



## **President's Message**

*by Donna Tucker*

The West Carling Association is fortunate to have a very engaged Board of Directors that generously volunteer their time. The Board meets regularly throughout the year to attend to Board affairs, stay current on issues affecting Carling residents, and make plans for our activities. Each director has one or more roles on our Board, as described below:

Officers:

*Vice Presidents* – Steve Vokes and  
Richard Wilson

*Treasurer* – Steve Vokes

*Secretary* – Janis Wade

*Georgian Bay Assoc. Representative* –  
Richard Wilson

*Newsletter* – Tom Betts and Nanci  
Wakeman

*Communications and Membership* –  
Allison Needham

*Directors at large* – Jay Burford, Carol  
Hodson, Craig Johnston, Bruce  
MacKay, Bruce Milburn, Cynthia  
Milburn, Peter Pook, Katherine Yantzi

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## **A Message from the Editors**

*by Tom Betts and Nanci Wakeman*

Welcome to the Fall edition of *Shorelines*, the quarterly newsletter of the West Carling Association. It is our hope that you have had a good season at the cottage and that if you are closing up for the year that that process goes smoothly. It is always difficult to see the season come to an end, but it is also a good time for reflection – a time to look back at those special and memorable times in, on, and around the water.

For the first time in quite a while, there will be a Winter edition of the newsletter. With your help, we hope to fill this newsletter with interesting reading which will serve as a timely and much-needed reminder of summer days at the cottage while the snow is flying around outside. We are seeking submissions from *any* member of WCA, or from *anyone* associated with your cottage, including other family members or guests.

Please consider sharing your summer cottage experiences – this can be through articles of any length, favorite photos which you'd like others to see, or original artwork

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Each of our directors has stepped up to be a part of specific projects or advocacy initiatives such as the Pancakes Docks, monitoring Council meetings, or providing sage advice on Board affairs. Adrian Crowe left the Board this year after 10 years of service and we welcomed Bruce MacKay to our Board in July.

My report provides an update on the main projects, issues and activities that we have been engaged in over the past year.

**Board Affairs**

As WCA is obligated to ensure our policies and practices are consistent with the Ontario Not-for-profit Corporations Act by October 2024, we completed a revision of our by-laws that dated from 1992. The change in the by-laws and our mission statement prompted a change to our Articles of Incorporation. Following approval by the Board, the by-laws, Mission Statement and Articles of Incorporation were ratified by the membership at our annual meeting in July. It is challenging to keep track of corporate filings, by-laws and other important documents, especially as we operate without staff and an office but rather with directors and officers, changing frequently. Electronic document storage is now the gold standard. We are trialling document storage software called *Governwell* developed by Mike Gordon, a long-standing member of WCA, to replace record storing in Rubbermaid containers or a shoebox or on a director's hard drive and at great risk of going missing. The software provides secure storage, easy retrieval of information, and can be accessed by all board members via a password.

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or poetry. Articles can tell an interesting or funny story, provide tips or tricks-of-the-trade on any of dozens of cottage-related topics, share historical information relating to Georgian Bay or Carling Township, reflect on time spent on the water or on one or more of our many islands, wildlife encounters or unusual species that have been observed, etc. It is our strong belief that the newsletter can and should provide reading on a variety of topics from a variety of authors. So share those stories, those photos, and anything else that can be included in our newsletter format.

The deadline for submissions for the Winter edition of *Shorelines* will be December 10, 2024. Any submissions should be sent to this address: [tcmbetts@gmail.com](mailto:tcmbetts@gmail.com)

**A Nod to Our Retiring Director  
– Adrian Crowe**

*by Donna Tucker*

Adrian Crowe served on the WCA Board for 10 years, having joined in 2014. Despite his challenging work schedule as an Emergency Room doctor in St. Catherines and a busy family life with his and Kate's three active children, Adrian has been a dedicated Board member. He served on the Membership Committee, as Vice-President of the Board for several years, and as the ever-reliable director of the water sports at our annual picnics. Adrian is an avid windsurfer and can often be seen in the south gap leading into Snug Harbour, flying back and forth in what appears to the observer to be gale force winds. He has even been spotted in winter, whizzing across the ice in the gap. Many thanks to Adrian for his valuable contributions to the Board of the West Carling Association.

