GEORGIAN BAY LAND TRUST
gblt.org

FALL 2025

LANDSCRIPT

PROTECTING **GEORGIAN BAY'S** WILDERNESS LANDS

Help Protect the

Honey Harbour Nature Reserve

Species Spotlight: Staghorn Sumac

The Lifecycle of the Massasauga Rattlesnake

Using Drones to Map Habitats

photo: Sarah Koetsier

Help Protect the Honey Harbour Nature Reserve

The Georgian Bay Land Trust has an exciting opportunity to create a new conservation area in north Honey Harbour and protect 365 acres of pristine forests, wetlands, and shoreline – forever.

The proposed Honey Harbour Nature Reserve is one of the largest remaining undeveloped parcels of land in Honey Harbour. Home to rich forests, significant wetlands, and thriving wildlife habitats – including an established Great Blue Heron rookery – it is an irreplaceable part of the Georgian Bay landscape.

Previously connected to one of Honey Harbour's old homesteads, this privately-owned land has been put up for sale for the first time in over 120 years. We're working to raise the funds to purchase this property by November 28, and protect it in perpetuity as a nature reserve.

This property's ecological values are exceptional. It contains parts of two Provincially Significant Wetlands – the North Bay Wetland to the south and the Bearshead Lake Wetland to the north. It also includes a provincially designated Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI) – one of only five in eastern Georgian Bay. These wetlands and interior lakes serve as important stopover and nesting areas for waterfowl, naturally filter water, and sustain amphibians and aquatic insects that are vital to the food chain.

In addition to wetlands, this property includes mature forests, streams, beaver ponds, and Canadian Shield outcroppings. This diversity provides habitat for a wide array of plants and animals including large mammals and multiple species at risk. On our initial visits, we've already documented 200+ plants and 50+ animal species, and we know this is just the beginning of the wildlife we will discover.

One of the most interesting features on this property is a Great Blue Heron rookery in one of the interior wetlands. Herons nest in colonies, often in swampy areas where they build their nests in standing dead trees. The rookery on this property has been established for many years and supports numerous heron nests, likely providing the breeding grounds for many of the herons seen in the north Honey Harbour area.

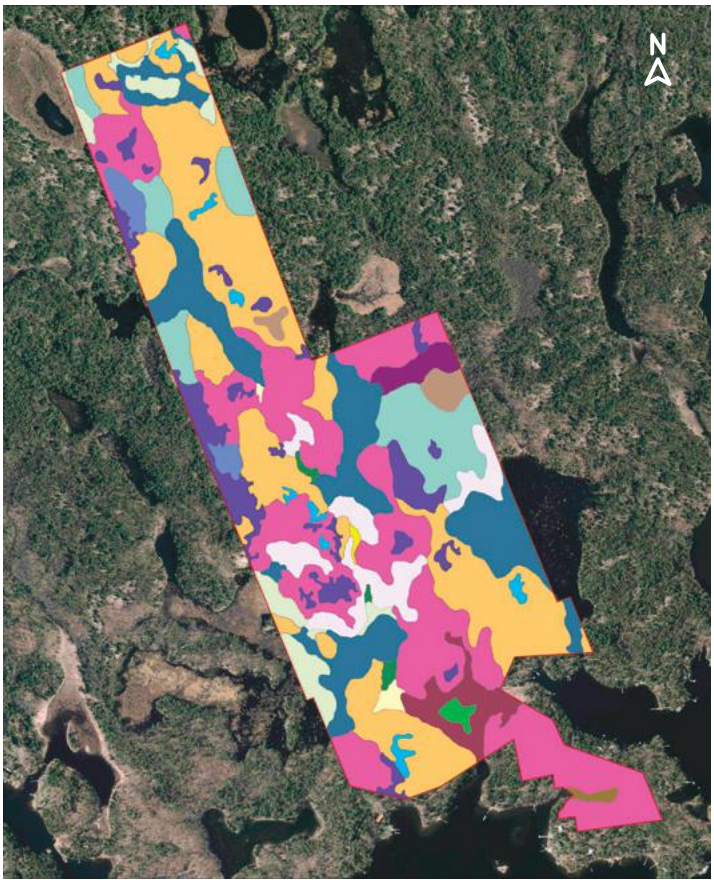
These large and diverse lands are an important link for natural connectivity in the region. On its north side, the property abuts the McCrae Lake Conservation Reserve, as well as lands protected through the Georgian Bay Land Trust's Corridor Project. The property borders crown land to the east, and flows into Honey Harbour's North Bay to the south. Maintaining these natural corridors will allow wildlife to move between these lands and waters, facilitating large-scale migrations and the local survival of many species.

Protecting this land means protecting species that require wide, intact ranges. It means safeguarding nesting sites, migratory stopovers, and rich wetlands that filter our water. It also means ensuring that future generations will always experience the wild beauty that makes Georgian Bay so special.

We need your help to protect this amazing place! We're delighted to have secured government funding to cover some of the costs of purchasing this property. But we need to raise additional funds by November 28 to make the Honey Harbour Nature Reserve a reality. Visit gblt.org/honeyharbour to learn more about how you can help protect this land forever.

Why this land matters

- One of the largest remaining undeveloped tracts in Honey Harbour
- Provides critical habitat for reptiles, amphibians, migratory birds, and species at risk
- Home to two Provincially Significant Wetlands and a designated Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI)
- Connects to the Georgian Bay Land Trust's Corridor Project lands and the McCrae Lake Conservation Reserve, strengthening a vital biodiversity corridor along the Georgian Bay coast



The proposed Honey Harbour Nature Reserve is located to the northwest of Honey Harbour's North Bay, and contains a rich diversity of habitat - each colour on the map is a different habitat type.

