



The Ottawa Field-Naturalists' Club

Ghislaine Rozon, Conservation Award for Members 2004

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The OFNC Conservation Award is given in recognition of a club member who has made an outstanding contribution toward protecting our natural environment. Ghislaine Rozon is a remarkable woman who more than fits this criterion. She is a dynamic, articulate, passionate defender of our local greenspace, particularly the Larose Forest. She has worked non-stop trying to preserve this area as a conservation zone, free of development.

Her battle for the forest began in the summer of 2002 when, newly retired from a long teaching career, she discovered that a development proposal for Larose Forest was being given serious consideration by the

United Counties of Prescott-Russell (UCPR). Aghast at what this would do to the natural environment of the forest, she threw herself into the fight. She contacted the OFNC Conservation Committee for advice, but quickly perceived that she would need a thorough understanding of municipal, provincial and federal politics, including a good knowledge of the Planning Act, if she was to argue the necessity of conservation with elected officials. Then she realized she would need to educate herself in the areas of forestry, hydrology, and ecology. All of this she did with tremendous competence and customary thoroughness. As Ghislaine immersed herself in learning everything there was to know about the political process, including the Provincial Policy Statement, Environmental Assessments, and related acts, the boxes of files, papers, articles, reports and letters grew. Her home became "Command Central" for those who were adamant that the forest must be preserved. Through detailed reading of numerous documents, she exposed inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the material produced to support development in the forest. She also knew that gaining public support was extremely important and rallied both residents and various conservation groups to the cause. The Friends of Larose Forest which existed prior to the controversy, was revived and with Ghislaine, presented a united front for a development-free Larose. She also contacted politicians of all levels, as well as the various media, offering guided tours of the proposed development site so that they could see it for themselves and make up their minds based on facts, not fallacy.

Anyone who has dealt with Ghislaine over the last few years knows that it is not unusual to receive emails written and fired off at 2, 3 or 4 in the morning! It appeared that she never slept! These detailed messages - lucid, well-reasoned, intelligent and thought-provoking - were regularly mailed to a growing list of supporters. Suggestions on how people could help, lists of addresses for the relevant government officials, sample letters, as well as succinct

synopses of many relevant reports, all were supplied by Ghislaine who became the acknowledged and reasoned voice for saving Larose Forest.

As a last resort, Ghislaine and several others appealed the issue to the OMB. This is not a step lightly undertaken. The cost for hiring a lawyer and expert witnesses was substantial and was absorbed by the appellants. In the end the decision was handed down in favour of the developers. Despite this crushing blow, Ghislaine has not given up her fight to save the forest. As she has done from day one, she continues to explore ways in which Larose Forest can be preserved as a conservation area, remaining vigilant and alert to all threats to this special place. Brimming with ideas, she has plans for a website, printed resource material, and possibly an interpretive centre - this lady is amazing! If ever there was an example of how to go about preparing to protect natural areas, one need look no further than Ghislaine for inspiration, which is why the Club awards her the 2004 Conservation Award for Members.

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