



GRAND Actions

The Grand River watershed newsletter



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Capturing the Grand's beauty

By Lara Fox
GRCA Communications Specialist

Having a camera while hiking local trails helped Darlene Hewson nab the top prize — a \$500 gift certificate from a local camera retailer — in the Grand River Conservation Authority's photo contest.

Nearly 270 photos were submitted during most of 2014. The winners are people who combine their enjoyment of getting outdoors with photography. Many awesome pictures didn't 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 and recreational activities in the watershed today and in the past.

Grand Prize

Darlene Hewson spends much of her free time with a camera in her hand and loves the outdoors. "I love to hike and explore new places

and trails. For me, hiking and photography go hand in hand," she said. Hewson is a member of the Brant Camera Club.

The Grand Prize winning photo — depicting Whitemans Creek and the Cleaver Road bridge in Brant County — was taken on a foggy autumn morning after hiking to the creek through the trails at the Apps' Mill Nature Centre property.

"The morning light was just enough to light up the fall colours along the creek," Hewson said. To capture the photo, she set her tripod on two small rocks in the creek.

Riverscapes category

George Rosema of Wyoming, Ontario is an amateur photographer who has a passion for landscapes and night photography and received the first place prize in riverscapes.

"I love the Elora Gorge area and have been there several times, but this was my first time shooting from right on the river," said Rosema when asked

Cover photo

The Grand Prize photo in the GRCA photo contest was taken of Whitemans Creek.

Photo by Darlene Hewson



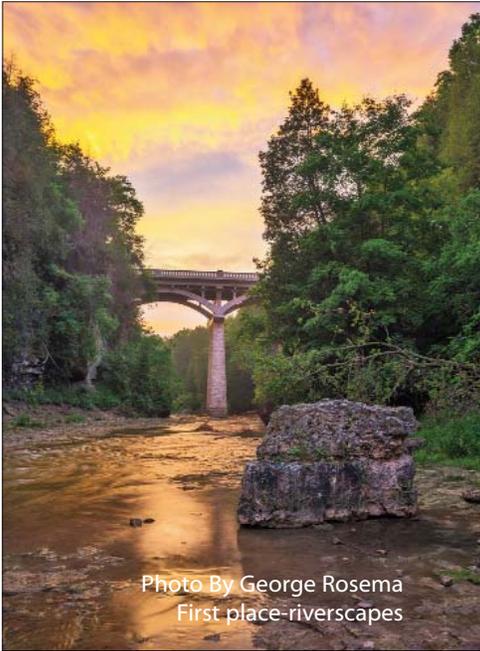


Photo By George Rosema
First place-riverscapes

about the day he took the winning photograph. He captured the photo, showing the David Street bridge from the banks of the Grand River in the Elora Gorge at sunset in June, 2014.

Second place winner Sara Hannaford's love of photography started about six years ago and has led her to start a small photography business.

"I love snapping photos of whatever comes my way or whatever I find on my journeys. Inspiration comes from lots of different things, such as the people around me, travel and nature," said the Caledon resident.

Hannaford's winning photograph of the Grand River was taken in June, 2014 near the village of Belwood. While out for a drive, Hannaford stumbled across this section of the Grand River. "When I got down to the river, I was baffled at the beauty I saw. I just couldn't resist taking the photo, as who knew if I would ever see the same thing again," she said.

Honourable mentions in the riverscape category went to Bill Chan of Stratford for a panorama of the Conestogo River near Wellington Lines 12 and 3 and to Lisa Cassidy of Brantford for a photo of a sunset on the Grand River at the Lorne Bridge, Brantford.

Recreational category

First place in the recreational category went to Tina McAuley, of Waterloo who has a passion for photography and the outdoors.



Photo by Sara Hannaford
Second place-riverscapes

"I do a lot of hiking, biking, canoeing, camping, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, and I am always taking pictures on my adventures," she said when contacted about her win. "I've recently been making an effort to include people in my photos to show the interaction that we have with nature and the enjoyment it brings us."

The photo, showing McAuley's boyfriend Chris fishing from a wooden canoe on Pinehurst Lake, was captured on a June afternoon. "We often go canoeing on Pinehurst Lake. It is such a nice, relaxing

escape that is close to home," she said.

Second place in the recreational category went to Sarah Gray, a 16-year-old Cambridge high-school student with passions for blogging, graphic design, photography and the outdoors. She captured this winning photo of her sister while biking the trails at Shade's Mills Conservation Area, something she and her family love to do.

