

Green Matters

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Happy Birthday!

Amid the many downright depressing stories among those on environmental topics, it feels good to talk about a positive one. This one is happening right here in our own back yard. The Land Conservancy for Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington turns 10 this month.

Land trusts have been around for a long time; Wikipedia claim that they go back as far as Roman times. In Ontario, however, land trusts are a relatively recent phenomenon, the movement taking off in earnest in the early 1990s. Our area finally got local representation with the formation of the Land Conservancy in 2004. I am an enthusiastic member, volunteer, and sit on their board, and I have written about them before. I wish that every Kingstonian who cares about nature would support the Land Conservancy by becoming a member.

The Land Conservancy celebrates its tenth birthday in June. At their Annual General Meeting in April, inaugural President Vicki Schmolka was re-elected for another two-year term. In her address to the Land Conservancy members in attendance, she spoke about the strong core of committed people who make the Land Conservancy work, through continuing membership support or, for those with the time and ability, volunteering to undertake such tasks as trail maintenance, monitoring, participation on boards and committees, visiting natural lands for potential acquisition, etc. She also spoke about the protection of species at risk.

On their tenth birthday, the Land Conservancy

is protecting 10 species at risk – this term including “endangered”, “threatened”, and species of “special concern” (each reflecting different levels of rarity in Ontario). While it is sad that we have so many listed species, it is good to know that efforts are being made to protect the habitat that these species must have to survive. It is also good to be reminded that species are occasionally “down listed” or removed from the listings as they recover. This is the case with another species on Land Conservancy property: the Red-shouldered Hawk, no longer considered at risk.

What are some of these species we protect? One of them is Ontario’s only lizard, the Five-lined Skink. Did you even know we *had* a lizard in Ontario? We do, and the Land Conservancy is protecting habitat for it at our newest property, Depot Creek Nature Reserve. That bright blue tail tells us that this is a juvenile or young adult. Breeding males have a bright orange-red chin and cheeks.



With the recent purchase of Depot Creek Nature Reserve, the Land Conservancy has acquired a property where people can come to appreciate nature, perhaps to catch a glimpse of a skink, while treating the property with respect and care (by leaving their dogs at home, for example. No dogs are permitted!)

One of the things I like best about the Land Conservancy is that it does not provide much information about most of its properties for a very good reason: the lands are for nature. What a concept. While national and provincial parks and conservation areas protect wonderful natural lands, they are mandated to open these areas to members of the public, who sometimes love them too much. Many parks struggle to accommodate visitors while trying to maintain protection of the very things that make the area so special. Although protection is often best achieved by keeping people away, the Land Conservancy is also eager to encourage nature appreciation and foster attitudes of sustainability. As Baba Dioum said, “In the end we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we are taught.”