

News & Views

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Mississippi Madawaska Land Trust
Preserving the land  Protecting the future



Carp Hills Preservation - Our New Initiative

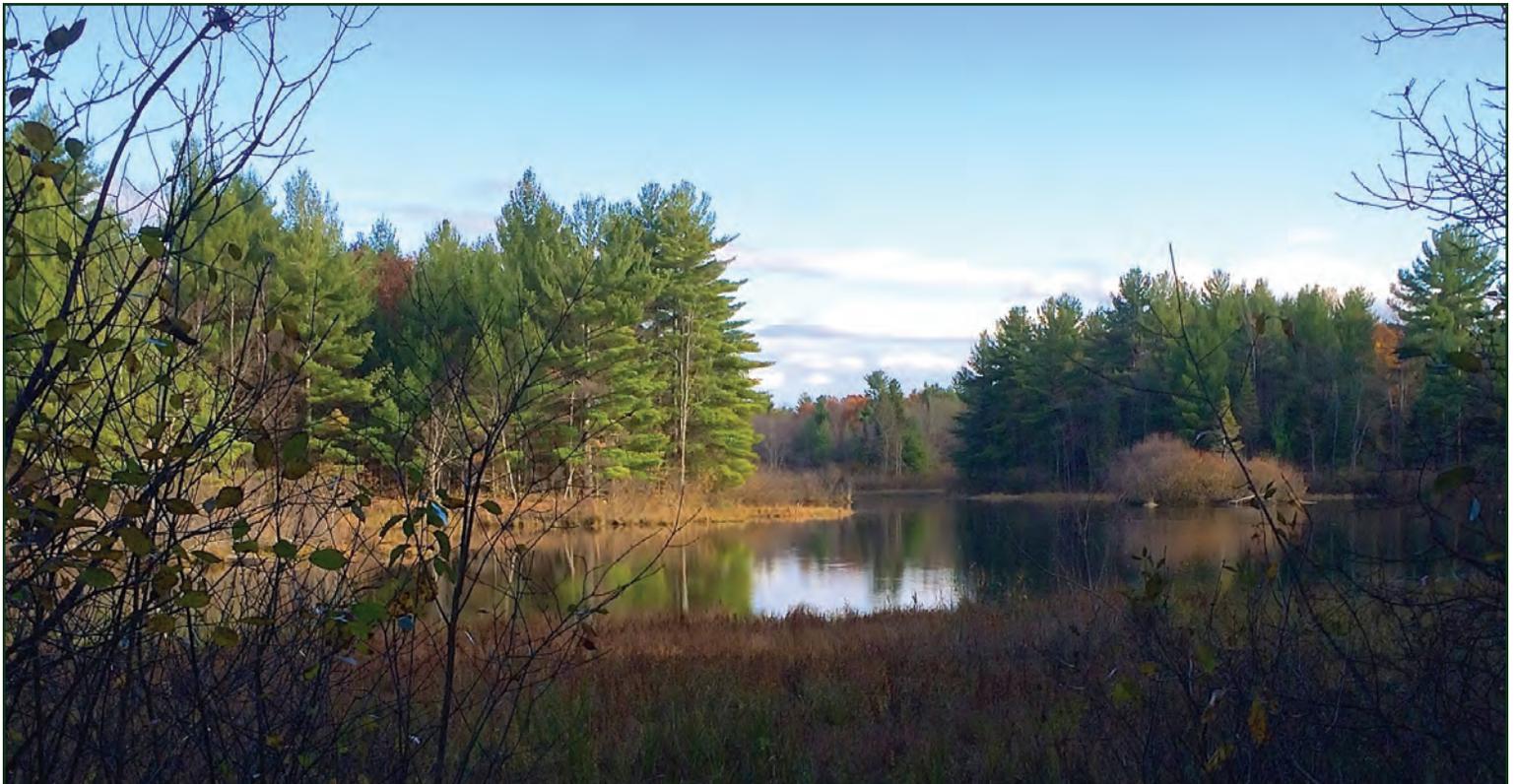
MMLT is launching a new initiative in the Carp Hills. This is one of the largest ecologically sensitive areas within the MMLT catchment area, which covers the Mississippi River and Lower Madawaska River watersheds. Because of the ecological significance of the Carp Hills, this roughly 3900 hectare (9600 acre) region has been designated an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI) by the provincial government and it is dotted with Provincially Significant Wetlands (PSW) as well.

Within this region the City of Ottawa owns a patchwork of land totalling roughly 900 hectares. The rest is privately owned, consisting of residences and uninhabited land parcels where City zoning bylaws place some limitations on development. This large natural area has traditionally been used for hunting, skiing, snowmobiling, and hiking. With encroaching development over recent years, unmanaged use has increased, raising concerns that what has made the Carp Hills special could be lost. This issue led to the formation of the Friends of Huntley Highlands, a local citizens' group who are dedicated to preserving the Carp Hills to

sustain wildlife and preserve traditional outdoor activities.

