

Wye Marsh Annual Report 2008

Wye Marsh Annual Report

January 2009

Upstream-Downstream: Wetlands Connect Us All

Wye Marsh has connected us all for more than 25 years

It's hard to believe this is my eighth year at Wye Marsh! Many things have changed, including the increase in volunteerism and number of donors, our financial picture, upgrades to the centre, program offerings, and continuity of staffing. However, one thing remains the same—we are all connected.

Twenty-five years ago Wye Marsh was saved through the commitment of the Southern Georgian Bay community. To this day we remain dependent on this community for our continued survival. Without core funding from either level of government, our success is a testament of the a true success story that everyone should be proud of.

Wetlands are so crucial to our health. They purify water, are the birth place for many animals, and control floods. We at Wye Marsh endeavour to conserve this natural resource and educate the public about the inter-connectiveness between the natural world and our everyday life.

My goal for the Wye Marsh is to build the capacity of the Centre so that your children, grandchildren and great grandchildren will be able to experience a natural environment and learn about the importance of wetlands through hands on activities, in perpetuity.

With your support we are able to live up to our mission

every day: To spark a commitment to conserving wetlands, woodlands and wildlife through creating exciting learning opportunities in a natural environment.

Laurie Schutt
Executive Director



Our Mission

"To spark a commitment to conserving wetlands, woodland and wildlife through creating exciting learning opportunities in a natural environment."

Strengthening Our Connection

As we continue moving forward in the wake of our 25 years of success, Wye Marsh is planning a special celebratory year. We are celebrating and further strengthening our connection with the community by having a better understanding of who they are, what their needs

are and how we can best meet and exceed their expectations. Sounds cliché, but it's true: we are interested in what our members, donors and guests want from Wye Marsh. We are pushing forward with obtaining necessary feedback through structured face-to-face

meetings with members, online surveys with the general public and asking questions to learn about our external perception. This also provides us with an opportunity to accurately educate the public about our internal reality, because what they don't know, they can't enjoy.

A Tribute to Robert Hartog



In celebrating 25 years as a not for profit, the Wye Marsh would be remiss if it did not acknowledge Robert Hartog's passion and commitment to the conservation of an environmental centre vital to the health of our community.

Robert Hartog's involvement with the Wye Marsh began in 1984 and over the decades he left a lasting imprint on the many volunteers, staff and visitors who came to the Centre.

"Robert always saw the possibilities of Wye Marsh. He believed the organization would become a centre for environmental excellence. I think we are almost there, thanks in large part to Robert."

He was always there for the Marsh when we needed him, and the last few years he was able to put his energy and time toward new programs and ideas for the future. I was very happy that he attended the audit meet-

ing two weeks ago, where it was announced that the Marsh had achieved a new milestone: \$1 million in revenue. I could tell he was tickled pink, but his only response was to say—'Finally.' One word that meant so much. Thank you Robert."

Laurie Schutt's comments at Robert Hartog's memorial service 2008

Our Story

Wye Marsh, and its interpretive centre, sits on a 3,000-acre wildlife area situated in an environmentally endowed location in Southern Georgian Bay. Wye Marsh has stewardship responsibility for this property that is anchored by its interpretive centre. It is committed to connecting people to nature and promoting an understanding of the vital role wetlands play within the environment. The Friends of the Wye Marsh are committed to conserving the Wye Marsh and the natural heritage of the Wye Valley while providing low impact educational, recreational and research opportunities benefiting present and future generations.

This year-round facility provides educational programs and excursions, maintains a

30km trail system, and a multitude of canoe channels. It acts as protector for an Important Bird Area (IBA) and a breeding ground for Threatened and Endangered Species: including Blandings Turtles, Least Bittern, Black Terns and the famous Trumpeter Swans (representing approximately one third of the Trumpeter Swan population in the province). Wye Marsh is also designated a Provincially Significant Wetland (PSW) and an Area of National Scientific Interest (ANSI).

The Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre was opened in 1969 as a nature reserve operated by Environment Canada. In 1985 the federal government withdrew and turned operations over to

The Friends of the Wye Marsh. The Wye Marsh Wildlife Centre has since been run as a registered non-profit.

