



RIVERSONG

NEWSLETTER OF THE LOWER GRAND RIVER LAND TRUST INC.

Volume 19 Number 4

'Tis the Season

Winter 2013

It is hard to believe that the volunteers are decorating the mansion once again for Christmas - it feels like the decorations were just packed and stored. The season will open on November 30th and run through each weekend until December 15th. In between, candlelight tours, a concert and teas will be featured. Our programs will focus on the Thompson family stories using family accounts, letters, cards and their Scottish heritage as a basis for the research.

While preparing for another shipment of documents for digitizing, we came across a few Christmas cards and notes received by the Thompsons over the generations. Following are a few examples.

To Isabel, "Busy Hands" Xmas '25

*For busy hands, for useful hands,
For little hands I Love,
I give you, for each of them,
A warm, warm fur-line glove.*

*And may the hands outwear the gloves
Whilst tens of years roll by,
Though gloves 'must come and gloves must go',
I'll love you till I die.*

A.T.T.

[A poem for Violet along with a pair of gloves from husband Andrew Thompson].



Thank you to our volunteers who have been busy decorating the mansion. Left to right Sheila Farraway, Nancy Vanderburg, Lois Glenney, Pearl Buckle and Donna Tansley beside the Victorian Christmas Tree.

From Laurier House, Ottawa

December 23, 1933

My dear Colonel:

Except the late Charles Dickens, I know of no one in my circle who possesses more truly the Christmas spirit than yourself. You are greatly to be envied for you possess as well not a little of the poetic genius and joviality of Robert Burns. From your appreciation of realities, and your contempt for shams, I know there is a little in your make-up of Thomas Carlyle as well. For what has come to me from all three in your letter just received, and for what it has recalled of auld syne, I cannot thank you too warmly.

Let me extend to Mrs. Thompson and yourself my very best wishes for Christmas Day and for the New Year. Let me add my affectionate regards as well.

*Very sincerely your friends,
Mackenzie King*



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President's Message

By Betsy Smith

President, The Lower Grand River Land Trust

Strategic Plan in Place

The Lower Grand Trust board has just completed the process of formalizing a five year strategic plan for Ruthven Park National Historic Site. The board hired EntrepreneurOntario, a consulting firm that specializes in not-for-profit facilitation for planning and human resource development. Much of the early groundwork was initiated through an electronic survey completed by our membership, other related parties and organizations, staff and board. Thirty nine percent of the surveys were returned which was an encouraging start to the process. The survey included questions to identify issues and challenges that the respondents knew or perceived about Ruthven. Plenty of opportunity was given for opinions, criticisms and ideas. All responses remained anonymous. Once received and analyzed by the consultants, the information was forwarded to board members and became a basis for discussion through the strategic planning retreat held on October 26th. With full board attendance, staff and a few key representatives including Eva Salter, Advisor for the Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Sport and David Adames, Senior Director, Business Development at Niagara Parks Commission, the 7 1/2 hour process began. The session was conducted using an electronic meeting system (EMS), an innovative facilitation process developed from research at the Queen's School of Business. This process called "the Decision Centre", combines expert facilitation with a state of the art group decision support system to enable groups to rapidly accelerate idea generation and consensus building. Of course there was a lot of verbal interaction throughout the day and much was accomplished.

We envisioned where Ruthven would be in the next five years then broke down these strategic goals into objectives and prioritized as to what could be accomplished over the next two years. This ensured that the task was not overwhelming and provided an opportunity to set measureable outcomes and change the course of action as needed.

The overwhelming strategic goal was obvious - funding and sustainability. As a not-for-profit, nongovernment organization we have a commitment to earn our own revenues and to sustain and grow our endowment. Funding is key to all we do.

Our vision looks at what Ruthven Park wishes to accomplish in the next five year.

- to be financially secure and sustainable
- to ensure sound governance is in place
- to be known as a regional cultural hub
- to have strong facilities and landscapes

- to have adequate staff resources
- to ensure community engagement and have solid partnerships
- to have a strong education focus

Board members and staff have been assigned homework in order to keep the process evolving. We will keep you apprised of the progress.

If you wish to see a copy of the full report contact marilynn@ruthvenpark.ca.

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Consultant Erik Lockhart, Assistant Director of Queen's Executive Decision Centre, Queen's University (below screen) leads the strategic planning session while Gord Evans, CEO and founder EntrepreneurOntario (far side at end of table) observes.

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*"This is not much to send you,
But just enough to say,
That no one else can wish you,
A better wish 'to-day."*

Christmas

The Compliments of

*the Season
and
all Good Wishes
From
Corpl. E.J. Summer*

No. 141363, B Co., 76th Battn., C.E.F.

