



# SAMUEL WILMOT NATURE AREA NEWS

**Municipality of Clarington**

**Summer 2009**

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## **Samuel Wilmot recognized by DEAC**

The Samuel Wilmot Nature Area Management Advisory Committee has won the 2009 DEAC Irene Kock Award for Education and Communication. The Durham Environmental Advisory Committee (DEAC) annually recognizes individuals and organizations that have contributed to environmental improvements through awards in six categories.

While the SWNA- MAC has previously received honorable mention, this is the first time the committee has won top honours in a category.

The committee made a submission under the Irene Kock Education/Communication Award, which recognizes the fostering of effective communications, sharing knowledge and exhibiting leadership in helping others to learn about the natural environment.

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The SWNA –MAC has undertaken many special events at the nature area, including interactive exhibits of raptors (birds of prey), reptiles, and a naturalist-led investigation of bugs, butterflies and bees.

The area has numerous interpretive signs, and two newsletters are published annually, with schools included on the distribution list.

The award was presented at the Region of Durham Headquarters on May 14, 2009, and two committee members were on hand to proudly accept it.

## **Indian River Reptile Zoo Presentation**

On Saturday June 6, at the Toronto Street parking lot, the Indian River Reptile Zoo delivered an exciting presentation and live exhibition of various native and exotic reptiles. The event was possibly the most successful ever for the SWNA, with over 100 people attending, and lots of children.

Several varieties of snakes, turtles, an iguana and a 12 foot python were displayed. The culmination of the event was the opportunity to pet the python, which was being held by seven lucky volunteers from the audience.



## **Interested in a PowerPoint Presentation on the SWNA?**

Over the past 18 months, the SWNA Committee has developed a PowerPoint Presentation to deliver information about the SWNA to a variety of interested groups. If you are interested in a presentation, please contact Peter Windolf at 905- 623-3379.

## Durham Region Coastal Wetlands Baseline - Conditions and Study Findings (CLOCA and Env. Can.)

Wilmot Creek is best known for its coldwater fishery comprised of Rainbow, Brown, and Brook trout as well as Chinook and Coho salmon. The clear, cold-water creek is able to support these fish species because it is relatively free of human barriers (weirs and dams) and provides natural stream-bank vegetation throughout much of its course through the watershed. Wilmot Creek Marsh receives its water from this watershed and from the smaller Foster Creek watershed.

With many natural buffers around the watercourse, the watershed is only 12 percent urbanized. These creeks and their tributaries drain the watershed and the water that enters the wetland is not as clear as the upper reaches of Wilmot Creek. On its way, the stream water accumulates moderate amounts of excess nutrients and other contaminants often associated with agricultural run-off. As well, analysis of sediment deposited in the wetland has revealed some pesticide residue; however, overall sediment quality is good.

In coastal wetland fish communities, piscivores (fish that eat other fish) are important in the food web as top predators. They are also indicators of fish community condition. Disturbed coastal wetlands, like many in Durham Region, show little or no sign of these species – and are in fair or poor condition. Wilmot Creek Marsh supports one of the best fish communities in the Region's coastal wetlands and has high numbers of piscivore species, mainly Northern Pike and Largemouth Bass.

The open-water areas on the margins of large cattail stands that dominate the wetland supported one of the best aquatic macro-invertebrate communities among Durham Region coastal wetlands. The Wilmot Creek Marsh aquatic macro-invertebrate community was particularly abundant in two varieties of sensitive crustaceans, isopods and amphipods.

Although other biological communities are well represented here compared to most other Durham Region coastal wetlands, low numbers of American Toad and Green Frog were heard. One indicator species, Spring Peeper, was present, but in low numbers. Results suggest that while the marsh offers fair amphibian habitat, it is being affected by human disturbance. Wilmot Creek Marsh was also abundant in birds that are general marsh users (e.g., Red-winged Blackbird).

As expected, the salmon and trout species that make Wilmot Creek renowned as a cold-water fishery are not generally found in the warmer wetland waters. However, the marsh waters themselves sustain one of the best coastal wetland fish communities in Durham Region.

Dominated by warm-water species, the fish community was characterized by populations of Yellow Perch and many sunfish species. In addition, this is one of the few coastal wetlands in the region that had an abundance of predatory Northern Pike and Largemouth Bass. In Lake Ontario coastal wetlands, these species occupy the upper levels of the aquatic food web and are indicators of a high quality fish community. *Source: Durham Region Coastal Wetlands, Baseline Conditions and Study Findings (2002 and 2003)*

### CFWIP Funding Application

The SWNA MAC has applied for a Community Fish and Wildlife Improvement (CFWIP) grant from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to conduct a planting project in the Lake Meadow area.

The project aims to improve habitat for butterflies and birds through the planting of native shrubs and perennials. It was conceived in an effort to draw more songbirds to the SWNA. The funding, if approved, will help to cover the costs of equipment and materials used by volunteer workers.