



Annual Report 2005



Our Mission: To spark a commitment to conserving wetlands, woodlands and wildlife by creating exciting learning opportunities in a natural setting.



**Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre
Midland, Ontario**

2005 A Snapshot of another busy and successful year

Staff

Wye Marsh now has 10 full-time and 6 part-time staff in addition to over 400 enthusiastic volunteers. The major change this year was to combine the Stewardship and Program departments; each staff member has taken on responsibilities in both worlds. This will better facilitate the dissemination of information from research and stewardship projects to our education programs. Adrian Philpot has assumed the role of Education and Stewardship Manager with Renee Fountain, Julie Kee, Chris Michalak, and Adam Zita all reporting to him.

Programs

This year two new programs were added to our extensive list of curriculum geared education programs: "Conservation in Action" for grade 9 and "Healthy History" for grade 7 in conjunction with Ste Marie Among the Hurons. These programs were successful and we will continue them. Currently, additional high school programs are under development as well as a sustainable energy program for all ages.

Residential programs continue to be in demand. Boy Scout and Girl Guide groups are now travelling from all over southern Ontario for a weekend of camping and badge work.

Summer Day Camp (Camp Marshes and Moccasins) numbers were up 15% from the previous year and evaluations were excellent. Kinder Camp was in such demand that a second week was added. This coming summer Wye Marsh is planning to add two additional weeks for older campers: "Survival Camp" and "CSI Camp". Both of these will run one week each month and have borrowed themes from the TV shows of the same name.



Off-site programs are growing in popularity as Wye Marsh develops more options to be booked. The Birds of Prey show is proving to be a hit and Wet and Scaley continues to be popular. This past summer one staff stayed at Delawana for two months and delivered programs to its guests six days a week. Additional staff traveled there on Friday nights to assist with the Wet and Scaley program. This coming summer Wye Marsh will also be at the Wiggamog Inn one day a week delivering 2 naturebased programs and a Birds of Prey Show. We hope to expand our offsite programs and are marketing them extensively at many trade shows.



The Falconry program shows great promise for the future and as a good source of revenue for the Marsh. Weekly shows have sparked a lot of interest and we intend to improve our show as we train more birds. Two staff are licensed Falconers while two others are currently apprenticing. Wye Marsh is working with Matt Lieberknecht, a master falconer from the Ontario School of Falconry to ensure the birds receive the best care and training. The birds that are on site now have been transferred from Ulrich Waterman of Bird Control International.

The S.W.A.N.S. (Students Wondering About Nature) changed their name back to Junior Naturalists. 2005 was the second year of funding for the program from the Natural Science and Engineering Research Council. The number of youth signing up to be Junior Naturalists increased to 27 and their volunteer hours were over 2,000. They assisted with events, did interpretation for our visitors, and helped with stewardship and maintenance projects. For educational purposes and as a small perk, the Junior Naturalists were taken to Muskoka Wildlife Centre, The Falconry Centre in Tottenham, and attended an EcoMentors Workshop in Toronto. Kevin Callan came to talk to the group as well. Junior Naturalists receive training in animal care, plant and animal identification, visitor services, and interpretation techniques to prepare them for the job market. Two Junior Naturalists have been hired for weekends this year from this program to assist with interpretive programs, animal care, parent-and-tot programs and birthday parties. Although the program presents challenges, it continues to show potential.

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Facility

Grant dollars enabled many improvements to our site in 2005.

Healthy Wetlands, Healthy Communities Program, a matching grant program through the MNR, and Ducks Unlimited, gave Wye Marsh \$48,000 for the new boardwalk and \$38,000 for signage. Matching funds were obtained from ELCAN, Town of Midland, Tiny Township, Tay Township, Canadian Wildlife Service, CIBC, Page Graphics, The McGeachy Foundation and Wye Marsh.

