



# GRAND Actions

The Grand River watershed newsletter



November/December 2012 • Volume 17, Number 6

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## Ruthven's master bird bander receives 2012 GRCA award

**By Janet Baine**  
GRCA Communications Specialist

**R**ick Ludkin is up before dawn to do six hours of continuous bird monitoring at Ruthven Bird Observatory, which operates seven days a week during the spring and fall migration.

Ludkin shares his love and extensive knowledge of birds with university researchers, school kids, a dedicated team of keen volunteers and anyone who happens to stop by the birding station at Ruthven Historical Site near Cayuga. He is a master bird bander and received a 2012 Grand River Conservation Award for his work.

During spring and fall migration, Ludkin and the volunteers retrieve birds that have been captured in a series of nets on the 1,400 acre (567 hectare) site. They put each bird in a coloured bag and bring it to the banding station. There each

bird is identified, measured, weighed, banded and then released.

On a Friday during the fall, 79 birds of 33 species were trapped, 61 were banded and 18 were birds that already had been banded. In the evening Ludkin posts the statistics as well as many photos of birds, volunteers and visitors on his blog: [www.ruthvenpark.ca/natureblog](http://www.ruthvenpark.ca/natureblog). This adds another three hours to his day.

"I wouldn't be able to do this without the volunteers," Ludkin said. To him it is not a one-man show, but a team effort that has led to the success of the banding station. Those at the station that day included a long-time volunteer bander Nancy Furber, three visitors from Hamilton and a high school student who is doing a co-op placement. In a year Ludkin has about 40 volunteers and about 10 of those come out regularly as often as several times a week.

According to Environment Canada, which

### Cover photo

*Nancy Furber and Rick Ludkin admire a bird at the Ruthven bird banding station. Rick received a watershed award.*

Photo by Janet Baine.





Photos by Janet Baine

From top left clockwise: **1.** A grosbeak caught in nets. **2.** A small band is put around the bird's leg so that it can be identified if it is recaptured. **3.** An orchard oriole is set to be released. **4.** A red-eyed Vireo is ready for release. **5.** Rick Ludkin points out the specifics of identification on the wing feathers. **6.** Flying off with a new band. **7.** Each of these small colourful bags contains a bird that is taken back to the banding station. The information collected by bird banding helps scientists learn about changing bird migration patterns.

issues banding licences, banding is a scientific technique that requires expertise and skill gained over many years of study and field experience. Ludkin started with a personal interest in birds and he ticked off birds that he saw on a list until he wanted to do more. He then learned from a bander at Selkirk Lake, and moved to Ruthven in 1995.

Over the past 18 years, the banding station has grown. Rick started out by himself with only three nets and a hunting shelter. Now there is a network of nets that are continuously monitored for six hours a day spring and fall during the migration season. There is also a banding building where several people can work or learn under Ludkin's guidance.

Results of the banding program are used to monitor bird species health and populations, both in the lower Grand and as part of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network.

### Rick's enthusiasm is contagious

"Rick's personal experience is vast and his enthusiasm contagious. The facility is used for university level research and Rick's personal time spent mentoring students is considerable. Most significant, is the community learning resources whereby the general public is becoming more knowledgeable about birds in the lower Grand," said Ralph Beaumont, who nominated Rick for the watershed award.

He always makes people feel welcome. He tries to give everyone a chance to hold a bird and release it back into the sky. Volunteers say it is an honour and a privilege to visit the Ruthven banding station, because Ludkin shares his knowledge freely no matter how much or how little the visitor knows about birds.

Nancy Furber holds a sub-license under Ludkin. She also bands birds and does a purple martin banding program and a night

time saw-whet owl program.

Ruthven is part of the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network of about 23 observatories.

Ludkin is looking for assistance to add a full weather station at the observatory, because migration results are closely associated with weather.

His work was done on a volunteer basis for many years, but he has been paid during the past couple years. Most observatories, however, have two paid banders.