ELC Common Name

- Broad-leaved Sedge Organic Meadow Marsh Type
- Cattail Organic Shallow Marsh Type
- Common Juniper Granite Shrubland Barren Type
- Cottongrass - Beak-rush/Yellow-eyed Grass Open Fen
- Dry - Fresh Sugar Maple - Oak Deciduous Forest Type
- Dry - Fresh White Pine - Red Maple Mixed Forest Type
- Dry Granite Barren Type
- Forb Organic Meadow Marsh Type
- Fresh Hemlock Coniferous Forest Type
- Graminoid Coastal Meadow Marsh Type
- Mountain Holly Shrub Fen Type
- Narrow-leaved Sedge Organic Meadow Marsh Type
- Oak - Red Maple - Pine Treed Granite Barren Type
- Rice Cut-grass Organic Meadow Marsh Type
- Water Lily - Bullhead Lily Floating-leaved Shallow Aquatic Type
- White Birch-Red Maple-Trembling Aspen-Mountain Maple Forest
- Winterberry Holly Organic Thicket Swamp Type
- Property Boundary

0.2 0.1 0 0.2 0.4 0.6 0.8 1 Kilometers

Aerial image from South Central Ontario Orthophotography (SCOOP) 2023

Species Spotlight:

Staghorn Sumac *(Rhus typhina)*

by Tory Cadotte

In spring, the Staghorn Sumac's cones are made up of green flowers
Photo: Dan Mullen

The Staghorn Sumac's red cones persist through winter, providing food for birds
Photo: Esteve Conaway

At this time of year, a shrub that really stands out on the Georgian Bay landscape is the staghorn sumac. In spring, it's adorned with small greenish-yellow flowering clusters. These are soon replaced by the dark red, cone-shaped fruit that makes the plant so easy to identify. Through the summer, sumac blends in with surrounding vegetation, with its green, umbrella-like canopy of leaves. But in the fall, it truly shines—its foliage turns brilliant shades of yellow, orange, and scarlet red before falling away to reveal the plant's striking branching architecture. The staghorn sumac gets its name from these thick, velvety upper branches that resemble the antlers of young male deer. The red fruits persist through the winter, providing both visual interest and food for wildlife. Staghorn sumac is truly a shrub for all seasons!

But did you know that staghorn sumac fruit is actually edible? Sumac has a long and culturally significant history and has been used for a variety of purposes. The tart and lemony flavoured "berries", rich in vitamin C, can be dried for spices, steeped in hot water to make teas, or boiled down to make ink. The bark and leaves, rich in tannins, have traditionally been used to tan hides. The plant also has a history of therapeutic use, thanks to its antioxidant properties.

You are likely to see this plant in many different landscapes, but in natural spaces like Georgian Bay, it tends to be one of the first colonizers to fill areas that have recently been disturbed. This means you might see it along roads or developments, in meadow-like areas or along forest edges.

Sumac spreads easily by rhizomes – underground, horizontal plant stems that send up new shoots above ground, making new plants. The new plants are genetically identical to the original or "mother" plant; and off to a good start - the mother plant provides energy and nutrients to its younger offshoots and helps it grow quickly. Because these baby plants can also reproduce through rhizomes, this can lead to exponential growth, at times forming vast sumac thickets. In fact, sometimes sumac can sprawl so much in open areas it can be considered invasive and almost weed-like. Despite its pervasiveness, staghorn sumac is intolerant to dense shade; it needs the sun to thrive.

But if sumac can reproduce easily through rhizomes, why go through all that effort to create flowers and fruits? Sumac is not alone in using both asexual and sexual reproduction (think raspberries, balsam fir, and yes, sadly, phragmites!). This multi-strategy approach is advantageous because it allows sumac to spread both locally and farther afield via wind dispersal, establishing new populations with genetic diversity. It's genetic diversity that equips the species with the ability to evolve with environmental pressures for long term survival.

In Georgian Bay, staghorn sumac is a native species that is beneficial to the local environment. Sumac trunks are forked, and the branches are spreading, providing a great refuge for birds and animals including its namesake – deer! It also attracts insects, like bees and wasps, helping to support pollination.

So the next time you see a staghorn sumac, take a closer look – notice its clustered berry like fruits, its intricate branching structure, and fuzzy antler-like stems. Can you identify it in all four seasons? That's your challenge!

Do you have a species you'd like to see spotlighted in an upcoming issue? Send your suggestion to ***info@gblt.org****.*

Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship in Georgian Bay – Our First Year

Research Students Lauren and Rishona and visiting ornithologist Catherine band birds on a MAPS day

Georgian Bay got its first MAPS station this summer! We're excited to have launched this bird banding program as part of our ongoing efforts to bring more conservation science to Georgian Bay.

MAPS stands for Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship. It's a project of the Institute for Bird Populations, a nonprofit organization founded in 1989 to study the causes for declining bird populations. Since the program began 36 years ago, over 1,400 locations have participated, representing nearly every Canadian province and American state. But the closest station to Georgian Bay was over 100 km away – so we decided to fill the gap by establishing a new station at the Robertson Nature Reserve in north Go Home Bay.

The MAPS program works by collecting standardized data on the birds that are present at each of its stations throughout the breeding season. When the data from all the stations is analyzed together, it allows researchers to make estimates about bird populations as a whole, including things like survival rates and reproductive success. The more stations that operate, and the more years that data is collected, the more detailed the picture becomes.

