

# Letter to the Editor: Callahan Rapids under serious threat

OPINION Aug 23, 2017 Central Hastings News

Dear Editor,

I've been enjoying the 800 hectares of natural beauty at Callahan's Rapids Conservation Area for 28 years. The peace of mind this sanctuary always provides has given me an affordable summer vacation spot as well as a place to recover in solitude from various personal tragedies.

But over the 28 years I've watched a gradual decline in its care and maintenance. When I first visited, there were change and toilet facilities and waste receptacles were available. The toilets and waste bins disappeared decades ago, sadly replaced by illegal campsite fire pits filled with garbage. The three main footpaths have been 'supplemented' by a maze of rutted trails torn through the thick bush, courtesy of illegal ATV trespassers.

Seemingly Crowe Valley staff are content to sit in their air-conditioned offices and surrender our once pristine conservation area to the vandals. I've never once seen a uniformed conservation officer during my dozens of visits to Callahan's Rapids. Considering it's a 10 minute drive from Crowe Valley's Marmora headquarters to the conservation area, I wonder why this lack of monitoring? Ditto the OPP - never once have I seen a cop car stopping all the illegal ATVs.

Our local taxpayer dollars are being wasted while we wait for our public servants to perform their duties. The fish and birds, whose breeding areas are being destroyed, are voiceless. Ditto the frogs, toads, snakes and turtles, that are having their habitat ripped up by fat and lazy ATV joyriders.

There are rare orchids in the woods which are now criss-crossed by ragged trails and illegally chopped down tree stumps. Today I watched a parade of ATVs driving downstream from the Trans Canada bridges

to the rapids, a distance of several kilometers. The jerks were often churning through several feet of water, and I kept hoping they'd ruin their noisy idiot machines. The senseless damage they were doing to the habitat is hard to believe.

Simple solutions: for starters I'd like to see a couple of uniformed Crowe Valley Conservation officers in the parking lot on weekends. Although they are empowered to give tickets, just their presence would cool out some of the garbage leavers and illegal campers. Our local OPP should also visit on weekends, and begin by issuing warnings for the first few weeks to the ATVers. Something has to be done soon, or we're going to lose this special spot to the vandals among us. The original donors of this sacred conservation area must be turning in their graves.

For the frogs, toads, snakes, birds, bees, fish, trees, orchids and all our other silent friends who depend on us for their preservation...

*Chris Faiers*

*Marmora*