Janet Mason, co-chair of the Friends of Huntley Highlands, commented, "The number one message we have heard from the community is that people want to keep the Carp Hills as a wilderness area. We want to offer landowners and people in the community some options that allow them to support and contribute to this goal."

MMLT shares the concerns of the Friends of Huntley Highlands and has now joined them in a partnership to launch a new initiative for preserving wilderness land in the Carp Hills. It is vital to keep this natural area large and connected, which means that landowners need to play a role in the preservation initiative. Interested owners of ecologically sensitive property have a number of options for protecting their land forever, which can provide tax benefits. Information about property eligibility and the options available can be found on the MMLT website. The land conservation process can be complex and there are appraisal and legal costs, so you'll want to talk to an MMLT director for full details. (see over)



Carp Hills Initiative (Continued)

For those who want to contribute to land conservation in the Carp Hills, but don't own land or have land that does not qualify, they can make a donation in cash or securities to the Carp Hills Opportunity Fund. This charitable fund has been set up with an initial donation of over \$50,000 and will be used for any expenses directly linked to the acquisition or donation of land or to the establishment of conservation easements in the Carp Hills.

A landowner can also offer "Trader Land", which can be donated to the MMLT and then sold to provide funds for Carp Hills' properties. All donations qualify for a charitable tax receipt.

Both partners hope that the result of this initiative will be a large, contiguous natural area that both sustains wildlife and preserves traditional outdoor activities forever.

About the Friends of Huntley Highlands

The Friends of Huntley Highlands is a volunteer organization dedicated to the preservation of the Carp Hills for the benefit of nature and the community in perpetuity.

The FHH works collaboratively with landowners, the City, government agencies, businesses and community groups to preserve areas of wilderness for conservation and public access in the Carp Hills. Contact the FHH at: HuntleyHighlands@gmail.com and at www.huntleyhighlands.com.

MMLT Receives \$10,000 Shell Grant for Bio-Acoustic Monitoring

If you have been following our news for a while, you may recall that we received a grant for our Soundscapes Project from the TD Friends of the Environment a couple of years ago. This helped us purchase some state-of-the-art sound equipment and launch a bio-acoustic monitoring program. This fall, we learned that we were runners-up in the Shell Fuelling Change contest so we have now received an additional \$10,000 to advance our Soundscapes program. This grant has allowed us to extend the contract of our bio-acoustic technician, Chad Clifford, purchase more sound equipment and share it with other land trusts.

Bio-acoustics is cutting-edge technology that is brand new to the stewardship monitoring function that is key to land trusts. This equipment will allow us to identify the wildlife on our properties and measure their density over time.

Part of our Soundscapes program includes an outreach component, allowing us to offer workshops for educational purposes. Soundscapes demonstrations will reintroduce individuals and groups to the restorative wonders of nature and its important role in the community.



Sounds of the Wild Let Their Voices Be Heard

The multiple and repeating sounds of bird calls, (and some other creatures too) coming, appropriately, from the Gilligallou Bird Store in Almonte late last month were part of a fascinating evening presentation led by Chad Clifford, a bio-acoustic technician working with the Land Trust. On several walks on Land Trust properties over the past year, Chad has demonstrated what can be heard through "soundscape" in the wild using special listening devices. This event gave listeners a chance to learn more about the technical aspects of the work as he demonstrated and explained a variety of equipment that he has been using.



Microphones and portable recording devices are at the heart of this activity, but parabolic reflectors and stereophonic arrangements help refine the capture of natural sounds. While most of the equipment has been purchased, some has been cleverly adapted or elaborated upon by Chad. For example, he has developed simple but effective ways to record sounds from underwater in a pond, thus rendering up some of what beavers and other creatures might hear from their watery locations. Indeed, a great deal of ingenious experimentation was evident from the descriptions Chad gave on how he has gone about learning about and improving the quality of data picked up.

Special software is used to analyse and investigate transcribed sounds, and it provided particularly astonishing insights into the nature of the recorded calls. By allowing them to be isolated from background noise, played at different speeds, and compared via oscilloscopic graphic representations, many new insights appear. Chad gave plenty of examples of how these aids can be used to track down the merest breath of some kinds of sounds.

After the technical explanations had been given the audience was invited to identify a variety of bird calls from their sounds, while viewing the corresponding graphs given by the software package. Gilligallou owners, Bob and Louise Volks, helpfully provided verification with comparable recorded calls. In the attentive audience were some very distinguished birders who demonstrated their prowess at identifying bird calls that a few of us in the audience could barely hear. This exercise proved valuable too, as season, time of day, and location on the property, were suggested as factors to consider and record for identifying calls.

Developing bio-acoustic capabilities is one of the pioneering approaches being taken by your Land Trust and our volunteers to help monitor, record, and understand biodiversity and the changing natural environment on the lands we protect.