He would also like to build relationships with more universities — researchers from the University of Windsor and Western University have worked at Ruthven, but he would like to have researchers come from other institutions, including those within the Grand River watershed.

A short video about Rick Ludkin is available at [www.grandriver.ca/awards](http://www.grandriver.ca/awards).

### Ruthven by the numbers:

10,000 birds banded at Ruthven in 2011  
23 observatories within the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network  
2,800 visitors to the Ruthven observatory in 2011  
40 volunteers who help with many banding initiatives

# Friends of Mill Creek

By Janet Baine

GRCA Communications Specialist

Set aside conflict, baggage and confrontation.

Bring enthusiasm, creativity and cooperation and be ready to get your feet wet.



Brad Whitcombe

This is the winning formula that the Friends of Mill Creek has adopted to improve the small creek that runs through Puslinch Township and joins the Grand River in Cambridge.

Improving the creek means working through a complicated set of environmental challenges, but FOMC has been up to the challenge. For their work, the Friends of Mill Creek received a 2012 Grand River Watershed Award from the Grand River Conservation Authority.

Now in its 15th year, Friends of Mill Creek has aggregate companies, environmentalists, politicians, service clubs, government agencies and landowners working together. The group has a formalized structure, a board, a president and an “opportunities plan” that is the strategic document to guide them. There is a fundraising committee, a technical committee and a community outreach committee. Two partners, Dufferin Aggregates and Capital Paving, received a 2007 Watershed Award for their work with FOMC.

Their winning formula has been noted and used in other communities. FOMC is made up of some noticeably strange

bedfellows who are working together to revitalize the small tributary of the Grand River. While they do this, they gain new respect and appreciation for the variety of viewpoints in the community.

“Everyone’s knowledge and enthusiasm is respected and that energy is amplified through what we do. We don’t allow the tension to enter the (meeting) room to begin with,” said Brad Whitcombe, the president of Friends of Mill Creek and the former mayor of Puslinch Township. “Friends of Mill Creek can tap into all that energy and expertise and really get things done. It is everybody’s responsibility to meet these challenges and it means not only respect for the environment, but respect for each other.”

Most of the creek is still bordered by forests and provincially significant wetlands. It has had to endure many changes. Early settlers dammed it for power, and these dams still block the flow and warm the water, making it harder for aquatic life to thrive in the creek. Parts of the creek were even moved when Highway 401 was constructed and then again when the Hanlon Expressway was built. Forests have been removed, land has been converted to agriculture and gravel has been extracted. Fill and garbage has been put into the creek and all of this has really impeded the

waterway.

Some accepted processes used to resolve conflict are adversarial. This seemed to be the case in 1990 at a 200-day “David and Goliath battle” at the Ontario Municipal Board, Whitcombe said. At the end of the day when the hearing was over, the aggregate companies got their licenses granted with restrictions. Many in the community were disheartened by this outcome.

“The system wasn’t working for the community at that time. I felt we needed a way to celebrate the watershed. The only way we are going to succeed in our community is with a healthy watershed where we can live, enjoy and recreate,” Whitcombe said.

“Friends of Mill Creek is a healing process from that. There is only so much energy people can put into confrontation.

Co-operation is proving to ignite the enthusiasm of many people. Businesses need a healthy watershed and they also bring excellent resources to complete projects.

One key to the successful rehabilitation of the creek is the Mill Creek Rangers — the team of four teenagers and a crew leader who are hired each summer to jump into the creek with hip waders and hard hats. They work all summer to restore the creek little by little.

There are now nearly 40 former rangers



Community members, agency staff and Mill Creek Rangers gather to learn about river restoration from Jack Imhof of Trout Unlimited.



Two Mill Creek Rangers move a log to help create a moving waterway that is good habitat for fish and other aquatic life. The rangers are a cornerstone to the success of the work on the creek.

and many have gone on to careers in the environmental field.

