



Grand River
Conservation
Authority



The Grand:
A Canadian
Heritage River

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The Main St. bridge over the Grand River in Cambridge stayed warm and cozy in September. Thanks to many contributors, Sue Sturdy, artist-in-residence at the Cambridge Centre of the Arts, covered the bridge in colourful knitting.

Photo by Amber Morais

Holmes receives award

By Janet Baine
GRCA Communications Specialist

Allan Holmes led the Grand River Conservation Authority through its darkest times when he was Chief Administrative Officer between 1991 and 2000, but his passion, commitment and integrity helped overcome funding cuts and put the GRCA on a solid footing.

Holmes, a resident of Guelph, picked up his 2010 Grand River Conservation Honour Roll Award at the GRCA awards ceremony in Cambridge Sept. 16. This is a special award that is not given out by the GRCA every year.

Holmes grew up on a farm near the headwaters of the Grand River. He was Wellington County's Chief Engineer for 26 years, where he worked closely with the GRCA on many projects. His fascination with engineering stemmed

partly from visiting Luther and Shand dams as a boy. One of his major engineering feats was construction of a bridge on County Road 7 across the



Allan Holmes

Grand River in Elora, a complex and controversial project that some said could not be done.

In 1985 he received a Grand River Watershed Award for the tree planting program he oversaw as county engineer. His interest in heritage buildings inspired

him to play a significant role in saving Guelph's historic court house and jail, then turned it into a spectacular administration centre for the county.

The 1990s were difficult times and Holmes knew many challenges were ahead when he accepted this position at the GRCA. In 1991 he



Allan Holmes was the CAO of the GRCA during the 1990s and helped set the organization on course during challenging times of cutbacks.

conducted an organizational review so when the province cut funding from \$4 million to under \$1 million the blow was lessened.

“I wanted to maintain the integrity of the organization and stabilize the GRCA to ensure it generated income of its own,” he said. In the years since, up to half of the GRCA’s annual budget has come from self-generated income. The rest is from municipal levies and grants.

Holmes worked closely with board chair, the late Archie MacRobbie, to restructure the GRCA board. This change ensured that the board worked effectively to keep all members included, informed and involved. It was no small task, as the Grand River watershed includes 32 local municipalities and seven upper tier regions and counties. He also developed a solid working relationship with the First Nations within the watershed.

Many successes

Despite the challenges, there were many great successes for the GRCA during those difficult years, including the designation of the Grand River and its major tributaries as a Canadian Heritage River in 1994.

“Allan really put his heart and soul

into getting the Canadian Heritage River designation. This was a tremendous achievement for the GRCA,” said Barbara Veale, coordinator of policy planning and partnerships, who worked on this project. This designation helped bring recognition, partnerships, tourists and funding for many improvements. Most importantly, it turned the attention of residents back to their local waterways, where they found recreational opportunities close to home. Holmes also had a hand in securing land for the 75 kilometres of rail-trails.

A month before he retired in 2000, the GRCA received the prestigious International Thies Riverprize from the International Riverfoundation in Australia. This award is for excellence in watershed management. It came with \$100,000 AUD prize and has resulted in lasting international connections for the GRCA.

After retiring, Holmes was on the Grand River Conservation Foundation board until 2008, and continues to be a great contributor as a Grand Champion. Contributions of more than \$25,000 were made in his honour when he retired and this was just the beginning, as he has actively worked with the foundation on many projects.

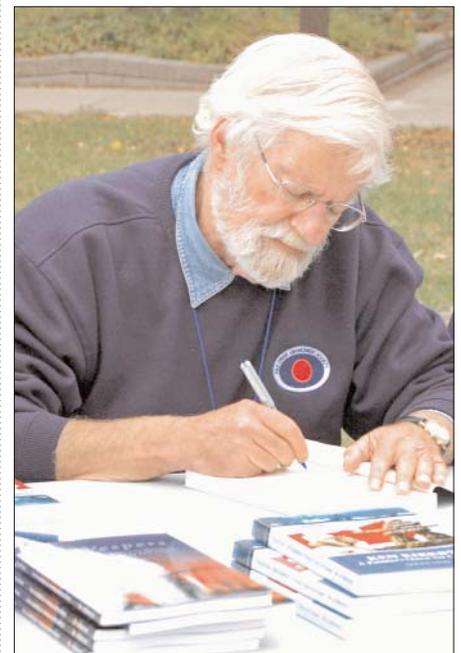
“He is a compassionate, caring man,” said Paul Emerson, who succeeded Holmes as CAO of the GRCA and recently became CAO of Brant County. “On a personal note, he was also a mentor and friend to many people throughout this career. He was certainly one of the most important people in my life and career.”

