



MISSISSIPPI MADAWASKA LAND TRUST CONSERVANCY

Official Newsletter

January 2014

CHILDREN'S PLACE WINTER OUTING

What do you say about youngsters willing to brave a winter storm up on a "mountain", snowshoe through rather heavy snow, make cone feeders to leave for the birds, eat lunch sitting in a snowbank and cheerfully walk back down the mountain? Who couldn't love the enthusiasm, the smiling faces and the open-mouth wonder of those sitting around the fire enraptured with Grey Owl's stories? Oh to be young again!

It was a snowy blustery December 20, when a hardy group of 25 six to nine year old children from The Children's Place in Ottawa visited the High Lonesome Nature Reserve to experience nature in winter. They were undeterred by the weather, many on snowshoes for the first time, learning about tracking and how to walk in the woods, listening to the sounds of nature through MMLTC's new soundscaping equipment, making spruce cone bird feeders to hang on the trees as a Christmas treat for the resident birds. Lunch was beside the fire followed by a visit from Grey Owl telling stories about his Nature experiences. The road conditions by then made it impossible for the bus to navigate Carbine Road so the children cheerfully hiked back down the mountain.

With the children asking, "Can we do it again?" it was the adults who were just as enthusiastic with the same question. What a wonderful introduction to MMLTC's new programs of introduction to the great wild outdoors. Oh yes, we will definitely do it again!



A first attempt at snowshoeing for these young urbanites



The children gather around the bonfire to hear stories from legendary conservationist "Grey Owl".

The Suzuki Nature Challenge

By Howard Clifford

Those of us who love Nature don't need to look for the latest research to tell us that nature experiences are good for us. We have discovered this for ourselves, over and over again. Nevertheless such research is always welcome, if for no other reason than to help convince those tied to the virtual reality world that they should give the "Nature Vitamin" a try.

Elizabeth K. Nisbet of Trent University has released her findings regarding Nature's impact on those who took the David Suzuki Foundation Nature Challenge. The report was released June 26, 2013 covering the May 1-31, 2013 time frame when over 10,000 Canadians committed to getting out in Nature for 30 minutes a day for 30 consecutive days.



The results were impressive. Dr. Nisbet states, "They reported significant increases in their sense of well-being, feeling more vitality and energy, while feelings of stress, negativity, and sleep disturbances were all reduced.

In the discussion section of the report, the author adds, "The well-being benefits people experience when spending time in Nature are also likely to foster greater environmental awareness and concern. The more contact people have with the natural environment, the more they are likely to feel connected with Nature and want to protect it"

THE IMPRESSIVE BRAIN OF THE CHICKADEE

By Howard Clifford

If someone called us a “bird-brain” we wouldn’t take it as a compliment. But scientists now know better. There is growing evidence that we humans have grossly underestimated the intelligence of our feathered friends.

It always seemed to me to be an impressive feat that chickadees reliably find their hundreds of food caches. I suspected that such a small-brained species perhaps found only a small proportion of its hiding places and this was nature’s method of insuring that the unfound stores served to replenish the forests. After all, I have only a handful of places where I store things of importance to me and sure enough, even with my larger brain, I sometimes search for misplaced items without success.



Close-up head shot of Black-capped Chickadee.
Source: Photo by Shanthanu Bhardwaj.
Wikimedia Commons: Public Domain.

It is humbling to learn that researchers like Colin Saldanha who has studied the black-capped chickadee since 2001 reports that the chickadee’s hippocampus, the part of the brain responsible for spatial organization and memory increases in the fall. Then in Spring when feats of memory are not so demanding it shrinks back to its normal size. Another researcher, Professor Dianne Lee, states that the increase is in the magnitude of 30 per cent. So much we don’t know! But I for one will think of the term “bird-brain” with a whole new level of respect.

MMLTC MONTHLY GIVING CAMPAIGN WINTER 2014

We value nature and are committed to its protection. That is why we took out membership isn’t it? So what is one of the best ways to help? Experts advise that becoming a Monthly Giver is at the top of the list. For as little as \$10 a month, you keep your membership current and speed MMLTC on its way to efficiently and effectively accomplish our collective goals.

We all experience the press of daily activities resulting in some of the things dearest to our hearts just slipping from our minds. Under the monthly giving program, there is no more need for reminders, no more need for postage for you or for the land trust. Precious staff and volunteer time freed up to do the things you want us to do.

Monthly giving provides the Conservancy with a reliable, low cost stream of revenue that sustains ongoing activities and facilitates the planning of essential projects. What a boon to cutting unnecessary administration costs.

Of course we all face the prospects of changes in our financial situation. With monthly giving you can easily increase, decrease, pause, or stop your gift at any time. Many find that the automatic transaction of monthly giving makes for easier, convenient personal budgeting and oh how much further it goes.

How does it work? It’s simple. Just fill out a form authorizing us to debit your bank account or provide us with post-dated cheques. This form is available at <http://mmltc.ca/support/donate> or by calling our office. Just think each month as you review your bank statements you see this one item. A testament to your ongoing support to have beautiful wilderness areas set aside and protected in perpetuity. It’s a wonderful feeling isn’t it?



The trail up to the Blueberry Mountain lookout looks quite different this time of year.

If you have questions or would like to be added to our mailing list, please contact Susan at ssentesy@mmltc.ca or 613-253-2722.

Office Hours: 8:30 – 4:30
Monday to Friday