In 1996, the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) asked The Friends of Wye Marsh, to assume management responsibilities of the Wye Marsh Provincial Wildlife Area (PWA), which constitutes the majority of the land in the Wye Valley.



Stewardship of the Wye Marsh and Wye Valley

Stewardship of the Wye Valley is very important to Wye Marsh staff, even though we no longer have the funding to carry a staff responsible for this area, many stewardship related projects are completed each year. Invasive species have been a real focus for the Marsh over the past 5 years. Purple Loosestrife is no longer a problem but Glossy Buckthorn continues to get the best of us. Last year we had Base Borden Cadets, Barrie Day Camps and many work parties removing this invasive shrub and replanting native shrubs and trees in its place. This was supported through a grant from the Walmart – Unilever Evergreen Fund.

Over the summer and fall, we hired Gartner Lee to complete a species inven-

tory focusing on species at risk as well as a rough vegetative mapping of the valley. The information reported back to the Marsh will be used to develop the Species At Risk component of the Management Plan. This project was funded by both the provincial and Federal Habitat Stewardship Programs. Unfortunately the funding announcements came three months too late so a few of the species targeted for this project like Spotted Turtle were missed (early breeding season).

We are all stewards in our every day life. Wye Marsh continues to suffer from illegal motorized vehicle traffic that disrupts the flow of natural springs feeding the valley as well as the constant dumping of garbage. We ask that all visitors to

the property keep their eyes open and report and obvious misuses of the property.

Stewardship takes many forms and can be a part of everyone's life. The Marsh teaches stewardship through its programs and offers many opportunities for visitors to become citizen scientists, learning valuable skills that they can use in their own environment. Some of the current programs you can become involved in are: Valley Watch, Marsh Monitoring, Backyard Bird Count, Frog Watch, Forest and Field Bird Maintenance (slated for spring/summer 2009) and owl banding.



Rick Hunter, local Wal-Mart store manager, visited Wye Marsh to see first hand how the funds contributed by Wal-Mart Evergreen are making a difference. He became a willing participant with Glossy Buckthorn.

Monitoring the Trumpeter Swan

Initiated in 1981 the Trumpeter Swan Reintroduction Program at Wye Marsh was a resounding success. Today, over 1,000 Trumpeter Swans are monitored by volunteers across the province. Wye Marsh continues this important stewardship program to ensure the ongoing viability of the swan. In 2008 ten of our swans were adopted. Thank you to all those who have made a donation to our program and to those who have adopted a Trumpeter Swan at Wye Marsh. Your gifts are vital to our ongoing monitoring of this magnificent species.

In 2009 Wye Marsh will unveil the new Swan Treatment Centre - "Off the Grid." Funding received from the Shell Environment Fund will enable the Swan Treatment Centre to be powered by wind and solar energy. This project not only enables Wye Marsh to use alternative energy it also expands current educational programs to include small scale applications as part of our curriculum.



Jack and Dianne in the summer of 2008 with four cygnets. Sadly, the Wye Marsh lost Jack late in the summer of 2008. He was born at the Marsh in 1991, and parent to over 60 swans.



The students at James Keating Elementary School learn about alternative energy sources through this offsite program. Funded by the Minister of Energy Community Conservation Fund, and Midland PUC, this program encourages today's youth to make decisions that will influence sustainable living choices, today and tomorrow.

Over 20,000 students from kindergarten to Grade 12 visited the Wye Marsh in 2008

In 2008, 240 children made Camp Marshes & Moccasins their choice for summer camp. Many children came to more than one camp. CSI Survival Camp and Kinder Camps are very popular specialty camps and in 2009 a Birds of Prey Camp will be added to the roster.

Programs at Wye Marsh

As I approach my first year anniversary, I find myself continually amazed by the breadth and depth of the educational and recreational programs offered here at the Wye Marsh.

All 42 of our curriculum-based education programs have served both teachers and students, in Junior Kindergarten through to Grade 12, well. This year the Ministry of Education updated their Science Curriculum and thus we have been

working diligently to better align and improve our program objectives and expectations.