The committee members and partners take great pride in seeing the creek that is at the heart of the community improve each year. There are nearly 40 partner organizations and it is the community that raises the money to pay for the Mill Creek Rangers each summer.

“When it comes to the environment, agencies and governments can only do so much,” said Whitcombe, adding co-operation of community members can work towards solving these environmental problems.

Information and videos about all seven 2012 watershed award recipients is available online at [www.grandriver.ca/awards](http://www.grandriver.ca/awards).

### 2013 Watershed Awards

You can nominate an individual, group or business for a 2013 Watershed Award.

The deadline for nominations is May 1, 2013. The form can be found online at [www.grandriver.ca/awards](http://www.grandriver.ca/awards). Check the list of past award winners before nominating someone, because awards can only be granted once.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING

### Foundation awards conservation grants

Each year, the Grand River Conservation Foundation presents Community Conservation Grants to help finance projects by organizations to improve river access, protect and improve natural areas or other works.

The money comes from two Foundation endowment funds: The Thiess Riverprize Fund and the Grand Champions Fund. The Thiess fund was established with the GRCA's monetary award when it was named the world's top watershed management agency in 2000. The Grand Champions Fund holds the foundation's endowment donations.

This year Pollination Guelph received a grant to expand pollinator habitat on the TransCanada Trail in Guelph.

In addition, eight schools received grants for schoolyard naturalization projects. These schools are:

- Southridge Public School, Kitchener
- James McQueen Public School, Fergus

- Onondaga-Brant Public School, Brantford
- Sir Adam Beck Public School, Baden
- Ryerson Public School, Cambridge
- William G. Davis Public School, Cambridge
- St. Theresa of Avila Elementary School, Elmira
- Driftwood Park Public School, Kitchener

## New tree nursery for the north

A new tree nursery on the west side of Luther Marsh Wildlife Management Area opened up this fall on GRCA land.

The nursery is operated by Wellington Green Legacy and is a joint venture between Wellington County, the GRCA and the Upper Grand District School Board. This tree planting program received a 2010 Grand River Watershed Award for engaging thousands of volunteers to plant more than 150,000 trees each year. Since 2004, over 1.4 million trees have been planted throughout the county. The new nursery compliments another Green Legacy nursery located in Puslinch Township.

The long-term program goal and the GRCA's goal is to reforest 30 per cent of the county — up from the current level of 17 per cent.

“The Green Legacy Tree Nursery expansion stands as a tribute to the county's commitment to enhancing tree coverage throughout the county,” said Warden Chris White. “I'd like to thank County Council, the Upper Grand District School Board and the Grand River Conservation Authority for their partnership and vision in creating this project.”

The northern tree nursery property was developed through a solid partnership with the GRCA and the Upper Grand District School Board, and consists of three greenhouses, a shade cloth area and an outdoor activity area.

“Each year approximately 4,500 people volunteer over 16,000 hours to help make Wellington greener,” said Councillor Shawn Watters, County Planning Committee Chair. “I'd like to thank all our community partners who have helped make the Green Legacy Programme a success.”

Green Legacy is the largest municipal tree planting program in North America.



Two Mill Creek Rangers get set to plant some trees from the Wellington Green Legacy nursery.

The nursery officially opened in October when 100 County of Wellington and Township of Wellington North councillors, employees and their families participated in the seventh Annual Warden's Tree Planting Day, planting over 1,500 trees on GRCA land near Luther Marsh.

# Top birders on ebird

By Janet Baine  
GRCA Communications Specialist

There are some very keen birders in the Grand River watershed who are making their observations known globally to help scientists learn more about birds.

Binoculars and cameras are a couple of their key tools, but the Internet is becoming a preferred method of recording birds. Enthusiasts can track birds they see regionally, provincially and nationally and then anyone who checks the top 100 list for a region, province or country can follow their progress.