New trailhead and directional signs have been installed and many more interpretive signs are in production and will be installed by May 2006. The first 635 feet of the boardwalk were replaced. A post system was first installed and allowed us to raise the boardwalk eighteen inches off the marsh. The boardwalk was widened to 8 feet and a short rail put was installed along the side to give wheelchairs guidance. An Adopt-a-Board program has been started to help recover some of the cost of the wood. The Midland-Penetang Field Naturalist Club purchased a large section as its contribution to the marsh this past year.

2005 was the final year of the Trillium Accessibility Grant and additional equipment was purchased. Wye Marsh now has 5 different all-terrain wheelchairs, 2 trail riders, 3 sit skis, 4 kick sleds, and a 6-seater golf cart available to customers. Most of the accessibility equipment is also available for loan.

The purchase of some heavy equipment has made life much easier for the only member of our maintenance staff, Graham MacDonald. The Rotary Club of Midland graciously donated \$20,000 to Wye Marsh, allowing us to purchase a Kubota tractor with a backhoe. Additional monies from Canadian Wildlife Service also made it possible to purchase an electric dump trailer that will fit down the trails and berms behind the tractor. The main berm needs much repair and with this equipment we will be able to accomplish this in the coming year. The berm should be raised and reinforced before we bring up the water level in the Wye Marsh cell.

Thanks to Ed Hartley and his crew, Wye Marsh now has a large new storage barn. This was necessary to store all the accessibility equipment as well as seasonal maintenance equipment, freeing up much needed space in the workshop.

The ID Trail had to be partially closed this year due to the danger of falling trees. This trail goes through a swamp area so many of the trees are dead. With the high winds we received this year, many trees came down and others are still leaning or hung up. The trail has been rerouted until it can be made safe.

Graham built a muse for the Birds of Prey and is continually improving their housing facilities and necessary equipment like perches and travel boxes. Sponsorship for the Muse was received from Barber and Haskill. As this program grows and we learn more about the world of Falconry, additional sponsorship will be necessary.

The ski trails were worked with some diversions around wet areas, new trails were created and extensions were made. Bridges have been built and culverts installed over other wet areas where water runs in the fall and spring. The red trail was diverted off private property and where the boundaries were uncertain; it was not opened and will not be until property stakes can be located.

The residential cabins were insulated and new windows procured. These will be installed in the spring. More renovations are still needed and will be accomplished when funding is secured.

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Stewardship Department

Stewardship/Research Program

Least Bittern & Black Tern Research was undertaken with thanks to funding obtained from Nature Canada Communities in Action Fund (CAF)

Research was completed in preparation for a Wye Marsh Management Plan. Species surveyed included: Yellow Rail (*Coturnicops noveboracensis*), Blanding's Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*), Black Crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*), Sandhill Crane (*Grus Canadensis*), and Fisher (*Martes pennanti*) – all were confirmed in the study area. Species surveyed but not confirmed in 2005 include: Milk Snake (*Lampropeltis triangulum*), and the Hognose Snake, (*Heterodon playrhinos*). A report detailing this research is available from Julie Kee (Stewardship Department) upon request. Colin Jones from NHIC (National Heritage Information Centre) donated materials, equipment and time (he gave instructions) for the Odenata & Lepidoptera count which was completed for the 2005 research.



Bird monitoring programs were continued with data submitted to Bird Studies Canada & Ontario Nest Records Scheme: Project Feeder Watch, Marsh Monitoring Program, Forest Bird Monitoring, Tree Swallow & Wood Duck Box.

The Eastern Blue Bird boxes project by Junior Civitans started in 2004 was completed with the installation of boxes by club members in March 2005.

Galerucella Beetles were monitored in Preston Cell to control the spread of Purple Loosestrife. Data collected showed that their population is increasing and they are spreading from the release point established in 2004.

A Caring for Nature Workshop Series was developed and each workshop offers visitors a stewardship related activity each month for the cost of general admission. A schedule of workshop themes is posted on the Wye Marsh website.

