



Dignitaries, staff and campers take part in cutting the ribbon to officially open the splash pad.

Make a Splash at Fanshawe!

The Fanshawe campground splash pad is officially open for the 2010 camping season! The weather for the grand opening on July 6 was hot and humid – perfect for this event.

Irene Mathysen, MP for London-Fanshawe, and Khalil Ramal, MPP for London-Fanshawe, were on hand to help cut the ribbon and showed great interest and support for the new splash pad.

Linda Lewis, the Fanshawe Campers Association Chair, spoke on behalf of the association. It was great to see campers enjoying the splash pad. During the official ribbon cutting, several children helped to hold and cut the ribbon.

UTRCA staff included Ian Wilcox, who hosted the event. Jennifer Howley and Steve Sauder provided great direction and answered questions from media. UTRCA board member Peter Huitema also came to celebrate the opening. Ashley Tenner, our Events and Programs Leader, organized refreshments for everyone in attendance.

Funding for the \$160,000 splash pad project came from several sources. The Fanshawe Campers Association raised approximately \$21,000, which was matched by the UTRCA. The federal and provincial governments provided the remainder through infrastructure spending commitments.

Planning for the splash pad began last fall. Excavation and construction were completed late this spring, and the unit was fully operational and running smoothly by June 4. Installation was provided by Ro Buck Contracting Limited and all features and equipment were supplied by Recreation Play Systems.

The splash pad is a fully recirculating system, and the water sprayed used on the pad is treated in much the same way as in a swimming pool. A 3000 gallon underground tank stores the water. A large pool pump pulls water from the tank and through two sand filters, and bromine is added for disinfection purposes. The water then goes to the main header to be splashed out onto children playing on the pad.

The pump is activated by two sensors that, when rubbed by your foot, start the features spraying. The splash pad has 10 features in total. Each activator will start two of five features and the system will run four features at a time. The system runs for three minutes and then shuts off, unless reactivated.

Contact: Steve Musclow, Superintendent, Fanshawe Conservation Area

Wildwood Lake Trail's a Hit

With the grand opening come and gone, the Wildwood Lake Trail has seen a steady flow of mountain bikers, trail runners and hikers making their way around the newly refurbished 23 km loop. Our official trail opening on June 6 was a huge success, despite some heavy rain and muddy conditions. The ribbon cutting ceremony included representatives from the federal and provincial governments, as well as municipal officials. Displays included Norco bicycles, who offered the opportunity to take their new, full suspension mountain bikes for a trip around the trails, at no cost!

It was definitely a relief for us to have the trail officially open

and see lots of smiling faces by the end of the day. Our staff have been extremely busy this season making improvements to the trail system in order to make it both safer and more enjoyable for users. The work included new boardwalks, trail re-routes around sections that were permanently wet and damaged, removing hazard trees that could fall on or near the trail, installing emergency response stations every 500 metres around the trail system, an updated Wildwood Lake Trail brochure/guide, a new bike wash station, a trail information kiosk, and the addition of a more challenging 1.3 km loop.

Regular maintenance of the trail system includes grass/brush cutting with a tow behind trail mower as well as pruning and trimming new growth.

Looking to the future, our goal is to build additional sections of technical single-track for mountain biking.



The new Wildwood Lake Trail brochure is available on line (www.thamesriver.on.ca) and at the park office.

We will also focus on bringing events to Wildwood to utilize the new trail system, such as mountain bike and trail running races.

Feedback from trail users has all been positive, supportive and encouraging. A buzz of excitement has been created and people are pleased to have a great, safe trail system with so much variety. Comments have included, "It is much harder than I thought it would be!" "Amazed how far along the trail has come considering it just opened this year." "Sections remind me of when I was riding out on the west coast!" We are proud to provide such positive experiences for all our trail users.

All Wildwood's trails are multi-purpose (bike/hike) and require a day or seasonal cyclist/pedestrian pass in order to access them. Trail pass revenue contributes to trail improvements and management. Staff bike the trails regularly to provide information on the new changes to our trails.

The next time you want to go for a family hike, challenging mountain bike ride or trail run, remember that the Wildwood Lake Trail is ready and waiting to be discovered.

Contact: *Craig Machan, Superintendent, Wildwood Conservation Area*

UTRCA Hosts Forest Gene Conservation Association AGM

The UTRCA hosted this year's Forest Gene Conservation Association (FGCA) Annual General Meeting in Woodstock. FGCA membership is made up of a diverse group of individuals



Look way up The tour group inspects trees at the W. Leslie Dickson Arboretum.

interested in planting and maintaining native seed zone specific trees. About 40 members from across the province attended the two-day event.

The activities included a number of presentations on June 8 at the Quality Inn Suites and a field tour on June 9. Presentations included direct seeding of native trees, butternut (a species at risk), dogwood anthracnose, tree seed collection, and 24 years of reforestation in the UTRCA watershed

On the tour the group visited t w o U T R C A

reforestation sites, the W. Leslie Dickson Arboretum (Pittock), a direct seeding trial (Pittock) and an American chestnut planting at the UTRCA Downey Tract.