Gray uses a borrowed camera and has taught herself photography basics. "I often take [photography] books out of the library, watch YouTube tutorials, read articles online



Photo by Tina McAuley
First place-recreation



Photo by Sarah Gray
Second place-recreation

and use trial and error. I borrow a camera almost every weekend and I am very excited to one day have all my own equipment,” she said.

Honourable mentions in the recreation category went to Judee Richardson Schofield of Cambridge for her photo of a kayaker in the Grand River near Parkhill bridge in Cambridge and Doug Hall of Brantford for a photo of river users at a pedestrian bridge over the Grand River in Brantford.

Historic category

Scott Munro of Rockwood garnered the first prize in the historic category. The Hammond/Munro family has fond

memories of times spent at Belwood Lake that span three generations. Munro, originally of Fergus, submitted this photograph of his mother, the late Sheilah Hammond Munro, and her cousin, playing on the beach at the lake in 1947. This was just five years after the lake was created by the construction of Shand Dam in 1942.

“Belwood Lake was always a large part of our lives. My grandfather always had a boat, and we all learned to fish, waterski and swim there,” said Munro. “We had many good family moments at Belwood.”

Historic category second place went to Jeff Leader, Glen Morris who has a keen interest in the history of the area. The winning photo

shows the Glen Morris Old Stone Mill. It was pulled from an album Leader purchased from an antiques dealer. The photo is estimated to be circa 1920. “I am currently working to assign names, dates and locations to all of the [historic] photos I have in my collection,” he said.

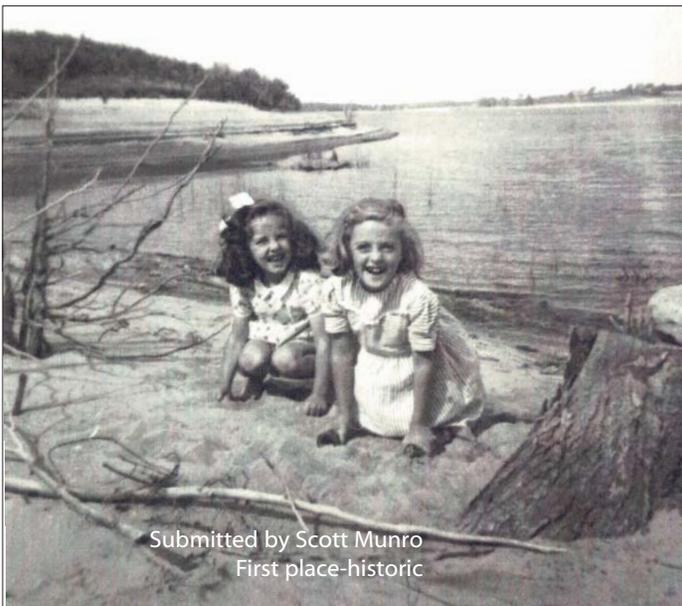
The Glen Morris Mill, which overlooks the Grand River, was built in 1867 by builder Andrew Kelman for Sydney and Alva German. The mill featured the largest turbine in the area and converted raw wool into fine cloth by utilizing water from the Grand River. Later, it was converted into a 13 bedroom summer resort called the Grand River Lodge. But access to the resort was cut off after the Lake Erie and Northern Railway was built in 1913-1914 and the resort closed down. Today, the walls are still standing, but the old mill is in need of structural maintenance.

Random draws

The GRCA also held eight monthly draws for an annual membership to the Grand River Parks. These went to Nick Wagner (Kitchener), Brenda Astins (Fergus), Paul Baron (Arthur), Ron Rhodes (Waterloo), Sy Deeb (Cambridge), Lynn Boehler (New Hamburg), Scott Munro (Rockwood) and Eleanor Grant (Waterloo).

The winning photographs will be used in GRCA publications and online. They can also be viewed online here:

www.flickr.com/grandriverconservation.



