

## Community gets back to nature in late photographer's name



**By Jake Courtepatte**

Just over one year has passed since the accident that took Richmond Hill's Graeme Loader's life, a 24-year old with a passion for photography cycling across the country for charity.

But his name lives on through the family, friends, and wildlife charities that he touched along the way, embodied by the first annual Ride for Wildlife in Aurora last Sunday morning.

Dozens gathered at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex to ride or walk 20 kilometres or four kilometres, respectively, through the protected McKenzie Wetlands. All money raised went directly to the World Wildlife Fund to assist in their efforts to protect the future of nature in Canada.

Graeme, an avid photographer of all things nature, undertook a journey from coast to coast last July with a goal of raising \$15,000 for the organization. However, it came to a tragic and abrupt halt when he was struck and killed by an SUV while riding in Manitoba.

"We lost Graeme one year, one week, and a few days ago as he cycled across our great land," said his uncle, David Loader, who organized the event. "This is a celebration of his life, of loving, and of living."

While never a seasoned cyclist, riding his bike around York Region gave Graeme the idea to marry two of his passions, photography and nature preservation. He posted photos on his blog of his journey, while taking in the sites on his bike.

"He was gentle, trusting, and patient enough to wait for a hummingbird to land on his hand and capture the image," said Loader. "The energy he brought to his passion for nature was something you could almost touch."

Graeme was also member of the Aurora Barbarians rugby club, who were well-represented at the walk and ride on Sunday.

Loader quoted the final post Graeme made to his Facebook page before his passing, aptly-timed for the events of the day.

"I've been repeating a phrase that popped into my head this morning," read the post. "I am where I am because I am. It's incredible what can happen when you accept the unexpected and embrace every moment."

He finished the post by saying "I love this planet."