Dec 3rd 1962,

Dear Drew,

I thought of writing a few lines I haven't seen you for so long, how do you keep, we are all well here...I have no news for you at all, and I am deaf I don't hear any thing they say (very pleasant) but I can if you talk slowly and not shout I know you will have a very happy Xmas and a happy new year.

From your Nanny

[To Drew Thompson, 5th generation].

• Bits & Pieces •

By Marilyn Havelka, CAO

David Webb (on the right), keynote speaker at our recent annual general meeting is shown here with board member James Potter who is outfitted with some accessories worn by Canadian soldiers during WWI. The topic of David's presentation was *Hidden Treasures: The Stories behind Ruthven's World War One Collection* - a timely one as



we approach the centenary of the war. His knowledge as an historian with expertise on the War of 1812 and Great War time periods, curator, and re-enactor held the audiences' attention throughout the presentation. He stressed the importance of Ruthven's WWI collection due to its association with and ownership of with the Thompson family. David went on to say that the collection is "stunning" - many objects being scarce or one of a kind. In addition to the rare MacAdams shovels, David mentioned the red wool sporting jersey probably worn by Lt. Col. Andrew Thompson and used for team sports like running, baseball, tug-of-war. These activities were a big part of army life and participation was viewed as a way of showing regimental pride. Other objects David focused on were swords, medals, helmets, a 114th regiment water bottle, gas goggles and uniform. The collection has been catalogued and is being prepared for exhibition during 2014.



Congratulations to our 'Cheesy Trivia' winners the Chamber Pots from left to right Patti-Bell Sergeant, Karen Crozier, Ted Aylan-Parker, Nancy McBride, Barbara Martindale, Pam Aylan-Parker and Anne Unyi, Curator of Edinburgh Square Heritage and Cultural Centre, not a team member, but a co-host of the event.

Each year we offer a presentation on a WWI topic to honour the contribution of the Thompson family and all Canadians defending our great country. This year we were pleased with the return of Studio Babette Puppet Theatre's original play *"From Ruthven to Passchendaele"*. Throughout the week over 200 school children enjoyed the performances.



Norm Christie in front of an attentive audience. He is sharing the stage with Mike, Drew Thompson, Drew's mother Voilet and sister Margaret (thanks to Studio Babette)

On November 6th Norm Christie, author of over 100 books on Canadian Military History experiences in WWI and WWII, and host for History Television's critically acclaimed *For King and Empire* made a scheduled stop at Ruthven. His presentation, *Masters of War: The Canadians in the Great War* was interspersed with information about the 114th battalion who went overseas under the leadership of Lt. Col Andrew Thompson.

This year Ruthven member and volunteer, Ken Martindale participated in the Remembrance Day service at the Cayuga cenotaph. Ken laid the wreath representing the commitment of the Thompsons in WWI.

I am pleased to inform you that Natalie Campbell, our Education Coordinator has joined the board of Interpretation Canada.

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Wild Grapes and Cedar Waxwings at Ruthven

By Rick Ludkin, Bander-in-Charge

Wild grapes are a relatively new phenomenon at Ruthven. There were always a few but, since 2010 there number has skyrocketed. I can infer the year from the number of Cedar Waxwings we have been catching in the fall. In the 10 years running from 2000 to 2009 we banded 506 of them, an average of 50.6 per season (and in 2009 we had only 2). But from 2010 to 2012 we averaged 426.6 and this fall we banded an astounding 1,481!

Cedar Waxwings are a common breeding bird at Ruthven. They have even built nests in the decorative maples only 20 meters from the banding lab. They are primarily fruit eaters except when feeding young, at which time you can see them sallying out over the Grand River to hawk insects like flycatchers. But it is sugary fruit that they prefer and the increase in wild grapes at Ruthven has been much to their liking. In the fall now you can see them reeling about the site in flocks ranging anywhere from 7 or 8 or up to over 300 birds. First thing in the morning, when the fruit was ripe (late September/October), you would see them fly in and take up positions in the treetops, seemingly checking things out. They would often move from one area to another looking for the best clusters with the fewest potential threats from predators. And then, when all was right, they would drop down en masse to feast on the sweet purple fruit.

But now the flocks are all but gone – on their way south. The winter home for Ruthven's waxwings would appear to be in Georgia. Two of our banded birds have been recovered in that state during the winter.

It isn't unusual to see a few waxwings in the area during the winter. This winter should be interesting in that there is still a lot of fruit left on the vines – potential food to entice overwintering birds like bluebirds, robins, hermit thrushes and waxwings.