Funding through Ministry of Tourism Development has also enabled us to begin translating our programs and program resources into French in order to better serve our target markets.

New to the Marsh this year both our community kayak program and our community bike program met with

great success. Both programs, funded by the Simcoe County Communities in Action Fund, provided inexpensive recreational opportunities in five of our neighboring communities. While the kayak program enabled families to explore their local Georgian Bay waterfront, the bike program encouraged local use of the Tay Trail.

Laurel Finney
Program Coordinator

Post Secondary Education at Wye Marsh

2008 was the year that Wye Marsh officially expanded their education programs into the college realm. Wye Marsh staff are offering to two colleges extensive hands on classes in animal care, assessment, proper handling techniques and housing. The students are given a learning experience while handling under supervision the snakes, turtles, swans and birds of prey.

Northern College from New Liskard has made the trip three times this year with their third year students enrolled in a Wildlife Rehabilitation course. These students have already graduated from the Veterinary Technician course and have a good knowledge base to work with.

Wye Marsh staff are also teaching the Foundations

Course of the Animal Care Certificate Program for the Midland campus of Georgian College. This certificate program includes courses covering legislation, working with people, animal identification and assessment, first aid and animal well being.

Camp Marshes & Moccasins

Friends of Wye Marsh have extended a hand to disadvantaged youth in the community by making spaces available each summer at Camp Marshes and Moccasins. Over six years 80 children have enjoyed the beauty of the Marsh and have built confidence in their abilities, learned new skills and made memories that last a lifetime.

Donations to the Gordon Black Memorial Camp Fund and from Bunn's Kids Trust have been instrumental in creating a lifetime of memories and an appreciation of our natural resources in disadvantaged children & youth in Simcoe County

Thank you for sponsoring Camp Marshes & Moccasins.



Camp Marshes & Moccasins is accredited by the Ontario Camping Association.



Residential Programs Expand

Our residential programs are focused on providing experiential programming that meet Guiding and Scouting badge requirements. The continued success of these programs is evident through both our high rates of repeat customers, as well as through the ever increasing number of new bookings.

While our weekends are currently running at full ca-

capacity, we are looking to expand our residential programs by introducing curricular programs to school groups who seek an overnight experience during the week.



During a weekend visit to the Wye Marsh, Scouts work on their Winter Scouting Badge and learn about winter gear, cold injuries and safety and fire starting.

Birds of Prey

The Birds of Prey Program is proving to be a worthy attraction with a huge educational component for the visitor to Wye Marsh. Not only can participants of the formal education programs or the informal flight demonstrations see raptors emulating their natural flight, but they learn an incredible amount of information about the raptors that grace the Southern Georgian Bay skies.

This year saw the addition of three Eurasian Eagle Owls, one Spectacle Owl, one Eastern Red Tail Hawk and one Peregrine Falcon all to be used for education. During the winter months, the birds are shown inside during the Meet the Creature Sunday program. Once the weather improves, they finally get to stretch their wings again without the worry of frostbite!

Wye Marsh has seen a growth in the numbers of people fascinated with raptors that have taken either a one day workshop or a full school of falconry. Wye Marsh offers both under the very talented tutelage of Matt Lieberknecht, a master falconer with over 25 years experience.



Between 1999 and 2005 there were only 10 definite sightings of Barn Owls in Ontario. Only three breeding pairs have been confirmed in Ontario in the past 25 years. (Ontario Nature, Winter 2008-2009)

Junior Naturalist Program

The vision for the Junior Naturalist Program is to have a mentoring system where young individuals interested in the natural environment are encouraged to increase their understanding.

We were very fortunate this past summer to have had several passionate and committed participants.

They impressed us not only with their ecological knowledge, but also with the ways in which they interpreted this understanding with inquiring visitors to Centre.

"As a Junior Naturalist at the Wye Marsh, I met lots of new people and encountered wildlife in a way that I never could have imagined. I would recommend this program to anyone

interested in nature and wildlife conservation"

Kevin Kemmish

"This was the best summer of my life thanks to the Wye Marsh!"