Running a MAPS station requires a commitment to banding birds once every 10 days throughout the breeding season. The procedure works as follows: on each banding day, mist nets are opened at dawn and left open for a period of 6 hours. (Mist nets are very fine mesh nets strung between poles – similar to a volleyball net – which birds can fly into and be safely extracted by researchers.) Research teams monitor the nets throughout the day, and each time a bird is caught, they record key data like age, sex, and body condition, place a band on the bird's leg, and then release it back into the wild. The whole process is designed to take only a few minutes from capture to release.

Our MAPS "station" was not a physical structure, but rather a series of 10 temporary nets that were set up for banding days and taken down at the end of the season. Our team of staff and research students ran seven monitoring days, beginning on June 8th and wrapping up on August 4th. We caught 61 birds in total from a variety of species and learned a lot about how to successfully operate a station like this in the Georgian Bay environment. The data we collected has been sent to the Institute for Bird Populations to support their broader research efforts. We're already looking forward to next year!

Property Spotlight:

Celebrating 15 years of the Kemerer Easement

Fifteen years ago, Peter and Cynthia Kemerer decided to make sure that the landscape they loved around their cottage would remain wild forever. The conservation easement they created with the Georgian Bay Land Trust has become a proud part of their family's legacy on Georgian Bay, now lovingly looked after by their daughter Natalie and her family.

"I love protecting all the little creatures," says Natalie. "I try to leave things as natural as possible. We have good biodiversity on our property because we focus on natural things."

The Kemerers have been cottaging on Cognashene's Bone Island since the mid 1980s, having moved there from a nearby cottage where Peter grew up. Natalie believes that her parents were inspired by their neighbours to consider a conservation easement, but that protecting the land also always came naturally to them. "My parents were very conservation minded, and did a lot of volunteering and fundraising," she says. Once they became involved with the Land Trust, they started hosting "Shakespeare on the Rocks" fundraisers attended by their neighbours in Cognashene.

Conservation easements are agreements in which landowners commit to maintaining all or some of their property in its natural state forever. In the Kemerers' case, the cottage sits on 2 acres of buildable land at the front of their property, and the easement covers the remaining 12 acres of forest and wetlands.

These 12 acres include extensive white pine and oak forest, interspersed with rock barrens and boggy depressions. These diverse habitats support a variety of animal life, including important breeding habitats for birds and reptiles. "We love all our animals: salamanders, birds, snakes, mammals," says Natalie. "We love that there are pileated woodpeckers that come through, hummingbirds, and hawks soaring. We had a good year with a bear and some cubs, which was exciting. When you leave your property natural and you're kind of quiet and not very obtrusive you are rewarded by seeing a lot of life around you."

Their natural shoreline also supports a lot of life - not only fish, turtles, and birds, but also rare Atlantic Coastal Plain plants including Carolina yellow-eyed grass. Atlantic Coastal Plain flora is a special phenomenon in Georgian Bay and Muskoka, an ice-age relic where plants that are almost exclusively found on the east coast are also found growing in small pockets here on the Bay.

Natalie describes herself as "deeply devoted to the land". She is passionate about identifying and encouraging native plants, and tackling invasive species whenever they pop up. She regularly hikes the property's trails with her family.

"We try to enjoy as much of it as we can. We walk back there – during Covid we hiked back there all the time. We have several special spots that we go to, and a lot of family memories of those hikes."

In 2015, the cottage that the Kemerers built in the '80s burned to the ground. Out of this disaster a new cottage was built, and Natalie has been observing the changes in the landscape post-fire. "There is a massive amount of biodiversity that has appeared," she says. "To watch the expansion of the ecosystem every year since the fire is really unbelievable. I'm seeing flowers and plants I didn't know were present here."

Placing a conservation easement on their property means that the Kemerers have guaranteed that it will remain in its natural state forever, no matter who owns the land in future years. They are free to sell the property or pass it on to heirs, but the conservation easement remains on title, and the Georgian Bay Land Trust monitors the ecology of the land once a year. The Kemerers received a tax receipt to offset the financial property value that they have given up in creating the easement.

"I really love the idea of protecting natural areas in perpetuity," says Natalie. "I think it's a very important thing for people to do. We don't think of ourselves as owning the land – we're stewards."

What does Georgian Bay mean to Natalie? "It's part of one of the most unique landscapes in the world. My dad grew up there, we grew up there, our kids are growing up there. There's something about that place that just holds you. The pine trees, the rocks – I think it deeply affects the people that stay there and that visit there."

Natalie, we are so grateful to you and your family for doing your part to protect this landscape and all of its inhabitants forever.

Drones for Conservation

by Adam Grottoli, Corridor Project Coordinator

Protecting nature requires stewardship of the land, but in places as remote and rugged as Georgian Bay, stewardship can sometimes be a challenge. This year, the Land Trust began using drones to make our job more efficient.

Drone technology is rapidly emerging as a tool that can be used to aid in conservation efforts. Drones can capture detailed images of the landscape from above which can then be used to create high resolution maps of ecosystems. For conservation groups like the Georgian Bay Land Trust, they offer a way to see more land in less time, while also collecting information that would be impossible to gather on foot. By flying over the areas the Land Trust protects, drones give us a bird's-eye view of how ecosystems are changing and whether any threats are emerging.