Three Volunteer for Nature Workshops were held at Wye Marsh, volunteers were provided through the Ontario Nature Volunteer Program:

- Boardwalk Building (May 2005)
- Glossy Buckthorn (June 2005)
- Purple Loosestrife (August 2005)

Additional Glossy Buckthorn control was undertaken along the Return Trail by staff, Wye Marsh volunteers and Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. The Georgian Bay Get Outdoors Club removed Purple Loosestrife during Project Purple Week – August 2005 (see picture attached).

A "Behind the Scenes Pass" was developed with the help of the Marketing Department and is a special program designed for interested members of the public who would like to experience the Wye Marsh from the perspective of an experienced staff member. The option includes a chance to join the Trumpeter Swan Program Coordinator or a Wye Marsh Falconer for a 2-hour "Behind the Scenes" tour.

A vermi-composting program was started at Wye Marsh. We started 3 bins of worms early in the year and by Festival in September we started taking orders for worms. Worms can be ordered by the pound (\$25/lb) or per kit (\$50). Included in the kit are a bin, bedding and 1lb of worms. An official presentation has been developed and presented to two outside groups, Katimavik Midland and Katimavik Penetanguishene. Each group was taught the basics of vermi-composting and its importance and guided through the creation of a bin for their households.

Events were organized for the following volunteer groups: Stewardship Rangers (MNR), Nature Conservancy of Canada, Jr. Civitans, General Mills Annual Environment Day, Air Cadets, Ontario Nature Volunteers, Rovers & Ventures.

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Swan Program

For the second year, the Wye Marsh Stewardship Department was able to undertake many flights due to a Trillium grant received by Harry Lumsden. Stewardship expenses related to the swans are covered by this grant and administered through the Amherst Wildlife Foundation.

The flights were completed in two phases: one during the nesting season, to find nest locations, and the second during the post-hatching stage, to locate successful broods.

For the 2005 nesting season, there were 35 possible nesting territories determined in the Wye Marsh study area. 20 of these territories were classified as occupied for 2005.

Of these 20, 15 produced cygnets, 5 while were unsuccessful. Of the successful nesting pairs, 11 were confirmed as having produced surviving cygnets to fledge. This year two nests were located within the Wye Marsh, which were both successful (last year there were four nests - three were successful). After a fairly quiet summer and fall with only 2 swan broods and a handful of singles at Wye Marsh, 53 swans returned to the WM swan pond in early December.

The following data was recorded:

- 7 broods + 1 single cygnet
- 24 cygnets (8 cygnets were tagged by Wye Marsh staff)
- 6 broods with tag/band numbers
- 1 brood untagged unbanded

A total of 17 swans were tagged in 2005 by Wye Marsh staff. Most of the tagging was accomplished in November & December when the tagging trap was setup at the feeding station. This had not been done in the past and has greatly improved the frequency of our tagging efforts.

Interesting Trumpeter Swan sightings included:

- Swan #698 on the Susquehanna River, near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania (November)
- Swan # 757 near Port Royal, Juniata County, Pennsylvania (December)
- Swan #928 at the brink of Niagara Falls feeding in a sheltered area near the grounded barge (December)

Plans are underway to net in a portion of the swan treatment pond to allow us to completely rehab injured swans. Funds have been received from the MNR CWIP program to build a nest platform for that pond. The Swan Report will be available to the public in February 2006.

Special Thanks:

National Fliers out of the Barrie-Springwater airport was used for all swan survey flights. They were chosen because they waived their usual runway fee, and when told that we are a non-profit organization, they donated the additional cost of ferrying a plane from Barrie or Collingwood to the Midland airport.



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Events

This year our annual events were affected by bad weather. However, Sweetwater and Festival still managed to raise much needed funds. This is due in a large part to having expenses covered by sponsorship. This was the final year for the traditional Wye Marsh Festival. The fall of 2006 will see a new format that is less staff-time intensive and hopefully will raise equal funds. The Canadian Woodcarving Competition will still continue in the main building. There will be folk music, a BBQ, a beer garden and the usual activities of Wye Marsh (canoeing, guided walks, Birds of Prey, etc) on the Saturday. We are hoping to have a concert that night and the artist is still TBD at this time.

