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LIVING



A promise for the future

Buying land for conservancy will ensure our grandchildren know Kawarthas' wild spaces



Ian Attridge, Special to The Examiner

The above photos show the landscape on the 100-acre property of Alice Sharpe. Sharpe donated the property to the Kawartha Heritage Conservancy to protect it for future generations.

Because of our unique location, straddling the southern edge of the Canadian Shield, the Kawarthas is fortunate to enjoy an abundant variety of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish and invertebrates, as well as the forests, wetlands, lakes and rivers they inhabit.

However, like most of south-central Ontario, our region's natural heritage is under great pressure from development.

For example, compared to when European settlement began, southern Ontario has lost 75 per cent of its original wetlands.

More and more people are recognizing the importance of acting now to protect and restore our natural areas and to help conserve the rich diversity of flora and fauna.

Land trusts, or conservancies as they are often called, play a key role in that.

They are non-profit, non-governmental, charitable organizations that acquire land or interests in land for conservation.

They are a promise — a promise that we as a community make to our children, and our children's children, that in 10, 50 or even 100 years the wild spaces of the Kawarthas will still exist, and our natural and cultural heritage will not disappear.

Land trusts acquire land or conservation easements through donation by the landowner, through land being willed to them, or by direct purchase.

The lands or easements are held in trust for future generations in



OUR
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SEASONS
Drew Monkman

order to provide long-term protection for biological and cultural values of the property.

They are sometimes also established to protect scenic, historical and agricultural lands, as well.

Many conservancies also contribute to landscape planning, provide public education about conservation and stewardship or assist private landowners and communities in caring for their land.

A conservation easement (or conservation restriction) is a legal agreement between a landowner and a land trust that permanently limits uses of the land.

It allows you to continue to own and use your land and to sell it or pass it on to heirs. Future owners, however, will also be bound by the terms.

The land trust (conservancy) is responsible for making sure the easement's terms are followed.

Established in 2001, the Kawartha Heritage Conservancy (KHC) has several conservation easement agreements and received its first gift of land this past spring. Alice Sharpe generously donated her 100-acre property, located just west of Young's Point, to the conservancy.

"The protection of our land fits well with our personal values — we feel that the special features of our land need to be protected for generations to come," Sharpe says.

Ian Attridge, the conservancy's executive director, acknowledges the importance of this donation.

"This property hosts significant ecological features important for

Conserving over holidays

What: Cut down a holiday tree in an environmentally friendly way.

How: Kawartha Heritage Conservancy hosts its fourth annual Family Christmas Tree Adventure in which participants pay \$25 to cut down a tree that thins out forest plantation in an ecologically sensitive way. The money also helps fund the conservancy group's ongoing work.

When: Dec. 9 and 10.

Where: 845 Johnston Dr., on the edge of the city.

Call: 743-5599

the Kawarthas. We are most grateful to Alice and Charles Sharpe for their stewardship values and their long-term commitment to conservation in our bioregion," Attridge says.

The property includes part of the provincially significant Moore Lake wetland and the headwaters of a creek that flows into Lake Katchewanooka.

Its protection will help preserve local water quality.

There are also glacial deposits on the property that are part of the Lakefield Crevasse Fillings, an area of provincial earth science significance.

Crevasse fillings contain many small kettles — noticeably deep pits or potholes — marking the location of stagnant ice blocks during the last period of glaciation.

The wetland is home to a threatened bird species, and the more than 200 varieties of plants on the property include 13 types of ferns.

There is also a species of wildflower that is rare in Peterborough County.

The donation of the land title will ensure the long-term protection of these natural values.

Sharpe and her first husband, Frank Dance, bought the property in the late 1960s raising their family there and operating a hobby farm with horses, a small herd of cattle and various fowl.

In the early 1990s the focus shifted to tree planting, and Charles Sharpe subsequently used one of the front fields as a private air strip for his ultra-light plane.

The property remains home to the Sharpes, since they retain the right to live on the property for as long as they wish.

Also, for their donation, they receive significant tax benefits over several years.

In partnership with the Sharpes, the Kawartha Heritage Conservancy is working with the Peterborough Field Naturalists, the Natural Heritage Information Centre, Trent University and others to complete a management plan for the property.

This includes an inventory of plants and animals, mapping of habitats and linkages, and continued wildlife and forest management in the diverse areas of the property.

KHC is a regionally-based land trust and charity dedicated to conserving the natural and cultural heritage and distinct landscapes of the Kawarthas. Its work is partnership- and stewardship-based, building on community knowledge, research and scientific practice.

The conservancy seeks to enhance ecological health and economic well-being and sustain the

outdoor traditions of the Kawartha bioregion.

On Dec. 9 and 10, KHC is hosting its fourth annual Family Christmas Tree Adventure at the south end of Peterborough.

For a \$25 donation, you can choose and cut your own 'real tree' at 845 Johnston Dr. on the edge of the city.

The landowner is working with KHC to conserve the natural values of this beautiful property on the Otonabee River — a promise for future generations.

The event helps fund conservation and thins the forest plantation at the same time. Bring a handsaw and toboggan if you can, and KHC will provide refreshments and direct you to the trees that need thinning.

Another way to support stewardship activities that maintain the natural values of land in KHC's care is to give a Heritage Acre Stewardship Certificate as a gift.

A \$50 donation will help KHC steward one acre of its growing number of important conservation properties in the Kawartha bioregion.

Stewardship Certificates are personalized and include a photo and details about the property of your choice.

For more information about the Kawartha Heritage Conservancy, about tax benefits or about programs and activities, call 743-5599, email info@kawarthaheritage.org or visit www.kawarthaheritage.org.

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