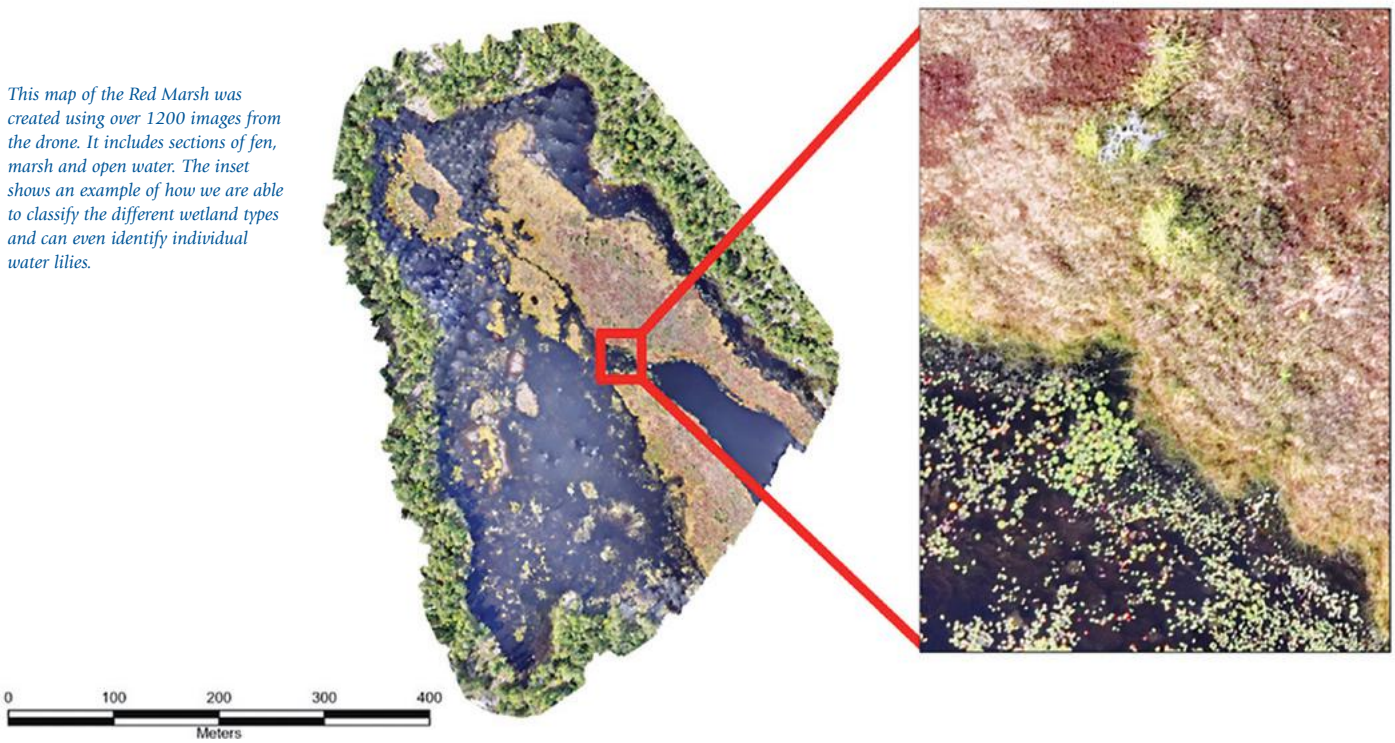
One great example of how drones are being used by the Georgian Bay Land Trust is the Corridor Project - our most ambitious effort to date. The project is designed to protect a connected network of lands along the eastern shore of Georgian Bay. A key component of the corridor involves conservation agreements on long, narrow strips of municipally owned land. Although some of these strips are only 20 metres wide, together they form a grid across the landscape that help prevent development from fragmenting the wilderness they encompass. Since many of these strips of land are far from roads or docks, it is difficult for staff to reach them regularly. With the drone, however, our team was able to capture imagery of more than 100 kilometres of these strips of land in just seven days.

These images now give us a complete snapshot of the Corridor, showing us where human encroachment on protected lands may be an issue. The imagery also allows us to classify habitats with a level of detail that would be extremely difficult to achieve otherwise. For example, with drone photographs we can easily identify wetland types, forest edges, and even forest types (deciduous, coniferous, or mixed forests).

Drones also open the door to new ways of protecting Georgian Bay's ecosystems. With specialized cameras, drones can detect changes in vegetation that are not visible to the naked eye. This makes them especially useful for managing invasive species and detecting changes in vegetation composition and health. By flying the same areas year after year, drones will also help us track how the environment is shifting over time. For example, wetlands are in a constant state of flux and may change in unexpected ways in response to climate change. Whether it is climate change, natural events like fires, or human activity, these repeated surveys will give us a powerful method to analyze change.

The data from drone flights becomes even more powerful when used alongside the other ecological information the Georgian Bay Land Trust collects. By building a database that includes drone imagery, ecological surveys, and fieldwork, we can look at the big picture of how Georgian Bay's ecosystems are functioning and how best to protect them.

The first year of drone operations has shown just how valuable this tool can be. As the technology continues to improve, the possibilities will continue to grow, giving us new ways to steward the land, water, and wildlife of Georgian Bay.



This map of the Red Marsh was created using over 1200 images from the drone. It includes sections of fen, marsh and open water. The inset shows an example of how we are able to classify the different wetland types and can even identify individual water lilies.

Georgian Bay **QUERY:**

Answered by Joseph Kohut, Corridor Project Ecologist, Georgian Bay Land Trust

Rattlesnakes Around the Year

As a cottage owner on Georgian Bay, I'm fascinated by Massasauga rattlesnakes but also a bit wary of them. Should I be concerned about them being on my property? Can you tell me about their behaviour and the types of habitats they prefer throughout the year?

