



ANNUAL REPORT

Friends of Wye Marsh

2015

INSIDE

Executive Director's
Message

Page 3

Education Looking
Forward in 2016

Page 5

Volunteer
Contributions

Page 7



FRIENDS OF WYE MARSH

Our Mission

'Fostering Environmental Stewardship'

Our Directors

Sean Diening, President

Anne Lorriman, Vice President

Barry Bergey, Treasurer

Bill Byrick

Heather Eland

Colin Harper

Lisa Lipskie

Jim MacMillan

Robert Thompson

Our Staff

Sara Street

Executive Director

Paul Beauchamp

Maintenance Manager

Denise Graham

Captive Wildlife Care Technician

Nick Howell

Assistant Education & Reserv. Coordinator

Darlene Lenehan

Bookkeeper

Cathy Lewis

Visitor Services Coordinator

Beryl Loxley

Volunteer Store Manager

Tracey Patterson

Event & Volunteer Coordinator

Sonya Stemerdkin

Education & Reservations Coordinator



A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR...

This year has been full of change and new energy at the marsh. We removed our boardwalk and embarked on the journey to raising the funds needed to replace it in 2016, we were successful due to a wonderful year in donations and grants. We've raised over \$300,000 to replace the boardwalk. In part through the Ontario Trillium Foundation (\$150,000), the National Wetland Conservation Fund (\$107,500) and through donations from our visitors, members, volunteers, donors and supporters. Without all of you we wouldn't be as successful as we are! Thank you!

Our staff have worked through tough times this year and been very dedicated. Every year I am blown away by the work that we as a team are able to accomplish. Our team is not just our staff—but also our volunteers, members, donors and supporters. My sincerest thanks to the entire team for their hard work and passion throughout this year and here's to 2016!

We've made some big strides towards creating a new vision/mission for the marsh—with the help of consultants Cathy and Joanna of Smart Move we've conducted over 120 interviews, collected 275 responses to our online survey, conducted a staff focus group and major summit event (Feb. 2016) with more excitement to come. The journey toward a revitalized Wye Marsh will require hard work and lots of hours but it will all be well worth the effort and I look forward to reporting on the successes of 2016 next year. Cheers! - Sara.





VISITORS EXPERIENCING WYE MARSH...

Another year has passed where we greeted both new and old customers, from several different countries and cultures. This was the first year for our Heart of Georgian Bay Discovery Tour Ticket which was very well received. We always suggest that someone who has never visited the marsh before should go on a guided tour either walking or canoeing as their experience is always more rewarding. Several people who have not been here for several years are returning either with their children or grandchildren. Escape from technology and rejuvenate yourself, an outdoor experience truly is the best medicine in the world! Looking forward to the new boardwalk and special programs for the coming year. Thank you for supporting us. Catherine.



"WELL WORTH THE TIME! This is a swan sanctuary! And the marsh boardwalk is not only beautiful, but children can fish for marine life with nets provided (and put them back afterwards). There are early pioneer buildings throughout the walks, and be sure to buy some sunflower seeds at the entrance to feed the many many chipmunks that will cross your path in the lovely wooded areas. There is a look-out tower, a birds of prey exhibit, and a honey bee hive with crafts and information. And don't forget to check out the swan rehab area!" - Tripadvisor review by Omionekonomi



EDUCATION IN 2015 ...

In May 2015, new program staff were hired and we were very busy with school groups through May and June. The Wye Marsh offers school groups a variety of programs which can involve everything from dip netting to canoeing to mineral testing. Reviews of our programs have been excellent due to our team of passionate and knowledgeable interpreters. In July and August, public programs which included guided canoe and kayak tours were a hit. The 3 hour Kayak Eco Tour which takes patrons beyond the limits of our normal public kayak tours, and deep into the heart of the Wye Marsh became very popular. We had 5 Eco Tours in the first 2 weeks of July! All around 2015 has been a good year for the Education department of the Wye Marsh! - Nick.

EDUCATION LOOKING FORWARD INTO 2016...

Our Program department is looking forward to the many opportunities to explore with students, families, community groups, campers and special interest clubs throughout the upcoming spring, summer & fall sessions.