New this past year were a 5 km and 10 km run partially sponsored by Casino Rama and The Running Room. All participants had a great time and loved the trail that Graham set, giving them a real tour of the property. Planned for 2006 are a 5 km and 10 km cross country ski race (depending on snow conditions), another 5 km and 10 km run, an adventure race, and a half marathon.



Gift Wrapping saw an increase of monies raised over last year. This was due in part to an additional set up at Wal-Mart for 6 days. The manager of Wal-Mart matched every dollar we earned through wrapping at his store. The Mountainview Mall Merchants are very supportive of our efforts and continue to support us with a financial contribution. Kindred Industries covered all expenses incurred for this event. We are very fortunate to have such dedicated support.

Volunteers

Wye Marsh would not be the success it is without the continued support of our volunteers. They put in many hours doing a multitude of tasks from bottling honey to grooming ski trails, from data entry to painting! This past year saw a total of 20,071 recorded hours by volunteers. This is equivalent to 10 full-time staff positions!

Thank you, we are extremely grateful!



Wye Marsh Store

The store continues to provide valuable income. The margins are good and the diverse selection of items in such a small space is a credit to our manager, Evelyn Kain. She has an eye for nature-related merchandise that rarely remains unsold.

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Marketing

Wye Marsh has its challenges with marketing. Efforts are being made to streamline advertising and to focus on specific markets. The web site is undergoing a rebuild to reflect this and to make it easier to update and manage. The Wye Marsh exhibit booth is becoming known as an attraction at trade shows and we have been invited to participate in many shows over the next few months.

Greatly increased media coverage in the local and national press, as well as specialized articles, will mean improved recognition by the public and interested groups that Wye Marsh is one of the "hidden assets" of Ontario and Canada.

We are very fortunate to continue to receive the services of marketing interns from Germany who are doing a placement as part of their school requirements. They assist us in the development of brochures, posters, flyers, newsletters, web site updates, etc. They are indispensable! **Thank you!**

Winds of Change

A model of the proposed changes to the Wye Marsh parking lot and entrance, which was sponsored by Hacker Gignac and Rice, has been on display for most of the year. The landscape architect has made some minor improvements to the design but the concept remains intact. Before the business plan can be completed with fairly accurate cost estimates, bore holes need to be drilled in the parking lot to determine soil substrate, thus load bearing capacity. Funding for this is still to be acquired.

The business plan must be presented to Environment Canada. For approval and to renegotiate the current lease. A feasibility study is planned to determine if the estimated 2.5 million dollars can be raised. Once this is accomplished, a decision will be made to launch a capital campaign.

In the meantime, Wye Marsh Board of Directors, staff and volunteers are working to follow the strategic plan that was developed in 2002. Many of the recommended changes and improvements have been made. However, this is an evolving document and as we improve, more ideas are being suggested to reach the ultimate goal of financial self-sufficiency.



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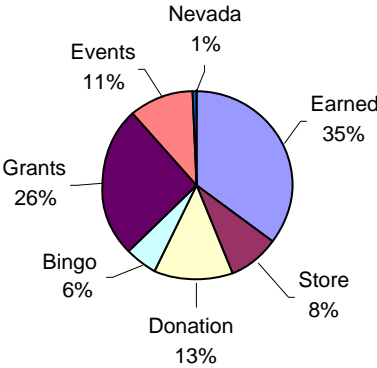


