



# GRAND Actions

The Grand River watershed newsletter



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## Cover photo

*The Grand Prize photo in the GRCA photo contest was taken by the Caledonia Mill in the early mist.*

Photo by Andrew Dietrich



## Photo contest winners selected

**By Janet Baine**  
**GRCA Communications Specialist**

An avid fisherman has hooked the grand prize — a Nikon D90 camera — in the Grand River Conservation Authority’s photo contest.

Nearly 700 photos were submitted during the contest that ran from April 30, 2011 to March 31, 2012. The winners are people who love to get outdoors close to home. There were many awesome pictures that didn’t quite make it into the winners circle so the judges faced some challenges during the selection process. The photos that were submitted show the diversity of beautiful landscapes, interesting plants and animals and the many different ways in which people enjoy local natural areas.

### Grand Prize

The Grand Prize winner is fly fisherman Andrew Dietrich of Waterloo. His photo was taken on a cold fall morning with the mist rising from the water just below the Caledonia dam. It incorporates the silhouette of Dietrich’s fishing buddy with the rising sun reflected on the

Caledonia Mill. This is one of his many favourite fishing spots along the river.

“I’m always fishing throughout the watershed. I love it,” said Dietrich when he was contacted about his win. “I live in Waterloo five minutes from the Grand. Once bass season opens, I get out whenever I can. I was fishing in Elora just yesterday.” He also often volunteers with Friends of the Grand River.

### Three category prize winners

There were also three category prize winners who received \$300 gift certificates. Their photos were taken in Waterloo, Wellington County and New Hamburg.

Chris Wilkinson of Rockwood won the people category prize. His picture features his two children on a sled being pulled by the family’s dogs and was taken on the Elora Cataract Trailway. He was the first person to submit photos to the contest after it opened in April, 2011 and his picture was taken that winter. This past winter he made a pact with his daughter to go out dog sledding every Sunday morning when conditions would allow.





Photo By Chris Wilkinson  
Winner in people category



Flora and fauna winner  
Photo By Scott Bradford

“It’s a sad thing because of climate change, we didn’t even go out once this year. There wasn’t enough snow,” said Wilkinson, who works with the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario and also teaches environmental studies at the University of Waterloo.

A goose that Cambridge resident Scott Bradford captured from above landed him the category prize for flora and fauna. The picture was taken on a miserable winter day when Bradford was mountain biking on the

rail-trail between Cambridge and Glen Morris. He stopped at a high vantage point above the river when a flock of geese were passing below. He wasn’t quick enough to capture the flock, but he panned along as a straggler, a lone goose nearly landed, then continued on its way. The aborted landing meant the feathers were ruffled in the breeze and he feels lucky to have captured the moment.

The category prize for landscape and waterscapes went to Dan Baskin of Kitchener

who took a photo while kayaking on the Nith River. Baskin said that he goes kayaking on weekend mornings on local rivers. His picture was taken early one morning when he was leaving New Hamburg shortly after sunrise and he rounded a bend and saw a boat reflected in the water.

### Three Honourable Mentions

The three judges from the GRCA (Dave Schultz, Liz Yerex and Al Standing) also gave an Honourable Mention in each of the three categories. The prize was four GRCA books: *The Grand River*, *An Aerial Journey*, *Paddling the Grand River*, *Fishing Ontario’s Grand River Country* and *Grand River Country Trails*.

Casey Held of Cambridge took a photo of her son holding a dip net at a family program at Laurel Creek Nature Centre. Michael Collins of Kitchener captured a magnificent buck in the middle of the Grand River at Blair. As he was preparing to take the photo, a blue heron flew past, skimming the top of the water. Eustacio Dionisio of Brantford received an Honourable Mention for a sunset photo that he took at Brant Park.

### Random draws

The GRCA also held draws for a voucher for a vehicle season’s pass to the Grand River parks. There were to be 11 passes given out, but we snuck in a couple of extra. These went to Alan Thompson, Hannah Braam, Jeff Haynes, Eustacio Dionisio, Rachael Duncan, Judi Thompson, Jeffrey Milliken, Lynn Boehler, Lucille Wells, Rose Versnick, Emily Lalonde, Deanna Norris and Blake Namaman.

The GRCA’s last photo contest took place in 1999 and only slides were accepted. The prize was possible inclusion in the Canadian Heritage Rivers calendar, three books and a subscription to a canoe magazine.

The GRCA is not holding another photo contest this year but we will hold one again in the future.