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### **Communication**

Our newsletter team of Tom and Nanci have created a new look and name (*Shorelines*) for our newsletter and are adding a winter edition so that there will be four editions each year.

Allison, our communications director keeps our website up to date throughout the year with informative news and events of interest and sends out communications through our email server, Constant Contact, when there are topics that need to be sent out in a timelier way. Many thanks go to Marc Cooper, a longstanding member of WCA, who generously hosts both our website and our email service through his private marketing business Junction 59.

### **Membership**

To date we have 166 primary members and 33 associate members. With co-owners in the mix our reach extends to 332 members as of this writing. We completed last year with 171 primary members and 28 associate members.

### **Phragmites**

WCA is actively working to keep invasive phragmites out of Carling, thanks to the leadership of Richard Wilson and our partnering with Georgian Bay Forever (GBF). This highly invasive plant can completely take over a waterfront area in a short span of time. Richard obtained a \$4000 grant last year from Green Shovels that has been used for supplies to map and cut phragmites, and for signage posted at key access points to the Bay to inform residents. The Deep Bay Association has recently

expressed interest in joining the fight against phragmites along with WCA.

We are appreciative of a \$5000 grant that Carling Council has provided for phragmites management in Carling Township. The grant will be administered by Georgian Bay Forever. Many thanks go to Richard for his successful lobby effort in obtaining this grant.

A “cutting crew” of WCA volunteers and GBF staff went to Franklin Island on August 31, 2024. GBF staff was active in Carling mapping and cutting this summer.

### **Municipal Engagement**

We have a roster of directors who attend Council meetings virtually and provide a summary report to the Board to keep abreast of Council activities and decisions.

### **Pool Project**

We continue to monitor the progress and finances of the pool project and remain concerned about both the financial viability of the project which is critically short of cash and has a **\$2.85MM** overrun on site preparation and new project management. The project budget has now risen to **\$39.1 MM** project (**versus \$36.3MM**) and is highly dependent on fundraising (**\$5 MM** for capital and **\$5MM** for operating expenses).

The Pool Board convinced the municipal partners to change the partnership agreement to permit borrowing, which was explicitly **not** permitted in the original agreement. The Pool Board appealed to the municipalities to provide financial support to cover a **\$13.5MM** bridge either in the form of cash from reserves or by backing a loan until sufficient cash flows from the province. It is difficult for the Pool Board to obtain bank

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financing unless it is backed by the municipalities, as the Board has no significant collateral to back the loan. Carling Council passed a resolution in April refusing to provide funds from cash reserves and refusing to directly obtain a construction loan. Despite the April resolution, on September 10, 2024, Council approved a cash transfer of \$157,500, apparently to cover cash flow until the line of credit is approved.

WCA recognizes the dilemma faced by our Council who has inherited this project. However, we are two years into Council's term and there have been NO information forums in Carling, and NO consultation, with the assumption that the majority of Carling residents want the pool. How can it be said the community is behind the project? What consultation has been done?

WCA is not only concerned about the gap in funding for the building of the pool, but also the as yet unknown annual operating deficit. Based on contractual obligations, at a minimum Carling's 10.5% share would be \$140,700 annually. Even this is not realistic as it is based on assumptions of revenue from memberships and successful fundraising that were not supported by a third-party review. It is likely that the annual deficit will be significantly greater than \$140,700 and certainly well beyond the 2021 projection of Carling's share of the annual deficit of \$30,000 originally pitched to Carling residents.

### **Lobbying for Dump Opening Hours on Holiday Mondays**

WCA and the Pengally Bay Association worked together to successfully lobby Council to keep the transfer stations open on holiday Mondays so that seasonal residents aren't forced to take their garbage with them

when they leave to go home. This led to a thoughtful decision at Council and a workable solution with opening hours on holiday Mondays.