Contact: *John Enright, Forester*



John Enright, UTRCA Forester, highlights the direct hardwood seeding research trial at Pittock.

Those Looooong Summer Weekends!

The July long weekend was a successful and profitable one for Fanshawe, Pittock and Wildwood Conservation Areas. All three CAs were at or near capacity for the weekend with only one non-hydro campsite available anywhere. This year, Canada Day fell on a Thursday and, since some workplaces gave their employees the Friday off in addition to Canada Day itself, the holiday weekend was four days long for many. The beautiful weather also attracted many people to the day use areas.

Tens of thousands of dollars of revenue were generated within the campgrounds over the course of the weekend through a combination of camping fees, canoe rentals and the sale of camping essentials such as wood and ice. The three CAs sold a combined total of approximately 900 bags of ice and 600 bags of wood, generating almost \$7000 in wood and ice sales alone.

At Pittock, the annual Canada Day fireworks event, held in conjunction with the City of Woodstock, saw approximately 1000 vehicles come to the park for the day's activities. Spectators arriving at Pittock before the fireworks show were able to enjoy activities and shows throughout the day, including a coed beach volleyball tournament, live bands, a magic show, pony rides, small carnival rides, face painting, various demonstrations from community groups, the Pittock splash pad and a small flea market with several vendors. The entire event was a tremendous success and, of course, everyone enjoyed the fireworks.

Fanshawe, Pittock and Wildwood were also packed full for the August Civic Holiday weekend. Fanshawe's splash pad and pool were very popular. With the nice weather for the second half of the weekend, the day use areas were very busy. Boaters enjoyed the opportunity to water ski and wakeboard at Wildwood, and Wildwood's Lake Trail was well used.

August will continue to be busy for the Conservation Areas. Pittock hosts the Woodstock Rotary Dragon Boat Festival on August 14. The Mountsberg Conservation Area Birds of Prey Show

will be coming to Wildwood on August 21. Fanshawe is hosting the London Dragon Boat Race Festival on August 21. Reservations are already coming in for Labour Day long weekend. Once again this year, the CAs are drawing people of all ages.

Contact: Steven Musclow, Superintendent, Fanshawe CA
Craig Machan, Superintendent, Wildwood CA
Ryan Datema, Superintendent, Pittock CA

Species of the Month The Caddisfly

Like much of the abundant life that inhabits the bottoms of our streams and rivers, caddisflies are insects that spend the larval stage of their life in the water, then emerge to complete their life cycles as



An adult caddisfly.

terrestrial adults. The moth-like adult form, which is characterized by tent shaped, hairy wings and long antennae, usually only live a few weeks, just long enough to mate and lay their eggs in or near the water. These eggs hatch into the caterpillar-like aquatic larvae.

All caddisfly larvae produce silk and the way they utilize it divides them into three groups. The first and most diverse group uses their silk to manufacture a protective case that they carry around with them. The shape and material used to create the case is characteristic of the species. They include purse-shaped silk cases, tubular or square cases of twigs and woody debris, horn-shaped cases of fine sand, and the Snail-case Caddisfly (Family *Helicopsychidae*) which produces a snail-shaped case of coarse sand particles.

The second group uses the silk to create nets to capture their prey, which may include algae, zooplankton, other invertebrates or organic detritus. Some create elaborate horn-shaped affairs while others are simple cup-shaped nets attached to the tops of cobble and boulders in areas with strong flow. The latter includes the very common Net-spinning Caddisfly (Family *Hydropsychidae*) whose nets are visible as small pockets in the algae on the tops of rocks in our streams and rivers. The larvae themselves often are bright green in colour to match the surrounding algae and can be recognized by having three hard plates on the back of their thorax (the front third of the body behind the head) and branched gills on the abdomen (the back two thirds of the body).

The last group is the Primitive or Free-living Caddisflies. They do not produce a case or net but prowl the stream bottom searching for prey. They produce silk to create a protective case for their pupae, the inactive stage where the larvae transform into adults.

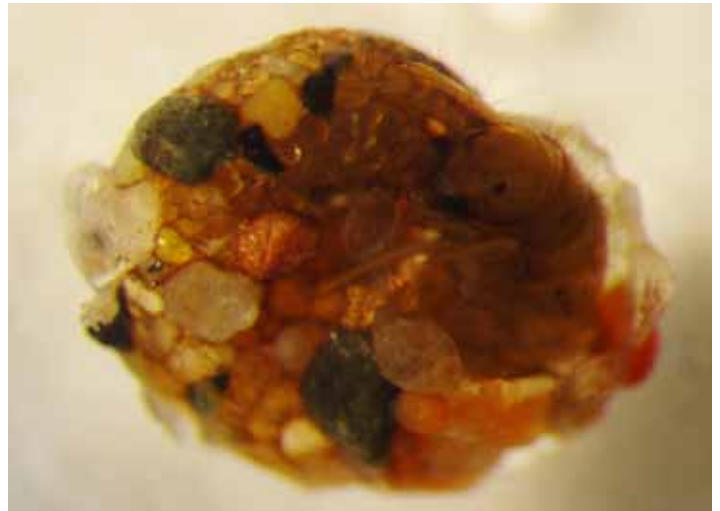
Many caddisflies are very sensitive to pollution and stream habitat alterations. As a group, caddisflies are good indicators of water quality and stream health. The presence of an abundant and diverse caddisfly component of the microfauna inhabiting our stream substrates indicates a healthy aquatic ecosystem.

