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**ENVIRONMENT**  
**Turtle conservation group releases hatchlings in Birds Creek**

by KAITLIN SYLVESTER  
 Staff

On May 1, among the first whispers of spring, the dedicated volunteers of Think Turtle Conservation Initiative released a clutch of snapping turtles that had overwintered at the turtle hospital. With careful hands and hopeful hearts, the first batch of hatchlings were released into the wild, marking the beginning of a new season of ecological preservation.

The journey of these hatchlings is a testament to the tireless efforts of conservationists and the challenges faced by wildlife in the region. Discovered along the highways last fall, these eggs were found through sheer luck when a mama turtle nested on top of an existing nest, scattering eggs along the roadside. They were spotted by a local resident and picked up for overwintering at the turtle hospital. Providing the hatchlings with a fighting chance, overwintering shields them from the harsh winter elements and offers the opportunity to thrive come springtime.

While nests are typically better off protected outdoors, rather than brought inside through the winter, Kelly Wallace, the managing director of Think Turtle Conservation Initiative, reflects on the delicate balance between human infrastructure and wildlife preservation. Current limitations within the municipal bylaws prevent the installation of nest protectors along roadsides where turtles frequently nest. In Hastings Highlands, the language around discarding debris has prevented the volunteers from setting up nest protectors along roadsides where many turtles tend to nest.

Though the nest protectors would be off of the road and not cause any impediment to traffic, the current language could see fines levied at the volunteers if nest protectors were to be installed. Wallace emphasizes the need for municipalities and regulatory bodies to reevaluate existing policies, emphasizing the vital role proactive conservation measures play in safeguarding these vulnerable species.

Particularly as climate change alters traditional nesting patterns and habitats, the need for adaptable and collaborative conservation efforts becomes increasingly urgent. From habitat loss to poaching, snapping turtles face a myriad of threats requiring vigilant attention and collective action from the community. Wallace also noted poaching was a real threat to Bancroft's

see TURTLES on page 8



A forest of the future

Registered Professional Forester Fred Warner instructs the attendees from the Bancroft and Area Stewardship Council, the Scouts and the North Hastings Community Integration Association how to properly plant the 500 white pine seedlings at McGeachie Conservation Area on May 4. /MICHAEL RILEY Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

**COMMUNITY**  
**Stewardship Council plants 500 trees at McGeachie**

by MICHAEL RILEY  
 Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Bancroft Area Stewardship Council, along with the Scouts and the North Hastings Community Integration Association planted 500 white wine seedlings at McGeachie Conserva-

tion Area on May 4. They were joined by Crowe Valley Conservation Area regulation officer Beth Lowe, Professional Registered Forester Fred Warner, and Lincoln Electric Rally of the Tall Pines coordinator Bruce Leonard, whose organization donated the money to procure the seedlings for this initiative. BASC's chair Ian Hendry and its vice chair John O'Donnell commented on this successful event.

BASC, along with the NHCTA and the Scouts, came to McGeachie Conservation Area on May 4 at 10 a.m. to help plant 500 white pine seedlings, made possible by a \$750 donation by the Rally of the Tall Pines. This planting of white pine seedlings, the provincial tree of Ontario, was to help replenish trees that were lost

see TREES On page 3

**COUNCIL**  
**HH council silent regarding NHCC report**

by BILL KILPATRICK  
 Staff

The report on the operational costs of the North Hastings Community Centre, prepared by the Town of Bancroft, was presented to Hastings Highlands council under the agenda section entitled "Correspondence." It was accepted without question or comment, under what can only be described as an eerie silence. The report goes over

the history of the arena, and how things have arrived in their current state and outlines the findings of both the operational costs review and the origin of the users. The Town of Bancroft is still awaiting the findings of the facility assessment that was completed in 2023 – a report that will outline the "long-term capital costs required to maintain the building" and allow the town to integrate those costs into their asset management plan.

As was previously reported by *The Bancroft Times* and *Bancroft This Week* the arena is current-

ly running a \$207,350 deficit. The report breaks down the costs per municipality based on the per cent of the users from each municipality. The report states that 38.5 per cent of the users of the community centre come from Hastings Highlands which equates to a yearly payment of \$79,800. The report, that was sent to seven municipalities, points out that these findings represent a "starring point" on the road to a future agreement and asks

see REPORT On page 2

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From left, BASC vice chair John O'Donnell, Crowe Valley Conservation Authority regulation officer Both Lowe, and Fred Werner at the planting of 500 white pine seedlings at McGoachio Conservation Area on May 4. MICHAEL RILEY Local Journalism Initiative Reporter



Registered Professional Forester Fred Werner instructs the attendees from the Bancroft and Area Stewardship Council, the Scouts and the North Hastings Community Integration Association how to properly plant the 500 white pine seedlings.



BASC chair Ian Hendry collecting water to help with the planting.



Richard Taylor and Amelia putting in their seedlings.

## Trees planted at local conservation area

Cont'd From page 1

during the destructive derecho that hit the area last year.

Lowe thought the planting of these white pine seedlings by the BASC, NHCIA and the Scouts was awesome.

"You know, John [O'Donnell, BASC vice chair] and company are out here doing this. It's the Scouts out here doing this and these kids plant the trees and grow with these trees. And then they know that this space is here so it really gets them connected to nature," she says.

Werner was there to show the attendees how to properly plant the white pine seedlings.

"And then I go around and sort of individually coach some of them and answer their questions as they're learning," he says.

Werner says they'll be planting the seedlings on the forest floor and letting them fend for themselves.

"If they're planted right, they'll probably survive. We don't expect everything to be a full-size tree, just because of the history of planting these. Seedlings are food for certain species and the weather takes its toll as well," he says.

