



Friends of  
**Mashkinonje**

# THE WETLANDS OBSERVER

Volume 7 Issue 2

July 2007

## Home of the Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Moose, and numerous other species



### **Turtles / Trails / Trees**

By Chuck Miller, Park Superintendent  
Killarney / French River / Mashkinonje / W.  
Sandy Island / Manitou Islands Provincial Parks

#### **Turtles**

Turtle populations across Ontario face many threats including habitat loss, increased rates of adult mortality from traffic and elevated rates of nest predation from “subsidized predators” such as raccoons. A significant reminder of the need for protected wetlands such as Mashkinonje.

Five turtles basking on logs in the wetland are revealed in a single scan by binoculars from the lookout at the intersection of Atakas and Bobcat Trails. These turtles are the lucky ones as they will likely never see motorized traffic, and have protected habitat.

Many turtles migrate to nesting areas in mid June and frequent sandy road embankments, so watch for them and yield the right-of way.

#### **Trails**

Last year’s July 17 severe thunder storm brought down many trees in the park but also weakened others. Despite the light winter snowfall this year – some early wet snows did bring down several trees onto park trails. Crews have been out and cleared trails and hardened additional trail sections along the Samoset Trail near the intersection with the Lapin’s Beach Trail. Watch for poison ivy near the Lapin’s Beach Access. Plans are underway to improve access

to the trail network on the west side of the park at the Martin Pond and Blanding’s Access in late summer or early fall.

#### **Trees**

Restoration of damaged environments by youth with community partners is always a good news story. *Vermillion Forest Management* currently has 500 red pine trees growing in a nursery for planting in Mashkinonje in late August. The plan is to utilize Ontario Rangers, an MNR youth employment program, and volunteers to complete the planting. The planting will restore red pine trees to the old quarry near the Loudon Peatland Access.

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT: Angela Martin

Mashkinonje's peaceful beauty remains the same, but there is a lot happening in the park and much to write about. The more we learn the more fun it gets.

A fun task was naming the new bridge along the Coastal Trail. Thank you to all of those who submitted names for the bridge. The directors voted by secret ballot. There was a tie between *Whisky Jack Bridge* submitted by Carmelle Girouard and *Coastal Bridge* submitted by myself. I was voting for *Whisky Jack Bridge*. We wrote the names on paper and drew ***Coastal Bridge***, which is now the name of our new bridge. I hope you get the opportunity to visit the new bridge. It is in a very pretty place.

Many of you have asked about trail maps for Mashkinonje. We are working on them and had hoped to have them for you this summer but it does not appear that it will be possible. We will try to have maps available for next year.

I would like to give special thanks to **Peter Beckett**. Peter lives in Sudbury and is a professor at Laurentian University. He has been involved with Mashkinonje for over 10 years and attends as many meetings and activities as he possibly can. Your dedication is very much appreciated, thank you, Peter.

We have our AGM and Annual Picnic coming up on Sunday August 19<sup>th</sup> and I hope to see you there. Have a great summer.

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## Mashkinonje Eagles By Angela Martin

In early January, Gary and I were hiking Martin Pond Trail and we always look for birds. This day, we could hear Ravens. When we got home and we were looking out the living room window, we saw the Ravens that we had heard on the trail. They were landing on the ice on the West Arm and off the northeast shore of Mashkinonje. On a closer look through the binoculars; we could see that there was an animal frozen in the ice. We guessed it to be a deer. Winter and snow arrived and we had forgotten about the frozen animal in the ice.

In late April, we noticed Crows and Ravens going back to the frozen carcass. Then, we saw an amazing sight. Four Bald Eagles flew to the carcass.