Submitted by Scott Munro
First place-historic

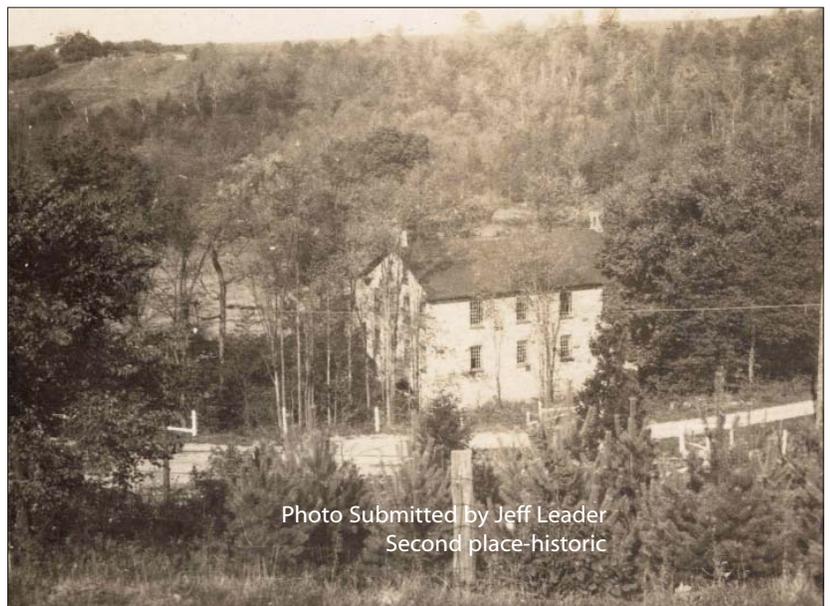


Photo Submitted by Jeff Leader
Second place-historic



Photo by Kevin Tupman

Feeders allow birds to survive winter. A red breasted nuthatch at a feeder.

Confessions of an addict

By **Dan Schneider**
Senior Nature Interpreter

I am an addict. Close-up views of birds have thrilled me for most of my life. And I am not alone. Each year, North Americans purchase tonnes of seed, making this one of the most popular wildlife activities.

Many years ago, I wondered whether feeding birds helps or harms birds and other wildlife populations. My concerns arose gradually. I watched hordes of red and gray squirrels on my feeders and wondered if I was increasing their local population.

I learned that the jaunty blue jays and even the cute chipmunks that visited my feeder were consummate nest robbers. I picked up and cradled the occasional dead bird at the base of the picture window near our feeder.

I watched house sparrows and starlings eat our food, then saw the sparrows usurp a nesting box from tree swallows, and the starlings as they evicted a pair of northern flickers.

House finches appeared in greater and greater numbers. And — horror of horrors

— my foray into summer feeding proved irresistible to several brown-headed cowbirds, a species that lays its eggs in the nests of other birds and is capable of decimating songbird populations.

Eventually, I faced the obvious question: does feeding help the birds that visit our feeders? Are we increasing their numbers, or are we exposing them to greater dangers than they would normally confront? Finally, I put my questions to the experts. Here are some tips based on what I learned. While this research goes back 20 years, I suspect that it mostly stands true today.

Tips for effective bird feeding

Every feeder owner must make a personal decision about which birds to feed and how to feed them. Experts have made the following suggestions to reduce the negative impacts of bird feeding.

Backyard Naturalization: Whether or not you have a feeder, planting your yard with native species that attract birds is a low-impact way of bird feeding. There is lots of information about this and even a new term called birdscaping—which is landscaping

with birds in mind.

Cat Predation: An Environment Canada study released in 2013 found that cats take down about 200 million birds each year in Canada. Kitty cams show that a wandering cat would kill 10 to 12 birds in a night. To reduce cat predation, keep the feeder area clear of potential hiding places to a radius of at least two metres. Placing the feeder at least 0.5 metres off the ground will also help.

Window Kills: Feeders placed very close (three metres or less) from your observation window will cause fewer kills than those placed farther away. Avoid black, mirror-like glass and glassed-in rooms where the birds can see through to the other side. Use dividers (e.g., vertical venetians or adhesive strips) to interrupt uniform expanses of glass. Falcon silhouettes should be placed on the outside of the window. Check their visibility from the birds' point of view; light-coloured silhouettes may show up better than black. In problem areas where kills cannot be reduced, netting may be necessary.

Squirrel Access: To eliminate access by squirrels, place the feeder fairly high on a pole in an open area two or three metres from a deck and at least six metres from overhanging branches. Put a cone- or cylinder shaped baffle on the pole, with its bottom at least 1.5 metres from the ground.

Type of Feeder: Using a tube-shaped silo feeder with small perches will discourage blue jays, grackles and starlings.

Type of Food: Limiting the use of corn and small grain, such as millet, and using sunflower and niger seed will reduce the starlings, house sparrows and cowbirds at your feeder. But mourning doves and tree sparrows will also stay away.

Cleanliness: Platform feeders should never have more food than will be used in a day or two. Remove any remaining seed before you add more.

