

GRCA Current



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www.grandriver.ca

Belwood Lake OspreyCam now live for second year

The Belwood Lake OspreyCam is operating between April and September at a nest near the entrance to Belwood Lake Park near Fergus. It captivated viewers in 2015.

Adult birds were back at this nest in early April, but not the same ones which occupied the nest in 2015. Neither of the parents were banded last year. The female now at the nest was banded at Luther Marsh on Canada Day in 2010.

The camera operates 24/7, although the broadcast signal may be disrupted from time to time due to technical difficulties. The camera setup allows people to review nest activities over the previous four hours. While this is fascinating to watch for many people, it may be difficult at times because osprey families face many dangers.

Visit www.grandriver.ca/osprey to find the link to the webcam.

Ice storm closures

Throughout April, forestry staff were busy cleaning up trees that were damaged during the ice storm that took place at the end of March.

They worked hard to have all the Grand River Parks open as scheduled on April 30. A few trails within the parks remained closed for safety reasons. Signage was posted in these areas and staff continued to assess damage and remove trees and branches.

Only two Grand River Parks — Byng Island and Brant Park — were unaffected by this ice storm. Several areas and portions of the Elora Cataract Trailway remained closed until early May.

Conference for high school teachers

About 100 high school teachers from across the province attended a two-day conference highlighting how the Great Lakes can be linked into the Specialist High Skills Major program.

The conference included a tour of the Grand River watershed to learn about the environmental significance of the Grand River and the Great Lakes.

The keynote speaker of the Brantford conference was Lieutenant Governor of Ontario Elizabeth Dowdeswell. The Minister of Education, Liz Sandals, also addressed the audience.

This conference was planned in partnership with the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, the Ministry of Education, the GRCA, Grand Erie District School Board and the Wellington Catholic District School Board. It was funded by the ministry.

GRCA photo contest runs until October

The GRCA has launched a 2016 photo contest, which will continue until Oct. 28.

More than \$2,200 in prizes will be awarded. This includes a random monthly draw to give away a Grand River Parks membership that covers a year of visits to all parks. There will also be an overall grand prize of \$500 and first and second place winners in each of three categories. The three categories are recreation, nature and panoramic photos.

The photos submitted will be used by the GRCA in publications and online. This is the third time the GRCA has held a photo contest of this type.

More information, including contest rules and information on how to submit photos can be found on the GRCA website at www.grandriver.ca/photocontest.

Turning \$15 million into \$45 million

The GRCA's Rural Water Quality Program has become a model throughout the province.

So far, 5,500 projects have been completed thanks to \$16 million in grants that go to landowners. However, since the program started in 1988, a total of \$45 million has been invested

Grand River Conservation Authority

when the contributions of property owners are considered.

The grant money comes from municipalities within the Grand River watershed which contribute about \$800,000 a year to this program. These funds have resulted in the creation of 388 manure storage facilities, 414 nutrient management plans, fencing off more than 145 km of streams and wetlands from livestock and planting 250 kilometres of windbreaks.

The program has also seen thousands of trees planted along streams to reduce erosion and provide shade for fish habitat.

Most importantly, the GRCA has developed strong working relationships with a network of landowners across the watershed. Once a project is completed, landowners often undertake more projects.



Photo by Lisa Stocco

Markers are placed by all GRCA-owned dams in order to warn recreational river users of the dam ahead. This is done each spring and they are removed in the fall before freeze up.

Caledonia, Wilkes Dam (Brantford), New Hamburg, Parkhill (Cambridge), Bissell and Drimmie (Elora), Conestogo, Woolwich, Wellington Street (Guelph), Shand (Belwood), Breslau, New Dundee and Baden.

The area around dams is much more dangerous than it appears. Water surges through gates or over the dam, creating strong undertows and backwash below the dam, where you can be pinned below the water. The buoys and booms are installed each spring and removed in the fall before winter freeze-up.

system provided access to flow and other information that is vitally important during storms.

Not only is this information available to key GRCA decision makers, but it is also available to the public online at www.grandriver.ca/riverdata.

This issue of *GRCA Current* was published in May 2016.

It is a summary of the April 2016 business conducted by the Grand River Conservation Authority board and committees, as well as other noteworthy happenings and topics of interest.

The Grand River Conservation Authority welcomes distribution, photocopying and forwarding of *GRCA Current*.

Next board meeting:

May 27 at 9:30 a.m.,
GRCA Administration Centre.

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April showers

Precipitation in April was close to the long-term average through most of the watershed.

About twice as much fell as rain, compared to snowfall, but there was also freezing rain and a mix of everything at times during the month.

Large temperature swings resulted in mostly winter-like temperatures during the first part of the month. By the middle of the month it warmed up and reached 20 C at times.

However, the average monthly temperature was 2.3 C, which is about 3.1 C below average. This was the first month since last June that was colder than average.

Lake Erie continued to be well above average. The groundwater level near Burford stabilized after the steady decline of last year.

Booms installed at dams

The GRCA installed warning booms or white buoys upstream of GRCA dams to warn paddlers, anglers and boaters to stay away from the dams.

This is one of many safety procedures developed by the GRCA to reduce the risk for people who enjoy water activities on rivers. The hazards around dams can cause serious trouble and sometimes death if warning signs are ignored. The booms and buoys were to be put in place May 2 to 11 at dams including Dunnville dam and weirs,

Communicating during major storms

The ice storm at the end of March resulted in downed powerlines and disrupted phone service at the Marsville and Nithsburg river gauges.

This would normally prevent flood managers from receiving critical information that helps them to operate the dams to minimize flooding.

Fortunately the two gauges that were impacted were among those operated by Water Survey of Canada which has been working to install satellite communication at some of their gauges within the Grand River system. Even though the power and phone lines were not working, the river data from these gauges continued to work. The satellite