**Day 1** - In the morning a mature Bald Eagle was feeding, pulling and tearing, using its wings for balance. The carcass was a deer; we could see an antler above the ice. The Ravens and Crows were always close by. Once the large mature Eagle finished, it perched on the antler and let the Crows feed but the Eagle was constantly moving, keeping a close eye on everything. About an hour later, two immature Bald Eagles arrived, one a first year the other a second year. The adult began its posturing; it would puff up, spread its wings and dance on the ice. The adult soon chased the 2 year old away; it flew several hundred yards away and while the adult allowed the year old to feed. Shortly after, a smaller adult arrived. Now there are four Eagles on the ice. A Raven came in and was feeding while the large adult was posturing. When the adult Eagles were fed up with the Raven, they puffed up and did a little dance, then they ganged up and the Raven left. The large adult allowed the small adult and the year old to feed but not for long. In between the large adult would have another go at the carcass, I was beginning to wonder if it would be able to fly afterwards. The whole time the two year old waited patiently at a distance until it couldn't stand it anymore. It flew over and as it landed it puffed up and did its dance then large adult flew off to a short distance away. The two year old managed to pull the head of the carcass up onto the ice then stood on the ice and fed from the head. Soon after all the others left and the two year old had its fill, it flew away too. All of the Eagles were apprehensive stepping off the ice and onto the deer, perhaps because it may have been floating, none of them liked it or stayed too long.

**Day 2** - The large adult and two juveniles arrived on day 2. They stayed varying times from 10:30am to 12:30. First the large adult fed. When the 2 year old was ready to feed, it chased the adult away and the one year old came running over but not all the way. The Crows were present eating at the same time as the Eagles. When it was the yearlings turn, it didn't want to eat with the Crows. The yearling puffed up, spread its wings and tried to scare the Crows- it didn't work. The day before, the two adults puffed up and spread their wings and the Crows moved away. The yearling kept trying and finally moved to the carcass to eat with the Crows. The Crows didn't like this youngster and when the Eagle was feeding, one of the Crows would sneak up behind and pull the Eagles tail feathers. The 2 year old watched from a distance, it wasn't ready to help. This continued for a half hour and the Eagle had to keep looking back. After a while, all the birds had to tolerate one another, it was the only way to eat.

**Day 3** - All four Eagles were present at varied times from 8am through the whole day. The yearling first, followed by the 2 year old, the large adult then the smaller adult stayed long after the others left. The carcass is floating now and its ribs and antlers are visible. The small adult fed with 2 Ravens. Eagles and Ravens are both large birds but seeing them together, the Eagle is twice the size but I thought there would have been a greater difference between them. One of the Ravens puffed and partially spread its wings but the Eagle was not intimidated, so they fed together.

**Day 4** - The one year old Eagle arrived at 9am and fed on the deer with the Crows and Ravens all day. At 5pm the Eagle flew over the open lake shore and flew overhead. When I checked the deer site, the antlers and ribs had disappeared into the lake, to feed the life under the water. We didn't see the Eagles again but the Crows and Ravens have kept us company ever since.

## Friends of Mashkinonje Outings

### March Snowshoe:

March is always a great time of year for a snowshoe. The sun was warm and our snowshoe day was gorgeous. Twenty one people were not disappointed. We snowshoed along the Samoset and Lapin's Beach Trails to the West Arm of Lake Nipissing. At this point, the snowshoers split up: half retraced their tracks and spent time enjoying the surroundings, while the other half aggressively snowshoed the Coastal and Pebble Beach Trails to end at the north park.



### Ontario Nature Hikes

The Friends of Mashkinonje are affiliated with Ontario Nature, a provincial organization for naturalists and friends groups. Gary & Angela Martin hosted an Ontario Nature regional meeting in May at Welcome Lodge. We led hikes into the park early in the morning to bird watch, and late one afternoon we hiked the Samoset Trail. We saw nesting Black-capped Chickadees and Downy Woodpeckers and heard many warblers including the Northern Waterthrush.