More pictures will be featured in future issues as well as other GRCA publications. They can also be viewed along with selected other contest entries here:

[www.flickr.com/photos/grandriverconservation/collections](http://www.flickr.com/photos/grandriverconservation/collections).



Category prize :Water and landscapes  
Nith River By Dan Baskin



Honourable Mention  
By Eustacio Dionisio



Honourable Mention people  
By Casey Held

# Living with wild things

By Janet Baine  
GRCA Communications Specialist

**G**ood intentions to help wildlife can result in unexpected new problems.

Take for instance the Kitchener resident who saw a cute little rabbit shivering in his backyard on a cold winter day. He took pity on the little critter and left a carrot out in his backyard. The next day, the carrot disappeared and he was delighted. He offered another carrot and then another. But when he went away for the weekend, the rabbit gnawed the bark off of some of his cherished backyard shrubs.

Instead of providing more carrots, he covered the base of the bushes so the rabbit could not do more damage. Eventually, he was happy to notice that the rabbit moved somewhere else and he learned an important lesson — don't feed wildlife.

A couple had a similar experience when they found a mother duck and six cute ducklings living in their backyard swimming pool. They fed the family and offered sanctuary. As the days grew warmer and longer, the couple wanted to open their pool and use it for swimming. They called officials including the Grand River Conservation Authority to take the ducks away. What they discovered is that no one could legally remove the ducks from their yard without a wildlife removal permit from the Ministry of Natural Resources. But when they stopped leaving out food and provided an escape route in the form of a lounge chair propped against the fence, the duck family left the pool to the human family. With no food, it was no longer a hospitable environment.

## Don't feed wildlife

"The main thing is don't feed wildlife," says Cam Linwood, GRCA communications coordinator, who has taken calls from people about wildlife in their backyard or in natural areas.

As a rule, ducks, geese, small animals and fish should not be fed in natural areas such as parks and conservation areas, even though it is entertaining to feed them. Allowing your kids to feed the goslings at a conservation area in the spring may result in bitter disappointment for them on a hot July day. You may arrive to find that the overwhelming number of geese has resulted in the beach being posted due to water quality problems and the



Photo by Michael Collins  
Honourable Mention

# Grand River flows for recreation

By Janet Baine  
GRCA Communications Specialist

Is the water level in the river going to be okay for canoeing or kayaking on the weekend?

This is a common question that people call the GRCA to ask. It is also an important question. Usually they mean is there going to be enough water, but occasionally, there is way too much for most people to canoe safely.

Fly fishermen too need to check river levels so they are safe and don't get swept off their feet by a strong current. An angler will likely move to a different area rather than take a chance.

As an organization, the GRCA does not make recommendations as to appropriate water flows for recreational activities along the Grand River and its tributaries because there are many variables to consider. Some people have the expertise and training to enjoy high flows that could be fatal to inexperienced and ill equipped paddlers. Very low flows make for slow going as there may not be enough water for the canoe to float and it may need to be pulled to deeper water at certain times. A skilled paddler will be able to read the water to find the deepest water and will have fewer problems. Some people have a bad day if they have to step out of their boat even once, while others are more tolerant of low flows. That is why there is no definitive answer to this question.

Appropriate water levels are a favourite discussion among paddlers. Those who paddle regularly have their own personal chart, whether it is in their head or on a spreadsheet.

## Checking flow information

Many avid river recreation enthusiasts bookmark the River Data section of the GRCA's website and check it when trip planning at [www.grandriver.ca/riverdata](http://www.grandriver.ca/riverdata).

This is one of the most visited sections on the GRCA's website and provides hourly updates on river flows from 39 gauges on the Grand and eight tributaries. Some gauge information is also posted on an Environment Canada website that includes

children will return home without their swim.

Be aware that sometimes young animals are intentionally left alone.

One beautiful day in May, a doe left her fawn sleeping in a meadow. Deer often leave their young alone during the day because they are less likely to attract a predator when they are alone. Unfortunately, this meadow was in the middle of a campground at Pinehurst Conservation Area and it happened to be the Friday of the long weekend. When the doe went back to reclaim her young one in the evening, the meadow was surrounded by cars, tents, campers, noise and campfires. The doe could not get to her young one. It spent the weekend dodging people, some who wanted to capture it and bring it to park staff. But park staff are not licenced to handle wildlife and the best thing is to leave abandoned animals alone. At the end of the weekend, all the people went home, the mother reclaimed her traumatized fawn and the meadow was once again quiet.