This is how the website describes itself: "A

real-time, online checklist program, [www.eBird.org](http://www.eBird.org), has revolutionized the way that the birding community reports and accesses information about birds. Launched in 2002 by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and National Audubon Society, eBird provides rich data sources for basic information on bird abundance and distribution at a variety of spatial and temporal scales."

## A big year

The all-time highest number of birds ever recorded by an individual in Ontario was set in 1996 by Glenn Coody who spotted 338 species. For birders, this is called a Big Year — spending a year attempting to see as many different bird species as possible in a pre-defined area.

Cambridge resident and recent University of Guelph grad Josh Vandermeulen has broken that record this year, with 344 species spotted by early November and he is still looking. His records are on ebird and the details of the challenge he has set for himself to have a big year are in his blog.

"The "biggest" year does not make you the best birder in the province," writes Vandermeulen. "If anything, having a numeric goal will give me the excuse to go on an adventure, explore some cool areas, see some amazing birds and meet more individuals in the birding community. It should be a wild ride."

GRCA staff members Tony Zammit and Kevin Tupman are in the top 10 for Waterloo Region for 2012. But they have been beat out by young brothers Matthew and Anthony Vanderheyden. Zammit bumped into the brothers who were with their parents on a tour at Long Point earlier this year.

"I'd never met the Vanderheydens before and when I was touring the Long Point Area with other members of the Ontario Field Ornithologists, I ran into them, and was very glad to see that they were youngsters who were so enthusiastic about birds and the natural environment," Zammit says.

Birding is a growing pastime, as some people check their backyard feeder and others travel far and wide.

Once observations are submitted on ebird, conservation researchers and ecologists have more information to help them understand where species live, how abundant they are and to see any changes over time.

The GRCA also appreciates receiving reports about rare or endangered species seen on GRCA-owned land, as this helps us to know about our conservation efforts. A form is available in the birding section at [www.grandriver.ca](http://www.grandriver.ca).



Josh Vandermeulen of Cambridge has sighted a record number of birds in 2012. He and many other local birders are recording their sitings on [ebird.org](http://ebird.org).

# 1,000 clients for RWQP in Wellington

By Janet Baine

GRCA Communications Specialist

**R**ichard Adamick is the 1,000th landowner to take advantage of the Wellington Rural Water Quality Program.

This fall after he upgraded his well, Adamick received \$1,500 which covered 80 per cent of the cost of the work that he did. Next spring he is planning to plant trees and shrubs along a stream on his land and he expects another cheque back to help cover those costs.

“You need financial incentives to initiate these things and you have to treat everyone equally, not based on financial need,” Adamick says of the program. “This program gets owners to make changes, and it got me to do this now, instead of putting it off.”

The idea behind the program is simple — if landowners take care of the land, the land will take care of the water. In this way, people like Adamick help downstream communities. He lives near the headwaters of the Grand River, so just about everyone in the watershed is downstream of him.

During the 13 years since Wellington County’s RWQP started, 1,000 rural landowners have invested a total of \$14.6 million in more than 1,700 projects through this program. They’ve received \$4.4 million back in grants.

While clients of the program receive 50 to 100 per cent of the costs back once the work is complete, the program is not only about the money. Adamick completed an Environmental Farm Plan as part of the process. Through this he says he learned about other stewardship opportunities, which is why he will be planting trees along the stream this spring.

“This is exactly what we hope for with our clients — that they start with one project, plan another and many years later, we are still working with them,” explains GRCA conservation specialist Anne Loeffler, whose job is to help rural landowners like Adamick take care of their land. She studied both



Conservation Specialist Anne Loeffler stands with Richard Adamick by a shelter belt near his house. He planted these trees many years ago and they now stand tall. “Trees are invaluable. You can’t go wrong planting them,” Adamick says.

agriculture and agroforestry and has a knack for talking to rural landowners and helping them to achieve their environmental goals.

Loeffler has great respect for the landowners she works with, since these projects take time and money. The biggest benefit is often to the communities downstream who are unlikely to even know that landowners are looking out for their interests.