### Birds, Blooms & Bugs Hike

We always enjoy hikes that include the Friends of Mashkinonje, the Sudbury Naturalists and the Nipissing Naturalists Club. Unfortunately, three participants arrived too late for this photo. We began by visiting one another then going into the park, hoping we will find something new. We hiked the Loudon Peatland Trail to see the Nodding Trilliums, which are rare in these parts. We were looking at the Nodding Trilliums from the boardwalk in the Black Ash Swamp, when Peter Beckett discovered a *Jack-in-the-Pulpit* (on front cover). This plant is new for us too. Its leaves are similar to those of the Trilliums. We went on to find more Jack-in-the-Pulpits along the Samoset Trail. We were stimulated not only by the hike but our new discovery. It was a great day. (There are many great days in Mashkinonje).



### Outdoors Writers of Canada Hike

Ontario's Near North was holding a conference in North Bay for the Outdoor Writers of Canada and I, Angela, was asked to lead a hike. You'll never guess where I took the couple from Alberta. You guessed it, Mashkinonje. The first thing I told them was, "There is much more to Lake Nipissing than fishing" and I believe that is true. Lake Nipissing is beautiful, but so is the surrounding area. I took them first to Cache Bay for birding. Cache Bay also contains provincially significant wetlands with varied bird life. We hiked the Loudon Peatland and Samoset Trails. I am hoping that one day an article will appear in an outdoor magazine.

### Ontario Parks Hike

We were very happy to be able to host a hike for the Marketing and Communications Departments of Ontario Parks. They have heard about Mashkinonje in Peterborough and now they were able to experience our beauty and bugs first hand.



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## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

**Tony, Sheila, Mike and Mark Studer**  
**Tom, Arlene, and Jason Murison**  
**Brian and Christine Maydo**  
**Ron and Denise Garbutt**  
**Gary, Louise, Ashley and Amber Cooper**  
**Marion and Doug Harbin**

### *Friends of Mashkinonje* *Picnic and Annual General Meeting*

**Sunday, August 19, 2006**

**Location:** Welcome Lodge, Musky Island Rd. off Hwy. 64 South

**11:00 am** Annual General Meeting and Election of Officers (members only)

12:00 – 1:30 pm *Silent Auction*

*IF you have anything to contribute to the Silent Auction, please bring it!*

12:00 Lunch: Corn Roast, Sausage on a bun, Desserts, or bring your own

2:00 pm **Boat ride to Pebble Beach and Hike to the Coastal Bridge**  
(\$10 per person)

For further information, contact Liz Lang: (705) 898-2108, Angela Martin (705) 594-1153

#### **FOM DIRECTORS**

##### **President**

Angela Martin

##### **Vice President**

Dr. Peter Beckett

##### **Secretary/Treasurer**

Liz Lang

##### **Members**

Carmelle Girouard

Chuck Miller

Friends/Ontario Park

Superintendent

##### **Parks Liaison**

Killarney, Ontario

#### **CONTACT US**

We hope you enjoyed our newsletter. To view past editions,  
visit our website **[www.mashkinonje.com](http://www.mashkinonje.com)**  
or contact us at: Friends of Mashkinonje

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## Extreme Birding-Mashkinonje Style

The following article was written by Sheldon McGregor. Sheldon is a Friend of Mashkinonje, who owns a property adjacent to Mashkinonje and is an avid birder. Most birders on a birding day will travel by motorized transport to as many locations as they can to maximize the number of species they can find. Sheldon also wanted to help preserve our environment while pursuing one of his passions. Thank you Sheldon for your efforts, sharing your results and being a Friend of Mashkinonje.

## Birding Biathlon (also known as Baillie Birdathon)

By Sheldon McGregor

After a rewarding experience last year doing my inaugural “fossil fuel free birding big day” I was keen to try my luck again. Thinking green and doing it ourselves requires personal adjustments and I feel a sense of satisfaction with each step I take. Not to mention the challenge in trying to cover as much ground as possible to see how many birds I can list in the day.