### **Deputation to Council**

WCA worked with Deep Bay, Pengally Bay and Bayview Association to make a deputation to Council on August 13, 2024 to discuss current concerns of Carling ratepayers. The three main areas addressed were Communication, Finance, and Recreation and Leisure. We are waiting on a report responding to our concerns and suggestions. Full details and a video of the deputation can be found at:

<https://westcarling.com/deputation-to-carling-council/>

### **Docks on the Pancakes**

WCA has been investigating the resurfacing of the docks at the Pancakes Island picnic site. We started this process in 2019 shortly after ice took the tops off the docks. We learned that the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) eliminated the budget line and had no intent to restore the docks. When the province asked the municipalities to take on the docks they declined, and nothing happened. The project went dormant during Covid, as it was difficult to generate interest. WCA picked up the project again last year and met with the MNRF who told us that we would need a Land Use Permit between the province and the municipality to move this project forward. Although Carling is supportive of the project, they declined based on liability concerns. We decided to go back to the province for another try. We have had two opportunities to speak with our MPP

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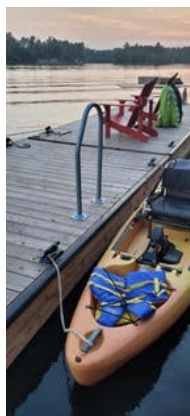
Graydon Smith who is also the Minister for the MNRF. We have learned that there is a private donor who has offered to fund the dock repair. Although no promises were made by the MNRF, we are optimistic that there is a way forward. Currently we are soliciting letters of support from members and other local associations. Many thanks to the more than twenty WCA members who have sent letters of support. You will have recently received an email from WCA titled *Help Us Rebuild the Pancake Island Docks!* that provides further detail and a link to send a letter of support to Graydon Smith.

**Dock Edge Boarding Buddy Handrail for Dock**

*information shared by Donna Tucker*

This handrail is useful for safe convenient access both on and off a boat or dock. Ideal for any docking platform to help prevent accidents. It is available online at RONA for \$129.

<https://www.rona.ca/en/product/dock-edge-boarding-buddy-hand-rail-for-dock-36-in-galv-alume-de90800f-330740460>



**Membership in WCA**

*by Donna Tucker*

*Membership* is a garden that requires tending – staying in touch with members and maintaining our database is now only through email. If you move or if you change your email address, please inform us at: [info@westcarling.ca](mailto:info@westcarling.ca) or go into your profile on our website and make the change directly so that you will continue to receive our newsletters and updates.

We also need your help to recruit new members, particularly among a younger demographic. We have a very loyal core membership, but we need to work on passing the torch. Do you have a neighbour or friends that you think might be interested in joining? If so, please spread the word about the West Carling Association. You might consider forwarding some of our newsletters to these folks, or urging them to take a look at our website.

We also suggest that you promote the work that is done on our behalf at a provincial and federal level by the Georgian Bay Association. If you have a neighbour or friend who is interested in membership, applying can be done directly through our website. For additional information, direct potential members to submit a request through [info@westcarling.ca](mailto:info@westcarling.ca).

*Rocks are records of events that took place at the time they formed. They are books. They have a different vocabulary, a different alphabet, but you learn how to read them.*

Author John McPhee



**Photo: Tom Betts**

## **Creature Feature – the Common Merganser**

*by Tom Betts*

The Georgian Bay region is home, at least seasonally, to many bird species, and quite naturally more than a few of these are closely associated with water. One such species, frequently seen, is *Mergus merganser*, the common merganser. The scientific name loosely translates to “diving goose,” which reflects that this merganser is a rather large duck (25 inches) and that it dives regularly in search of food. Close relatives include the equally beautiful red-breasted merganser and the flashy hooded merganser.