Suet: Use rendered suet in warmer months to prevent rancid food. A suet feeder that is open only at the bottom reduces starling usage.

Hummingbird Feeder: Change liquid every two or three days to prevent fermentation.

More info:
www.feederwatch.org
www.naturecanada.ca

New volunteer program

The Grand River Conservation Authority has a new volunteer program thanks to a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

If you would like to volunteer for the GRCA, either as an individual or as part of a group, Matt Amy can help.

Amy is the new volunteer program coordinator and his job is matching volunteers with GRCA projects and programs. These come in an assortment of shapes and forms — from building a walking bridge to maintaining trails to anything related to improving habitat or recreation, or even outdoor education. Amy will be looking at co-op placements, corporate volunteering, community events and special skills that seniors or others may offer.

“The GRCA has always had strong community support and volunteers have always helped us out. We are now trying to simplify the process and make it easier for volunteers to connect with us,” Amy explains. Previously, a potential volunteer with a great idea may have approached a

FOUNDATION

variety of different staff members, such as a nature centre staff member or a parks superintendent. However, without anyone dedicated to volunteers, some of these projects didn't materialize and the volunteers went elsewhere or were not recognized for their contribution.

A volunteer himself in his own community, Amy has worked for the GRCA for eight years in parks, resource planning and human resources, starting when he was a student. He knows this organization from many different angles.

“I know how many opportunities there are for volunteers at the GRCA and that is why I am really looking forward to connecting volunteers with opportunities,” he says.

This new program came about as a result of a \$274,000 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and additional support from the Grand River Conservation Foundation.

There are many ways that volunteers

“We are working to make it easier to volunteer for the GRCA.”

-Matt Amy



Matt Amy, new volunteer coordinator for the GRCA.

contribute to the GRCA. For example, each spring Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada (TMMC) employees undertake projects such as trail maintenance and trimming, constructing walking bridges and painting buildings. These change from year to year, but this is an example of how a company can work closely with the GRCA on projects.

A shop class under the direction of teacher Scott Granby at Tollgate Technological Skills Centre in Brantford has also undertaken many projects over the years. The students have constructed picnic tables for Brant Park, done a park cleanup and are currently making 600 plywood fish for a GRCA outdoor education program that will take place this spring.

Amy is also very impressed by a dedicated volunteer at Guelph Lake Nature Centre, Chris Osborne. He helps with many maintenance projects. During the winter, he shovels snow before the students arrive to ensure their safety, and in fall he rakes leaves and maintains the grounds. This makes a really big difference to the staff and students at the nature centre.

Until now, many volunteers have been referred to partner organizations or have quietly gone about their volunteer work with little or no recognition. This new program will recognize volunteers, engage new ones, and ensure their safety. It will also help the GRCA look after our lands and connect people with the environment through outdoor experiences. The GRCA will also



Employees from Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada unload wood for a new walking bridge that they will build on a hiking trail.

work even more closely with partner organizations.

Amy will work on annual events, such as GRCA tree planting events that take place each spring across the watershed. These create future forests, and volunteers are always needed. GRCA volunteer event opportunities that are open to the public, including the tree planting events, will be listed on www.grandriver.ca/events once the details have been worked out.

Volunteers, companies that would like to arrange volunteer work days for their staff and community organizations can get in touch with Matt Amy by emailing him at volunteer@grandriver.ca or by calling 519-621-2763, ext. 2214.

Apply by Feb. 27 for conservation grants

Applications are now being accepted for grants for schoolyard and community environmental projects. The grants are offered by the GRCA and the Grand River Conservation Foundation. Deadline for applications is Feb. 27. Grants will be distributed in the spring to schools and in the fall to community groups.

Two categories of grants:

- Community groups can get up to \$1,000 for conservation projects that are tangible and available for use or benefit of the entire community. For example, previous recipients have built a river access point, carried out habitat restoration and planted trees.
- Elementary schools in the Grand River watershed can get up to \$750 to pay for natural elements (e.g., trees, shrubs, seeds, plants) of a schoolyard naturalization project.

The application form and other information is available on www.grcf.ca. Money for the grants comes from two sources:

- The GRCA's Thies Riverprize Endowment Fund, which was established with the monetary portion of the GRCA's 2000 Brisbane, Australia award for excellence in watershed management.
- The Foundation's Grand Champions Fund, established through private donations to support local environmental work.