Joseph conducting Massasauga rattlesnake research for conservation science. Handled with appropriate permits and wildlife safety protocols.

Massasauga rattlesnakes may be one of Georgian Bay's most misunderstood residents. Despite their fearsome reputation, Massasaugas are truly shy and docile snakes, preferring to avoid conflict. As ambush predators who specialize in hunting small mammals, they have no interest in pursuing humans or our pets. Far from being pests, they actually play a key role in controlling rodent populations.

Rattlesnakes rely on their venom to catch and digest their prey, making it too valuable to waste. Massasaugas have multiple defensive behaviours they will exhaust before resorting to using their venom. When threatened by our presence, their first instinct is to remain still, relying on their bowtie-shaped pattern as camouflage. If discovered, they will flee to nearby cover if possible. If they can't escape, they will begin to rattle. Rattling is a warning display, a polite request for personal space, rather than a direct threat. Striking behaviour only occurs when they are handled or continuously provoked, lunging forward to ward off what they perceive to be a threat. Striking is often used as a final warning display before resorting to envenomation. Simply put, Massasaugas will do everything they can to avoid using their venom on humans and other non-prey animals.

Not only is it rare for Massasauga rattlesnakes to bite humans, but they also have one of the least potent venoms of all rattlesnakes. Massasauga rattlesnakes have resulted in only 2 human deaths in Ontario throughout recorded history, with both occurring over 50 years ago. Nevertheless, if you suspect that you have been bitten by a Massasauga, you should remain calm and visit the nearest hospital as soon as possible. While their bites are rarely fatal and do not always carry venom, untreated bites can result in severe health complications.

If you do happen to come across a Massasauga on your property, you will want to remember that they can only strike within a distance that is equal to under half of their total body length. Massasaugas are a relatively small rattlesnake: adults are typically between 55 and 80 centimetres long. You can therefore ensure your safety by always remaining at least 2 metres away from them.

While finding a Massasauga rattlesnake on your property is rare, it is not a great reason for concern. Massasaugas have specialized habitat requirements and do not spend long periods of time in areas that are close to human activity or developments. In fact, habitat loss due to human development is one of the greatest factors resulting in the species' rapid population decline over the last few decades. Learning to coexist in Georgian Bay with Massasauga rattlesnakes is not only necessary for their survival, but also part of Georgian Bay's natural heritage.

Furthermore, as a species at risk, Massasauga rattlesnakes and their habitats are both federally and provincially protected. It is illegal to kill, harm, or harass Massasaugas, and it is similarly illegal to damage or destroy their critical habitats. Having knowledge of the types of habitats Massasauga rattlesnakes prefer can help us to respect their boundaries and avoid interactions. Similarly, it is important to understand why Massasaugas can be found in different habitats at different times of the year, as their movement patterns are closely tied to their life cycle and survival requirements. It is therefore best to describe their habitat use by each season.

While habitat loss and the impacts of roads have led to

the near collapse of Massasauga rattlesnake populations in Southern Ontario, the eastern shore of the Georgian Bay still holds the largest remaining population across their entire species range. While limited development in eastern Georgian Bay has helped preserve hibernation wetlands and gestation sites, plans of expanding development threaten the future of these critical habitats.

At the Georgian Bay Land Trust we are taking on the fight to protect our wildlife and their habitats. Our Corridor Project plans to establish a permanent migratory haven for species at risk by connecting a 62,900-acre protected habitat corridor along the eastern shore. For more information, please visit gblt.org/corridor to learn about our Corridor Project, and see what you can do to help.

SPRING: Awake After Winter

Massasauga rattlesnake basking in a hibernation fen

As the sun shines and the frost melts in mid to late spring, Massasaugas emerge from their six-month winter rest. Their top priority is to regain their strength by basking in the sun and foraging for food. They can be found around their hibernation wetland habitats – peatlands, such as treed fens and thicket swamps, that are rich in moss. Spring is also mating season, where males may travel up to a kilometre in search of a partner. As temperatures rise, rattlesnakes gradually begin moving between wetland and drier upland habitats.

SUMMER: Months of Massasauga Mothers

Pregnant Massasauga rattlesnake at her chosen gestation rock

People most often encounter rattlesnakes in the summer due to the behaviour of pregnant Massasauga females. Despite the common belief that all snakes lay eggs, Massasaugas give live birth. As cold-blooded reptiles, Massasaugas cannot produce internal heat and instead must regulate their body temperature through external sources. To support embryo development, pregnant females will search for an appropriate rock barren habitat to serve as a gestation site over the summer months.

The perfect gestation rock must have access to open sun for warmth, space beneath for refuge and cooling shade, and nearby low shrubs like junipers and blackberry bushes for protection. Massasauga mothers will remain at their chosen site for most of the summer. Although this might seem like trivial information, avoiding these habitat features during the summer can help reduce rattlesnake encounters. Males and non-reproductive females move more freely between habitats and along forest edges in search of rodents, but typically stay within one kilometre of their hibernation wetlands during the active season.

FALL: Baby Snakes on the Move

Juvenile Massasauga Rattlesnake during fall migration

As leaves change and temperatures cool, Massasaugas start crossing upland habitats to return to the same wetlands they left in the spring. This is also the season of baby snakes! While newborn rattlesnakes still carry venom, they cannot rattle, as they are only born with one rattle segment. They are only 15 to 25 centimetres long and easy to avoid as long as you are wearing closed-toe shoes.