Planning for our busy Spring session is already underway with the hiring of staff, those with whom we have a common goal of sharing our knowledge of the environment to preserve its natural history. These staff will certainly need to hit the ground running as we anticipate the Spring session to be busier than usual due to many classes having to re-schedule their cancelled trips from the Fall of 2015 (due to the public school work to rule action). Our efforts continue in the attempt to offer new programming to students and teachers. Currently, we are working hard at not only developing new programs, but also at modifying the way in which we offer our existing ones. A selection of our classic programs (those that are tried, tested and true) will be entering 'the vault' where they will remain until they are swapped out and re-introduced at a later date.

With the addition of the Canoe Museum's travelling exhibit in our Display Hall, we are also planning for a very busy Summer session. We are working to augment this fantastic addition by giving visitors an opportunity to engage with the exhibit's content experientially by offering both pre-registered and drop-in workshops, tours and demonstrations. The program staff are also committing to providing this Summer's visitors with the unique experience to contribute to ongoing research efforts. Through programming that is designed with the 'citizen scientists' in mind, visitors will participate in wildlife (bird, aquatic invertebrate, amphibian and reptile) surveys/counts.

For Fall of 2016 we will be introducing all new programming for our Scouts Canada groups in order to reflect the changes that they have recently made to their overall programming structure. As Scout groups make up a large percentage of our business throughout the winter months in our overnight accommodations packages, we are committed to providing them quality programming that adheres to their organizational goals for their participants. - Sonya.





UPDATE FROM THE ANIMALS...

2015 proved to be a busy year for our animal ambassadors here at the Wye Marsh. Our birds of prey, as always, attracted many visitors to our Sunday demonstration as well as offsite programs and private demonstrations, they even managed to get on camera a few times (TVO Kids, amateur video by Innis and co). Also new to birds of prey are Katelyn and

Rebecca! Besides coming in as program staff they also wanted to learn more about the birds. They are both enjoying working with our raptors, especially JJ, and I too am enjoying the fact that I can trust them with the responsibility of handling the birds as well as doing their own demonstrations!

Our display hall animals are still an attraction to our guests, Sonic is always there to impress! With the success of our Jr. Naturalist program (almost 5 Jr. Nat's per day last summer), the display hall was spotless. All the animals were well cared for and all the turtles received everyday outdoor basking, I'm looking forward to this summer's recruitment of Jr. Naturalist! Unfortunately not everything can live forever and we did lose a few amphibians, leaving us with some empty tanks. Our salamanders, green frogs, bullfrog (who was at least 12 years old!) and our toad, they all lived well over their life expectancy in which visitors were always impressed to hear.

The WM honey bees are always a hit. With a poor start to the season with all our 4 hives dead, we replenished with 3 new hives and new equipment that Paul was nice enough to build himself. 2 Hives went on display at the bee house and the third was installed in the observation hive. We were able to collect 80 lbs of honey from the 2 hives at the bee house and we left the observation hive with their winter crop. So far this winter season has been rather mild,

Christmas day the bees were flying around foraging for food, which is an advantage for these foreign insects. Let's hope that spring and summer will be nice for the bees. -

Denise.



VOLUNTEERS ARE A PILLAR IN OUR OPERATIONS WE WOULDN'T BE HERE WITHOUT THEM ...

Volunteers are the heart and soul of many organizations, and Wye Marsh is no different. Our volunteers contributed over 6,000 volunteer hours last year, helping with everything from flipping pancakes to weeding our wildflower gardens. The value of that volunteer work cannot be underestimated. A comment on a new volunteer application I recently received expressed exactly what volunteering at Wye Marsh is all about: "I am excited to volunteer at Wye Marsh because I know there is a lot of behind the scenes work required to keep such a facility in operation. Volunteering will ensure that people will be able to continue to enjoy great outdoor activities like cross country skiing". Well said!

This past year has seen some enhancements in volunteer management at the Marsh. We conducted an online survey of over 100+ volunteers in the Fall to ask them about their volunteer experience, the good and the bad of volunteering with us, and to get their feedback on a couple of issues. The response rate was excellent and we are working towards compiling all of the responses into an action plan which we will use to focus on improving and/or fine tuning our volunteer experience. Another online survey is forthcoming shortly to get feedback on what the Marsh is doing right (or wrong) with our volunteer appreciation processes. We are also working on re-vamping our volunteer handbook and orientation procedures to ensure all our volunteers, existing and new, are getting the most out of their time commitment.



