

Protected lands on Oak Ridges Moraine expand thanks to generous land donation

Local family donates 40 hectares to Nature Conservancy of Canada Protected lands around Southern Ontario's Oak Ridges Moraine are expanding, thanks to a generous land donation by a Toronto area family. The Nature Conservancy of Canada is announcing the donation of a 40-hectare property, featuring forests that are next to the neighbouring Ganaraska Forest, about an hour's drive northeast of Toronto.

The Burgess family has cared for the property – which they fondly called the 'outback' – for generations, planting trees and carefully managing the forest. Their shared dream of safeguarding these lands has now been realized and they can rest assured knowing these lands will be cared for forever.

The site features thriving forests with towering sugar maple and red oak trees, as well as coniferous species like white pine. Much of the property is made up of interior forest - areas deep in the woods and far from the edges, where it's typically more sheltered and less disturbed by outside factors. Interior forests are vital for many species that need large, continuous areas for nesting, feeding, and other daily activities, including many songbirds like wood thrush and eastern wood-pewee.

The property also helps protect the headwaters of streams that emerge from the Oak Ridges Moraine and flow into the Ganaraska River, part of the Great Lakes Basin that feeds into Lake Ontario.

This project is a major conservation achievement enhancing ecological connectivity and resilience by building on the adjacent conserved lands of the Oak Ridges Moraine, a cherished landscape that offers habitat for hundreds of species, filters water, helps clean the air we breathe, and acts as a powerful carbon sink.

The newly protected property is adjacent to the 4,500-hectare Ganaraska Forest, spanning across the Municipalities of Northumberland County, Peterborough County, City of Kawartha Lakes and Regional Municipality of Durham, is owned and managed for conservation by Ganaraska Conservation and offers a vast range of recreational opportunities for people to connect with nature in Ontario.

The Burgess' property was donated to the Nature Conservancy of Canada under the Government of Canada's Ecological Gifts Program. This program provides enhanced tax incentives for individuals or corporations who donate ecologically significant land.

"This property has been in

the Burgess family for approximately 170 years and was a large part of our heritage. It is our pleasure to be able to donate this property to the Nature Conservancy of Canada for its protection and management. Forests breathe life into our world. We need to ensure their resilient future for the benefit of future generations." – The Burgess Family

"The Nature Conservancy of Canada is grateful for this generous donation. It makes a significant contribution to protection of the sensitive Oak Ridges Moraine habitats and also provides a protected buffer to the conservation lands of the Ganaraska Forest. We thank the Burgess family for entrusting us to care for these lands." – Mark Stabb, Program Director – Central Ontario East, Nature Conservancy of Canada

"Nature is our greatest ally in the fight against climate change. But nature needs our help. Too many of the precious and beautiful ecosystems that we hold dear as Canadians are under threat and need protection. Through the Ecological Gifts Program, we are making meaningful progress toward conserving more lands and waters and protecting species at risk. Today, we are expanding protected areas and strengthening ecological connectivity near Ontario's Ganaraska Forest. Preserving these forests is vital—not only for protecting wildlife habitat, but also for filtering water, purifying air, and combating climate change." - Hon. Julie Dabrusin, Minister of Environment and Climate Change

Facts

The newly-protected property is surrounded on three sides by the ~4,500-hectare Ganaraska Forest, managed by Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority (GRCA) as a multi-use recreational forest.

This property adds to a network of more than 1,500 ha of conservation lands that NCC has protected across the Oak Ridges Moraine.

On March 13th, 1853, Robert Burgess purchased a parcel of land in the township of Clarke in the County of Durham. This was the original Burgess farmstead. The farm was a mixed farm which included a woodlot. In 1970 the woodlot portion was inherited by W.J. Burgess who wanted to preserve the property. He studied forestry and hired a Ganaraska forester to create a forest management plan. This plan included maintaining the hardwood species, removing the Scotch pine and planting red and white Pine.

As Canada's largest environmental charity, the Nature Conservancy of

Canada has worked with partners to conserve natural landscapes since 1962. Together, we deliver solutions to address the dual crises of biodiversity loss and climate change through large-scale and long-term conservation. We create lasting change for the planet and its people by partnering with Indigenous Nations and communities, governments and businesses around shared interests. Nature makes it possible.



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