

## The Kris Starr Sanctuary

From Ron Reid

One of the remarkable aspects of creating nature reserves is how often the people involved are motivated by a desire to remember and honour members of their family. The newly-created Kris Starr Sanctuary on Monck Road is no exception; for Bill and Molly Starr, this 100-acre reserve is a fitting way to remember their late son Kris, who was only in his twenties when cancer tragically carried him away.

By all accounts, Kris was a remarkable young man – a wilderness guide in Algonquin, a rising star in lumberjack competitions, a person of a wide diversity of interests and enthusiasms. So how fitting that the Kris Starr Sanctuary is a property of great natural diversity and fine ecological qualities; acre for acre, likely the most diverse of any Conservancy reserve.

At its south end, the Sanctuary takes in a small piece of the Carden Alvar, and the steep limestone slope created by the rough caress of the glaciers. At the foot of this slope, the Head River meanders across the reserve, its spring floods nourishing a rich floodplain forest. Then comes a band of mixed forest of oak, pine and birch on pockets of drier soils. But the northern half of the Sanctuary, north of Monck Road, is classic granite barrens with scattered trees and a mosaic of beaver ponds and wetlands. All on this one property, the ecological transition known as The Land Between is fully on display.

As might be expected, such diverse habitats shelter a great diversity of species – moose and bear, otters and weasels, even uncommon insects such as the Clear-winged Sphinx Moth that is often mistaken for a hummingbird. Rarities about too, with Five-lined Skinks and Blanding's Turtles and Hog-nosed Snakes and Butternut trees. At the landscape level, this property provides a vital link between Queen Elizabeth II provincial park just to the north, and the Carden Alvar to the south.

The purchase of this property by the Couchiching Conservancy was made possible by a generous partial donation of its value by the Starr family, and through the support of the federal government's Natural Areas Conservation Program and Lou and Judy Probst's Carden Alvar Acquisition Fund.

Bill and Molly Starr are planning to attend the Conservancy's AGM on January 26<sup>th</sup>, so we look forward to celebrating their generosity in helping to preserve their cherished lands for all generations to come.