

## Newsletter Summer 2023

We'd like to keep you in the loop about a few things.

**Uxbridge Provincial Urban Park:** Planning for the new Park is well underway. All groups involved have been working hard to meet the ambitious timelines. GDA is centrally involved in the planning along with other groups which include Ontario Parks, Nature Conservancy of Canada ([NCC: Nature Conservancy of Canada](#)), Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA), Region of Durham, Township of Uxbridge, the Schad Foundation ([www.schadfoundation.com](http://www.schadfoundation.com)), and the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation.

All the partners involved in the project have been meeting every 2 weeks since the Park was first announced. Various task-groups are now also meeting. There is huge excitement about this project amongst the partners and it is a privilege to be a part of the creation of a new Park – a once in a lifetime opportunity to protect lands for nature and contribute much-needed greenspace for people as our cities and towns grow.

A survey has been developed by Ontario Parks to explore public interest in what the Park will include. More public consultation will follow but please take 10 minutes to share your initial thoughts using the link below. Share it widely to family and friends too. The timelines are tight (closing date July 19), our apologies for being slow in getting this link out to you:  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/survey-exploring-creation-urban-provincial-parks>

**Paid parking pilot project:** This initiative of the Township of Uxbridge continues and GDA has been a part of an advisory group to the steering committee. Being a member of this committee gives us an opportunity to shape the project and guide the spending of dollars collected.

With the announcement of the Uxbridge Provincial Urban Park, the pilot project has been extended for another year. There will almost certainly be changes once the Park comes formally into being. We continue to provide our feedback at the advisory meetings.

There have been benefits to this project. It has raised the Township's awareness of the trails south of town - of the level of use, the extent of the engagement of volunteers on the trails and the travel range of visitors to the trails (users come from far and wide). Coming together to discuss the parking project has provided an opportunity for all the land managers – the Township, TRCA, Region of Durham and LSRCA to start working together, something they should have been doing years ago as trail users have increasingly flocked to this area. When the Park was suddenly announced, the land owners and managers were able to begin working together quickly because they had already been meeting regularly about the parking project.

The mowing costs GDA has been paying to TRCA to keep some of the more heavily-grassed trails accessible for visitors will now be covered by this fund. Funds from the project will support the re-construction of the bridge across Duffins Creek, with contributions from GDA, Durham

Mountain Biking Association and a grant from TransCanada Trail Foundation. Building of the bridge will commence the week of July 17.

GDA members have contributed in many ways to the development and maintenance of the incredible network of trails and protected lands which are south of Uxbridge. All GDA members can continue to be exempt from paying for parking by doing the following: Email the Bylaw department at the Township of Uxbridge ([bylaw@uxbridge.ca](mailto:bylaw@uxbridge.ca)) , copy Courtney Clarke ([cclarke@uxbridge.ca](mailto:cclarke@uxbridge.ca)) and [info@greendurham.ca](mailto:info@greendurham.ca). Provide your licence plate and mention you are a GDA member/volunteer.

For annual passes, the Township is working with 4paiy (the parking app vendor) to send out renewal emails. Three notices will be sent before the pass expires: 30 days, 15 days, and 3 days prior. The renewal email will also include additional information about the use of funds.

**Volunteer activities:** The Provincial Park project has placed high demands on our time. For this year we are taking a back seat to major trail projects. Other trail user groups such as DMBA and ORTA are working on some large projects and we will step in to assist where possible. Anyone interested in coordinating GDA volunteer activities, or in finding out what might be involved, please get in touch!

**Mowing:** GDA volunteers managed to complete a first mow of the trails volunteers on those parts of the lands which are harder for TRCA to access with their large mower. We'll need to complete a second mow in the next few weeks. The equipment GDA purchased with the federal grant last year has made that work almost a pleasure. We also have several battery-operated string trimmers available.



**Fallen trees:** We maintain an email list of trained chainsaw volunteers. When we receive reports of fallen trees, usually after a storm, the list is sent out. If you are one of those volunteers, remember that we have some fabulous new battery-operated chainsaws which were purchased with funds from last year's federal grant. You are welcome to use them!

Our volunteers also report incursions on the trails. In recent years a group of dirt-bikers has regularly entered the property in Glen Major and done extensive damage to the delicate environment in that area. Local groups have been working with Durham Police and TRCA to try to stop this group. Recently a group of electric unicycle riders was stopped and charged in Durham Forest. We hope the same thing can happen with the group entering Glen Major.

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**Bluebird project:** GDA volunteers work with North Durham Nature and others interested in a bluebird box project situated at the Lafarge Regan pit located directly across the road from Durham Forest on Concession 7. Some of you may remember when the project began more than 10 years ago, and more than 50 bluebird boxes were installed throughout the pit. Volunteers have been monitoring and maintaining the bluebird boxes ever since.

Trees have grown in the rehabilitated parts of the pit, requiring that some boxes and posts be moved and installed in an area more favourable to bluebirds. The wood in the base and on the faces of the boxes is starting to decay. And last month a bear destroyed at least 5 of the boxes.



These boxes are one of the best designs for supporting bluebird nesting. They were created by Paul Rothsfel. His widow Margaret Almack has the design and templates if anyone is interested in picking up the baton and making them again. They are more expensive to make than other models but also offer better protection from heat, from mice and other predators (except bears!).

Some of you may have one or two of these sitting on a shelf and not installed, or perhaps your property has grown up and is no longer favourable to bluebirds, and your boxes are no longer used. If you'd like to contribute them to this project, please get in touch with Derek Connolly of North Durham Nature: [ndnature7@gmail.com](mailto:ndnature7@gmail.com)

**Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve:** At roughly 4700 acres, this is by far the largest of the Greenbelt carveouts implemented by the Ontario government. Historically GDA played a central role in ensuring these lands were protected for agriculture. We are monitoring the situation with the help of other groups interested in these lands. You may find this recent article of interest: [Ontario Greenbelt development plan faces new threat from federal government | Globalnews.ca](http://Globalnews.ca)

**We'll be in touch about the date for our AGM.**

**Have a great summer everybody!**