

Art auction to benefit waterfowl habitat

By KATE GILDERDALE
While most of us are concerned about the preservation of the environment, we're often at a loss about how to help.

Ross Barnhardt, Canadian chairman of non-profit conservation group Ducks Unlimited, hopes an art auction will result in some steps towards that goal.

Ducks Unlimited has approximately 100,000 supporters in Canada, and probably five times that number in the United States. It operates in Canada, the U.S. and Mexico.

The organization raises money through private and corporate donations. The annual fundraising dinner and art auction takes place Wednesday, May 3 at Le Parc, Hwy 7 and Leslie St. in Markham.

"We auction off a lot of wildlife art and some original works at the dinner," explains Mr. Barnhardt. "We have a great number of carvings and sculptures of decoys by very well known carvers."

Among the artists represented this year will be Len Ugarenko, from Newmarket, who's won ribbons for his carvings in the world championships, the North

American Waterfowl Competition in Michigan, and at the Sportsman's Show.

Larry Fell of Markham, Wayne Simkin of Richmond Hill, Al Glassford of Scarborough, Dale Rickard of Keswick and Ian Crokam of Barrie have all donated carvings.

"As well, we have two hundred items offered as raffle and door prizes," advises Mr. Barnhardt.

At last year's dinner, the organization raised \$47,000. "Between 75 and 80 per cent of the money raised is used directly for protection of existing wetlands habitats, or the creation of new ones. Our wetlands have been disappearing at a tremendous rate due to urban development, agricultural draining and pollution. We've lost more than 50 per cent of what we had 100 years ago," he says.

Ducks Unlimited approaches both private and government landowners for permission to assess a certain area, to see whether it would be feasible to build a device to maintain water levels there, to preserve or create wetlands.

"We go in, evaluate it and tell them what we'd like to do,"

states Mr. Barnhardt.

With the landowner's permission, they then design a program and build to the required specifications.

"The only condition is that the landowner agrees to maintain the marsh. He may not wish hunters to be permitted on that land; but that's his prerogative."

Although Ducks Unlimited was originally founded by hunters, "it doesn't take any position on the question of hunting," he stresses.

"We have perhaps the best success story of any conservation organization," reckons Mr. Barnhardt. "We've been doing it for 50 years, and it works."

Examples of local projects include a sizeable one at the south end of Cook's Bay on Lake Simcoe, and smaller ones on part of the Holland Marsh area, at Lake Scugog and in the northeast area of Uxbridge.

Through its work, the group hopes to attract wildfowl back into areas which could no longer support them, as well as into newly created wetlands areas.

"A couple of species have adapted well to man but most haven't. We have species like the pin tail duck which, because of the drought which hit the prairies, had their population decimated to 70 per cent below

normal."

There were over 300 projects started in Canada in 1988. "That's what we mean when we say we put our money where our

mouth is," stresses Mr. Barnhardt.

Those interested in attending the dinner, which starts at 6 p.m., should contact Mr. Barnhardt at

640-3442 or Marvin Betz at 640-1424. Tickets, which include the cost of dinner, are \$50 per head, of which \$25 is tax deductible.

150 kids take part in fun 'project fair'

By JIM THOMAS
Through the annual Science Fair, Whitchurch-Stouffville's elementary schools have produced dozens of budding scientists.

To keep this interest alive, Orchard Park School has adopted what is called a 'Project Fair.' It involves boys and girls in primary grades 1 to 3, ranging in age from six to nine.

Products of this ambitious program were on display at an 'Open House' Tuesday evening.

"It's for pupils who do not take part in the regular Science Fair," explains staff teacher Ruth Geddes. "We hope it will form the foundation for participation later on."

While structured in its content, the 'Project Fair' also promotes self-motivation, says Mrs. Geddes.

Each student's work is graded. All receive evaluation marks and participation prizes.

Subjects have included animals, birds and insects, space

and transportation. Individual project choices branch out from these.

Oral presentations take place in class.

All the work is done at school.

"The primary teachers have been very co-operative," Mrs. Geddes stresses. "We hope the results will show in the future."

Reading 'buddies' from junior grades provide assistance.

"I'm pleased with the result," Mrs. Geddes told Focus. "A lot of work has gone into it and hopefully much success will come out of it."