To see a video slideshow about Holmes, check the GRCA’s channel on www.youtube/grandriverca.

Five other awards

Five 2010 Grand River Conservation Awards were also given out Sept. 16. They went to Clare Rennie for his work on the Guelph Rotary Forest, Chuck Beach for environmental work including the Brantford Earth Week committee, Paul and Steve Cressman for tree planting and stewardship of their two farms near New Hamburg, Ducks Unlimited Canada for wetland creation and enhancement throughout the watershed and Wellington Green Legacy which has planted a million trees since starting in 2004.

Stories on other award recipients will be featured in *Grand Actions* over the coming months.



Ken Kirkby, an environmental activist and artist, signs copies of a biography as a fundraiser for river enhancements.

Thinking beyond the Grand challenges

By Janet Baine
GRCA Communications Specialist

Two provincial ministers, the Environmental Commissioner for Ontario, entrepreneurs and a B.C. artist were among those who spoke at the 10th annual Water Forum on Sept. 17.

About 300 Grand River enthusiasts flowed into the grand marquee tent at the GRCA headquarters for this day-long forum. Accolades regarding local water management, partnerships and innovations were abundant. But so was the recognition that we face a serious challenge because this watershed is designated to grow 30 per cent over the next 20 years even though there are limited water resources.

Looking back over the past 10 years, Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller said Water Forum immediately caught on because it spoke to the tremendous need and interest. He said it is relevant, inclusive and faces the challenges head on, resulting in solutions.

Ontario Minister of Environment John Wilkinson said there are two line ups of people at Queen's Park — a long line up for people with problems and a very short line up for those with solutions. The GRCA is always in the short line up.

Minister of Research and Innovation Glen Murray followed up by commending innovators in the Kitchener, Waterloo and Guelph area, saying that there is a history of research and innovation here. Local water companies and researchers could become as successful in the environmental sector as Research in Motion is in technology, he said.

The first panel discussion of the day carried the discussion along the same line of thought.

There is not much venture capital available right now, said Tim Jackson, CEO of the Accelerator Centre in Waterloo. But one venture fund that is growing is focused on technologies

related to water, so this is an area of opportunity for companies and researchers in this watershed.

"Twenty or 30 years from now people globally will look at this community and say they dealt with an issue, they have created a centre of excellence here around innovation to water issues," Jackson said. "We can become not just an Ontario or a Canadian leader, but a global leader."

A successful wastewater optimization program in Guelph is reducing wastewater spills and becoming more efficient, said Cameron Walsh, manager of wastewater services for the City of Guelph. It is now being rolled out across the watershed thanks to a pilot project and training sessions are being held at the GRCA this fall.

"The better we manage the Grand, it is actually something we can export globally to folks who struggle with their river systems," Walsh said.

Manufacturer Owens Corning works closely with the City of Guelph water department to improve water efficiency by 60 per cent. "In a boiler application,



Ralph Beaumont and Larry Mellors talk after Water Forum. This event brings together people who care about the river.



for every \$1 of water we save, we save \$3 in energy and about \$10 in water treatment chemicals. Anytime you have water, you are pumping it around and pumping means electricity," Rob Nixon, maintenance and engineering leader at Owens Corning, so water savings is only one financial benefit.

"The Grand could be the most energy efficient and water efficient watershed within 20 years," said David Rudolph, scientific Director of the Water Institute at the University of Waterloo.

"And the only way we are going to accept all the new industry and growth is to achieve that goal. If we do, we will be the target worldwide for people to come and see how we do it. Technology has a lot to do with it, communications and education is really ramping up. Our next generation is coming with the right mind set," he added.

The afternoon panel was made up of Mark Reusser representing the Ontario Federation of Agriculture; Larry Mellors a member of the successful Grand River Fisheries Management Committee which received a national award from the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans last year; Blain Albin, from the family-owned Grand River Dinner Cruises; and Crawford Reid, chair of the Grand River Conservation Foundation.

At the end of the day even when the challenges are significant "this forum has not become discouraged, has not been defeated, this forum looks to a future that will be better and it looks to communities that can and are working together to make that future better," said Miller.