Cedar waxwing eating grapes. Photo by Caleb Scholten.

4th Annual Ruthven's for the Birds Festival



James Cowan from the Raptor Conservancy holding a majestic Bald Eagle.



...while Juggle Magic entertains the kids.

Cars in the Park



Cars in the Park was the best attended to date with over 250 cars and 400 people in attendance. The weather was a big factor! Photos by Fred Smith.

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I would like to thank all those who provided input for the strategic plan. It was encouraging to involve the community and to build consensus among the board. We now have agreed upon strategic goals for the next five years!

On October 16th honorary Land Trust members, Ron and Nancy Clark received an Honour Roll Award from the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA).

As a special award, it is not given out every year, but Ron and Nancy certainly deserve it! They have been very active with the Grand River Conservation Foundation for many years and were lead donors for the recent restoration work at Taquanyah Conservation Area and revitalization of Kinsmen Park in Caledonia. With their particular interest in children participating in outdoor education, Ron and Nancy have supported Ruthven's education program and recently recommitted their contributions for another five years.

We are very much appreciative of their continuing support.



Ron and Nancy Clark accepting their award flanked by Joe Farwell (GRCA CAO) and Jane Mitchell (GRCA Chair). Photo by Grand River Conservation Authority.

The Lower Grand
River Land Trust Inc.

...wishing you a
Merry Christmas
and a very
Happy New Year!

Membership Appreciation Event

By Rob Gerrie, Membership Committee Chair

This year our Membership Appreciation Event was held on Sunday, November 3rd. The Membership Committee wanted to highlight two major activities: the Bird Banding Program and the Thompson family involvement in World War 1.

Beginning at 1:30pm, members and their guests had the opportunity to visit Ruthven's Bird Banding operation and talk to volunteers running the station.

Afterwards Studio Babette performed their original puppet show, *From Ruthven to Passchendaele*. This show followed the Thompson family as they travelled from Canada to Great Britain and then on to mainland Europe during the First World War. The show illustrated the privations and tragedy of war and how it impacted the Thompson family. The pastoral existence of the family at Ruthven contrasted with the shock and awe of the First World War.

Those in attendance questioned the puppeters and our Education Coordinator on the historical aspects of the production.

At the closing all those present were invited to share in refreshments and fellowship.

I wish to thank staff, Caitlin Cannon, Natalie Campbell, and Marilyn Havelka for their assistance in setting the activity up. Also thanks to the Membership Committee members: Betsy Smith, Gail Collins, Karen Walton, and Janet deVos for their support and participation in making this a successful event.

On another note, we had a slight increase in membership attendance from the previous year.

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We are truly grateful to: **Ontario Power Generation (OPG)** for their ongoing support by providing funds (\$5,000) to enhance our educational program by adding to the life size models of species at risk found on our site. Our experience with the turtle and snake models, also funded by OPG last year were so well received that we wanted to add to the collection.

The remaining portion of funds will provide the opportunity for the butterfly garden to be experienced through our other senses besides sight.

And **TD Friends of the Environment Fund** who provided \$2,500 to provide sensory activities for education programs in the butterfly meadow. This contribution, along with that of OPG will further our education goals and provide another accessibility friendly activity.

Together these initiatives will assist Ruthven in furthering its mission.

2013 Butterfly Season Summary

By Norm & Mary Pomfret, Volunteers

(Note: We thank Norm and Mary, volunteers and members who have carried out Butterfly Census at Ruthven for the past several years).

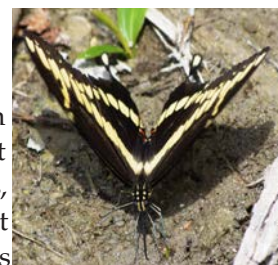
The butterfly census started on April 11 and carried on weekly until the end of September (normally Wednesday afternoon when weather and other obligations permitted). The overall numbers were down as well as the number of species totalling 33, compared to 43 in 2012 and 42 in 2011.