All pupils participated willingly, she said.

The materials were provided by the school but parents were encouraged to accompany their sons and daughters to the public library for subject research, Mrs. Geddes explained.

Tuesday evening marked the first time local moms and dads had an opportunity to view the finished projects, she noted.

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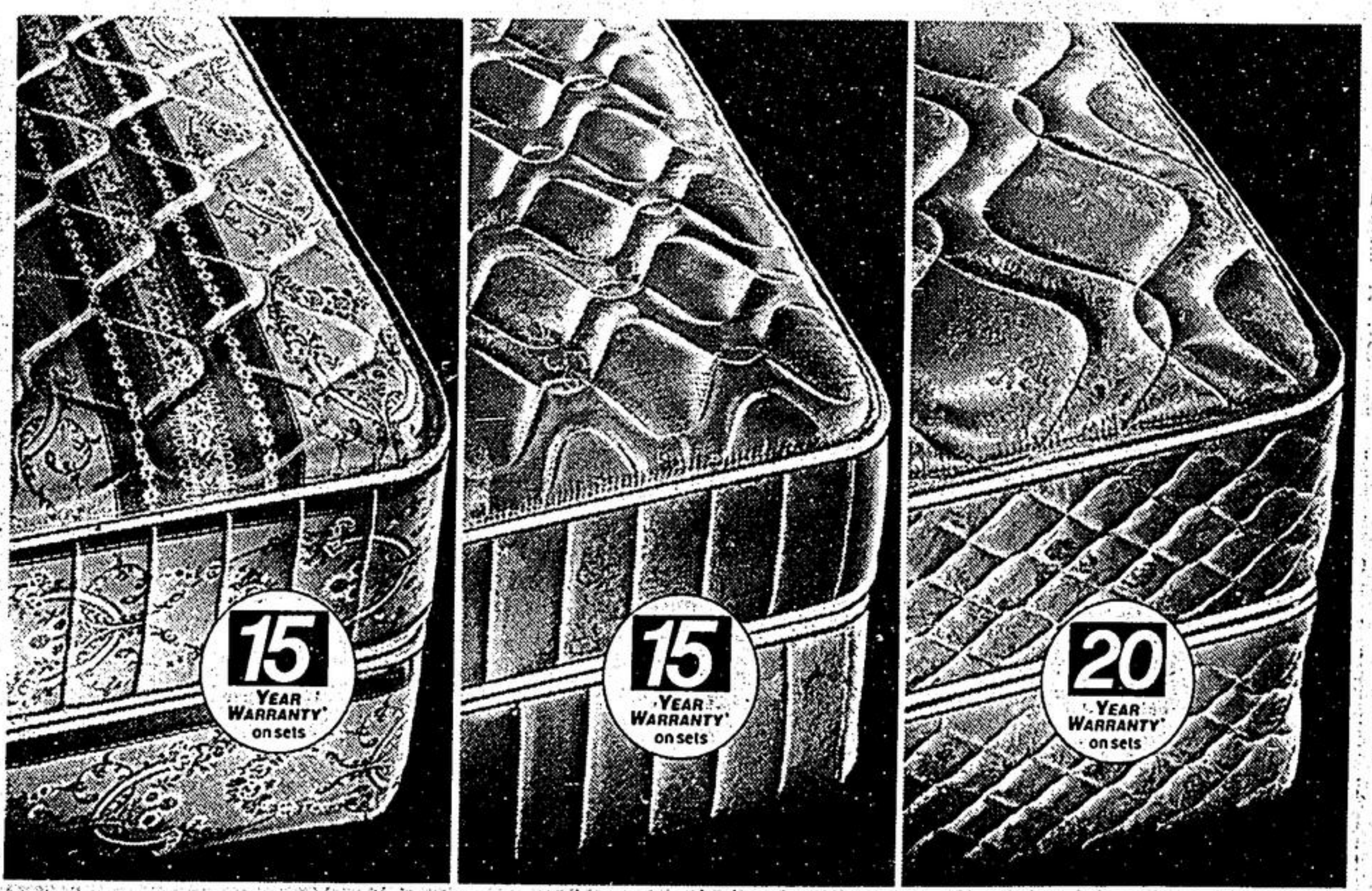
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