

THAMES TALBOT LAND TRUST

TaTTLe



Protected Forever – Counted and Recognized!

Thames Talbot Land Trust (TTLT) is thrilled to announce that in December 2021, 16 TTLT nature reserves, totalling 694 hectares, were recognized and added to the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database. Prior to that, TTLT worked with the Ontario Land Trust Alliance to have TTLT lands evaluated against comprehensive pan-Canadian standards for Protected Areas in Canada. In an evaluation completed by staff at the Protected Areas Section of Ontario Parks, TTLT lands met all criteria. This is the first time that lands held by TTLT and several other land trusts across Ontario will be included in the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database. In an area like southwestern Ontario, where there are few national and provincial parks, land protection by land trusts and other conservation organizations is critical to protecting biodiversity.

Canada is working to increase nature protection to 25% of terrestrial lands by 2025. By 2020,

12.5% of Canada's land and freshwater was preserved. In Ontario, however, only 10.7% was protected (see Figure 1). Although progress is being

made towards the target of 25%, much of the land protection is occurring in northern parts of Canada where large tracts of natural lands are still available. The "protected areas" distribution is uneven, and there is a lack of representation of certain ecoregions – particularly along the southern border of Canada (see Figure 2).

Our area, part of the Mixedwood Plains, is by far the least protected across Canada, having less than 1% of lands recognized as protected

areas. In part, this is due to a lack of natural cover in this region, as much habitat has been eliminated. It is also a result of the failure to recognize the lands protected by non-governmental conservation organizations such as conservation authorities, municipalities and land trusts. For example, in Middlesex County,

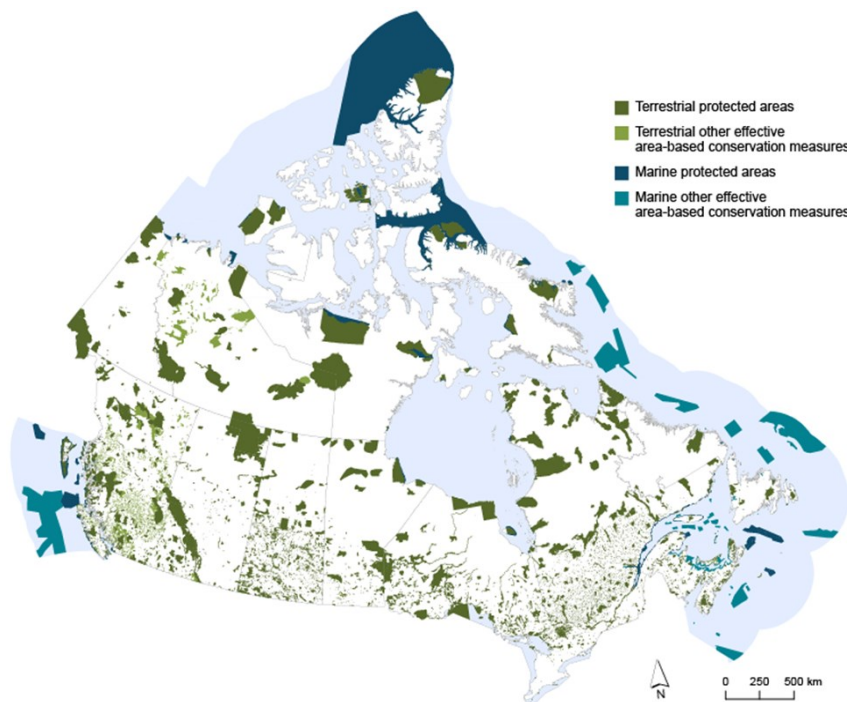


Figure 1: A map of Canada showing the size and distribution of protected areas (terrestrial and marine) and other effective area-based conservation measures as of 2020. Source: <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/environmental-indicators/conserved-areas.html>

www.canada.ca/environmental-indicators

(Continued on Page 3)

Inside This Issue

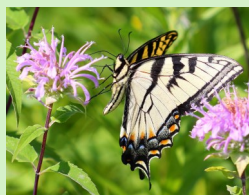
Protected Forever – Counted and Recognized	1
Upcoming Celebrations & Events	2
What is a Protected Area?	3
Celebrating Wachner Nature Preserve	4
Bringing in the New Year with Boview Farm	5
Notes from a TTLT Newbie	6
A Climate-adapted Restoration at Bebensee Tract	6
How You Can be a Hatchling Hero	7
Logic Puzzle: TTLT Nature Reserves Open to the Public	8

UPCOMING CELEBRATIONS

Visit www.ttl.ca for more information.