Contact: John Schwindt, Aquatic Biologist

Two larvae in the *Hydropsychidae* family (middle photo), which make silk nets to capture their prey, and a *Rhyacophilid* larva (bottom), which is one of the Primitive or Free-living Caddisflies.



The *Limniphilid* larva (above) has made a tube of sand and dirt. The *Helicopsychidae* larva (below) has made a snail-shaped case of sand particles.



Conservation Area Beaches

2010 has been a great year for campers and day users alike to get out and enjoy the beaches at Pittock and Wildwood CAs. With a little help from Mother Nature, people were visiting by the car load to cool off with a quick dip in our reservoirs. Pittock and Wildwood's beach areas are considered regional attractions and attract many local residents. A substantial percentage of day use revenue generated can be directly attributed to our beaches.

Unfortunately, however, all good things must come to an end. The bacterial levels in Pittock Reservoir have risen to levels not suitable for swimming, resulting in the posted closure of the reservoirs beach area on July 27. As of early August, Wildwood's beach is still open but it will probably close in the near future.

The beaches are closed due to bacteria levels every year, usually in late July or early August. CA staff work closely with local health units to assist in sampling and testing the water, as well as to post beach closures and inform the public of the beach conditions via signage, websites and posted notices.

Contact: *Ryan Datema, Superintendent, Pittock CA*

Family Fishing Weekend

During the week of July 3 to 11, people across Ontario celebrated family fishing week. Throughout this week residents are able to go fishing without a fishing licence.

Fanshawe, Wildwood and Pittock CAs all participated with events. At Fanshawe, a family fishing day was held on July 10 at the boat launch area. Many campers and day visitors came to fish, socialize and enjoy the outdoors. The Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters supplied some great fishing information for new and expert anglers. Bass, walleye and perch were caught, including a 15 inch walleye near Fanshawe Dam.

That same day, over 140 people took part in a fishing derby at Wildwood. Canadian Tire, the Fishing and Hunting Store and Harvest Bakery provided community support. Stratford Police Service donated \$500 as part of the Kids, Cops & Canadian Tire Program.

The annual fishing derby at Pittock was held July 31/August 1. This event was organized by the Campers Association.

Contact: *Steven Musclow, Superintendent, Fanshawe CA*

Embro Pond CA Enhancement Project

Several UTRCA staff lent a planting hand on a project in Embro Pond CA on June 22. School groups were booked to assist with the planting, but had to cancel at the last minute. In true form, a call for help was answered by staff eager to do something different and learn about native plants at the same time. Over 1400 prairie plugs were planted, including species such as black eyed Susan, wild bergamot, tall coreopsis, grey headed coneflower, Culver's root and showy tick tre-foil.

The Embro Pond Community Association had approached the UTRCA's Bill Mackie to see if a plot could be established near the entrance, that would be visible to the general public. Funding was approved through the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation.

A site visit in late July revealed that the plants are benefitting from this summer's rain and are doing well.



Several UTRCA staff spent a day planting native prairie species at Embro Pond CA.

The next time you're driving by Embro Pond CA, take a look next to the entrance and check out the progress of the plants. This first summer, they will concentrate on root growth. Over the next two years they will all be in full bloom, peaking in mid-July.

Contact: *Karen Pugh, Resource Specialist*

On the Agenda

The following items will be presented at the UTRCA Board of Directors meeting on August 24th, 2010. Board meeting minutes are posted at www.thamesriver.on.ca; click on "Downloads."

- Draft Forest Cover Targets Presentation
- Children's Water Festival Update
- Fanshawe Pioneer Village Report
- Administration and Enforcement - Section 28 Report
- Conservation Areas' Funding Strategy
- Budget 2011: OMERS Cost Increase
- Tier 2 Water Budget Additional Work
- Building Committee Update
- Tender Approval
- Joint Health and Safety Committee Meeting Minutes
- Appointment of Oxford County Representatives under Section 88 of the Clean Water Act
- Approval of Pittock Dam Gate Painting Tender
- Approval of Pittock Dam Gate Painting Contract Administration
- Health and Safety/Book 7 Update

Contact: *Susan Shivas, Executive Assistant*

Upcoming Events

Go to www.thamesriver.on.ca for more upcoming events.

- August 14 - Woodstock Rotary Dragon Boat Festival, Pittock
- August 20 & 21 - London Dragon Boat Race Festival, Fanshawe
- September 14-16 - Exhibitor, Outdoor Farm Show, Woodstock
- September 18-19 - Doors Open London, Sifton Bog ESA
- September 26 - Furtney Memorial Forest Dedication, Fanshawe
- September 26 - St. Marys Memorial Forest Dedication, Wildwood