

Remember When . . .

John Lucas

Asked to write about the recent human history of Rithet's Bog a few years ago I interviewed a number of people who lived or had lived near our beloved wetlands. One of these was Elsie, an enchantress of nearly eighty. Since I was honouring the reminiscences of several people I used very little of my interview with her, a description of ice skating on the bog and their laughter, now like the tinkling of bells from far away.



Elsie is gone but she lives in my memory as the girl delighting in the sight of trumpeter swans landing in the bog and gliding elegantly in its open water, and ducklings straggling after their mother, the crackle of blackbirds calling after each other, cattails swaying in the breeze, and the gold of autumn sunshine.

She remembered Rithet's Farms and watching the planting, reaping, and "Oh, my, those strapping farm boys named Burdge. They were so good-looking." She and her friends had aching crushes on these "older boys, who were at least seventeen or eighteen. But we were too shy even to say hello and if they ventured near "we collapsed into unbecoming giggles". Cut like a hard groove into her memory is the day in 1965 when the farm's great barn burned down, destroying the newly harvested crops. Her heart went out to the Burdge family and the boys she had admired from afar. We lost that architectural treasure but it lived on in memory, Elsie's, mine, and yours.

Rithet's Bog Update

CATTAILS IN RITHET'S BOG – Too Much of a Good Thing



Sharon Hartwell

Cattails are classic wetland plants. They provide vital habitat for birds and other wildlife, and are an important component of marsh ecology. But given the right conditions, they can spread vigorously; creating dense stands that eliminate open water and reduce habitat diversity.

This has happened on the Chatterton wetlands of Rithet's Bog Conservation Area. The extensive open marsh created in 2002, when 11 acres of willow were cleared as part of the bog restoration project, is now disappearing under tall cattail leaves. There is less feeding habitat available to waterfowl, bird watching is becoming difficult, and the benches installed to provide a view of the wetlands now face a wall of vegetation.

Help is on the way: Ducks Unlimited, one of the lead partners in the Rithet's Bog restoration project, will be undertaking cattail control measures. Two years of scientific trials by DU have determined that the best method of mechanical control is to cut the cattails below water level twice a year. The first round of cutting will take place this summer, after waterfowl breeding season is complete. Specialized mechanical equipment will be brought on site for the purpose.

Cattail removal will be targeted by area (adjacent to the trailside to improve viewscape) and the type of cattail removed. The native *Typha latifolia*, or broad-leaved cattail, will be selectively retained. The taller *Typha angustifolia*, or narrow-leaved cattail, which has been introduced from eastern North America, will be removed.

Clearing of this excess cattail growth will assist in restoring the biological functioning of this important wetland, and ensure that two of the primary goals of the restoration project (creating areas of open water for waterfowl habitat, and providing wildlife viewing opportunities for the public) continue to be met.