On the special event front our annual Fundraising Dinner in October was very well received, and our Hal- lowe'en Marsh Monster event was a roaring success. Thank you to all the volunteers who helped out at all our special events this past year, we really couldn't have done it without you!



MSS Co-op students enjoying a snack after their week of work!
These students are a hard working bunch!

This upcoming year is again full of exciting special events such as our 25th annual Sweetwater Harvest Festival on March 19 & 20th, Canoe Trippers Rendezvous April 23rd 2016, Fundraising Pasta Dinner May 12th 2016, Get Outdoors Festival in August, our annual Fundraising Dinner in September and Marsh Monster in October. We look forward to seeing everyone there enjoying all that the Marsh has to offer.

Once again, a big thank you to all our volunteers who so generously donate their time and skills to ensure that Wye Marsh can continue to fulfil our mission to "foster environmental stewardship". - Tracey

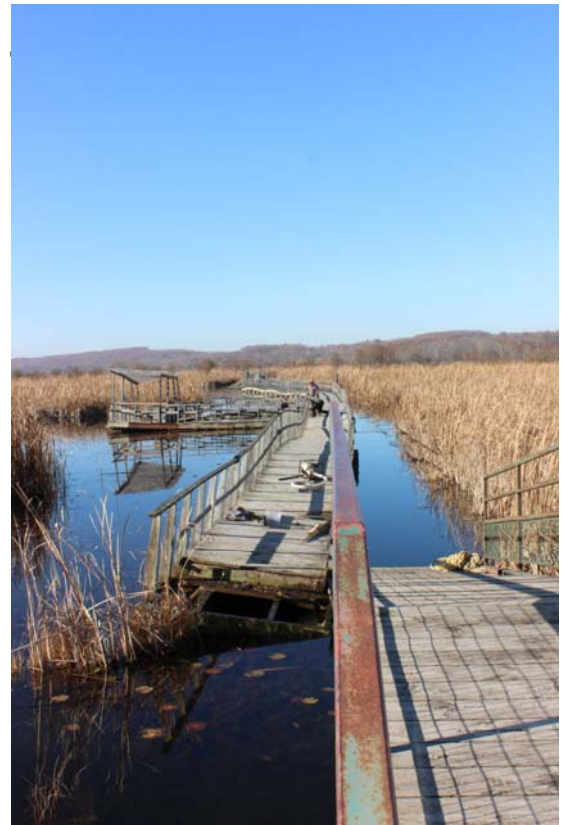


AN UPDATE ON THE FACILITY AND GROUNDS...

This season was a busy one in the maintenance department of the Wye Marsh. Many small projects were completed.

- We were able to complete the replacement of the floor in the ID Trail Blind with the help of John and Brian and the ramp will be replaced in 2016.
- Our bunkhouse fire pit received some new screenings to hopefully keep it from being a big mud puddle in the spring.
- New stairs were constructed on each of the bunkhouses—replacing the old stairs and landings, giving the entrances a safer and more appealing look.
- The kayak launch was installed on the dock at the tower and proved to be a very welcome addition—it works very well to keep the kayak stable as people get in and out of the kayaks.
- A fence was installed along the edge of the pavilion and parking lot to help stop the balls rolling into the parking lot and increase the safety of our campers.
- Many hours were spent with the help of a few volunteers to prepare the ski trails for the winter and it seems that work has been a great success as some areas that are almost always wet/open are now covered with snow.
- In November of 2015 the carpet in our visitor centre was removed and replaced with tile—giving the whole room a fresh feel.
- Our boardwalk was removed by GLS Welding and Fabricating - and the new boardwalk will be installed by Summer 2016!

Many of these projects were only made possible through donations from private foundations, individuals and grants. Many thanks to our donors, staff and volunteers for supporting/completing this work. - Paul.