An Overview of 2005 Finances

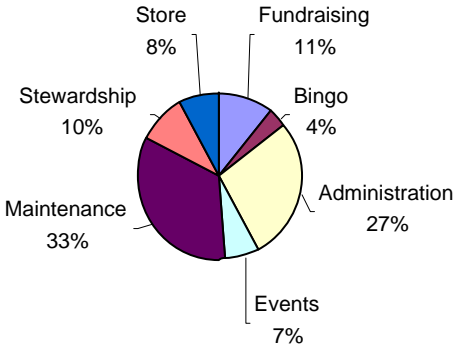
Financial

Careful control of expenses (reduced by \$61,106 or 7.8%) offset a decline in revenues (66,824 or 8.5%). Donations and grants for capital equipment contributed to a strengthened balance sheet. 2005 is the year that the Marsh moved to a financially stable position and is now positioned for growth in future revenues through improved marketing and major projects.

Revenue



Expenses



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Our Thanks for Your Support

Our programs would not be possible without the support of the following businesses. Our apologies if anyone was missed.

Accent Tool & Machine Ltd.
AGM Milling
Amherst Wildlife Foundation
Barber & Haskill Ltd.
Barrie Agricultural Society
Baytech Plastics Inc.
Bradford Greenhouses Limited
Bunn's Kids Trust Fund
Bushnell Corporation Canada
Canada Helps
Canadian Custom Packaging Company
Canadian Tire Corporation
Canadian Wildlife Service
Casino Rama
Castle Village Shops Ltd.
CCL Container (Penetanguishene) Inc.
Compu Solve Technologies Inc.
CTS/ Chek-Trac Systems Ltd.
Day Specialties Corporation
Ducks Unlimited
ELCAN Optical Technologies
Elite Fitness
Fellowship Club of St. Paul's United Church
For the Love Live
Friends of the Wye Marsh Inc.
Garthside Oil
General Mills Canada Corporation
Georgian Bay Quilters Guild
Georgian College
Georgian Team Design Builders Ltd.
H.S. St. Amant & Son
Hacker, Gignac & Rice
Harry Huizinga & Associates Inc.
Hillsdale Veterinary Services
Home Building Centre
Human Resources Development Canada
Huron Office Services Ltd.
IBA (Bird Studies Canada)
IBM Canada Ltd.
Industrial Filter Manufacturing Limited
Inn at Bay Moorings
Intertan Canada Ltd.
Jackman Foundation
Jason Lucio Art
Kindred Industries Ltd.
Mayes-Martin Limited
McCarthy, Rastin, Kerr
McGeachy Charitable Foundation
Metis Training Initiatives
Midland District Shrine Club
Midland Home Building Centre
Midland, Honda
Midland IGA
Midland Secondary School
Midland-Penetanguishene Field Naturalist Club
Minds Alive
Ministry of Natural Resources
Ministry of Tourism & Recreation
Mink Insurance Services Ltd.
Mountainview Mall Merchants Association
National Bank
Natural Science Engineering Resource Council
Nature Canada
Normans Garden Gallery
North Simcoe Veterinary Services
Ontario Trillium Foundation
Page Graphics
Preston Nicholson Harvey Inc.
Rankin Holdings
Rawsons Meat & Deli
Real Canadian Superstore
Receiver General of Canada
RIO CAN Property Services Trust
Rival Office Solutions Inc.
Rotary Club of Midland
Rotary Club of Penetanguishene
Shell Canada Limited
Sheppard, Rosemary
Simcoe County District Coop
Sir Joseph Flavelle Foundation
Southern Georgian Bay Chamber of Commerce
Staples
Summer Work/Student Exchange
Sustainability Network
Tay Township
TD Canada Trust
Telequip systems Ltd.
The Brumara Foundation
The Catherine & Maxwell Meighen Foundation
The Glass Attic
The Hylcan Foundation
The Woodworks
Tiny Township
Topographics Limited
Town of Midland
Trillium Foundation
United Way Ottawa
Ventus Energy Inc.
Walker's Electric 2000
Wal-Mart
Webb & Associates Financial Solutions
Wenneker Woodworks
Wye Marsh Wildflower Gardeners
Young Canada Works