

### Dam Projects Completed

Two significant major capital projects were undertaken at Pittock and Wildwood Dams this year: replacing back-up generators, and painting the middle gate at Pittock Dam.

The aging original back-up generators (circa late 1960s) at Pittock and Wildwood Dams required replacement as their reliability had become questionable and they were maintenance burdens. The generators are for emergency purposes, and automatically engage to supply power to the dam in the case of power interruption. Uninterrupted power is required due to the dams' critical emergency flood control function, to operate the water control gates and valves, sump pumps, gate heaters, exhaust fans, and monitoring equipment.

In addition to the greatly improved reliability of the new generators and control systems, the new diesel generators feature improved noise attenuation and reduced air emissions.

Pittock Dam's steel water control gates have not been painted completely since the dam was constructed in the late 1960s. Over time, the corrosion protection of the existing paint has degraded, and the paint requires removal and re-application to continue providing protection. A tendering process was completed in 1993 for gate painting; however, a contract was not awarded (and work not completed) due to budget constraints at the time.

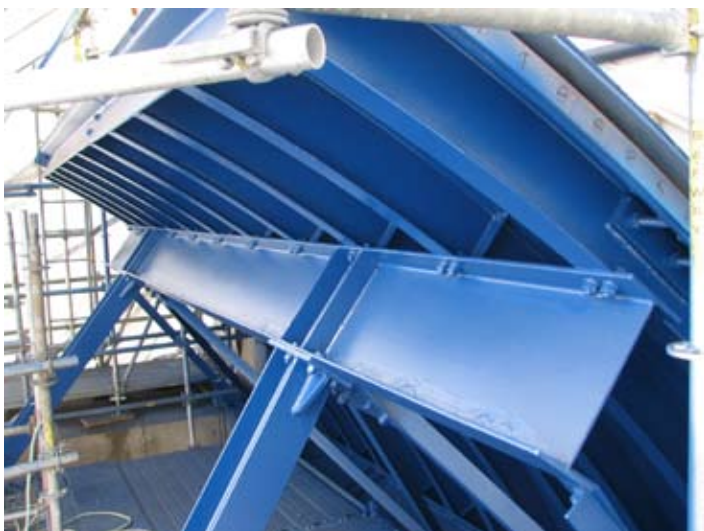
The work completed this summer on the middle gate consisted of removing the existing paint, and priming and repainting the gate. Environmental requirements required enclosure of the work area and capture of the spoil. Plans are to paint the remaining four gates in following years.

Both the generator replacement and gate painting projects received 50% funding from the Provincial Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECI) funding program.

Contact: Mark Shifflett, Water Resources Engineer



Above: The gate was enclosed while the work was on going.  
Below: Pittock's newly painted third gate.



### 10 Wonderful Years of Support!

On August 11, the UTRCA hosted the 10th Annual Kelly Mohring Memorial Golf Classic at Pine Knot Golf Course in Dorchester. Organized by a dedicated staff committee, the event once again proved to be a wonderful success in terms of participation and money raised for the Hailey Mohring Trust Fund. Over 140 golfers participated and several others joined us for dinner on a beautiful summer day.

This event is held in memory of Kelly Mohring, one of our staff members, who passed away in March 2000 after a prolonged battle with a rare form of cancer. Her daughter, Hailey, has a rather severe form of cerebral palsy. Money raised in the golf tournament is directed to the Trust Fund, which is overseen by seven trustees.

Money from the fund has gone toward a variety of services and equipment over the years, including summer camps, massage therapy, specialized accessories and equipment, lift/track systems and before/after school care. The 2009 tournament raised approximately \$20,000, bringing our 10-year total to over \$115,000.

Contact: Mark Snowsell, Land Use Regulations Officer

Hailey with her dad, Jeff, on the new wheelchair/bicycle that the Trust Fund purchased. The wheelchair can be detached from the bike and used separately.



## Sustainable Trail Building

Representatives from the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA/Canada) visited the Fanshawe Lake Trail on the last weekend of August. The Lake Trail was one of four sustainable trail building workshops conducted throughout Ontario in 2009, offering state of the art information on trail design, construction, and maintenance. Taught by IMBA trail specialists, the workshop was available free of charge to members of the public.

The session was a collaboration between IMBA, the London Mountain Bike Club, and UTRCA staff. Approximately 30 volunteers attended the classroom and field work sessions. Participants re-worked an established trail to create a new sustainable section of trail for both hikers and bikers to enjoy in the future.



Contact: Mike Knox, ESA  
Operations Assistant

Workshop participants created a new, sustainable section of trail.

## TD Shoreline Cleanup 2009

The UTRCA is partnering again with London employees of TD Canada Trust on the 2009 TD Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup. This Canada-wide effort began in 1994 as a beach cleanup in Vancouver and has now grown to involve over 60,000 Canadians from coast to coast.