The monarch butterfly numbers were shockingly reduced from last year. Only 13 were seen on census compared to 55 to 105 in a more normal season (106 in 2012) – and no larvae were seen this year. Remember that our monarchs fly directly south to Mexico but monarchs migrating north in the spring stop along the way and go through several life cycles in the US before the adults arrive in Ontario. Contributing factors to our reduced monarch numbers this year include:

- during the summer of 2012 numbers of monarch butterfly fell by 58% in the US Midwest
- there was an 81% drop in the amount of milkweed found on Midwestern US farm fields
- the 2012/13 wintering monarch populations in Mexico declined by 59%
- a loss of milkweeds in corn and soybean fields due to “round-up ready” genetically modified seed
- a push for biofuels has resulted in the planting of 25.5 million more acres of corn and soybeans than were planted in 2006
- development consumes 6000 acres a day or 2.2 million acres a year
- intensive farming reduces the area from the edge of the road to the field and management of our roadsides with the use of herbicides and excessive mowing which also eliminates milkweeds
- deforestation of the oyamel fir forests in Mexico
- unusual weather in 2012 e.g. warmest March, flooding, drought



Blue vervain, Oxeye Sunflower, Brown eyed Susan, and non-native Queen's Anne's Lace



Giant Swallow Tail

This year there were no southern species seen at Ruthven. Norman did more planting in the Butterfly Meadow – seed was obtained from Tall Grass Prairie and other groups, started at home, potted on, and transplanted at Ruthven. The young plants were relished by the rabbits, deer and grasshoppers. Some have survived the critters and the heat and drought in August with some extra watering, help from pepper spray and “deer be-gone”, and little plastic walls and markers.

Norm's Plantings at Ruthven 2013

No.	Common Name	Latin Name		Larval Food Plant for
51	Virginia Mountain Mint	<i>Pycnanthemum virginianum</i>	N	
5	Northern Wild Senna	<i>Senna hebecarpa</i>	F	Little Yellow
11	Compass Plant	<i>Silphium laciniatum</i>	N	
16	Cup Plant	<i>Silphium perfoliatum</i>	N	
6	Rosin Weed	<i>Silphium trifoliatum</i>	N	
22	Yellow Giant Hyssop	<i>Agastache nepetoides</i>	N	
5	White Wild Indigo	<i>Baptisia alba</i>	F	Wild Indigo Duskywing, Funereal Duskywing, Silver-spotted Skipper
8	Yellow Wild Indigo	<i>Baptisia sphaerocarpa</i>	F	
8	Dwarf Blue False Indigo	<i>Baptisia australis minor</i>	F	
26	Blue Vervain	<i>Verbena hastata</i>	N	
12	Sneezeweed	<i>Helenium autumnale</i>	N	
3	Lance Leaved Coreopsis	<i>Coreopsis lanceolata</i>	N	
16	Showy Tick Trefoil	<i>Desmodium canadense</i>	F	Northern Cloudywing, Silver-spotted Skipper
8	Red Turtlehead	<i>Chelone obliqua</i>	F	Baltimore Checkerspot
7	Purple Coneflower	<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	N	
10	Dense Blazing Star	<i>Liatris spicata</i>	N	
6	Oxeye Sunflower	<i>Heliopsis helianthoides</i>	N	
5	Swamp Milkweed	<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>	F	Monarch, Queen
26	Prairie Coneflower	<i>Ratibida columnifera</i>	N	
3	Spice Bush		F	Spicebush Swallowtail
2	New Jersey Tea	<i>Ceanothus americana</i>	F	Mottled Duskywing, Spring Azure
1	American Plum		F	Coral Hairstreak

