



MISSISSIPPI MADAWASKA LAND TRUST CONSERVANCY

Official Newsletter

June 2013

PRESIDENT'S NATURE CORNER - SOUNDSCAPES

by Howard Clifford

Bernie Krause, author of "The Great Animal Orchestra", argues that soundscapes do for nature listening what binoculars do for birding. As a professional musician, his first experience using mics and ear-phones introduced him to a range of vivid detail in nature that changed his career path. "The visual spectacle is impressive, but the sound is absolutely glorious." "A picture may be worth a 1000 words but natural soundscape is worth a 1000 pictures." One advantage of soundscape recording is that our brains filter sounds but the mics pick up everything, allowing for later study and developing a deeper perspective.

Many of us, in a vague fashion, think of wilderness and music as somewhat connected. I was personally excited by the way soundscapes confirmed and delineated the connection. Krause's soundscape studies took him around the world and suggest that each site has its own unique acoustic signature as does each species within it. A myriad of non-biological sounds including landscape, wind, water, climate, light, plus seasonal cycles, time of day and a host of other variables set the stage upon which each member of the biological community establishes its own acoustic niche. Each vocalization is arranged so that each voice is distinctly heard and recognized by the intended receiver. Krause wonderfully describes one experience:

"Every distinct voice seemed to fit within its own acoustic band-with-each one so carefully placed that it reminded me of Mozart's elegantly structured Symphony No. 41 in C Major, K. 551. Woody Allen once remarked that the Forty-first proved the existence of God. That night, listening to the most vivid soundscape experience I had to that moment, I came as close as I would ever come to said revelation."

The acoustic sounds of a community of plants and animals occupying a site, orchestrated with non-biological sounds create a glorious concert hall. John Muir claimed he could tell his location by the symphony of music unique to the interplay of wind and specific pine groves - obviously not a fanciful observation after all.

Given my own fascination with old growth forests, I liked his observation that the roots of our musical history could still, in part at least, be glimpsed in soundscape recordings in undisturbed old growth forest. He found that older, less disturbed sites retain classic acoustic integrity and are "the Johann Sebastian Bachs of natural sound," that we reject at great risk. My own inspirational experiences in more pristine, primitive forests, makes it easy for me to understand why he still finds himself mesmerized by the ambient material he recorded in the Muir Woods.



Soundscape recordings document that man-made intrusions, such as oil spills or logging, severely reduce the acoustic density and diversity of the site. On one occasion he recorded a before and after event of selective logging. Returning to the site his naked eye could not determine any serious damage to the environment. The soundscape recording told a completely different story and sadly, over a span of a decade, the site has not returned to its acoustical splendour.

Soundscape recordings open up opportunities to deepen our experiences in nature. Bernie Krause kindly recommended a beginning recorder kit and one way it might make a contribution to the MMLTC is to have the recordings serve as a component of our baseline reports (which provide a detailed description of the property including species present). This would provide over the years a record of acoustic density, diversity and over-all ambiance. In centuries to come, the recordings hopefully will vindicate the wisdom of allowing nature to naturally restore forests to pristine, old-growth status. The recordings may prove to be an added tool to evaluate the impact of our various activities. Perhaps another first for MMLTC in land trust experimentation.

COMING SOON! VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Like most charities, a land trust would not be able to achieve its goals without the assistance of many hardworking volunteers. Ever since our infancy as a new organization we have been fortunate to have offers of help even before we asked. But that can also create a challenge for a small volunteer Board with part-time staff. Just how do you organize all those willing hands when you've barely had time to make a plan, train your helpers, and set up some way to communicate with them efficiently? And most importantly, we want to find some way to recognize our volunteers and express our deep gratitude for their contributions.

With many thanks to the Ontario Trillium Foundation, MMLTC now has some funding to help set up a Volunteer Program. We're beginning to compile a list of specific activities that require volunteer assistance. We will need various types of help to put our vision into action, whether it be a few hours, days or ongoing involvement. We are building a database of volunteers to help us keep in touch. We've already had our first site day when a group of willing helpers joined us at High Lonesome to clear the trails from fallen winter debris.



Volunteers Cathy Keddy and Don Cuddy help director Ted Mosquin with an initial species inventory at Rose Hill Nature Reserve.

If you are interested in nature conservation or helping connect people to nature and are looking for a way to contribute to the cause, please contact us at admin@mmltc.ca to get your name on our list. For more details about the type of assistance we need please visit us at:

<http://www.mmltc.ca/support/volunteer>

BARB GIBSON'S CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION

by Howard Clifford

Barb Gibson, Glenn Drover, Erik Kafrissen, and Peter Fischl were presented our Certificate of Appreciation Award at the Wild Food Dinner on November 24, 2012. All are founding members of the Lanark Wild Food Club. Barb, unlike the other three, did not come from a background of love of wilderness, nor a childhood close to the land. Although she enjoys walking along Nature trails she doesn't recall ever being involved in environmental activities or paying much attention to them.



She started her career at CIBC in Toronto. Her natural abilities led to increasing levels of responsibility and eventually she became an Internal Auditor officer. Barb moved to Carleton Place in 1980 and, with an affinity for entrepreneurship, became involved in a business involving real estate and property management. Four years ago she moved to Perth and currently operates a small property management company.

She is active in the St. James Anglican Church serving as a Deputy Warden. She is an amazing organizer and has experienced wonderful results in the church's outreach program, which includes helping an orphan with the AIDS program in Malawi and a kindergarten in Tanzania. These are remarkable achievements for a church located in the relatively small town of Perth.

How did this background lead to being a founding member of the Lanark Wild Food Club, especially when she had never been a forager? Part of the answer is her love of gourmet food and an interest in wine clubs. Barb is quick to point out that she was never interested in preparing exotic foods or wanted to use her dinners as a venue to impress others. She simply thinks of food as an excellent way to connect people to people.

It is true that she doesn't like the limelight. It was like pulling teeth to get her to agree to this interview for our newsletter. Her sister Carolyn, who shares her passion for cooking, states she believed that the best preparation they had in their developmental years was having to make ends meet - nothing ever wasted. I am astounded when Barb casually says that preparing a meal for family and friends involving 50 or more people is not a big deal! It's just something she loves to do.

Both Peter and Glenn became friends with Barb through attendance at the church. She recalls a Community Dinner with both Peter and Glenn in attendance. Glenn casually asked if she ever considered a wild food dinner and Peter enthusiastically supported the idea.

So like many things an off-chance remark started us down the path. I believe that each of the club's executive have talents and interests that jelled the club. Their unique backgrounds, abilities, and enthusiasm led to a success far beyond anyone's expectations which has tapped into a growing and widespread hunger in the community for Nature.

In the club, Barb is the detail person - nothing escapes her attention - her energy and behind the scenes workload can not be overstated. The club has contributed to her life in a way she never expected. Previously she enjoyed a good walk. Now her connection to Nature and the outdoors has taken her to new levels. A year ago she would have laughed in disbelief if you told her she would, within the year, be hiking in the Grand Canyon and whitewater rafting. Amazing but true! Barb is a well-deserved recipient of MMLTC's Certificate of Appreciation awarded to individuals who have contributed in: Connecting People to NATURE, Valuing NATURE, AND THE Protection of NATURE.