

Hamilton Naturalists' Club (Jen Baker, Land Trust Coordinator)

Protecting the Cartwright Nature Sanctuary

The Hamilton Naturalists' Club (HNC) is a volunteer-based, charitable organization with almost 700 members that has been protecting nature and promoting public awareness and appreciation of the natural environment since 1919. The HNC's Head-of-the-Lake Land Trust (HLT) program works with landowners and conservation partners to protect, steward, enhance and restore lands for nature and for future generations.

Cartwright Nature Sanctuary

The Cartwright Nature Sanctuary is a 46 acre (18.6 hectare) protected area located in Dundas, Ontario. The sanctuary hosts a wide diversity of habitats from established forests to thickets to meadow marshes and forested slopes. It forms a key part of one of the primary ecological corridors linking the Niagara Escarpment and Cootes Paradise marsh and is part of a designated Environmentally Significant Area and a regionally significant Life Science Area of Natural and Scientific interest. Together with adjacent conservation lands, a core natural area of 150 acres (60 hectares) is now protected.

A large colony of American Columbo, (*Frasera carolinensis*), a wildflower in the Gentian family that is listed both federally and provincially as an Endangered Species, is located in the sanctuary; one of less than a dozen known occurrences in Canada. Pignut Hickory and other rare and uncommon species are also present.

The Cartwright Nature Sanctuary was protected in 2005 through an innovative conservation partnership between CH and the HLT, enabled by the Cartwright family's willingness to take back a mortgage for half of the purchase price. CH and HLT contributed equally to the purchase cost and shared responsibility for paying off the mortgage. CH holds title to the lands while the HLT holds a permanent conservation easement and has an option to purchase should CH wish to sell its interest. Management responsibilities are shared and a stewardship plan was developed in partnership between the two organizations.

Thanks to contributions from the EJLB Foundation, the Hamilton Community Foundation, the HIVA Environmental Fund, the Ontario Land Trust Alliance and over 200 HNC members and supporters we were able to celebrate paying off the mortgage in September 2007.

The partners worked together to conduct an environmental audit and prepare a baseline documentation report and preliminary biophysical inventory of the property. In 2005 the HLT undertook further inventory work and breeding bird surveys and developed a pedestrian trail loop linking with the Royal Botanical Garden's Berry Tract, located north of the sanctuary. A major bridge and 90 metres of boardwalk were completed in 2006, with funding support from the Knowles Bequest Board, the Hamilton-Wentworth Stewardship Council, and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (CFWIP). Work to control invasive species in the sanctuary is ongoing, focusing on the area around species

at risk with funding support from the Ministry of Natural Resources Species at Risk Stewardship Fund and Environment Canada's Habitat Stewardship Fund. Volunteers have cut hundreds of Common Buckthorn, and have removed tonnes of garlic mustard and dog strangling vine. This work has made a noticeable improvement with few invasive plants returning each year.

Since 2004, over 160 volunteers have contributed more than 5,000 hours to work in the sanctuary and fundraising and planning efforts to protect it. The HLT has made a special effort to engage the local neighbourhood in stewarding the sanctuary and several neighbourhood residents are actively involved.