Since 2005, the UTRCA and City of London have supported the efforts of the London TD employees by helping to find cleanup locations, organizing garbage removal, leading groups of volunteers, and educating the volunteers about the cleanup areas. Many of the past and current cleanup locations are in the City's Environmentally Significant Areas (ESAs), and the UTRCA's ESA Team is instrumental in leading the efforts in those sensitive locations.

- This year's cleanup will include the following sites:
- Saturday, September 19, 9-11 am (Fanshawe CA)
  - Monday, September 21, 2-4 pm (Fanshawe CA - Fisherman's Point)
  - Tuesday, September 22, 9-11 am & 4-6 pm (Thames River at Veterans Memorial Parkway/Catherine Street)
  - Thursday, September 24, 9-11 am (Kains Woods ESA)

Contact: Brad Hertner, Community Partnership Specialist

## Discover Nature Family Day

On Sunday, August 23, the UTRCA hosted a Discover Nature Family Day in Springbank Park. More than 300 people stopped by the four tents to learn about nature. The tents highlighted local reptiles, amphibians, fish and mussels. There were lots of hands on activities, displays, and information.

The event was hosted in partnership with Ontario Nature, Ontario Power Generation (OPG), the City of London and the McIlwraith Field Naturalists of London Inc. Ontario Nature and OPG are visiting 10 Ontario cities this year to help people discover nature close to home.

Contact: Steve Sauder, Marketing Specialist



One of the many displays at "Discover Nature" family day.

## Upcoming Open Houses

A series of open houses is being held at various watershed locations for people who own property within municipal wellhead protection areas (WHPAs). A WHPA is the area surrounding a municipal wellhead where special care must be taken in the use and handling of potential contaminants.

The open houses are an opportunity for landowners to learn more about the results of the technical studies, and to review detailed maps of the preliminary WHPAs. Three open houses are coming up at the end of September:

- Stratford, Sebringville, Shakespeare/Milverton, and St. Pauls preliminary WHPAs (September 29, 3-7 pm, Stratford Rotary Complex, Stratford)
- Mitchell preliminary WHPA (September 30, 3-7 pm, West Perth Public Library, Mitchell)
- Fanshawe, Birr and Melrose preliminary WHPAs (October 1, 3-7 pm, Medway Community Centre, London)

Sessions will be held for other municipal wellheads as mapping is approved. The open houses are part of the municipal drinking water source protection effort. More information is available at [www.sourcewaterprotection.on.ca](http://www.sourcewaterprotection.on.ca).

Contact: Linda Smith, Community Partnership Specialist

*Species of the Month*

## Eastern Hog-nosed Snake (*Heterodon platirhinos*)

One of Ontario's most unique snake species, the eastern hog-nosed snake can be found in sandy areas, ranging from open fields to dunes and thickets to mixed forests. This harmless snake is named for its upturned snout, which it uses to prod for toads, to bury itself in sand, or to excavate a nest.



Above: The eastern hog-nosed snake is named for its upturned snout. Below: Colours and patterns vary greatly - a melanistic hog-nosed.



This heavy-bodied snake can reach lengths of 50 to 115 cm as an adult. The colour and pattern are highly variable. In juveniles and some adults there are large, dark blotches along the back, alternating with smaller blotches along the sides. The background colour can be grey, green, yellow, orange or brown. Some adults have a solid dorsal colour of brown, olive, grey or black (melanistic). The belly can be cream or yellow with grey mottling. The underside of the tail is generally lighter than the rest of the belly.



Snakes locate prey by smell, using their tongues to collect airborne particles which are analyzed in their mouths.

Females will lay an average of 10 to 20 eggs in early summer, and young emerge in August or September. A prey specialist, the hog-nosed snake eats a diet primarily comprised of toads.

Initially when found, this species will lie motionless, relying on its camouflage pattern to protect it. When threatened, it will try a number of tactics to escape harm. A master of fakery, this harmless snake will flatten its neck like a cobra, vibrate the tip of its tail, release a foul smelling liquid from its cloaca, assume a coiled defensive position, gape its mouth, hiss loudly and pretend to strike with a closed mouth. If none of these defenses work, the snake will roll over and play dead, mouth open and tongue dangling to the side!



The many scare tactics of the harmless hog-nosed snake: If staying quiet doesn't work, the hog-nose may flatten out its neck like a cobra, vibrate the tip of its tail, release a foul smelling liquid, coil up (photo above), gape its mouth, hiss loudly and pretend to strike with a closed mouth.



When all else fails, play dead: This snake is hoping that whatever has disturbed it will lose interest and leave it in peace.