The Grand River Conservation Foundation has developed many lasting relationships with community groups for projects, including the Guelph Rotary Forest at Guelph Lake.

Celebrate 50 years and protect local rivers

This year is the 50th anniversary of the Grand River Conservation Foundation.

Over the years, the Foundation has raised \$11 million for conservation and outdoor education projects related to the GRCA, extending the work of the authority to create beautiful ecological spaces for nature and people.

The Foundation got off to a start when it received its Letters Patent from the province on April 12, 1965.

This year, the Foundation is working with its many partners and anticipates holding up to 50 events to raise funds for conservation projects. But it is also urging you to help meet this goal.

Plan your own project

“The Foundation invites individuals and organizations to consider joining us by holding your own event to protect our great river system. Funds raised when people get together can really add up to support GRCF’s recreation, education and restoration programs,” said Sara Wilbur, executive

director of the GRCF.

What the GRCF can provide:

- Information about the GRCF, including the charitable registration number
- Help selecting a project that is meaningful to you
- Donation forms
- Charitable receipts for donations of \$10 or more (you will need to collect contact information for anyone who would like a receipt)

Whether it’s a birthday or celebrating the achievement of a personal goal, or a get-together with friends, co-workers or a recreation group, you can help ensure that the Grand River watershed is enhanced over the next 50 years and well beyond.

Send the Foundation pictures of your event and we will share them, or send us the details of public events and we will promote them.

For more information, please contact Cam Linwood at clinwood@grandriver.ca, or 519-621-2763 ext. 2251.



Join the Big Chill Fun Day Feb. 16

Among the first Foundation celebratory events will be The Big Chill that takes place on Family Day, Monday, Feb. 16 at Rockwood Conservation Area and Guelph Lake Nature Centre.

There will be many family-oriented activities at both locations. The Big Chill will be free, and will also raise funds for the Grand River Conservation Foundation.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

Nature man Dan wins award

Dan Schneider, a.k.a. Dan, Dan the Nature Man, received the 2014 Watershed Interpreters Network (WIN) Award in November.

This award is given out annually by WIN, a network that includes outdoor education interpreters from 32 conservation authorities across the province, at their conference.

Schneider has been a nature centre interpreter with the GRCA for more than three decades and it is estimated that he has taught more than 200,000 watershed students about the wonders of nature.

“He embodies the characteristics of a great outdoor educator – passionate, knowledgeable, enthusiastic, fun, gentle, collaborative and a life-long learner,” said GRCA CAO Joe Farwell in describing Schneider.

Dan graduated from the University of

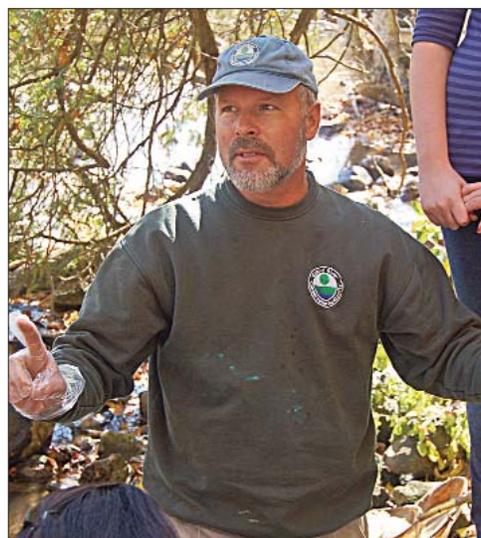
Guelph in 1979 with a BSc. in Wildlife Biology. He worked briefly as a biologist before beginning his GRCA career at the Laurel Creek Nature Centre. He moved to Guelph Lake Nature Centre in 1984 where he has been since. He earned a Bachelor of Education from the University of Toronto. “What makes the conservation authorities’ outdoor education programs unique is that we work within watersheds.

These are natural areas, cutting across artificial political boundaries like county lines. Students who visit our nature centres understand that what happens upstream affects those who live downstream,” Schneider has said.

A leader in nature education

He has been instrumental in developing the Specialist High Skills Major Environment program with the local school boards. He has also contributed many articles for the Grand Actions (including the one about feeding birds in this issue) and has written articles about travel and nature for Canadian Geographic, Ontario Nature and the Canadian Wildlife Federation’s Wild magazine.

Schneider is a past president of Nature Guelph, and has received an award for Outstanding Leadership in Environmental Education in 2000. Over the years, Schneider has also shared his knowledge and passion for the outdoors through presentations he has made to international organizations such as the National Association of Interpreters



Dan “the Nature Man” Schneider

and the World Environmental Education Congress.

