



The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

Friends of the Carp River, Conservation Award - Non-Member 2005

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Janet Mason accepts the Conservation Award on behalf of Friends of the Carp

The OFNC Conservation Award, non-member, is given to a group or individual who has made an outstanding contribution in the cause of natural history conservation in the Ottawa Valley, with particular emphasis on activities within the Ottawa District.

This year, the Award goes to The Friends of the Carp River, an organization that has worked for many years to protect and restore the ecosystem of the Carp River. The Friends of the Carp River grew out of the West Carleton Township's Environmental Advisory Committee, which began an extensive study of the Carp

River in 1993. The organization was formed in 1997 as a citizen's group whose goal was helping restore and improve the health of the Carp River. The river has its headwaters just south of the Corel Centre and flows 42 km to the Ottawa River at Fitzroy Harbour, and is "the only river that flows entirely within the boundaries of the City of Ottawa." Over the years the river has suffered from shoreline erosion, siltation, flooding, low-oxygen levels and subsequent loss of important wildlife habitat. Working with various groups including landowners, businesses, government agencies and recreational users, the Friends are developing some substantial, achievable goals to continue rehabilitating the "ribbon of life," their wonderfully descriptive term for the Carp River.

The Friends of the Carp River, an entirely volunteer run organization, is dedicated to reversing the decline of the river and the members have already made tremendous improvements. Since 1997 the Friends, with the help and cooperation of local landowners living along the river, and many volunteers, have planted over 20,000 trees and shrubs, which will have a substantial positive impact on controlling erosion and siltation. With assistance from provincial foresters, site plans for tree planting have been created.

Their work was recognized with a Trillium Foundation grant of \$50,000 to help them achieve their goal of rejuvenating the Carp River. One of their objectives for this grant was to commission a study of the river, which they did, and the *Carp River Remediation Project* report was prepared by consultants in April 2003.

The Friends of the Carp River have produced a pamphlet which details ways and means for landowners to achieve best management practices. Their members are available to help steer farmers and others to specific programs including funding, to enable them to implement improvements that benefit both landowners and the river.

The group has been ingenious, creative and tireless in coming up with ways to garner support for the river. Believing that an "image change" for the river was a necessary part of creating a positive public perception, it organized a year-long photography contest. It thus encouraged people to photograph the Carp River, and persuaded them to look at the river as a thing of beauty. Winning entries were used to create a millennium calendar that they successfully sold to raise funds. A benefit concert with Terry Tufts and Kathryn Briggs was held on Earth Day, 2001 also to help raise funds for continued work on the river. A CD of a song, "The Mighty Carp" by Dan Mayo, inspired by the river and dedicated to the Friends was released in 2002.

The Friends have been remarkably successful in drawing the community into active involvement with the health of the river as evidenced not only by the many volunteers who turn out for tree-planting activities but by the tremendous support they have received from local businesses and granting agencies. For these reasons and more, the OFNC is very pleased to give the Friends of the Carp River this Conservation Award.

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