Wachner Nature Preserve Celebration

May 14, 2022 at 10am



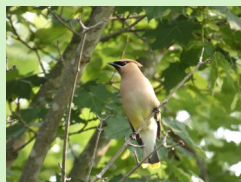
Tiger Swallowtail.
Photo by Stan Caveney

Generously donated by Ann and Fritz Wachner, the Wachner Nature Preserve became TTLT's 21st nature reserve in November 2021. Come and celebrate with us to mark its arrival! General registration opens April 27, 2022.

Boview Farm Celebration

June 18, 2022 at 2pm

Boview Farm was generously donated by the Harding family to preserve the legacy of Mary and Paul Harding's conservation efforts. Join us to honour the lives of Paul and Mary Harding while we celebrate the protection and continuation of their legacy. General registration opens May 11, 2022.



Cedar Waxwing. Photo by Sarah Hodgkiss

UPCOMING EVENTS

Learn more and [register for events at www.ttl.ca](http://www.ttl.ca) or contact us at 519-858-3442.

Native Plant Sale

Order online until May 13, 2022



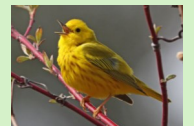
Ox-eye Sunflower.
Photo by Ric Symmes

Order your favourite native plants online now until May 13! Pick up will be May 28 at Westminster Ponds Centre. Hosted in partnership by TTLT, ReForest London, Climate Action London, Nature London, and Pollinator Pathways.

Passport to Nature: Birding for Beginners With Mhairi McFarlane

May 1, 2022 from 10am-12pm at Joany's Woods

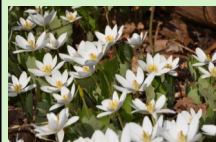
Come out to enjoy the colourful warblers and other spring migrants moving through the trees and wetlands of Joany's Woods in North Middlesex.



Yellow Warbler.
Photo by George Coker

Passport to Nature: Wildflower Walk With Winnie & Dave Wake

May 7, 2022 from 10am-12pm at Driedger Tract



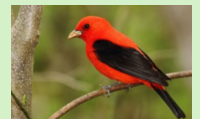
Bloodroot. Photo by Vicki Hammond

Spring is a glorious time of year, especially to learn about spring wildflowers. The diversity of habitats at the Driedger Tract supports a fine array of fascinating spring wildflowers.

Birding at Sitler Woods

May 21, 2022 at 7am, 9am, and 11am

Join us for morning birding hikes at Sitler Woods in the heart of Skunk's Misery in Southwest Middlesex.



Scarlet Tanager.
Photo by P. Allen Woodliffe

TTLT's Annual General Meeting

June 15, 2022 at 6:30pm

Online via Zoom

Gather with other nature lovers and conservation enthusiasts to celebrate TTLT's accomplishments over the past year. Only TTLT members may vote.

Protected Forever – Counted and Recognized! (Continued)

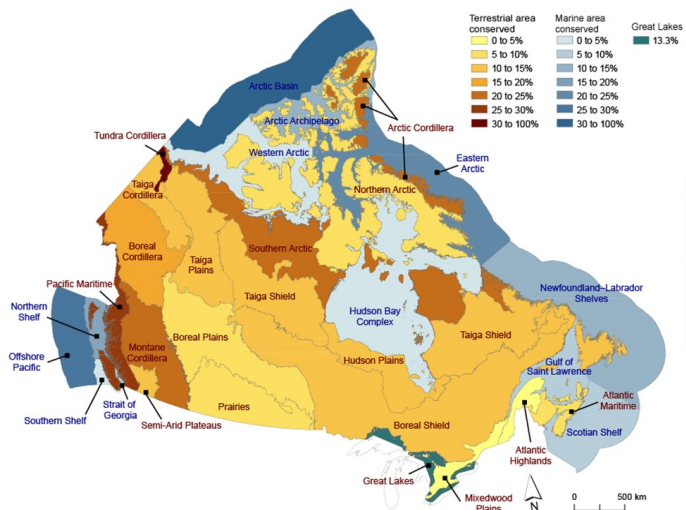


Figure 2: A map of Canada showing the proportion of area conserved by ecozone as of 2020. Source: <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/environmental-indicators/conserved-areas.html>

TTLT protects more lands than national or provincial parks, but conservation authorities hold by far the most lands (see Figure 3). TTLT, however, holds land with the primary intent of conservation. This contrasts with others whose land may be used for recreational activities such as camping. Recreation lands do not count as “protected and conserved.” Some municipal (e.g., some City of London Environmentally Significant Areas) and conservation authority lands (e.g., Upper Thames River Conservation Authority lands at Dorchester Swamp) have already been added to the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas

Database. Adding all eligible lands to the database will provide a much clearer picture of the extent of lands protected for nature – an important indicator of the environmental health of our region.