Autumn is a dangerous time of year for Massasauga rattlesnakes due to roads fragmenting their habitat, cutting through vital movement corridors. With small home ranges and highly specific habitat needs, Massasaugas often have no choice but to cross roads to return to their hibernation site. Their slow movement and the heat-retaining asphalt of roads (where snakes tend to linger for warmth) make Massasaugas vulnerable to vehicles. Reptile road mortality spikes during rattlesnake migratory periods in both the spring and fall. Georgian Bay residents can help protect wildlife by being aware and stopping their vehicles for the safe passage of animals.

WINTER: Below the Frost

This mossy fen provides Massasauga overwintering habitat

As temperatures drop and winter returns, Massasaugas must find refuge from the upcoming frost. Peatlands with mossy hummocks – moss mounds over root channels with hollow spaces – provide an ideal overwintering habitat for rattlesnakes. Hummocks deeper than the frost layer protect the snakes from the Georgian Bay cold. These microhabitat features are vital for winter thermoregulation and the survival of Massasauga rattlesnakes, yet these fragile hibernation sites are in decline across Ontario. Agricultural land use and ground water depletion have led to the loss of many key hibernation wetlands for Massasaugas.

A Scissor-Tailed Flycatcher Sighting on Georgian Bay

This spring, staff members Aaron Rusak and Jenn LeMesurier were lucky to see a very rare scissor-tailed flycatcher while on a site visit to a potential new conservation property in Pointe au Baril. It was a memorable experience. Here's a conversation between the two of them retelling the story of this very unusual sighting.

Aaron: This was the first time Jenn and I had worked together in a while, so we were talking a lot while we were doing the property inventory. We landed on the north side of the island and then walked around the east side, and I was commenting on how interesting and ecologically significant the island seemed, with all the warblers that were migrating through. Also, one of the first things we heard was a ruffed grouse drumming, which on a five-acre island is pretty weird to start with. Then we rounded a corner, and this bird flew out of the trees and landed in a red cedar. And I knew immediately it was a scissor-tailed flycatcher. And… maybe Jenn can take it better from here, because I completely shut down.

Jenn: I'm actually surprised that you were able to recount up until that point, because I feel like your brain just totally shut off the moment that it all happened. I was trying to frantically take notes on all the vegetation and birds that we were seeing, and you shouted out "that's a scissor-tailed flycatcher!". Because I'm not an avid birder, I just figured I would add it to the list, but the next time I looked up you were on your hands and knees on a rock in complete and utter shock. You were gasping and repeating: "I can't understand what is happening! How are we seeing this bird here?!" You couldn't stand up, your legs were like jello.

A: Yeah, it's a blur what happened. The reason I knew it was a scissor-tailed flycatcher immediately is because it has pinky orange armpits, under the wing and on a little bit of the breast which I saw as it flew, and then it has these long outer tail feathers which really do look like a pair of scissors. When it catches an insect mid-flight you see it spread its tail and you get this very cool look of its hallmark scissor tail.

J: So then I thought "I gotta see this too", this is obviously something really cool. And when it flies, the tail feathers really do look like scissors, and it's quite large and stands out. It was unbelievable to see it there. And then I was trying to get Aaron to tell me why this is so cool, but he's losing his mind and could barely talk. His legs were shaking, he was on all fours and crawling over to this little ledge to keep looking at it through his binoculars. In between laughter and awe I asked, "do I need to put you in the recovery position? Is this a first aid situation?"

A: We did joke about that because we had just done our first aid training.

J: I couldn't stop laughing because his reaction was just so over the top, it was really funny. Just sheer joy and bliss. I have never seen someone react like that to seeing something in nature.

A: For reference, this is a bird that breeds in Texas. They're seen once every couple of years in Ontario, likely when they overshoot their migration, and they're not seen on Georgian Bay. And so to see one on a remote island was jaw-dropping. And yeah, I totally lost the ability to function for like a solid 45 minutes I would say.

J: It was a long time. I ended up continuing around the island to complete our site visit, so you could catch your breath, take pictures and connect with your birding friends, and just generally pull yourself together. I did another loop and then we met at the boat and you said "I just need to get one more look at it" and went back around.

A: Yeah yeah yeah I went back, a quick look for it.

I think it's extra special in birding when you recognize a bird immediately. With a lot of birds, you're looking at field marks and deliberating which species it might be. But with this one, as soon as I saw it fly, I just knew it was a scissor-tailed flycatcher. And I knew it shouldn't be there. It was the first recorded sighting in the Parry Sound region. Everything came together to make this one of the most impactful birds I'll probably ever see in my life. And Jenn was just standing there laughing the whole time.

J: The response was over the top, pure joy and exhilaration, and just such a genuine response. I can't even imagine a child being as purely exhilarated and joyful as you were in that moment. It was really cool, to see somebody that excited about a bird. It gave me a whole other appreciation for birding.

A: And it just goes to show what we're missing in the natural world within Georgian Bay, because in so many cases a bird like this would have been completely missed. I think there's a huge wealth of information that we're not capturing because Georgian Bay is such a massive and complex ecosystem, and there's so few people out there looking. We need more people birding on Georgian Bay.

Philanthropy Award: Tom and Pamela Scoon

We are so happy to present this year's Philanthropy Award to the very deserving Tom and Pamela Scoon.

Tom and Pamela have been incredible supporters of the Land Trust for over 20 years. It's hard to think of a way in which they haven't contributed during that time. Tom served on our Board from 2004 - 2012, taking on key responsibilities at the Land Trust. He led both the land protection and stewardship committees and also served as Board President. Together, Pamela and Tom have hosted awareness events, built connections and spread the message of conservation within the many communities they are part of.