Once again I based the day at the cottage which backs onto the untamed wilderness of Mashkinonje Provincial Park. The Moccasin Flowers were at their peak and were common in many areas. My route took me through the woods and beaver meadows while avoiding the many boggy and marshy areas. I began at 5:15 am after waiting for a short shower to pass. An extremely damp and humid morning made binocular fogging an early hazard. Warblers produced 14 species - all of which plus a couple more nest right there. I passed by the Sedge Wren colony and they sang persistently the chi-chi-chrrrrrrrrrrrr song. The Great Blue Heron colony was once again occupied.

After hearing some Sandhill Cranes earlier I came across 5 adults at close range. They did not flush which allowed me excellent looks. My main strategy was to break out of the bush and hike and bike on the roads through some of the farms to add field, feeder and barnyard birds. This was working fine until I was on the bike leg and the thunderstorms hit. The area is sparsely populated, and it was a relief that the first house I came to had a carport which I stayed in during the storm. It was a close one which twice sizzled the nearby power lines. I did add, from the comfort of the shelter, a bedraggled Chipping Sparrow and singing Warbling Vireo as the storm died down. After leaving my shelter I discovered a Painted Turtle right in the middle of the road which was tucked in but otherwise safe. I helped it to the shoulder but wonder if it was hunkered down after a passing car scared it (very little traffic) or if the storm had scared it?



Unfortunately I should have stayed put longer, since within 10 minutes another cell hit, and I chose to pass the house with two Dobermans for whatever the next house brought. The garage was open so I headed for cover and once inside looked back at the house to see the owner looking out at me. I spent the next hour watching the second thunderstorm and chatting with Jacques.

By then it was too late to make it all the way to Lavigne which would have added some species, so I short circuited my bike leg to ensure I would have enough time to hike back before dark. Nonetheless the fields had provided Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, and Savannah Sparrow; the barnyards House Sparrow, Eurasian Starling, Rock Pigeon and even a Belted Kingfisher in a sandy pile; and the feeders White-breasted Nuthatch and Mourning Dove. Although regular in the area I don't see them often so two Brewer's Blackbirds were perhaps the best birds of the day.

Always special are the mammal sightings during the day. Despite many chocolate-covered-almond-like moose

droppings, I did not see any actual moose this year. At one of the beaver ponds there were two active beavers in the morning and they gave several very loud tail slaps in greeting. Late in the day at a larger beaver pond three otters made a snuffling/snorting noise but did not move off, allowing me excellent views, including their serpentine tails as they swam and dove.

Another look at Angela and Gary's feeders produced Pine Siskin, and after a quick break and change of socks, it was time to trudge back to the cottage. With only minor stops it was a 3 hour hike back through some of the thickest brush of the day. Last bird of the day was a singing Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Fifteen hours later and an estimated 20 plus km of mostly bush whacking hiking and another 25 plus km on bike (all in rubber boots) made that jump in the lake an easy decision.

Hard to hit them all but interesting to note obvious misses – I saw no Osprey, Caspian Tern and Common Merganser. I also had a couple of “wish I had had a better look” birds – the humidity and darkness early in the day didn’t help.

The total for the day, for those curious, was 82 species (last year was 67 species and my guess for this year had been 75 – I was pleased to have two per species sponsors this time so I thank them for playing along!). Considering the large rain delay this was a great number. I would like to acknowledge Angela and Gary Martin for lending me a bike, providing food and water for me, and their concern during the thunderstorm - thanks! For more information on this provincial park see the Friends of Mashkinonje website at [www.mashkinonje.com](http://www.mashkinonje.com) or the Ontario Parks management plan for this natural environment park at [http://ontarioparks.com/english/mash\\_planning.html](http://ontarioparks.com/english/mash_planning.html)

Perhaps next year I can upgrade to a triathlon by using the canoe?

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***For anyone who wishes to know more about the world that surrounds us, the Mashkinonje Provincial Park is a great place and will remain that way for decades to come. Protecting this area in its natural state is our goal. Your continued support will help us share our wonderful wilderness.***

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***Thank you for being a Friend***