Additional TTLT nature reserves will be added to the database. TTLT is actively working to protect more nature in Canada’s most biodiverse region, and our work grows each year. TTLT will be celebrating the protection of three new nature reserves this year, bringing the total to 23. You can help support nature protection in our community (visit https://www.thamesaltlandtrust.ca/newest_projects_donation), and we’ll make sure “it counts”!

- Daria Koscinski

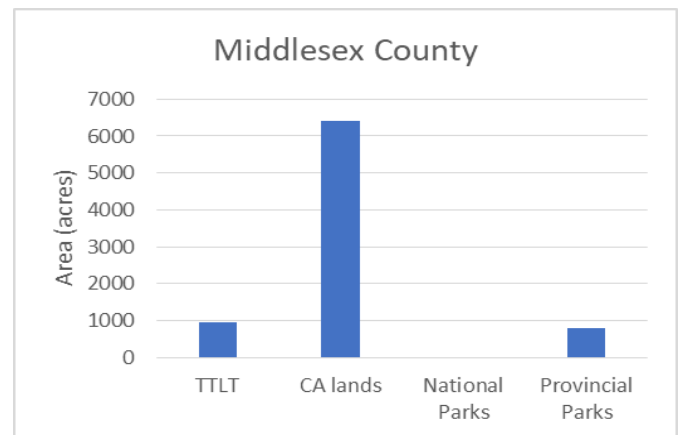


Figure 3: A chart showing the amount of protected areas (in acres) in Middlesex County by different land protection organizations.

What is a Protected Area?

“A protected area is a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to achieve the long term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values.

Protected areas are a mainstay of biodiversity conservation, while also contributing to people’s livelihoods, particularly at the local level. Protected areas are at the core of efforts towards conserving nature and the services it provides us – food, clean water

supply, medicines and protection from the impacts of natural disasters. Their role in helping mitigate and adapt to climate change is also increasingly recognized; it has been estimated that the global network of protected areas stores at least 15% of terrestrial carbon.”

- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) [Retrieved from <https://www.iucn.org/theme/protected-areas/about>]

Celebrating Wachner Nature Preserve

The year 2021 marked, most appropriately, the securement of TTLT's 21st nature reserve, the Wachner Nature Preserve. This 9.4 hectare (23.2 acre) property in Thames Centre protects a portion of the Dorchester Swamp and a small regenerating meadow.

The property was generously donated by Ann and Fritz Wachner. The Wachners lived on the property for many decades, raising their family along with ducks, rabbits and vegetables, and protecting the swamp at the rear of the property. In the last decade or so, Ann retired their small pasture and planted a variety of Carolinian



*Retired pasture planted with Carolinian tree species.
Photo by Daria Koscinski*

As the time drew near to leave the property and move in with family, Ann approached TTLT and inquired about a donation and EcoGift to ensure the long-term protection of the land. TTLT was impressed with the quality of the swamp and gratefully accepted the donation.

The lush forest teems with life, supporting a diverse assemblage of lowland (swamp) and upland species. Elm, maple and White Pine provide shade for understory shrubs such as dogwood and spicebush. Ferns, mosses and wildflowers thrive among the hummocks. Wet, shallow depressions support species such as Water Avenas.

The Preserve provides essential habitat for a



Forest landscape of Wachner Nature Preserve. Photo by Daria Koscinski

multitude of birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and insects. In nesting season, thrushes, orioles and other birds fill the woods with song.

Dorchester Swamp is an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest, a Carolinian Canada Signature Site, and one of the largest wetlands in the Upper Thames River watershed.

The property comes with a small house and barn. Staff and vol-

unteers are evaluating potential uses for the structures. TTLT is reluctant to be in the conventional rental business, so innovative options are being sought.

A celebration event is being planned for May 14th where we can gather to thank the Wachners, acknowledge funders, and walk the nature reserve (see page 2).

TTLT wishes to thank the Wachners for their very generous donation. For each TTLT nature reserve, a Stewardship Fund is established to allow the Trust to maintain it in perpetuity. Please consider making a donation to the Stewardship Fund for the Wachner Nature Preserve. Donations can be made online at www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca/newest_projects_donation.