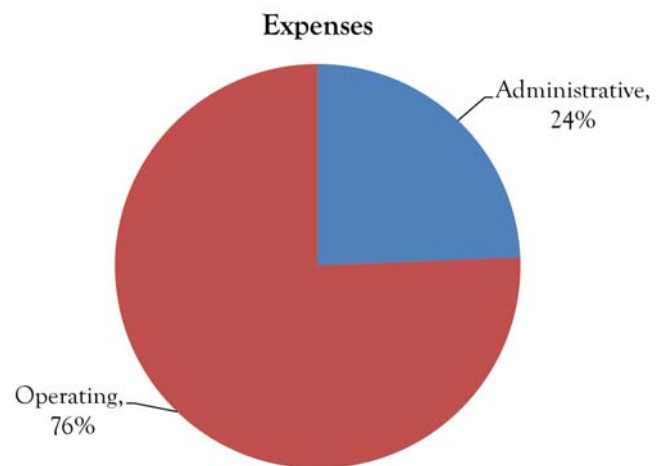
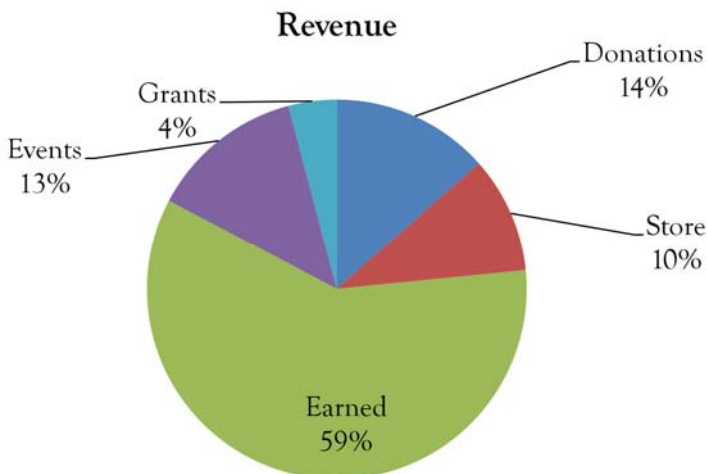


“WINTER WONDERLAND. Went cross country skiing at Wye Marsh this morning for the first time - soft snow falling - it was beautiful. I hadn't been on my skis for several years and was quite rusty. After an hour and a half on the groomed trails which are for the most part relatively flat, I was beginning to feel more confident and although quite tired actually managed to go down a couple of small hills without falling. The friend who accompanied me had been skiing at the Marsh in previous years and took some seeds with her. Chickadees come down from the trees to take the seed right from one's hand. So peaceful there with many bird feeders around the Centre. The Centre is well set up for resting following your trek with a fireplace, seating and refreshments. Snowshoes can be rented on site - there are separate trails so that the ski trails are not disturbed. You may also visit the local trumpeter swan population (they are very noisy) which is cared for by volunteers throughout the winter.” - Tripadvisor review by Wetherstone P.

AN EXERPT FROM THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR FISCAL 2015...



| Statement of Operations | | |
|---|-----------------|----------------|
| Year ended October 31, 2015 | | |
| Revenue | 2015 | 2014 |
| General Admissions & Membership | 133,807 | 123,889 |
| Educational & Recreational Programs | 169,568 | 176,064 |
| Store Operations + Bob's Book | 56,541 | 68,465 |
| Fundraising Events/Programs | 74,541 | 67,399 |
| Donations & Gifts | 76,407 | 40,061 |
| Grants | 23,401 | 52,588 |
| Amortization of Deferred Contributions | 33,206 | 31,661 |
| Total Revenue | 567,471 | 560,127 |
| Expenses | | |
| Administrative | 164,054 | 166,416 |
| Operating | 509,126 | 491,246 |
| Total Expenses | 673,180 | 657,662 |
| Excess of Revenue over Expenses for the Year | -105,709 | -97,535 |



Please see the full Audited Financial Statements for more details. The above is provided as a summary only.

A special “thank you” to all of our sponsors and donors!

Please support the organizations and businesses that support WYE MARSH



This project was undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada. Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier du gouvernement du Canada.

The Friends of Wye Marsh would like to thank all of the above companies that support the Wye Marsh throughout the year and on a per project basis. There are so many to thank we were not able to put them all on here. Without their help we would not be able to continue to reach over 30,000 visitors annually.