

Project Outline: Duggan Acquisition

To be known as **Bluebird Ranch**

*The Couchiching
Conservancy* 
*in cooperation with
Nature Conservancy of Canada*

Property location:

Approximately 206 acres, consisting of Lot 6, Concession 7, former Twp of Carden, located at the northwest corner of Wylie and MacNamee Roads. The property includes a 204-acre parcel and two 1-acre building lots that were recently severed near the southeast corner.

Acquisition status:

Agreement of Purchase and Sale in place; closing date October 31, 2011.



Grassland birds are the fastest-declining group of bird species across North America, largely because of habitat loss. As its name suggests, Bluebird Ranch is a great place to see families of Eastern Bluebirds, a striking songbird that has rebounded from near extinction thanks to conservation efforts. It is also a very productive site for other grassland birds such as Bobolinks (designated as Threatened nationally and provincially in 2010), Eastern Meadowlarks, Savannah and Grasshopper Sparrows, and Harriers.

The wet area along Wylie Road often has Wilson's Snipe calling from the fenceposts, and sometimes it also hosts American Bittern and Sedge Wrens. Most of the eastern half of property is identified as Critical Habitat for Loggerhead Shrike. Another endangered species, Henslow's Sparrow, was viewed by many visitors on the property several years ago (but not likely breeding there).

The open areas of Bluebird Ranch support at least half-a-dozen alvar plants, with abundant stands of Prairie Smoke and Balsam Ragwort. At the same time, this property links directly to Windmill Ranch to the north, protecting a large block of habitat and welcoming visitors to this popular area. Because the two severed lots are included in the purchase, no houses will mar this gateway to nature.





The Numbers:

Cost of land	\$240,000	Based on AACI appraisal report
Associated costs	10,500	Legal, appraisal, land transfer taxes
Staff securement time	5250	15 days negotiation & fundraising
Property management planning	5250	15 days inventory and mgmt plan
Fencing, signage	1500	Gates, two roadside signs
Project audit costs	1500	
Stewardship endowment	36,000	Based on 15% of land value; capital held as part of Property Protection Fund
Total project budget	\$300,000	

Potential project contributions:

Natural Areas Conservation Program – OQO	\$150,000	50% of total project budget
Carden Acquisition Fund	75,000	Match of total private donations
Private donations to be raised	75,000	
Total project revenue	\$300,000	

Private donations will include significant contributions from the 2011 Carden Challenge, and from a special event hosted by the Ontario Stone, Sand & Gravel Association and some of its member companies. A charitable tax receipt is issued for all donations.

Future management:

Bluebird Ranch will be owned by The Couchiching Conservancy. Cattle grazing will continue, managed to create optimal grass heights for Bobolinks and other target species. In some areas, clumps of cedar trees may be removed to restore the integrity of large patches of grassland.