



**Branching Out**

**Summer 2016**

## THE OLD AUSABLE CHANNEL, AN ASSET FOR ALL OF US TO ENJOY

Whether we paddle, photograph, fish or just admire it, the Old Ausable Channel is a unique treasure which adds to the enjoyment of our residents and increases the value of our properties. It is the only river left in Ontario which is not affected by agricultural runoff. So, keeping this local treasure in pristine condition is important for wildlife and for us all. This edition is dedicated to things we can do to keep our river healthy.

**Succession** is the process whereby rivers silt in and eventually become marshes. Human activity can either accelerate this process or delay it.

### Acceleration Activities

#### **Planting Lawns and Flowering Plants that Need Fertilizer.**

Huron Woods exists on sand dunes. Sand does not absorb fertilizer. Fertilizer, applied to the land, seeps down to the water table and from there to the river. Or, if applied to lawns close to the river, excess fertilizer simply runs off with each rainfall into that body of water. Fertilizer causes accelerated aquatic plant growth, making paddling difficult, and algae blooms which deplete water of oxygen needed by fish and other aquatic species to survive.

### Delaying Activities

#### **Practising Container Gardening Protects River from Fertilizer Runoff.**

Beautiful, colourful floral displays can be achieved using planters and pots which contain fertilizer and protect soil from contamination.

#### **Conservation of Native Wildflowers**

Native species do not need fertilizer, or weed control, thus do not negatively affect our river and do support abundant wildlife species.

### **FIVE LINED SKINK A CONTROL FOR LYME DISEASE?**

**Tanya Berkers of Pinery recently revealed that Lyme Disease appears to be diluted by the five lined skink, Ontario's only lizard and native to Huron Woods. Lyme disease is carried by ticks which prey mainly on white footed mice, thereby increasing their numbers and expanding their territories. But skinks eat ticks, and even if infected by them, do not allow Lyme disease to spread. The more Skinks we have, the more dilution of Lyme disease occurs. Keeping habitat in its native state with fallen logs on our properties, helps the skink to survive, offering food, nesting spots and protection from predators, and just may prove to be our best protection from Lyme disease.**



**Acceleration Activities**

**Delaying Activities**

**Failure to Keep Septic Tanks Pumped**

This may result in seepage of nitrates, nitrites and phosphates into the river causing algae growth and depletion of oxygen.

Keeping septic tanks in good condition by consultation with area specialists can keep river water free of contaminants. Pumping every three years can assist with this.



The once mighty Old Ausable Channel is now virtually a spring fed pond. As it passes by several residential and commercial areas, the water is subject to fertilizer and weed control contamination resulting in algae growth and overabundance of aquatic plant material. Algae deplete oxygen from the water, lowering fish populations. Excess plant material makes paddling a canoe difficult. Responsible property stewardship can prevent deterioration of this most precious asset, the Old Ausable Channel.

**Coming Events You are invited to expand your knowledge of our natural spaces by attending these events. All are welcome, especially newcomers.**

**Sunday, July 10 2:00 John Jimmo of ABCA “Something Fishy” The Old Ausable Channel, our local treasure at Huron Woods Clubhouse**

**Sunday, July 17 1:30 Pat Morden The Latest on Climate Change Huron Woods Clubhouse**

**Coming in August Coyotes! Understanding This Predator Ryan Watchorn of the MNR**

The number of Monarch Butterflies sighted in Huron Woods has dropped dramatically due to harsh winters, pesticide use and eradication of milkweed



Milkweed was removed from the pernicious weed list several years ago. Blooms are fragrant (like lilacs) and beautiful. Leaves provide sap to treat poison ivy rashes.

Free Common & Red Swamp Milkweed seedlings are available to plant in sunny spots by calling 238-6586.

Branching Out is produced by Habitat Stewardship Group of Huron Woods Writer/Editor Sharon Callan