Leonard says they've donated every year for the past eight to 10 years and this past year, they upped their donation to \$750.

"The Rally [of the Tall Pines] comes up here every year and the Town [of Bancroft] and area welcomes us so much. So, something we can do in return, other than bringing business to the area. Here's something we can do for the area," he says.

Loretta Kaperski was there with the Scouts and said they'd been planting trees for eight years. She says that Scouts Canada does a Scout-trees-community tree planting initiative every year, which is a pledge fundraiser and they get pledges to plant trees.

"In this way, we can make the world a better place than the way we found it. So, it's a great opportunity to make a difference in the world. We started off doing Algonquin Park when they had the funding. We planted a maximum of 2,000 trees over a weekend. And then when COVID-19 happened and the funding stopped, we went in search of tree planting we could do. One year we found someone reforesting their property so we did 400 trees there, and then I was lucky to get teamed up with the BASC. Every April, they reach out and we come out to help," she says.

Werner then called upon all the attendees to come over and he gave them all a talk on how to properly plant the white pine seedlings and the technique, so that they have the best chance of growing to maturity without being eaten or

infested by disease.

O'Donnell thanked everyone for coming, and thanked Leonard for the Rally of the Tall Pines donation, which made procuring the white pine seedlings possible. He said as vice chair, he's part of the BASC, which has a tree and shrub program every spring.

"I also want to thank Beth Lowe, CVCA regulation officer, who came by to help us. I've worked with the BASC and the CVCA to facilitate this. After the derecho last year, the devastation it caused to that beautiful mature hardwood bush, it's a good time to do this reforestation. At one time, this whole area was a white pine forest. So hopefully, the folks putting in the trees, when you get old like me, you'll be able to go back and say 'see that tree? I planted that,'" he says.

After O'Donnell's comments, everyone took to the path into the forest to plant the 500 white pine seedlings. Richard Taylor, one of the planters, said it was going pretty quickly.

"I think we'll make short work of the 500 trees with all the people that showed up," he says.

O'Donnell told *The Bancroft Times* that he was very happy with the planting on May 4.

"We had all the key players take part, including the BASC, CVCA, Rally of the Tall Pines, the Scouts troop, and NHCIA. It took just over two hours to plant the 500 trees and the weather was perfect despite the forecast we had Friday. This was fun watching our planters take so much of Fred Werner's instructions to heart. They will remember this throughout their lifetime and helping to restore the forest the wind-storm changed will be something they all can be proud of. Thanks to everyone who put out such a great effort on this worthwhile project," he says.

Hendry reiterated to *The Bancroft Times* that it took them a little over two hours to finish planting the 500 white pine seedlings.

"This was our second year working together as a group and it really was a special time. With volunteers from the BASC, Scouts Canada and the [North Hastings] Community Integration Association all working together towards a common goal, it went quickly," he says. "It's always great to work together with our youth and teach them the importance of good stewardship and a shining example of how well collaborating with others works so well."

For more information regarding each of the organizations participating in the tree planting initiative visit their websites at: [www.bancroftstewardship.ca](http://www.bancroftstewardship.ca); [www.scouts.ca](http://www.scouts.ca); [www.nheia.ca](http://www.nheia.ca); [www.tallpinesrally.com](http://www.tallpinesrally.com); and, [www.crowevalley.com](http://www.crowevalley.com).



### Museum Minute

Submitted by the Bancroft North Hastings Heritage Museum

#### Spring Floods on Hastings Street

Life in early Bancroft has almost been forgotten today. All along the York River there were sections of tenancy which in the spring of the year became drowned land. In the worst years the water backed up against the Eagles Nest, and Mike Burns spoke of spring burials in St. John's Anglican Cemetery when graves had to be bailed out before the funeral could proceed. Water sloshing across Hastings Street was common and, in the Village's original business section no one expected to have a basement since it would be awash for part of each year. Looking at Hastings Street today it is almost impossible to believe that at least 20 feet of fill has been dumped over the original roadway road and the land has been raised until it is no longer in danger from the flooding York. For a glimpse of the situation faced by Bancroft householders during the past springs, D. H. Morrison's account carries the most validity. This headline for week in May of 1899 proclaims, "York River on the Rampage." His article reads as follows.

"When a number a stop logs were removed from the now useless dam at Engle Lake last Thursday, the York Branch waters rose to flood

a large portion of Bancroft. On Monday night the boom, strung by the Davy brothers, just above the town dam, broke. A log jam formed there which backed up the water until it was over two feet deep on Hastings Street. Where upon boats were the only safe way to travel."

"Homes were flooded, and occupants were obliged to seek safety in higher quarters. A gang of town's men worked all day Sunday on the jam which was broken about 8 p.m. This drained the street considerably, but the abnormally high-water levels is causing annoyance since debris of all kinds is floating. It may be weeks before the river recedes."

"The Baptiste dam is still controlled by the Bronson and Weston lumber firm, although they no longer use it in their operations. Steps should be taken to compel its removal so there can be no recurrence of present affairs."

"Some of the results of the flooding is a loss of over \$100 worth of logs by the Davy brothers. Work is suspended on the flooded sawmill and F. Mullet can only reach his stable by boat."

"Water covers the floor of Maurice Fitzgerald's home to a depth of four inches and the road near the Eggo's Nest was under five feet of water. This makes crossing by teams difficult.

Fortunately, the Bancroft dam, which was in danger of being swept away, lost only its top timbers. They can be replaced when the flood recedes."

Visit the Heritage Museum and explore the history of North Hastings in greater detail.

Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Tuesday to Friday.



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