To see a short video of sound bites from Water Forum speakers, visit youtube.ca/grandriverca.



A habitat tour as well attended by council members, their spouses, Oxford area landowners, county representatives and DUC.

Improving natural heritage in Oxford County

By Joanne Barbazza
Ducks Unlimited

Stewardship Oxford is a group of dedicated volunteers that is working to improve the natural heritage of their community through a variety of stewardship initiatives. Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) has been working with the like-minded organization to implement wetland conservation projects over the last five years.

In 2005, DUC, Elgin Stewardship Council, Middlesex Stewardship Council and Stewardship Oxford entered into a three year joint funding initiative; Habitats to Healthy Waters, in which they completed small wetland conservation projects with landowners. This successful model continued after the program's end and paved the way for the Ontario Wetland Care Program. Funded in part by the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), this two year program, lead by DUC's outreach team, helped build capacity for wetland conservation by empowering landowners and conservation partners with the resources to implement their own projects with some funding assistance and technical guidance from DUC.

In 2009, DUC and Stewardship Oxford restored 2.6 ha (6.5 acres) of

wetland habitat and enhanced an additional 39.7 ha (98 acres) of existing wetland and upland habitat through the completion of five conservation projects with private landowners. Four Projects were completed in the Grand River watershed in the past two years and four more are planned by spring 2011. These two organizations will work together to deliver wetland conservation projects that contribute to a healthy Grand and a healthier Oxford County.

"Partnerships like DUC and Stewardship Oxford's allow our stewardship council to bring a higher quality service to the people of Oxford County. We can network to find many sites for wetland restoration and DUC can provide the expertise to make sure the projects are done right," Roger Boyd, Stewardship Oxford said.

"It has been very rewarding to work with everyone involved with Stewardship Oxford and see their interest level and capabilities grow as we work together to implement the Ontario Wetland Care Program" said Jeff Krete, DUC Conservation Specialist. "Oxford County is rich in its natural heritage infrastructure and there are many opportunities to restore and improve wetlands with interested landowners in Oxford

watersheds."

On-going partnerships are vital to helping DUC conserve, manage and restore wetlands. DUC welcomes the opportunity to build relationships with other like-minded organizations and individuals. For more information contact Ducks Unlimited Canada at 1-888-402-4444.



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

GRCA is stepping up enforcement

The GRCA is stepping up efforts to enforce the GRCA regulation that was made under the Conservation Authorities Act.

Regulated lands include areas in and near rivers, streams, floodplains, wetlands, valley lands, slopes and the Lake Erie shoreline. This is about 31 per cent of the land within the Grand River watershed. Any regulated activities including building or changing a structure and adding or removing fill in these areas, require a permit issued by the GRCA.

A professional resource planner is assigned each time a permit application

is made. GRCA staff inspections may take place before, during or after the work is complete. This ensures that the requirements of the permit have been carried out.

An example of a regulated activity would be putting fill in or near a wetland. The fill has the potential to decrease the ability of the wetland to filter and clean water. Another example is building a house in a floodplain. The proposed building site may be some distance from a watercourse, but floods may cause water to rise resulting in damage and an unsafe building.

Like all conservation authorities in the province, the GRCA is responsible to enforce its regulation. The GRCA regulation was updated by the province in 2006, and permits issued by the GRCA have more than doubled since then. In 2005, 247 permits were issued compared to 628 permits in 2009. Numbers are expected to be more than 600 again this year.

There has been a corresponding increase in compliance problems in recent years. Two enforcement staff have been hired and funds have been set aside to help cover the legal and consulting expenses that result from legal proceedings.

In cases where works are carried out without proper authorization from the GRCA, a regulations officer or resource planner will notify the property owner of the violation. Minor infractions may be resolved with the landowner, through discussions, removal or restoration. Occasionally violation cases go to court.

“Environmental regulation is an important part of protecting people, land and water. When people don’t comply with the regulation, we take action,” said Nancy Davy, manager of resource planning. The GRCA has a strong mandate from the board, which has dedicated money and expertise to enforcement and legal issues.

In the first half of 2010, the total number of complaint calls regarding potential violations was 73 and there are 19 ongoing investigations. Eleven inves-

tigations have already been resolved through negotiations through removal or restoration work, compared to only six last year.