Common mergansers are easily identified – the male, in his breeding plumage, will sport a glossy iridescent dark green head with a polished white breast and flanks. A contrasting dark back and a brilliant orange-red bill, serrated and slightly hooked, complete this beautiful bird. The female of the species, or a younger, non-breeding male, will appear mostly gray, but with

a cinnamon-brown head and a very noticeable white throat. Both male and female will have the characteristic red bill.

The common merganser is perfectly suited to life on Georgian Bay and the countless lakes and streams of Ontario. They can often be seen floating leisurely on the water, or perhaps drying off a bit by standing on an exposed rock or shoal. Awkward on land, their flight is strong and rapid,



*Common mergansers take flight*

**Photo: Tom Betts**

and they will not delay in relocating for safety or for other reasons.

When it is time to feed, mergansers will dive quickly and search for small fish, crustaceans, and aquatic insects. They

are exceptional hunters, and the serrated, hooked beak of this species aids in catching prey and has given mergansers the nickname “sawbill” or “fish duck.” Dives, which can be as deep as 15-20 feet, can extend up to two minutes in length but are more typically about 30 seconds. Occasionally small groups of

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## **Mergansers, from page 6**

mergansers will hunt together, crowding schools of fish into shallow, confined areas where they are easily caught.

Breeding female mergansers seek out a tree cavity to house the nest, but depending upon the habitat rock crevices or even a hole in a stream bank may be used. Here the female will typically lay 8-12 eggs, white to yellowish in color, and will incubate for nearly a month. The young are born well-developed and leave the nest in one day, often catching a ride on their mother's back to the best fishing grounds. Normally, the male plays no role in the 40-day period of raising the young.

Common mergansers are considered a hardy species, staying as far north as open water will permit. But migration will naturally occur,

with many northern birds spending the winter in the Ohio River Valley of the U.S., and a few more adventurous birds reaching the Gulf of Mexico. As a species, they are often the last migrants to leave an area, and one of the first to return.

The common merganser population is estimated at 1.9 million birds, and they are a familiar sight on the lakes and rivers of most of North America (not so much in the U.S. southeast, and in the extreme north of Canada). They do face predators, such as hawks, owls, eagles, loons, and even large northern pike and muskellunge. And, like many predatory birds, they can pay a price for the bioaccumulation of pesticides and heavy metals in aquatic ecosystems. But the species is currently of little conservation concern, and it adds plenty to the rich biodiversity of Georgian Bay.



*Late-season sunset from Snug Harbour*

**Photo: Peter Pook**

## Cottagers Need to be Bear Smart

by Rob Brown

It's always exciting to see wildlife at the cottage, especially bears. This summer many people had the opportunity to see a mother bear and her two cubs in the Dillon/Sand Bay area.

Unfortunately, what should have been a great experience didn't end well for the bears. In August, they had to be shot after becoming a nuisance and a danger to cottagers. This unfortunate situation did not have to happen. Bears are naturally afraid of humans. They only become habituated once they associate us with food either by intentionally being fed (perhaps to see them up close) or accidentally by leaving food in a cottage or garbage bin accessible.

My brother who was a park ranger for more than 20 years said if you feed bears or let them get into your garbage they will return every time they get hungry. It has

something to do with their metabolism and our high caloric food. Once a bear associates a human or cottage with food, it will lose its natural fear and become dangerous. Such a bear will then have to be removed. My brother said it's why Parks Canada used to have signs in their campgrounds that said if you feed a bear you are the one "pulling the trigger."

It's also why a dump bear will always be a

dump bear. He said they have trapped bears at dumps and transported them more than 50 km away, only to have them return in a week.

The story of the bears this summer is upsetting to me which is why I wrote this article. But it isn't the first time a bear has had to be "dispatched" and unfortunately it likely won't be the last. We are privileged to be surrounded by an incredible wilderness, and we owe it to the wildlife to keep it wild. Please be super diligent about keeping

your garbage and

cottage inaccessible to bears, and whatever you do don't feed the wildlife. Otherwise, you could be the one "pulling the trigger."