Ruthven Butterflies	Date	2013												Total for Season														
		Apr-11	Apr-26	May-01	May-08	May-16	May-20	May-30	Jun-04	Jun-12	Jun-19	Jun-26	Jul-03		Jul-11	Jul-16	Jul-25	Jul-30	Aug-05	Aug-15	Aug-23	Aug-29	Sep-04	Sep-13	Sep-18	Sep-26		
Silver-Spotted Skipper	<i>Euphydryas cetrus</i>																											7
Juvenal's Duskywing	<i>Erynnis juvenalis</i>					1						3																8
Common Sootywing	<i>Pholisora caecilia</i>						1																					1
Delaware Skipper	<i>Anatrytone logan</i>																											0
Least Skipper	<i>Angiolystra numitor</i>																											15
Dun Skipper	<i>Euphyes vestris</i>																											40
Hobomok Skipper	<i>Praeneis hobomok</i>																											3
Peck's Skipper	<i>Polites peckius</i>																											2
Crosslined Skipper	<i>Polites orginipes</i>																											0
Tammy Edged Skipper	<i>Polites themistocles</i>																											0
European Skipper	<i>Thymelicus lineola</i>																											653
Flyer Skipper	<i>Hylephila phylus</i>																											0
Northern Boken-Dash	<i>Wallerengia egeremet</i>																											2
Prairie Swallowtail	<i>Battus philenor</i>																											0
Eastern Tiger Swallowtail	<i>Papilio glaucus</i>																											6
Black Swallowtail	<i>Papilio polyxenes</i>																											9
Giant Swallowtail	<i>Papilio cresphontes</i>																											2
Cabbage White	<i>Pieris rapae</i>																											905
Little Yellow	<i>Eurema lisa</i>																											0
Orange Sulphur	<i>Colias eurytheme</i>																											10
Clouded Sulphur	<i>Colias philodotus</i>																											116
Banded Hairstreak	<i>Satyrus ceanurus</i>																											7
Striped Hairstreak	<i>Satyrium tibrops</i>																											2
Hickory Hairstreak	<i>Satyrium caneyocorum</i>																											0
Spring Azure	<i>Celastrina ladon</i>																											0
Summer Azure	<i>Celastrina neglecta</i>																											2
American Snout	<i>Libytheana carminea</i>																											0
Eastern Tailed Blue	<i>Erebia comynus</i>																											66
Bronze Copper	<i>Lycæna hylus</i>																											0
Meadow Fritillary	<i>Boloria belona</i>																											0
Great Spangled Fritillary	<i>Speyeria cybele</i>																											44
Aprothlis Fritillary	<i>Speyeria aprinthie</i>																											0
Silvery Checkerspot	<i>Chrysoneura nylæus</i>																											0
Northern Crescent	<i>Phycodes coccyx</i>																											106
Pearl Crescent	<i>Phycodes theros</i>																											87
Mourning Cloak	<i>Nymphalis antiopa</i>																											11
Eastern Comma	<i>Polygona commata</i>																											13
Grey Comma	<i>Polygona progne</i>																											0
Question Mark	<i>Polygona interrogatorius</i>																											1
Milbert's Tortoiseshell	<i>Nymphalis milberti</i>																											0
Red Admiral	<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>																											4
Painted Lady	<i>Vanessa cardui</i>																											0
American Lady	<i>Vanessa virginiensis</i>																											2
Common Buckeye	<i>Limnitis coenia</i>																											0
Viceroy	<i>Limnitis arthemis</i>																											0
Red-Spotted Purple	<i>Limnitis arthemis astyanax</i>																											5
White Admiral	<i>Limnitis arthemis arthemis</i>																											0
Tammy Emperor	<i>Asterocampa clyton</i>																											0
Common Wood-Nymph	<i>Ceryx oris pegala</i>																											265
Eyed Brown	<i>Satyrus eurycle</i>																											0
Inornate Ringlet	<i>Coenonympha tullia inornata</i>																											15
Northern Pearl-Eye	<i>Euroda amficedon</i>																											1
Little Wood-Sailer	<i>Megisto cymela</i>																											143
Monarch	<i>Danaus plexippus</i>																											13
Total Species Seen		1	0	2	3	5	4	7	8	7	7	7	9	16	13	16	11	12	14	14	7	9	1	6			33	

Mark On Your Calendar

CHRISTMAS WITH THE THOMPSONS

Weekends November 30 to December 15 ~ 12 noon to 4pm
(tours on the hour, last tour at 4pm)

The main floor of Ruthven mansion will be decorated for a unique Thompson family Christmas. Regular admission rates apply.

CHRISTMAS WITH TIA MCGRAFF

December 8 ~ 2pm. Tickets: \$15 (in advance), \$18 (at the door)

Get into the spirit of the season with an afternoon of music with international country artist Tia McGraff. Open seating. Enjoy a Christmas mansion tour (at 1pm or 3pm). Refreshments.

CANDLELIGHT TOURS

December 12 & 19 ~ 7pm. Adults \$12, Seniors \$10, Children \$4. Pre-registration required.

The Thompson family will welcome you to their home and share their Christmas experience at Ruthven. After the tour enjoy seasonal refreshments.

SCOTTISH TEA

December 15 ~ 2pm. Adults \$12, Seniors \$10, Children \$4. Pre-registration required.

Celebrate the season by enjoying tea with tasteful samples of Christmas sweets and hear about how the Scots celebrated the season! Mansion tour included.

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MISSION

Ruthven Park is a National Historic Site owned and managed by the Lower Grand River Land Trust Inc. a not-for-profit, non-government, charitable organization which seeks to conserve, maintain and promote Ruthven Park's rich cultural and natural heritage through research, stewardship, interpretation and education for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

(Approved by the board on October 26 during the strategic planning process).

LOWER GRAND RIVER LAND TRUST INC.

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2013 - 2014

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Marilynn Havelka, CAO, Ruthven Park

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Sandra Turner, Stewardship Coordinator

Caitlin Cannon, Operations Coordinator

Bob Donald, Maintenance

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We have several projects on hand!
If you are interested, please give us a call at
the Gate House.

905 - 772- 0560