Three cases have been resolved through other procedures such as civil legal agreements, compared to none last year. There are currently three court cases in which charges were laid.

Cormorants not overwhelming herons

Perhaps the shallow waters of the lake at Luther Marsh Wildlife Management Area is safeguarding it from being overwhelmed by double-crested cormorants.

In 2006 the GRCA considered culling cormorants in this location as had been done at other places in the Great Lakes region. Cormorants are a native species that seemed to be moving into the heronry at Luther Marsh. In large numbers they can be problematic. Both herons and cormorants raise their young in large nesting colonies. The concern was that the cormorants could be putting Luther’s heronry at risk. Cormorants are greenish-black, medium-size birds that swim under water and eat small fish. Herons are larger grey birds with long legs that wade into the water to do their fishing.

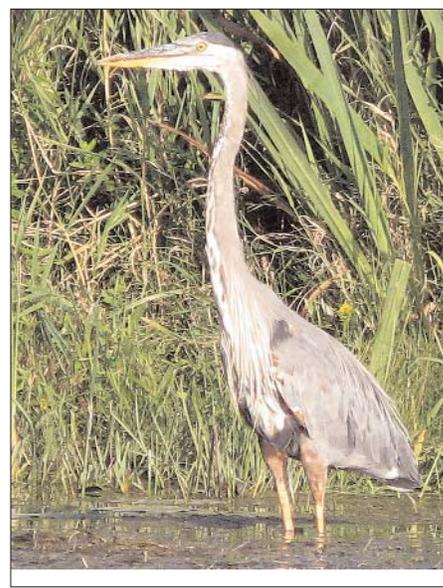


Double Crested Cormorant

At the time that a cormorant cull was proposed at Luther, culls had taken place in other Great Lakes locations because their large numbers meant some natural areas were being destroyed. At Luther the cull was put on hold by the GRCA board, which opted to wait awhile to see what would happen, while gathering information and installing new nesting platforms for herons.

“In 2006, the cormorant population was exploding and we expected this to continue, but it didn’t happen,” said Martin Neumann, supervisor of terrestrial resources for the GRCA. He suspects the habitat at Luther may not be suitable for cormorants, because Luther Lake is very shallow. The heron nesting platforms are in trees that have been standing since the reservoir was constructed in 1952, and some of the trees are falling over. Some of the platforms have been bolstered, but many of the herons have now moved to other locations and newer nesting platforms.

Cormorants can be seen at some GRCA reservoirs, such as Belwood Lake and Guelph Lake, where the water is deeper. The cormorants no longer appear to be a threat to the herons, which continue to be seen regularly at Luther and throughout the watershed.



Blue heron

Miller's ECO report touches on many issues

By Janet Baine
GRCA Communications Specialist

Each fall Ontario's environmental commissioner, Gord Miller, looks deeply into environmental issues and outlines his findings in an annual report.

He reviews how well the province is complying with the Environmental Bill of Rights, then make recommendations. The 2010 report, released in September, says Ontario's conservation authorities make an important contribution to natural resource conservation. He recommends redefining conservation at provincial, watershed and municipal levels to include the new, broader understanding of the natural world that has developed recently.

The new reality means a fundamental change in the way we live and function and a redefined conservation ethic that is deeply ingrained in our collective psyche, he said.

Topics in the report that are of interest to conservation authorities are tree planting and biodiversity, wetland drainage, integrated watershed management, storm water management, protection of the Waterloo, Paris, and Galt



Gord Miller is introduced to Julius, the boa constrictor, at Water Forum.

moraines and retrofitting dams to incorporate fish ladders.

Increase funding to authorities

In addition, Miller asks the province to increase funding for conservation authorities because of their key role in protecting the environment. Provincial funding has not changed in 10 years.

The report mentions a GRCA tree planting project near Pioneer Tower in south Kitchener. Around 15,000 native

trees — black walnut, silver and sugar maple, white and burr oak, cottonwood, white cedar and white pine — were planted on nine hectares of land.

“To say trees are important is an understatement,” he notes, adding that this is an example of the projects taking place across the province.

Miller calls Guelph's wastewater optimization program admirable and profiles it in his report.

Protect local moraines

Miller also reports on the Ministry of Environment review of the Waterloo, Paris and Galt moraines. He believes that current policies don't adequately “protect the ecological integrity and hydrogeology of the moraines.” He asks that the province take a broader, integrated approach to the protection of the moraines by amending the provincial policy statement to require that long-term ecological function and biodiversity of natural heritage systems are maintained.