Dan was the driving force in establishing WIN in 2007. As a member of the Eastern Conservation Authority’s Rekindle the Spark group in the late ’80s, he suggested that a Provincial Interpreters Network should be established.

Erosion workshop Linwood Feb. 10

Soil erosion can be a slow process, but over the years it leads to tremendous losses for farmers.

To help farmers learn how to combat erosion, a workshop will be held in at the Linwood Community Centre, 5279 Ament Line in Linwood on Tuesday, Feb. 10 from 1:30 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Specialists from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs will discuss steps farmers can take to keep the soil on their land. Topics will include erosion control structures and the use of cover crops.

Staff from the Grand River Conservation Authority will present erosion risk mapping developed for parts of the Upper Nith River watershed. This mapping shows areas of gully formation as well as areas at highest risk for sheet erosion.

Information will be presented on grants available in Waterloo Region and Wellington County to address erosion issues and support the use of cover crops.

“Erosion doesn’t just happen during spring runoff,” said Anne Loeffler, GRCA conservation specialist. “We’ve also had some significant soil losses after heavy rainfall events in late spring and early summer. Producers can’t afford to lose topsoil to downstream reservoirs and lakes.”

Participation is free, but preregistration is requested. To register, please contact Anne Loeffler at the Grand River Conservation Authority at aloeffler@grandriver.ca or call (519) 621-2763, Ext. 2242.

Funding for the workshop has been provided by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The Rural Water Quality Program is funded by the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, the County of Wellington and the City of Guelph.



Photo by Anne Loeffler

THE GRAND CALENDAR

Trees and Bees, Feb. 10

If you are tired of mowing your large lawn and looking to diversify your plantings, attend this free workshop Feb. 10 at the Cayuga Mutual Insurance Company, Cayuga. Get advice on what to plant to attract pollinators, how to enhance shoreline vegetation and create areas with trees for wildlife habitat. In addition, there are funding opportunities available to landowners with greater than five acres of property. Participants will receive a free Stewardship Guide. The workshop takes place 6:30 p.m. to 8 p.m. and register online at www.grandriver.eventbrite.ca.

Heritage Day, Guelph, Feb. 13

Mark your calendar to attend the 18th annual Heritage Day Workshop taking place in Guelph. The theme for 2015 is Timeline/Waterline: Grand Culture at the Confluence. This workshop is about Guelph's connection to World War I and the Natural and Cultural History of the Guelph area. The event is sponsored by the City of Guelph, Grand River Conservation Authority and the Heritage Working Group of The Grand Strategy. The workshop takes place at the John McCrae Royal Canadian Legion Branch (57 Watson Parkway South) in Guelph. Complete the attached registration form or download a copy from www.grandriver.ca.

The Big Chill Fun Day, Feb. 16

A fun day outdoors at Rockwood Park and Guelph Lake Nature Centre. Many family activities to enjoy winter and it is all free or by donation. In addition, there will be an owl prowling on Feb. 15 at Rockwood during the evening. Activities include horse-drawn sleigh rides, a campfire, dog sledding, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, feeding the chickadees, ice fishing and skating. Food trucks will serve up something hot. Learn about the plans for the new nature centre complex. Admission is free and voluntary donations for the new nature centre are welcome. Free or by donation to the Grand River Conservation Foundation.

Family Fishing Weekend, Feb 14-16

During Family Fishing Weekend, Canadian residents can fish without a licence. Two GRCA parks have special events. At Shade's Mills Cambridge, Family Ice Fishing Day is Sunday Feb. 15 and at Pinehurst Lake near Paris it is Monday Feb 16, both 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. This event is open to everyone from first timer anglers to seasoned ice fisherman. Equipment and bait will be available for new anglers, but there is a limited supply. There are numerous draw prizes and you will have a chance to win just for entering. This is a catch-and-release event, with prizes drawn at 2:30 p.m.

Landowners can order trees before March 1 or attend tree sale

Landowners can order trees to be planted on their own properties of 2.5 acres or more (exclusive of buildings) from the GRCA until March 1.

Tree orders must be for 200 seedlings or 20 saplings or more and there are many species available.

A tree sale takes place each spring at the GRCA in May for the trees that have not been picked up or that are overstocked.

For more information or to arrange a visit to your property, check the Forestry section of www.grandriver.ca/trees, email trees@grandriver.ca or call 519-621-2763.

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.

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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