- Cathy Quinlan



TTLT volunteers looking for Barn Swallow nests at the Wachner Nature Preserve. Photo by Daria Koscinski

Bringing in the New Year with Boview Farm

Once a quiet country road, Vanneck Road in Middlesex Centre is now the preferred route for many seeking to skirt the City of London on route to Highway 7 and destinations north. Those familiar with the area know that, once one crosses Egremont Drive, the rural countryside – with its many delights – soon re-establishes itself. One such delight is Boview Farm.



The Harding house. Photo by Daria Koscinski

This 35.5-hectare (88-acre) gently-rolling property was the pride and joy of Paul and Mary Harding. The “Bo” in Boview is a nod to both Oxbow Creek, which runs through the property, and the bovines (beef cattle) that once grazed its pastures. It was purchased in 1972 from a widower farmer – “Uncle” Jim Arrand – who continued to occupy the home for the next ten years while the Hardings remained in the Masonville area, closer to Paul’s work.

Paul was a renowned neonatal doctor who successfully blended cutting-edge research with clinical practice. He is considered by many to be the father of neonatal research in Canada. “Born to farm”, he began – at the tender age of five – to board the bus from Kitchener to London where he eagerly spent weekends and summers at his grandparents’ farm.

Mary was a woman of immense talent and vision. A graduate of the McDonald Institute (University of Guelph), she initially taught Home Economics at Medway High School, but left teaching to support Paul in his professional life while raising their four children. In later years, her diverse interests led her to many pursuits, including work as a highly regarded vocal coach.

Boview farm was a shared passion, as well as home, for Paul and Mary. This working farm – which

features an 1830 heritage home – was home to cattle, chickens and, in later years, a neighbour’s flock of sheep. Embracing self-sufficiency long before it was in vogue, Mary tended her gardens and hosted many magnificent meals for their many guests over the years. Caring for the farm was a family affair governed by the “Boview Farm job list”.

At Boview, farming and conservation were two sides of the same coin. As a result of tree-planting efforts spanning four decades, the 20-ha (49-ac) of agricultural fields are today complemented by a nearly 14-ha (35-ac) natural area. This mix of forest, grasslands, wetlands and flood plain serves as a wildlife corridor and shades Oxbow Creek.

Preliminary inventories have recorded more than 60 species of trees and 32 species of birds at Boview including at-risk species such as Barn Swallow, Bobolink and Eastern Whip-poor-will. Sampling of Oxbow Creek’s cold-water habitat has yielded 26 fish species. Future restoration efforts will increase the amount and quality of wildlife habitat.

In their later years, Paul and Mary were looking for a means to extend the work they lovingly began beyond their own tenure of the property, and a bequest was arranged.

With Paul’s passing in 2020 and Mary’s in 2021, Boview Farm was transferred to TTLT in January

of 2022. The family is thrilled to see their conservation legacy permanently protected, something that has helped them navigate the grieving process. We hope you can join us June 18th to celebrate two lives well-lived and their shared legacy (see page 2).

- Bernie VanDenBelt



Plantation at Boview Farm. Photo by Daria Koscinski



Forest landscape at Boview Farm. Photo by Daria Koscinski

Notes From a Thames Talbot Land Trust Newbie

Greetings! In the interest of full disclosure, I am a skilled procrastinator. As evidence, I am writing this on submission deadline day. I confess that when the idea of volunteering with TTLT arose, I had a quiet knee-jerk “ack!” response related to tasks and deadlines. Recently retired and having just reduced other volunteering duties, the idea of committing to a new volunteer deck generated mixed feelings.

Although I thought I was familiar with TTLT and its land trust mandate, truthfully, I was woefully ignorant. A while ago, a friend gifted me *Memories and Milestones: Thames Talbot Land Trust at 20 Years*. Until recently, it had been sitting on my piled high future-readings table.

This illustrated booklet detailing the TTLT journey from vision to successful land securement, conservation and stewardship was inspiring and uplifting. I am grateful for that boost in this current world. Reading the full TTLT story, I developed enormous respect and gratitude for the labour and perseverance of the many dedicated individuals who have grown the organization over 20 years.

The concept of trust struck me, and the implied mutual responsibility resonated - even more so given

the challenges of the past two years. Our fragility has been laid bare, and trust has been eroded on many fronts.

As a global community, there is so much collective work to be done to heal, to recover and to tackle critical issues such as climate change. Locally, I realized that I have trusted TTLT to be out there doing good work for the benefit of the environment and our community - rather complacent on my part.