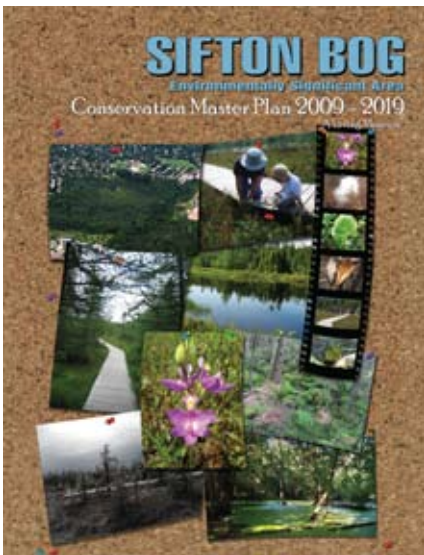
No other snake in Ontario has an upturned snout. The Massasauga rattlesnake is also a large, heavy-bodied snake, but it has vertical pupils, a rounded snout and usually a rattle at the end of its tail. In addition, the Massasauga rattlesnake does not occur in the UTRCA watershed.

Due to its large body size, slight resemblance to venomous species and elaborate defense displays, the harmless hog-nosed snake is often killed when encountered. Such human persecution, along with road mortality, loss of habitat, and prey specialization, have resulted in population declines across the species' range. The hog-nosed snake is listed as "Threatened" and is protected both provincially and federally. Sightings of this cryptic species in the watershed are being sought. Please contact Scott Gillingwater for more information.

Contact: Scott Gillingwater, Species at Risk Biologist

## New Master Plan for Sifton Bog ESA

The *Sifton Bog Environmentally Significant Area Conservation Master Plan 2009 – 2019* is now complete, almost three years after the work began. The UTRCA and City of London (Parks Planning and Design) worked with a dedicated Local Advisory Committee to produce this comprehensive document on London's most unique natural area.



Master plans are prepared to govern the management and use of ESAs. Sifton Bog in west London has been the subject of much controversy over the years, and is an extremely popular site for nature appreciation.

The conservation master plan provides excellent background information on the formation of the bog, current and past pressures, vegetation changes, water quality and quantity, trails

and other issues. The Local Advisory Committee helped identify goals, objectives and recommendations for the plan. The three goals are to conserve and enhance the ecological health of the site, minimize human impacts (trails), and encourage awareness and education.

The main threats to the site include the over-abundance of white-tailed deer and the proliferation of non-native, invasive buckthorn shrubs, both of which threaten to seriously harm the biological diversity of the site's plants and animals. Solutions are not simple or inexpensive, but many practical measures are recommended in the plan. Some recommendations are already being implemented by the ESA Management Team, with capital funding from the City of London.

This conservation master plan will direct needed work in the Sifton Bog ESA for the next decade. The master plan is on-line at [www.thamesriver.on.ca](http://www.thamesriver.on.ca).

Contact: Cathy Quinlan, Terrestrial Biologist

## Friends of Oxbow take the learning outdoors!

On Saturday, September 26, the Friends of Oxbow Creek and some additional local landowners, will go for a nature walk along the Oxbow Creek. UTRCA staff will be joining them to answer any questions they may have about the creek and the surrounding woodlots.

This outing will be a great opportunity for landowners to learn about how they can participate in making their natural environment healthier. Whether it's learning more about the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program or seeing the variety of aquatic life in the creek, these committee members and their fellow landowners will further realize the importance of taking care of their lands.

Contact: Julie Welker, Community Partnership Specialist

## On the Calendar

Upcoming events are posted at [www.thamesriver.on.ca](http://www.thamesriver.on.ca)

- September 15-17: Exhibitor, Outdoor Farm Show, Woodstock
- September 19: TD Shoreline Cleanup, 9-11 am, Fanshawe CA
- September 21: TD Shoreline Cleanup, 2-4 pm, Fanshawe CA
- September 22: TD Shoreline Cleanup, 9-11 am, 4-6 pm, Thames River at Veterans Memorial Parkway/Catherine Street
- September 24: TD Shoreline Cleanup, 9-11 am, Kains Woods ESA
- September 27: Furtney Memorial Forest Dedication, Fanshawe CA
- September 27: St. Marys Memorial Forest Dedication, Wildwood CA
- October 4: Woodstock Memorial Tree Dedication, Pittock CA
- October 17: Turkey Vulture Bait Trail Run, Fanshawe CA
- October 18: Fanshawe, Wildwood and Pittock CAs close for the season

## On the Agenda

The following items will be presented at the UTRCA Board of Directors meeting on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009. Board meeting minutes are posted on the Downloads section of our website, at [www.thamesriver.on.ca](http://www.thamesriver.on.ca).

- POA Designation
- Administration and Enforcement - Section 28 Report
- London Dykes, Ada Dyke Repair Contract Administration
- 2010 Budget Proposed Levy
- Community Conservation Centre Conceptual Design/ Building Committee Update and Recommendation
- Erosion and Tree Clearing Regulation Report
- Thames-Sydenham and Region – Ontario Drinking Water Stewardship Program

Contact: Susan Shivas, Executive Assistant