The Scoons have always been leaders in philanthropy. They were some of the original members of our Leaders of the Bay giving circle and have consistently supported the Land Trust's work with donations over the past two decades. Tom and Pamela always have time for the Land Trust and are ready to chip in for initiatives both big and small. When we put out a call for matching donors for our Spring Big Day fundraiser, they answered. When we've needed a donor to get on camera and talk about the Land Trust, Tom has stepped up. Almost every fundraising event, art auction, or call for donations has the Scoons on the list of supporters.

In 2008, Tom and Pamela decided to give in a different way, and together with their neighbours they donated 64 acres of land in Pointe au Baril's Laura Bay for conservation. Located near the Scoons' cottage, the Laura Bay Reserve protects secluded shoreline habitat for loons, turtles, fish, and more – what a legacy for their community.

Tom and Pamela have also helped with some of our most important fundraising campaigns over the years. In particular, Tom took a leading role in raising over $1 million in 2012 to protect the spectacular Little McCoy island, and was a key fundraiser for our Steamboat Channel purchase in 2016. The Scoons' passion for Georgian Bay shines through in everything they do, and they have been such fantastic advocates for conservation among their wide circle of friends and acquaintances.

Recently, Tom and Pamela have decided to champion another cause with the Land Trust: The Georgian Bay Corridor Project, which aims to create a 62,000+ acre protected habitat corridor along the eastern coast of Georgian Bay. The Scoons came forward early as supporters of this project, and their generous commitment reflects their lifelong track record of believing in big ideas and getting involved to make them reality.

We can't put into words how grateful we are to have Tom and Pamela on the Land Trust team, and how inspired we are by their commitment to the natural world of Georgian Bay. A huge thank you to you both!

We Have a New Website!

We have refreshed our website design and made important information easier to find. Check out our new interactive property map, read the latest news and stories, revisit the Land Trust's history, and more! Visit **gblt.org** to see what's new.

Bog Copper Study Update

by Madison Robinson, MSc Candidate, Western University

This summer, I had the opportunity to work alongside Georgian Bay Land Trust interns Abi and Wesley to study bog copper butterflies in the peatlands of Georgian Bay. Our team spent many days traversing the Bay to collect bog copper data, gathering samples from three island sites and four mainland sites.

The purpose of this study was to collect DNA samples that would help determine the genetic relationship between bog coppers on Georgian Bay's outer islands and the mainland populations. This will help us learn more about how this tiny butterfly travels along Georgian Bay, and why it is found in locations that are so different and distant from its usual mainland habitats. (For more details on the project, see the article in the Summer 2025 LandScript.)

At the start of the field season, we conducted site surveys to identify locations with populations of the bog copper butterfly. Once these sites were identified, we returned over several days to conduct sampling. Using hand nets, we captured butterflies, marking each individual with a small dot on the ventral hindwing in order to prevent resampling. We then collected a single leg from each butterfly, which was preserved in ethanol for later genetic analysis. We sampled as many individuals as we were able to in order to get an accurate depiction of the population. Over the course of the summer, we collected more than 400 samples, which I will now take back to the lab at Western University to analyze as part of my Master's thesis.

One of the best parts of the summer wasn't just the fieldwork—it was the people. We met so many Georgian Bay community members who helped shape the experience. Some welcomed us onto their land to study, others asked thoughtful questions about the project, and all offered encouragement and support. The success of this season is due in no small part to the community, and for that, I am incredibly grateful.

We'll keep you posted on the results from Madison's study!

Madison at work

A Bog Copper butterfly, marked as part of the study

Conservation Interns Abi and Wesley with their Bog Copper net

From Butterflies to Bladderworts: A Georgian Bay Summer of Events

We had a wonderful summer of events up and down Georgian Bay, seeing old friends, making new ones, and exploring the Bay's natural wonders together.

The season opened with a beautiful day for *Cocktails on the Lizard*, our annual summer kickoff event on one of Cognashene's beloved outer islands. Guests mingled and watched as visiting researcher, Madison Robinson, demonstrated her work with Bog Copper butterflies (see opposite). We got to see firsthand what butterfly sampling really looks like – with a few surprises! (Can you guess which body part the butterfly *doesn't* go home with?)

There were more opportunities for learning at our drop-in bird banding sessions, where visitors could see how mist nets are set up, meet our research team, and discover what the banding process looks like from start to finish. Thanks for all the great questions – we hope to do more of these next year!

Our guided nature walks are always fascinating, with more plants and animals to discover each time we visit one of our protected properties. Adam and Stef from our conservation team led four walks this year, exploring the ecology of rocky islands, rich interior forests, and coastal wetlands. One highlight was finding two tiny carnivorous plants at the MacCallum Reserve: Spoonleaf Sundew, which catches insects in its small tentacled leaves, and Bladderwort, which uses miniscule underwater bladders to trap its prey.

Of course, summer on Georgian Bay wouldn't be complete without coming together to celebrate our shared love of the land. Thank you to the generous hosts who welcomed guests into their cottages for *Cocktails for Conservation* parties, evenings of laughter, connection and shared passion for Georgian Bay's natural beauty.

The event season ended on a high note with a September bird walk in Sans Souci. Although the hawk flyovers weren't as numerous as at last year's event, we all learned a few tips about fall birdwatching, and enjoyed fall on Georgian Bay in all its glory.