Several incidents in the early spring between urban coyotes and pets have been reported locally. While coyotes are naturally shy of humans, it is important to keep pets on a leash and not to give the coyotes any opportunities for food. They are opportunistic eaters, and it is best if they don't associate humans with food.

## Helping some species

Of course, there are times when it is appropriate to help wildlife. Bird feeders and nesting boxes help ensure birds remain part of our natural environment, especially when the bird species being helped are rare or endangered. However, before you put a feeder or nesting box on your property, make sure you stay in it for the long haul — don't put up a feeder at Christmas and then stop feeding the birds in mid-winter when they have come to depend on that food. Nesting boxes also need to be maintained and cleaned out.

Likewise, helping a snapping turtle cross the road means helping a species at risk, so this is a time when it is appropriate to help. However, don't interfere with turtle nesting sites, even if you want to protect the hatchlings from predators such as racoons. This requires a wildlife scientific collectors permit. If done improperly, more harm than good can result.

## Some wildlife resources:

- The Ministry of Natural Resources has a website section about Living With Animals
- The GRCA's urban coyote fact sheet is on [www.grandriver.ca/NewsRoom/News.cfm](http://www.grandriver.ca/NewsRoom/News.cfm)
- The City of Guelph also has good information on their website called "city wildlife"

## River flow guidelines used by the Ancient Mariners

This guideline is used by the Ancient Mariners Canoe Club and is based on their river experiences using data collected over many years. Keep in mind that all club members have attended classroom, pool and in-river training so they are well prepared and equipped if they encounter difficulty. It is also safer to paddle in a group.

**Low flow:** Minimum flow for an average to large trip, although smaller groups of six to 10 canoes can work with flows that are 10 to 20 per cent less.

**High flow:** At this rate, only paddlers who have completed advanced training and have top-notch canoes can go out. Extreme: No club trips can proceed.

**Extreme flow:** No club trips proceed at this rate.

River reach	Summer Low Flow	Low flow	High	Extreme
Grand River (Elora-Freeport)	Elora (4.8) <sup>1</sup>	8.	24	40
Grand River (Freeport-Cainsville)	Galt (15.1)	21	65	100
Eramosa River (Eden Mills-Guelph)	Watson Road	4	12	20
Speed River (Guelph-Preston)	Edinburgh Rd (1.7)	7.5	22.5	37.5
Nith River (New Hamburg-Ayr)	New Hamburg (0.6)	3.5	10.5	17.5
Nith River (Ayr-Canning <sup>2</sup> )	Ayr (2.6)	7.	21	35
Conestogo (Glen Allan-Kaufman Flats)	St. Jacobs (3.9)	7.5	22.5	37.5

**Note 1:** There is no gauge at Elora. This is the sum of Salem and Below Shand gauges. **Note 2:** A whitewater run.

rivers in other parts of Canada, but the GRCA site has data for more gauges from this watershed.

The main chart here is called the Flow Summary. Recreational users should pay attention to the column headed “flow.” This one is measured in cubic metres per second or cms. If the rate is 10 cms, that means that 10,000 litres of water is moving past the flow gauge each second at this part of the river. The cms gets bigger as the river moves towards Lake Erie. There are huge changes in river flow due to seasons, weather, ice jams and dam operation.

Compare this to the “summer lowflow” which is the average flow during the dry summer months and you will see in relative terms how much water is flowing down the river.

Following this Flow Summary is a list of sections of the rivers and tributaries with graphs. For example, one of the most popular sections of the river for a day trip, Cambridge to Paris, a paddler would check the Galt gauge on the “Middle Grand River” section. The graph will tell you if the level is going up, down, or holding steady.

Occasionally a flow gauge does not operate and the information can be inaccurate, so the information is provisional.

### Outfitter information

There are several local outfitters in the area and they have cut off levels, when they

stop canoe rentals. Canoeing the Grand in Kitchener has a safety section of their website with a five step rating chart for paddling. This goes from “Excellent” to “No Go” with five levels, depending on the paddler age, skill, expertise and river conditions. The link is:

[www.canoeingthegrand.com/safety.htm](http://www.canoeingthegrand.com/safety.htm).

#### Canoe rescue technique:

The photos at right show four of the Ancient Mariners during the in-pool training session which took place this year. The Ancient Mariners Canoe Club, based in Cambridge, has about a hundred members and accepts 10 new members a year. The new members must all participate in classroom and in-pool training sessions. They are learning how to rescue people whose canoe has capsized when they are in deep water.

