



DUCKS UNLIMITED PRESCOTT

Making a difference in the great outdoors

By Joan Rupert-Barkley

If you care about the environment, wildlife and clean water, perhaps you should consider becoming a member of Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC). This non-profit organization was formed in 1938 by sportsmen and during that time has focussed on protecting, restoring enhancing and conserving wetland habitats for the waterfowl, wildlife and people. DUC also supports hunting by offering a program that teaches safe and ethical waterfowl hunting.

The membership fee is \$35.00 per year and this also includes a subscription to the publication *The Conservator*. Within a 50-kilometer radius of Prescott, there are 83 DUC habitat projects, 25,293 acres of secured habitat and \$3,539,941 invested

in DUC habitat projects. Chapters in this district are located in Brockville, Kemptonville, Morrisburg, Smith Falls as well as Prescott.

The Prescott and District chapter of DUC was formed in 1997. The founding chairperson was Dr. Jim Holmes.

“Ducks Unlimited not only helps wildlife but it helps waterfowl and humans too. People are realizing that the dirty old swamp actually has a need. That is what is filtering our water and keeping our water tables up”, stated Holmes.

One of the habitat projects in this area involved rejuvenating the wetland at Limerick Forest. “They built a roadway, berms, culverts and control gates to get

the water at an optimum level for birds and wildlife”, said Holmes.

Holmes, who has been to various DUC projects, such as a wetland in Kingston, and studies in Smith Falls, emphasized these project sites are not restricted. Members of DUC are always welcome to go out in the field with the biologist and observe the work as it is being done.

The chapter recently won the President’s Grand Slam Award for increased contribution.

Holmes also described another project that took place on some of his property south of Toledo, where there had been a significant decrease in the number of ducks, especially black ones. DUC came in and dug five large



PICTURES- submitted by Dr. Jim Holmes These are students from Maynard Public School putting together birdhouse kit. Top Left: From left Joseph Summerfield, Cameron Carboni, Dr. Jim Holmes, Nicole Klein, Corrin Fisher (These are students from Maynard Public School putting together birdhouse kit. Top Right: From left Kassie Coville-Gonczowski, Dave Hall and Abigail Salmon)

brood ponds adjacent to the river. Since the project has been completed, Holmes reported an increase in ducks, including mallards, wood, black ducks, as well as Canada geese, snow geese, swans, otters, turkeys and deer.

Another rewarding DUC initiative is the Webfoot project. Currently Holmes along with retired school teacher Dave Hall, are introducing this program to local public schools. Webfoot is an extensive educational program that teaches children all about wildlife, wetland, clean air, forestry and conservation.

"You have to teach these young people about this. They are the future caretakers. Let's teach them properly so they will get the facts straight and they will know all about conservation", said Holmes.

All the educational material in this program is designed to fit into the school curriculum under environment and science. Material is shipped from DUC's head office in Winnipeg directly to the school. Although the program is completely subsidized by DUC, Holmes reported in the past, individuals or corporations have sponsored classes. These sponsors receive an adult DUC membership, the magazine, a tax receipt, a thank you at the DUC annual fundraising dinner, a thank you in the newspaper, as well as a letter that goes home to all participating students stating the name of the sponsor. So far 94 classes, 2400 students and 11 different schools have participated in this project. At the end of the year, Holmes or Hall, visit the school to make a presentation and present the students with birdhouse kits. The students

also receive various conservation games and activities. Sometimes the students hang the completed birdhouses around the school. Holmes noted the program is very rewarding and over the years they have received thank you notes from some of the participating students with drawings of wildlife.

The DUC Prescott chapter has also participated in the Barn of Learning at the Spencerville Fair in September. At this event Holmes indicated they teach children and adults all about banding ducks and geese, as well as facts about wetlands and conservation. Participants are given a coloured band to wear around their wrist. There are four different colours of bands. By entering the words Ducks Unlimited Duck Detective on the computer, along with the colour of band they are wearing and their province, participants can find out what type of duck they are, as well as where the ducks live, where they winter, how many eggs they lay and many other interesting facts. Participants also receive a certificate of appreciation. During one event at the fair 451 people were banded.

The Prescott and District Chapter of DUC holds a fundraising dinner every year. This event raises money for the various projects in the area. Local businesses donate items for the live and silent auctions as well as for the door prizes. The chapter also purchases event merchandise from Ducks Unlimited Canada. There are theme packages, winner-takes-all packages and other fundraising activities at the dinner itself. A ticket to the dinner also includes the membership fee to DUC. Holmes indicated that since the Prescott chapter has only

6 – 8 people on the committee, including chairman Shawn Lockett, the folks from the chapter in Smith Falls often help out with this event. Prescott chapter returns the favour at their spring dinner. The dinner is also an opportunity for High School students to get their volunteer hours. LH



If you would like to become a DUC volunteer, a Webfoot sponsor or learn more about Ducks Unlimited, call Shawn Lockett at (613)925-1465 or Jim Holmes at (613)925-4800.