Thank you to everyone who joined us and to the many people who helped make this season of events memorable. To those who missed out because of the Georgian Bay weather, we'll see you next year!

Thank You Amy and Peter!

Newlyweds Amy Kazlovskis and Peter Uniac celebrated their marriage this summer with a thoughtful gift to Georgian Bay. Instead of wedding favours, the couple chose to honour their guests with a donation to the Georgian Bay Land Trust.

Georgian Bay has been part of Amy and Peter's story since the beginning. They met on the Bay in 2021, got engaged at the Pine Islands, and had their engagement photos taken on the Lizard. Peter even worked as a Georgian Bay Land Trust summer student when our conservation intern program was just getting started! The couple plans to spend summers at their cottage in Cognashene.

Amy and Peter's generous gift to the Georgian Bay Land Trust is a beautiful way to celebrate and give back. As they put it, "*We're so happy to celebrate in a way that gives back to a place we cherish.*" We are so thankful for their support.

Congratulations Amy and Peter! We wish you many more happy summers on the Bay.

Welcome New Board Members

Please join us in welcoming Trish Barrett and Jesse Wright to our Board of Directors! Both Trish and Jesse combine strong backgrounds in the law and governance with a deep love of nature from their time spent on Georgian Bay. We're delighted that they've chosen to lend their skills to protecting Georgian Bay's wilderness lands.

Trish Barrett

Trish Barrett is a lawyer at Goodmans LLP, specializing in corporate restructuring. She previously spent a decade with the World Bank Group, leading major development and disaster recovery projects across the Caribbean and beyond. Fluent in multiple languages and a passionate advocate for global sustainability, Trish brings international perspective and project management expertise to the Land Trust.

Jesse Wright

Jesse Wright is a Toronto-based lawyer at Paliare Roland, with a background in civil litigation and public service. A former press secretary and issues manager for several Ontario ministries, including Natural Resources and Tourism, Culture, and Sport, Jesse brings a strong legal mind and deep understanding of governance to the Board. We're delighted that she has chosen to step into the role of legal secretary.

Thank You to Our Departing Directors

We're so grateful to the three longstanding Board Members who have stepped down from their roles this year. Shannon, David, and Jan, you have each contributed so much to the Land Trust during your years on the Board, and we would not be where we are today without you. Thank you!

Shannon Beddoe

Shannon Beddoe joined the Land Trust board in 2013, and quickly took on the role of legal secretary, helping our board stay organized and compliant for over a decade. Shannon's professional expertise, diligent work, and dedication to Georgian Bay were critical to the Land Trust's success as we grew. Shannon was an enthusiastic and supportive member of the board, jumping in to help with special fundraising initiatives and frequently checking in with staff. Her encouragement and advice were appreciated by everyone on our team.

David Doritty

David Doritty was an instrumental part of the Land Trust Board since he first joined in 2012. He contributed to many areas of our work, including key roles on the fundraising, investment, and governance committees. David served as Board Chair from 2019-2021, and his steady and wise leadership was particularly appreciated as we navigated the early days of the Covid pandemic. In recent years, David devoted considerable time to helping the Land Trust update our investment strategy, and select key staff and board leadership roles.

Jan Ruby

Jan Ruby joined the Land Trust Board in 2015, and quickly became a core part of our leadership team. She served as Board Chair from 2017-2019, going above and beyond in her dedication to the role, and continued to take part in key decision-making ever since. Jan is a highly organized, strategic thinker, whose insights on governance and policy have been invaluable to our board executive over the past decade. Jan has always been generous with her time and resources, hosting gatherings for the Land Trust and showing up as an enthusiastic supporter of everything we do.

Georgian Bay Snapshot

Ode to Ed Bartam
by Adam Merifield

Adam Merifield has been photographing the eastern and northern shores of Georgian Bay for more than 20 years. This image was captured in September, minutes after sunrise on a shoal south of Bateau Island in the Parry Sound region. See more of Adam's photography on Instagram @adammerifield.

TributeGIFTS

Received from April 12 – October 5 2025

In Memory

Amy Beament
Sean Charles Belshaw
Horst Beyerle
Taylor Binnington and Parry Lake
John Catto
Kathleen Louise Davis
Allison Dixon
Helen Drinkwater
Donald Matheson Grant
Cliff Harding
Marilyn King
Donald Knight
Donny Lockhart
Walter and Jessie Meinig
Patty Garber Muir
Polly E. Naughton
Robert George Parney
Patricia Peacock-Evans
Ewing Rae
Peter Russell
Carolyn Rymell
Douglas M. Simpson
Bill and Jan Trimble
Bram Vermeulen
Ronald Webb

In Honour

Swith Bell
Cedar Point Book Sale
Anna Lord
Zoë Lord
Nick Steffey
Bryn Turnbull
Kaitlyn Watters
Lauryn Watters

gblt.org

FALL 2025

WINTER EVENTS

PROTECTING **GEORGIAN BAY'S** WILDERNESS LANDS

Get Ready to Bid at Bayscapes!

Support the Georgian Bay Land Trust's work to protect Georgian Bay's wilderness places! Bid online on a fantastic array of Georgian Bay themed art, photographs, items, and experiences, with all proceeds supporting nature conservation. Bidding opens at noon on November 14 and closes at 5 pm on November 22. Mark your calendar!

Visit **gblt.org/bayscapes** for more information and a link to bid.

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The Georgian Bay Land Trust acts to preserve the wilderness lands of eastern Georgian Bay and the North Channel through strategic conservation planning, land securement, stewardship, conservation research, and education.

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