**Step 1:** The first step to learning this is for the canoe to capsize.

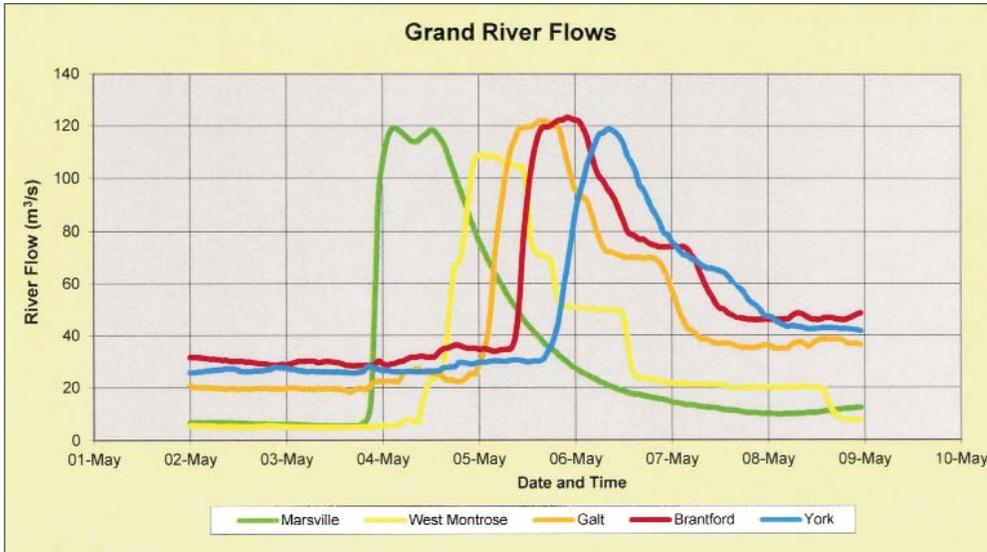
**Step 2:** The canoe is turned upside down and brought over to the rescue boat. It needs to be at a 90 degree angle.

**Step 3:** The canoe is lifted over the rescue boat until it is completely empty of water.

**Step 4:** The boat is then turned over so that it is right side up and then it is slipped back into the water.

**Step 5:** The empty boat is then brought along beside the rescue boat. The paddlers in the rescue boat and one from the capsized boat help stabilize the second boat while the paddlers reenter the boat, one at a time.





### When river flows skyrocket

As the graph above shows, the Grand River may not give much warning of a sudden increase in river flows, which is why the GRCA must sometimes issue high water safety warnings to the public.

This is the flow information from the week of May 2 to 9. Heavy rain on Thursday night May 3 in the northern part of the watershed meant flows ballooned from 8 cms to 120 cms within a couple of hours, as the data from Marsville shows. The GRCA issued a warning after the storm.

The rainwater gushed down the river and by the afternoon of Friday May 4, flows were dropping at Marsville but skyrocketing at West Montrose. By Saturday May 5, the river flows in Brantford were extreme and then they peaked at York on the southern Grand on Sunday. Dams can make the impact of a rainstorm less severe but they don't eliminate flooding or high flows. Recreational river users can check our [www.grandriver.ca/NewsRoom/News.cfm](http://www.grandriver.ca/NewsRoom/News.cfm) to find flood warnings, sign up on Twitter @grca\_flood\_msg or sign up to receive all of our news releases by sending a blank e-mail to [GRCAnews-subscribe@grandriver.ca](mailto:GRCAnews-subscribe@grandriver.ca) to receive press releases, including flood messages.



Unfortunately waste in natural areas is a watershed-wide problem. People who dump the waste probably don't think about those who clean it up, such as Elliott Cairney and his family. They live near the Grand River Trail in Kitchener and they bring waste out of the area regularly.

## From farm field to forest

By Janet Baine,  
GRCA Communications Specialist

Jim Phillips is growing an 85-acre forest near Arthur and he is also giving thousands of trees to school children in the spring.

Phillips is the recipient of a 2011 Grand River Conservation Watershed Award which he received for his tree planting. Phillips' father George purchased the farm outside of Arthur in 1974. George worked as a teacher and later as a principal in Toronto, but took early retirement in 1989. That's when he started a company, Copernicus Educational Products Inc.

In 1991 George and Jim had 11,000 trees planted with the help of the Grand River Conservation Authority on 11 acres of land. Now those trees stand tall.