Miller is pleased that the province is thinking of extending the period conservation authorities have to prosecute regulation violations from six months to two years. This amendment would enable conservation authorities to successfully prosecute more landowners who damage or destroy wetlands in southern Ontario. It can be difficult to collect evidence within six months of an offence, especially with respect to site conditions in wetlands during the winter, he notes.

He would like guidelines for stormwater management to be updated so that stormwater is addressed in a more holistic way.

In total, he makes 15 recommendations to the province. The full Annual Report and supplement are available on the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario's website at www.eco.on.ca. A report highlighting conservation authority concerns went to the board in October and is in the meetings section of www.grandriver.ca.



Fall is a great time of year to get out and enjoy a natural area near you—even your own backyard.

Photo by Kevin Tupman



Communications specialist Lara Vujanovic displays the gold medal and brochure that received a national award.

Birding brochure strikes gold award

The Trails Take Flight brochure struck gold again, this time winning a national award.

Trails Take Flight is a marketing initiative to promote the Grand River trails and bird viewing opportunities. Twenty trails in communities across the watershed were selected for their exceptional bird habitats, and marketed to the public in a unique brochure and interactive website.

The project won a provincial marketing award from the Economic Developers Council of Ontario (EDCO). In early October at a national conference in Quebec City, the project won a 2010 Marketing Canada Award from the Economic Developers Association of Canada (EDAC).

This award was granted in the single publication category, and was chosen from an award program that included 180 submissions in numerous categories, from across Canada. The brochure is now nominated for two other national awards.



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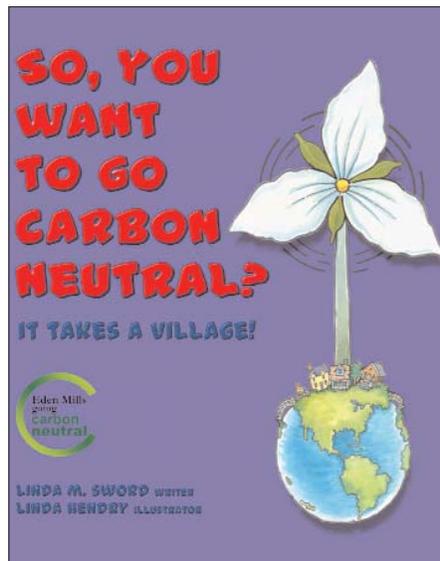
A new book about going carbon-neutral on a community level was launched during the 22nd annual Eden Mills Writers' Festival in September.

The handbook titled *So You Want to Go Carbon Neutral? It Takes a Village!* describes how the village of Eden Mills east of Guelph is proceeding towards the goal of carbon neutrality.

Written by Linda Sword, it is illustrated by Linda Hendry and designed by John Crompton, all active participants in the Eden Mills "going carbon neutral" project.

The book discusses such topics as community gatherings, installation of rooftop solar panels and geothermal heating, tree planting, green classrooms and even writing of a carbon-neutral anthem.

The handbook and accompanying DVD walk the reader through the steps the residents of Eden Mills took in developing its own grassroots, community-based, voluntary and comprehensive approach to reducing carbon dioxide emissions.



Carbon Neutral Anthem

From the first gathering of concerned neighbours to the installation of photovoltaic solar panels on a village household roof; from the rousing 'Carbon Neutral Anthem' to the wood pellet BBQ; from the workshops on 'geo-thermal' heating to the demonstration of a solar-dryer for vegetables; from the annual village tree-planting organized by the youth group to the first 'green' classrooms, the handbook is rich in ideas and clear about the process of building and maintaining dynamic participation.

This project began in 2007 and is a project of the Eden Mills Millpond Conservation Society Inc. This grassroots initiative has worked to reduce use of fossil fuels, replace fossil fuel consumption with sustainable energy sources and increase absorption and sequestration of carbon dioxide.

The group, which was a finalist in the Earth Day Canada Hometown Hero competition this year, hopes the new book will inspire similar projects elsewhere. The book can be read in a friendly, page-turning version online or downloaded as a pdf at www.goingcarbonneutral.ca under Education/Handbooks. Anyone wishing a print copy should send an e-mail via the website contacts.

