



Celebrating the successful conservation of Sandy Island



Peter Kingston, John McAllister, Pinky McAllister, Sheila Kingston, Debbie Gibson, and Jack Gibson visit Sandy Island (Photo by Don Wheeler)

Nearly 100 people gathered on a gorgeous August 16th at Sandy Island in Parry Sound to attend a picnic celebrating the successful purchase of 450 acres of the island for conservation.

Partners in purchase – The Georgian Bay Land Trust (GBLT) and Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) hosted the event and everyone delighted in a nature walk on the island, led by Dan Kraus, Conservation Science Manager of the NCC. Dan was able to highlight some of the geological and biological features of the island that make it such an important acquisition in the protection and preservation of the archipelago's unique biodiversity.

Sandy Island is known to support at least 17 reptile and amphibian species including the threatened Blanding's Turtle, Eastern Foxsnake and Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake, and contains ideal habitat for Eastern Hognosed Snake. Important fish spawning grounds are located along the shoreline of the property. Several

sheltered bays along the western shore include extensive areas of aquatic vegetation providing habitat for Smallmouth Bass and Longnose Gar.

David Stager, who was instrumental in the purchase of Sandy, was unable to attend, but sent along a speech that was read by Audrey Stratton, a steward of the GBLT, detailing the background of Sandy Island and how its original owner, Walter Lockwood Haight, had always envisioned that its environment and ecology should be preserved in perpetuity. Successful acquisition of the island was literally a decades long journey that finally culminated in the preservation and protection of these 450 acres more than a century after their original purchase by Mr. Haight in 1904.

Over 170 people participated in the GBLT's campaign that raised \$555,000 of the \$600,000 necessary to purchase Sandy Island. Thanks to these people, many other supporters and tireless workers as well as the publication of an exhaustive environmental report, Sandy Island and its unique ecology will now be preserved and protected for the enjoyment of present and future generations of Georgian Bay lovers.

The GBLT is a not-for-profit, registered charity whose goal is to preserve the unique environment of the archipelago and adjacent water bodies along the eastern shore and North Channel of Georgian Bay. GBLT currently stewards and/or owns 19 properties covering more than 1000 acres of environmentally important land. The organization ensures the conservation of its land and contributes to the protection of the unique biodiversity of the region.

If you would like to contribute to the efforts of the Georgian Bay Land Trust or learn more about our programs, you can contact the Trust at www.gbtl.org or 416-440-1519.