Chantel Ouellet





In recognition of World Wetlands Day Delawana pledged \$5.00 to Wye Marsh for each reservation made during the entire month of February. Ron Neville, Board of Director, Wye Marsh (left) receives the donation from Gary Don, Social Director at Delawana Inn Spa & Conference Resort.

OUR VISITORS

60,000+

Oversees Visitors

come from
England
Germany
France

Over 50% of our visitors come from the Greater Toronto Area



Members of the Tiny Cottagers Association present the Wye Marsh with proceeds from their annual summer fundraising campaign.

Milestone Achieved Thanks to Members and Donors

As the advertisement goes, "Membership has its privileges." But nowhere is the reverse more true . . . It has been a privilege to serve the membership of the Wye Marsh in our conservation of the Wye Marsh and Wye Valley.

Without our members we would not have been able to reach a milestone . . . a quarter century of providing world class environmental education to visitors of all ages from across this province, this country and across the world.

While families make up approximately 55% of the fabric of our membership, individuals (at 11%) and couples (at 28%) of all ages enjoy the diverse and extensive programming offered at

Wye Marsh. Whether its an canoe Ecotour into the depths of the marsh, an introduction to "slippery snakes—species at risk," or a cross country ski along the 25 km of trails, there is something for everyone.

It is also with gratitude that we say thank you to the many people and companies in the community who have invested their charitable dollars in the Wye Marsh. Twenty-five years is a long time to keep the doors open without core operational funding from the government.

Your dollars have enabled the Wye Marsh to change, evolve and grow.

In 2008 donations and earned revenue (admission,

membership and programs) continues to be our major sources of revenue. Events, while not a large percentage of our revenue, allow the Wye Marsh to extend its outreach to the larger community. Grants from private and public foundations enable the Wye Marsh to implement new and exciting programs to enable students to understand the environment in which they live and how to steward these resources for the future.

As we celebrate this year we reflect on all those who heard the call twenty-five years ago, "Save Wye Marsh—your children deserve it." Throughout events and activities the common thread will be the strength and generosity of our community.

Wye Marsh Owls Visit the Royal Ontario Museum

On Thursday, October 9th, 2008, 65 guests participated in our very first OWLS on the prOWL, raising an unprecedented \$10,000.

Bird lovers came to meet the Wye Marsh owls. It was a unique opportunity to have a close encounter with five different species of owls and to learn about the importance of habitat conservation and the provision of food and shelter for wildlife.

The evening wasn't all educational, it got a little touchy-feely too as guests were allowed to handle



Royal Ontario Museum: Class Room
October 9, 2008

HUDBAY MINERALS INC CASSELS BROCK

OWLS on the prOWL

these beautiful creatures,

and even adopt them. J.J. (formerly Einstein) a Spectacle owl was adopted that evening.

This event was geared towards creating excitement in the Toronto market. Many Simcoe County residents are well aware of our wonderful facility, and now we are extending awareness south and welcome new visitors and friends to come and experience the Wye Marsh.

Our thanks to HudBay Minerals and Cassels Brock for their generous sponsorship.

Balance Sheet

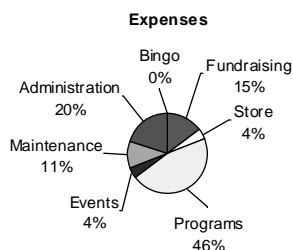
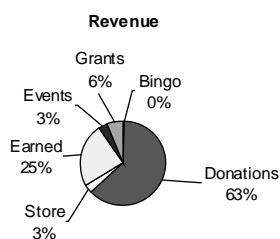
As at October 31, 2008

ASSETS	2008	2007
Current	\$ 983,312	\$ 103,860
Capital Assets	1,678,296	1,645,826
Less amortization to date	1,022,678	908,153
Total Assets	\$1,638,930	\$ 841,533
LIABILITIES	2008	2007
Current	\$ 109,819	\$ 127,253
Long term	598,914	663,827
Total Liabilities	708,733	791,080
NET ASSETS	930,197	50,453
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$ 1,638,930	\$ 841,533

