended the Gift Show in Toronto and brought back a variety of new and interesting items.

Other significant achievements over the last few months include the completely renovated FOM website which really looks great and provides a lot of useful information. Included in this is a new Paypal capability to allow on-line registration for Friends programs and activities. High among these is the "Huron Fringe Birding Festival" which once again has an outstanding program of activities and is now open for registration on the website. Planning is also going forward for another "Wild for the Arts" festival in the fall.

Please enjoy the rest of the season.

Peter Harrison



MacGregor Point Park's Float for Santa Claus Parade



becomes

Warming shelter for the Skating Oval, snow-shoers and cross country skiiers.



Huron Fringe Birding Festival 2012

Planning is completed for the 2012 Huron Fringe Birding Festival, our 15th consecutive event, which takes place over two four day weekends (Friday May 25 to Monday May 28 and Thursday May 31 to Sunday June 3, 2012) at MacGregor Point Provincial Park.

Pre-registration is well underway.

This year the Friends of MacGregor Point Park have invested in an on-line registration program allowing participants to register at their computers. Paypal is also in the works so participants will be able to register and make their payments all on-line, along with memberships and donations to the Friends.

There are about 80 hikes and events including three bus tours, geology, wildflower, photography events and of course birding events led by experts from near and far.

Last year's off-site banquet on Saturday evening will be repeated as it was a great success in 2011. It takes place on Saturday May 26, 2012, in the hall at Piper's Glen Golf Club just east of Port Elgin, same location as last year.

There will be a chicken buffet dinner supplied by Harrigan's catering, followed by a presentation by Elizabeth MacDougall-Shackleton on birdsongs. The cost is \$35.00, which includes the banquet and presentation (\$45.00 after April 15).

The planned bird blind is now completed and ready for visitors. Signs will be going in during the spring. The blind is located directly opposite the tower on the DU pond, Tower Trail.

Festival passes, weekend passes and single event tickets are available. Pre-registration is preferred and forms are available on the Friends of MacGregor Point

Provincial Park website www.friendsofmacgregor.org.

For more information send e-mail to birdfest@rogers.com or fompp@bmts.com. Or call the park at 519-389-6231 or 519-389-6232. Write to HFBF, Box 290, 525 Highland Road West, Kitchener, ON, N2M 5P4

The Huron Fringe Birding Festival is organized by a committee of the Friends of MacGregor Point Park., co-chaired by Norah Toth and Jim Duncan and committee members as follows:

Bette Jean Martin, Fred Jazvac, Anne Cathrae, Doug Pedwell, Judy Duncan, Carole Lupton, Arlene Richards, Norma Nanni, Margaret Anderton, Mike Pickup and Stewart Nutt.

We look forward to seeing you at the 2012 Festival.

Jim Duncan, co-chair,
HFBF 02/07/12



Completed Bird Blind

Bird Blind

A few years ago Mike Pickup had a "vision" of a special place in the D.U. pond where we could build a structure that hid us from the birds but allowed us to view the same birds in their natural setting. That vision is now reality as the Friends, with a great deal of labour and

engineering from the Park staff and strong financial support from the Birding Festival and the community have completed the Bird Blind Project.

Come springtime you will be able to view songbirds and water fowl out through the viewing slits onto the Duck Pond from the hidden comfort of the blind located off the same sideroad as the tower but on the eastern side of the pond. The blind can be accessed by a short trail and lead-up ramp from the Tower Trail on the southern edge of the Park. After the snow is gone new signage will be set in place to assist you with directions, pertinent information and thank you to our generous donors.

MacGregor Point Park is a jewel of a wilderness park within easy driving distance of a heavily populated southern Ontario. It is the purpose of the Friends of MacGregor Point Park to assist the park with endeavours that fall outside normal park operations.

Thanks go to the Friends Board of Directors for again demonstrating a leadership role in developing a project that not only benefits Friends members but enable every Park visitor another unique opportunity to enjoy and experience nature in its natural surroundings.

Dave Cheer
Project Manager

Stay tuned on the website for
Deadline for next
Spotted Turtle
new, wonderful merchandise at
April 22, 2012
**HURON FRINGE SHOP, when
the Visitor Centre reopens,
May 7 2012**



Lets hope for more winter, so we can make this "Closed" sign disappear and we can make more use of our beautiful, well marked trails on snowshoes and skis.



Bewarebe very aware of the return of the skunk spraying Naturalists

WELCOME TO KEITH EARLY-

Keith Early is our new MacGregor Point cluster Park Superintendent. Keith moves to MacGregor Point from his **last** position as Park Superintendent at Earl Rowe Provincial Park. Keith has **over 30 years** experience in the resource management and park operations field including experience with the Durham Board of Education, the Port Burwell cluster as well as some time in Peterborough as the A/Provincial Park Management Supervisor. **He is looking forward to working with the Friends of MacGregor; having heard many great stories from Chris Tomsett over the years regarding the Friends and everything they have accomplished. Keith looks forward to working on many more projects over the next few year.**



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Please complete your membership renewal and mail to :
The Friends of MacGregor Point Park, R. 1, Port Elgin, ON N0H 2C5 . The Friends membership year extends from July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2013

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
Postal Code: _____
Phone Number: _____ E-mail: _____

****please give us your e-mail, as this will reduce mailing costs for the newsletter****

Would you like to be contacted to volunteer at any of the builds or fund-raising functions(i.e. BBQ's) _____ ?

Payment by: Cheque _____ Visa _____
Mastercard _____
Card Number: _____
Expiry: _____
Signature: _____

Membership Category:

Individual - \$20

Family - \$30

Donation in addition to membership

Total

_____ Official Tax receipts will be issued for all donations.