“The landscape is really changing thanks to this program. You can see how it is changing,” she says. On the drive up through the rural areas north of Cambridge, Loeffler can pick out projects all along the route that she and colleagues have worked with landowners to complete. There are trees in rows along fields and around buildings (called shelterbelts and windbreaks), trees and shrubs planted along streams (called vegetated buffers) as well as fences that keep animals out of the water, so they don’t trample the banks and defecate in the water.

The projects that are the most costly are manure storage tanks or buildings. These are some of the most expensive environmental

projects on farms, since they can cost \$150,000 or more to construct. Through the RWQP, Wellington farmers near watercourses can now get up to \$25,000 in financial assistance when they work with the GRCA on these projects. Farmers have installed 146 manure storage facilities at a cost \$9.5 million in Wellington County.

These projects have changed the landscape and improved water quality. But Loeffler can easily point out opportunities for more work on her drive through the countryside. Farmers often know they have an environmental issue, but it takes time to plan and finance some of the more costly projects. One thing is for sure — once people know what needs to be done and why, they want to do what they can to make improvements that have environmental benefits.

“Wellington County has shown great leadership in environmental programs and the Rural Water Quality Program is a success because of their long term commitment. Their support has helped to leverage additional funding from other agencies,” says Tracey Ryan, manager of environmental

education and restoration for the GRCA and the woman who helped the county develop the program 13 years ago.

Wellington County is providing \$425,000 this year that the GRCA will turn over to rural landowners. Administration costs for the program are covered through the GRCA budget and all municipalities in the watershed.

“For all the money we are spending on water programs after Walkerton, this one is good bang for the buck. It is positive for agriculture and positive for the community and a good use for money,” said Chris White, Warden of Wellington County.

The Rural Water Quality Program got underway in Waterloo Region first, then Wellington County. Now most municipalities within the Grand River Watershed contribute to grants for rural landowners through this program and there are similar programs throughout the watershed.

The grants cover 50 to 100 per cent of the cost of projects, depending on the type of project. The Wellington program got a big boost this past July when there was an increase to the incentives to reflect increasing costs.

For more information on RWQP grants, contact the Grand River Conservation Authority at 519-621-2761. Information on the new higher grant rates can be found on the GRCA website at [www.grandriver.ca](http://www.grandriver.ca) in the Rural Water Quality Program section.

### By the numbers

- \$14.6 million is the total value of projects with \$4.7 million in grants paid out to help cover the costs
- \$9.5 million cost for 146 manure storage facilities
- 1,750 projects in total
- 46 km of creek fenced so that 4,600 livestock are kept out of the water
- 279 wells decommissioned and 245 wells upgraded
- 145 km of windbreaks, offering energy savings to farmers and helping to prevent erosion
- 509,000 trees planted on 929 acres
- 50 to 100 per cent of the costs of eligible projects are covered through the program

## DID YOU KNOW?

# How the rivers got their names

By Janet Baine

GRCA Communications Specialist

There are 11,000 km of rivers and creeks flowing through the Grand River watershed and we take them for granted. Ever wonder where the names of these rivers and creeks come from?

With a little delving and the kind help of some librarians, this is part of the story of how the rivers got their names.

According to the Geographical Names of Canada set up in 1897, there are three Grand Rivers in Canada, but only one Conestogo, Nith, Speed and Eramosa.

### The Grand

Native residents in the area called the Grand River the Tinctuo. History books say that French priest and geographer René de Galinée was among the first explorers to encounter the Grand River and in 1669 he named it “La Rapide”. French cartographer Jacques-Nicholas Bellin published the first map that showed the river, and he named it, “R. d’Urse ou la Grand Rivière”. Governor John Graves Simcoe christened it the “Ouse” in the 1790s. This is a river in Yorkshire England, and this name is still commemorated by a road called Ouse Street on the riverfront road in Cayuga. However, it is the Anglicized version of Jacques Bellin’s “la Grand Rivière” that the Grand River is known by today. James Gordon wrote a song about the Grand River called “She is fickle.”