**Photo Credit: Sue Ostertag**



## Oases on the Islands

*Article and Photos by Tom Betts*

It would be difficult for me to pick a favorite time of year on Georgian Bay. After all, each month – each week, for that matter, maybe even each day – can lay claim to some new event of Nature. From the time the snow and ice begin to recede in the late winter or early spring, we are dealt a progression of wonderful new happenings and rituals in the natural world.

But I would be hard pressed to say that I like anything more than the explosion of summer and fall wildflowers in seemingly inhospitable locations on Georgian Bay's rocky outer islands. From mid-August to mid-September tiny but beautiful gardens appear almost overnight in areas of the islands where at least the minimum of requirements is met – plenty of sunlight, accumulated moisture, a tiny bit of soil or at least something to sink some roots into. Any crack or depression in what seems like endless rock can provide what it takes for these wildflower pockets to establish themselves. And these mini-ecosystems can be downright beautiful!



*Oases of wildflowers on an outer island*

To the casual observer, this fragmented landscape appears to be mostly barren rock, with a few trees mixed in here and there. But look more closely and you will find pristine

gardens ranging in size from perhaps a square meter in area – something you can take in with just a single glance – to “meadows” of wildflowers that might take a minute or two to stroll around. But one thing is for certain: there will be an amazing array of colorful wildflowers with more species than you would think possible for an area so small on an island so remote.



*A vibrant garden thrives in a rock crevice*

Here you will see the very familiar but strikingly beautiful goldenrod. Study it closely and you will note some differences between several different species of this common member of the sunflower family. Packed into this dense garden, too, could be the dainty but beautiful slender false foxglove, the purplish blue vervain with its sturdy stems, and perhaps a scattering of bright pink Pennsylvania smartweed. Mixed in with these species will likely be a few taller stalks of the butterfly-favorite swamp milkweed, stands of wild mint with its square stems and whorls of light purple flowers, and clusters of wild yarrow whose stems



*Swamp milkweed is a butterfly favorite*

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are lined with delicate fern-like leaves. No doubt, sprawling asters in various shades of white and blue will be a highlight in this late-

summer island garden, as well as the similar fleabane, showy flowerheads of boneset, flashes of yellow from the cinquefoils or perhaps a primrose or two, and the brilliant fireweed, standing tall above most of the other flowers. And that is a partial list. With one quick sweep of the eye you will see a bouquet of white and pink and purple and blue and yellow and red, and vibrant combinations of all these shades. And framing the garden on all sides, by contrast ... lichen-encrusted rock in shades of gray and brown, billions of years old.

It is truly amazing how many species can be found in one small area, and what a pretty picture the plants make when blended together.

Of course we humans are not the only living things to notice. Hummingbirds and bees and butterflies, sometimes in abundance, congregate in these little gardens where they find nectar aplenty just weeks before Nature will no longer be so generous. If your timing is just right, you may find yourself admiring these island gardens in the peak of the monarch migration when dozens and dozens of monarchs will flit from blossom to blossom. Stand still at the edge of the garden and bask in one of Nature's most remarkable spectacles.



***A summer bouquet of asters and goldenrod***



***How many monarchs do you see?***

But too soon the show will be over, as each species of wildflower has a start and a finish to its bloom period. The weather, of course, can either lengthen or shorten this, but in time all will regress to a lifeless brown, and this tiny hotspot of life on the island will meld with so much lifelessness that surrounds it.



***Monarchs love boneset flowers***

A month or two later, the winter winds will be whipping snow

across these islands and rugged unfor-



***Where once there were gardens ... there will be once more.***

giving ice will entomb them. The world will appear drastically changed. But rest assured, Mother Nature is already planning for next year's flower show.

## *Photo Memories*

*(As a way of celebrating the endless beauty of our area, we are asking members to share a favorite photo or two from 2024 – we will include as many as we can in future issues ... the editors )*



*A full moon rises over Snug Harbour on September 17, 2024*

*Photo: Tom Betts*