Online water game for water efficiency

An educational game to encourage an understanding of water called Thrills & Spills takes you on an interactive journey to conserve and protect water is now posted. Play with up to three people age five and up. To play, visit: water.game.region.waterloo.on.ca.

The game received a Water Efficiency Award for Public Education and Awareness from the Ontario Water Works Association in May. This award is presented to organizations that have demonstrated a leadership role in promoting and educating the public on the importance of conserving drinking

water.

OWWA recognized Waterloo Region's school curriculum and "Thrills & Spills" board game as successful communications initiatives. These resources help teachers educate students about the importance of clean water in our environment and the need to protect and conserve it.

The region also promotes water conservation through programs like the Toilet Replacement Program, water efficient garden seminars, rain barrel distribution, Water Efficient Technology (W.E.T.) Program for businesses and the Water Conservation By-law.

About Grand Actions

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Current and back issues are available online at www.grandriver.ca.

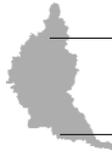
Do you want to submit to Grand Actions?

Deadlines for submissions are the 15th of February, April, June, August, October and December. Submissions may be edited for length or style. Photos and event information is also welcome. We do our best to publish items, but we are not able to guarantee publication.

Contact information:

Janet Baine, *Grand Actions* editor
Phone: 519-621-2763, Ext. 2302
E-mail: jbaine@grandriver.ca

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The Grand Strategy Calendar

How to Not Get Lost in the Woods, Sunday, Nov. 14, Laurel Creek Nature Centre, Waterloo 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Learn about Global Positioning Systems (GPS) and how these units can be applied to a hike in the wilds of Laurel Creek. Find your way around the natural habitats in this introductory presentation and outdoor challenge. We will provide the GPS units for the program and maybe even have a look at an ancient compass or two. GPS units are limited, so please call 519 885-1368 to reserve space. Program cost is \$5 per person.

The Best Dam Tour, Sunday, Nov. 14, Guelph Lake Nature Centre 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Join a tour of the Guelph Lake Dam and learn about flood control, the production of hydro electric power and how the dam helps to maintain water levels in the Grand River watershed. Cost is \$5 per person. Call 519-836-7860 to pre-register or for information.

James Raffan, Canadian canoeing guru, Thursday, Nov. 11, 7 p.m., Centennial CVI, Guelph. Raffan is author of several books and a recent article about canoeing the Grand River published in Canadian Geographic Travel Magazine. He grew up in Guelph on the banks of the Speed River.

A. D. Latornell Symposium, Nottawasaga Inn, Alliston, Ontario, Nov. 17 to 19. Focus is on biodiversity and keynote speakers include Richard Louv author of seven books including *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature-Deficit Disorder*. Concurrent sessions on many aspects of conservation. For more information, visit www.latornell.ca.

Awesome Snake Show, Sunday, Nov. 28, Guelph Lake Nature Centre 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Slithery, slippery and definitely NOT slimy! Come out and meet some very cool reptiles. There will be a slide show highlighting the snakes of Ontario, and a chance to meet some live snakes. Cost is \$5 per person. Call 519-836-7860 to pre-register or for information.

Animal Signs, Sunday, Dec. 12, Laurel Creek Nature Centre, Waterloo 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Tracks, scat, markings and calls are all evidence of the animals that live in our midst. We will do a presentation to learn to identify animal signs, followed by a hike to look for this evidence outdoors. Afterward, we will warm up with some hot chocolate. Please phone 519-885-1368 to pre-register. Program cost is \$5 per person.



Winter Trees, Dec. 12, Guelph Lake Nature Centre 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Learn how to identify trees by using the three B's: branches, bark and buds. We will also visit the chickadee tree and feed chickadees from our hands. Cost is \$5 per person. Call 519-836-7860 to pre-register or for information.

Winter Solstice Celebration, Tuesday, Dec. 21, Guelph Lake Nature Centre 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Join us for a celebration of the longest night of the year. We will go for an evening hike, sit around the campfire and do some star gazing if weather conditions permit. Bring a mug for hot chocolate. Cost is \$5 per person. Call 519-836-7860 to pre-register or for information.

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Please note that orders must be placed by
December 17, 2010. Charitable receipts will be
issued for donations.

The Grand River Conservation Foundation supports priority programs of the Grand River Conservation Authority. These programs enrich the natural values of the Grand River watershed and encourage people to enjoy and learn from the outdoors.