Statement of Operations

Year ended October 31, 2008

Revenue	2008	2007
General Admissions & Membership	\$ 157,129	\$ 146,997
Educational & Recreational Programs	254,675	246,052
Store Operations	59,740	66,783
Fundraising Events/Programs	80,194	86,638
Donations/Planned Gifts	1,116,677	177,800
Grants	109,357	114,446
Amortization of Deferred Contributions	107,592	101,147
Miscellaneous	8,292	17,793
Total Revenue	\$ 1,893,656	\$ 957,656
Expenses	2008	2007
Operating	\$ 872,976	\$ 795,746
Administrative	140,936	141,553
Total Expenses	\$ 1,013,912	\$ 937,299
Excess of Revenue over Expenses for the Year	\$ 879,744	\$ 20,357



Friends of Wye Marsh Board of Directors

For Year Ended October 31, 2008

President	Colin Harper
Vice President	Peter Moody
Treasurer	Joel Rumej

Directors:

Vern Cottrell	Damian Rogers
Pat Cowden	John Shepherd
Al MacDonald	Cheryl Webb
Peter Moody	Kirk Weldon
Michael Riffin	

Wye Marsh Staff

Executive Director	Laurie Schutt
General Manager	Loretta Hamilton
Operations Manager	Graham MacDonald
Manager Birds of Prey	Matt Lieberknecht
Resource Development Director	Suzanne McDonald
Animal Care Worker	Denise De Villers
Assistant Program Coordinator	Sonya Stemerdynek
Bookkeeper	Darlene Lenehan
Bookings Coordinator	Linda Belcourt
Fundraising Assistant	Laura Pilon
Marketing Coordinator	Nicole Saltsman
Program Coordinator	Laurel Finney
Store Manager	Chris Zwicker
Visitor Services	Cathy Lewis

The Balance Sheet and Statement of Operations have been extracted from the Friends of Wye Marsh audited financial statement as at and for the year ending October 31, 2008. The financial statements were audited by Brabant & Kretzshmann, Chartered Accountants. The complete financial statements and auditors report are available through the Wye Marsh at 705-526-7809, ext 205.

Escape...Explore...Experience...

"There is nothing stronger than the heart of a volunteer. With it beats the spirit of service, generosity and compassion...and the health and well-being of our community, our country and our world"

Kobi Yamada

"18,163 Hours In Service to Wye Marsh"

It started with my phone call and ended with an impressive 18,163.4 hours of donated time. At an average rate of \$12.00 / hour this equates to having 9 full time employees and a cost savings of \$222,912.

Your time was well invested in all areas of our operation from research projects to bird counts, to administrative tasks, to swan monitoring, to maintenance, to re-

ception, to education programs, to events, to stewardship, to the wildflower gardens, to finance, to directorship...etc. etc.... You have done it all!

It is with this type of support that we can look forward to growing and developing into a world class environmental education centre. To all of you who have made and will continue to make it possible, we re-

main in your debt. To coin a phrase from our teenage co-op students, you are "awesome and you rock"!

Thank you,

Loretta Hamilton
General Manager



Each summer a group of dedicated volunteers begin their planning for the Annual Fundraising Dinner in the fall. Pictured here is Beryl Loxley (left) who coordinates the event which includes sponsorships, auction items and volunteers. This past year the dinner raised over \$17,000.



The Wildflower Gardeners first chairperson and five subsequent presidents: left to right Verna Ives, Helen Riggan, Peggy Duhig, Barbara Tyrrell, Nancy Hunter, Linda Charters. The Wye Marsh Wildflower Gardens celebrated its 20 year anniversary July 25, 2008. Created and lovingly cared for by volunteers these gardens grace the entrance to the Interpretive Centre and educate about our native plants.

WYE MARSH



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Scott Warnock, Mayor of Tay Township (right) volunteers at the Annual Garfield Dunlop Spaghetti Dinner. Bruce Stanton (left), MP for Simcoe North takes time out of his busy schedule to support the Wye Marsh and enjoy a great meal!



The Wye Marsh Woodcarvers Association volunteer for many events throughout the year. From Sweetwater Harvest to the Children's Aid Society Annual Picnic, the woodcarvers share their craft and create lovely keepsakes for all participants.