Jim has taken over the business and continued tree planting on a grand scale. Since 2007, he has planted another 50,000 trees across 75 acres of land with partial funding from Trees Ontario and the Habitat Stewardship Fund. During the spring, there

## LOOK WHO'S TAKING ACTION

### Thanks volunteers for the debris removal

Every day in every way individuals and organizations are cleaning up natural areas around the watershed.

The GRCA salutes them all as they quietly carry out the task of cleaning up after others.

Here is one example. Collectively members of the Guelph Trail Hiking Club spent 37 hours removing three van-loads of trash from GRCA land in the Everton area near Guelph in April.

They cleaned out a widespread bottle and scrap-strewn area in the forest as well as an old community dump in a gully between two cliffs.

"What was a blight in a spectacularly scenic area is now pristine in appearance. This is important because several paths lay adjacent to the debris," said club vice-

president Bill Mungall, who organized the work crew to do the removal before shrubs began to grow up and hide the garbage.

The trash included tires, fence wire coils, a stove, TV, eaves trough, lots of broken glass and sundry scrap. One member of the clean up crew came from Waterloo to help out.

Unfortunately the GRCA does not have the staff resources to be able to do all of this kind of work.

Please make sure you are not contributing to the debris that volunteers need to spend a precious day to gather up and haul away — whether it is an intentionally dumped television or a forgotten juice box. It may well be a volunteer who is cleaning up your mess, because these items don't disappear on their own.



Jim Phillips stands by a tree in a field on his property.

are trees as far as the eye can see on his property, but by mid-summer, most are pretty hard to spot among the grass because they are newly-planted and small.

“We don’t often have planting sites that are more than 10 acres,” said Nathan Munn, GRCA forestry specialist who has worked with Phillips on tree planting. “The planting of these trees puts this poorly-drained marginal land to better use by creating interior forest habitat, groundwater recharge, carbon sequestration and a future source of timber.”

In the spring of 2009, Phillips had 150 sq. metres of lawn converted to a naturalized area. This was done to offset some of the company’s carbon footprint and improve wildlife habitat. The area is being expanded each year until the quarter-acre lawn will be converted into a naturalized area. In August 2009, the company received Backyard Habitat Certification from the Canadian Wildlife Federation for this project, because it provides wildlife habitat.

“It always makes me happy seeing areas being naturalized,” Phillips said.

Just as the forest and naturalized areas are growing, so too is the company. Copernicus now has 60 employees and a large factory on the former farm that ships educational products around the world. The company too has undertaken many greening efforts, including diverting 50 per cent of its waste

from the landfill site over the past two years. Some of the products are made out of recycled materials.

The company has been giving tree seedlings to local school children. In 2011 they gave 5,000 trees to kids within the Grand River watershed.

“The trees for schools program is something that I want to keep growing each year. I’m excited about it. I love getting trees into kids’ hands and this is a program that I’m committed to growing,” Phillips said.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

### Chiefswood reopens

After being closed for the past season for interior restoration, Chiefswood National Historic Site reopened Saturday May 19 for the coming season.

Located on the Grand River, Chiefswood National Historic Site is the only remaining pre-Confederation Indian mansion in Ontario. Built between 1853 and 1856 by Mohawk Chief George H.M. Johnson for his English bride, Emily Howells, Chiefswood is of national architectural and historic significance because it speaks to the Johnson family’s role as intermediaries between Native and European cultures. In 1861 the

poet and performer Pauline Johnson was born in the house and later drew inspiration for her literary works. Historically, it was a meeting place of cultures. Today, as a gateway to the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, Chiefswood introduces visitors to the rich culture and heritage of the Six Nations, the Johnson family and Pauline Johnson.

Interior restoration has been underway since February 2011. The exterior of the house has also been spruced up thanks to a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. Both the interior and exterior restoration work at Chiefswood required skills and craftsmanship that are rare in our modern world.

To guide visitors, new signs tell the history of the Six Nations, Chiefswood, the Johnson family, and Pauline Johnson thanks to a grant from the Stedman Foundation.

Chiefswood is surrounded by vestiges of the Carolinian forest and is also home to a restored tall grass prairie, an important ecosystem. Indigenous plants like the towering Indian Cup Plant, Ohio Spiderwort, Virginia Mountain Mint and Wild Bergamot can be found in Chiefswood’s tall grass prairie.

Thanks to an outdoor interpretive sign and brochures made possible by a grant from TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, visitors to Chiefswood can learn about the traditional medicinal and other uses of these plants and the importance of the tall grass prairie.