### The Conestogo

The Conestogo River that runs through Drayton is spelled differently from Conestoga College in Kitchener. In 1809, Conestoga wagons took early Mennonite settlers to the village of Conestogo, located just north of Waterloo and the river was likely named after these wagons. Perhaps it was a spelling error.

### The Nith

The troublesome Nith River has no

reservoir and floods occasionally around New Hamburg. It is named after the seventh longest river in Scotland that flows through Dumfries, Scotland.

### The Speed

John Galt named the Speed River because he was impressed by the power of the river’s current. The name was intended to connote success, fortune and prosperity, according to the book *Cambridge: the Making of a Canadian City* by Kenneth McLaughlin. There’s a Tragically Hip song called the Speed River.

### The Eramosa

Local history books say it is named after Un-ne-mo-sah, an Indian word meaning dog. There is also evidence from books and the internet that it could mean a specific kind of dog: black dog, dead dog, ornery dog, old dog or dog leg. Exactly which native language is a little murky.

Virve Wiland, the librarian at the Woodland Cultural Centre, discovered that



Photo by Sophie Gibbs

The season is changing at Shade’s Mills Conservation Area in Cambridge.



Photo by Dan Baskin

The Eramosa River near the covered bridge in Guelph.

## THE GRAND CALENDAR

### **Festive Frolic, Laurel Creek Nature Centre, Waterloo, Saturday, Dec. 15, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.**

Help prune the trails and learn about winter tree identification along the way. With the greenery, visitors will make a festive centerpiece to take home. A frolic isn't a frolic without a stop to feed the chickadees! Phone 519-885-1368 to pre-register. The cost is \$5 for children under 18 years old and \$10 for adults. Those 16 years old or younger must be accompanied by an adult.

### **Environmental Sciences Symposium, Saturday, Feb. 2, University of Guelph**

The 19th symposium will take place on Feb 2 2013, focusing on Traditional Knowledge & Cultural Perspectives on the Environment. For more information and to register, visit [www.enviroscisymposium2013.com](http://www.enviroscisymposium2013.com).

### **Guelph Organics Conference, Seeds of Co-operation, University of Guelph, Jan. 31 to Feb. 3**

This conference provides a comprehensive program of workshops, a free organic expo

and sampling fair as well as a Friday night keynote talk and forum about the greening of agriculture. For more information visit [www.guelphorganicconf.ca](http://www.guelphorganicconf.ca) or call 519-824-4120 ext. 56311.

### **Heritage Day Workshop, Friday, Feb. 15, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Dunnville Community Lifespan Centre**

Crossroads of Conflict, Pathways to Peace: The Haldimand Experience. This workshop builds on the theme from 2012 Crossroads of Conflict, Pathways to Peace: Divided Loyalties. It is the second Heritage Day Workshop to focus on the influence of the war on the people, places and events in the Grand River watershed. The event is hosted by Haldimand County, the GRCA and the Heritage Working Group of The Grand Strategy. Visit the Heritage Day Workshop section for the 2013 Workshop Program and Register on [www.grandriver.ca](http://www.grandriver.ca). Note that this workshop fills up prior to the event.

**Note:** Events at the GRCA's conservation areas and nature centres are posted on [www.grandriver.ca/Calendar](http://www.grandriver.ca/Calendar).

there is no "m" in any of the Six Nations languages. So she checked the Ojibway dictionaries which give "animosh" as the translation for dog. She also looked into a book *The Dog's Children: Anishinaabe Texts Told by Angeline Williams* and found that many Ojibwe/Anishinaabe stories are about half-dog people.

Did you know that all of these rivers are designated as Canadian Heritage Rivers? When the Grand River was designated in 1994, its four major tributaries were also designated.

*If you can shed further light on the origin of other names of local waterways, please e-mail [jbaine@grandriver.ca](mailto:jbaine@grandriver.ca).*

## 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.

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