For museum hours and admission, events and more information, visit [www.chiefswood.com](http://www.chiefswood.com).



A refurbished Chiefswood National Historic Site reopened on the Victoria Day weekend.



## Water week award for City of Guelph

The City of Guelph has received the 2012 Canada Water Week Certificate of Recognition for its support of Canada Water Week, held March 19 to 25.

During a March 26 ceremony at City Hall, Guelph Mayor Karen Farbridge accepted the award, which also included a one-of-a-kind piece of artwork entitled 'Ocean Bliss' by Toronto-based artist Meena Jagait.

"As one of the largest cities in Canada to rely solely on groundwater, Guelph has long recognized the need to conserve this precious resource. Canada Water Week was a terrific opportunity for our community to celebrate and promote our water," she said.

The award recognizes communities that excel at building local energy, support and awareness on water issues. It was given to Guelph for encouraging event development and attendance, as well as hosting a series of local events.

"The City of Guelph showed a real commitment to water awareness through its high level of engagement during Canada Water Week. We hope that many more communities are inspired by Guelph's success and join in Canada Water Week celebrations in 2013," said Tim Morris, fresh water program manager at the Walter and

Duncan Gordon Foundation.

This event is organized by the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation, Living Lakes Network Canada, World Wildlife Fund Canada, and RBC Blue Water Project.

## New festival celebrates Speed and Eramosa

This is the first year of the Two Rivers Festival that celebrates the Speed and Eramosa rivers which meet in the city of Guelph.

This festival runs June 10 to 17. It begins on Canadian Rivers Day. These two small rivers were granted Heritage River designation in 1994 along with the Grand River.

Partner organizations are holding 24 river-related events in Guelph during the festival. These include hikes, paddling, water-related talks, storytelling, performance, river heritage and arts events. The GRCA staff are doing an exploration of the Speed River on Sunday June 10 at 2 p.m. and a tour of Guelph Lake Dam on June 14 at 6:30 p.m. On June 15 is a free night of performance and 20th anniversary celebration of Guelph's covered bridge.

The festival incorporates the Speed River Clean Up on June 16, now in its 33rd year. See [www.2RiversFestival.org](http://www.2RiversFestival.org) for more information.

## Submit registry entries by July 30

The GRCA compiles an annual Grand Actions Registry.

If you or your group, organization, school or company did something in 2011 to promote local heritage or improve the natural environment, we would like to include you in the registry. Your submission can be made online at

[www.grandriver.ca/grandactionsregistry](http://www.grandriver.ca/grandactionsregistry) or by contacting Barbara Veale at phone: 519-621-2763 ext. 2274 or email: [grandactionsregistry@grandriver.ca](mailto:grandactionsregistry@grandriver.ca). The deadline for submissions is July 30, 2012.

## About Grand Actions:

*This newsletter is produced bi-monthly by the Grand River Conservation Authority.*

### More information:

Current and back issues as well as complete subscription information is available online at [www.grandriver.ca/GrandActions](http://www.grandriver.ca/GrandActions).

### Submission deadlines:

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.

### To subscribe by e-mail:

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100%

## THE GRAND CALENDAR

### Guelph Lake Triathlon Weekend, June 16-17, Guelph Lake Conservation Area

The Subaru Triathlon Series provides a variety of race distances for all levels of athletes. The Guelph Lake Conservation Area is dubbed "Canada's Most Popular Triathlon Site." Register and see a full schedule at [www.trisportcanada.com](http://www.trisportcanada.com). A similar event takes place Sept. 1.

### Grand River Bass Derby, July 6 and 7

The Grand River Bass Derby is a live release family derby held on the Grand River. All participants must have their registration card before fishing in the derby. Only smallmouth bass caught in the Grand River are eligible and must be brought in

alive. Proceeds enhance public access on the Grand River. Information is on [www.grandriverbassderby.ca](http://www.grandriverbassderby.ca).

### July and August summer camps

The Grand River Conservation Authority has increased the variety of summer camps on offer this year in order to encourage kids to keep learning and making friends in the great outdoors all summer. There are a multitude of camping opportunities at five different locations with new options tailor-made to suit a variety of interests for kids 6 to 16 years old. Registration is available online. More information is available [www.grandriver.ca](http://www.grandriver.ca).

Note: many events can be viewed online at [www.grandriver.ca/calendar](http://www.grandriver.ca/calendar).

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