Trust is also key to volunteerism and the fulfillment of shared goals. Trust is not just part of its name but seems to be a core value within TTLT which ensures that important tasks will be identified, communicated, delegated and completed. In turn, TTLT trusts community members to become involved. As is said, “It takes a village!”

Committing volunteer time to a vision that holds “Trust” with such purpose and integrity would be well worth overcoming an aversion to tasks and deadlines. I look forward to the learning curve and experiencing where the TTLT path leads, literally in nature and figuratively in finding ways to take part.

- Leslie Rockwell

A Climate-adapted Restoration at Bebensee Tract

Bebensee Tract is a 56-hectare (139-acre) nature reserve in the heart of Skunk’s Misery. The first parcel was donated by the Bebensee family in 2014. TTLT jumped on the opportunity to expand this nature reserve in 2019, purchasing a second parcel that, while mostly forested, included a 2-acre portion of marginal farmland. This was the perfect opportunity to create some new habitat in a small area that would “fill in” a gap in the forest canopy. We initially planted this area to meadow, which provides great habitat for pollinators such as Monarch butterflies in the short term. Over the long term, we plan to allow natural succession to take place and transition the meadow into forest habitat.

We also wanted to make sure the meadow is resilient in the face of a changing climate. While we

usually source all seeds for a restoration project locally, this time we introduced a portion of the seed from further south; 60% of the seeds were sourced locally, while 30% came from Pennsylvania and 10% came from as far south as Kentucky! No new species were introduced, only seeds from species that are already here. The idea is to introduce plants that are used to growing in a warmer climate. As the southern plants mix in with the local

plants over successive generations, the meadow community should be able to handle the warmer temperatures we can expect to see as our climate continues to change in the future.

The meadow was seeded in the fall of 2019 and, two years later, is alive with vibrant flowers and the buzz of insects!

- Rebecca Launchbury



(Left) Day of seeding Nov 2019; (Right) A diversity of wildflowers and grasses July 2021. Photos by TTLT Staff

How You Can Be a Hatchling Hero

Many of Thames Talbot Land Trust's nature reserves include wetlands, which could provide habitat for most of Ontario's native turtle species including the Snapping Turtle (*Chelydra serpentina*), Northern Map Turtle (*Graptemys geographica*), Blanding's Turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*), Eastern Spiny Softshell Turtle (*Apalone spinifera*), and Midland Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta marginata*). Natural spaces containing rich riparian wetland habitats are especially good at providing habitat for foraging, brumating*, breeding, and nesting.



Painted Turtle hatchlings. Photo by Carrie Freele

What could be more exciting than a bunch of hatchlings emerging from the soil, fearless and driven in their quest for survival?

Smaller than a toonie, a hatchling will face many challenges before it reaches maturity, including predation, road mortality, and habitat loss. To mitigate some of these challenges, TTLT and its volunteers have participated in laboratory hatching programs for the Midland Painted Turtle and Snapping Turtle; these hatchery programs are designed to give the turtles the best shot at life when they are young and vulnerable. Included in these programs are sex assignment (more females are lost to road mortality during nesting), radio telemetry for species tracking, and assisted hatchling launches. The combination of a safe emergence, a greater ratio of females to males, and the long-term protection of habitat against degradation and development gives these turtles the best chance they can get.

What can you do to protect turtle habitat and provide good hatching grounds? How can you be a Hatchling Hero? It's not as simple as grabbing your nearest turtle hatchling and launching it into the

nearest body of water. Hatchlings are sensitive animals, and handling should be kept at a minimum or completely avoided if at all possible. If you find a score of hatchlings away from a wetland, pond, or other water system, contact your local conservation authority or turtle conservancy to see what the best course of action is. Most hatchlings



Snapping Turtle hatchling. Photo by Carrie Freele

have around four days on average to learn and map out their home territories, so taking them away from their home may have lethal consequences for the entire clutch. There are several turtle rescue organizations in Ontario that can assist in relocating hatchlings and nests and suggest a safe course of action for any turtles or hatchlings found in immediate peril, such as a roadside nest. The hatchlings released by TTLT teams were hatched in a laboratory and were carefully timed to ensure the hatchlings did not imprint upon the facility and can be re-integrated into the wild.

Other ways you can protect hatchlings include reducing speed when driving through wetlands or during the spring nesting and fall hatching seasons; supporting legislation that prioritizes shoreline protection to provide turtles with alternative, suitable nesting habitat; reducing urban waste that subsidizes the turtle's natural predators such as the Striped Skunk, Red Fox, and Raccoon; protecting wetland resources from unsustainable develop-



Radio transmitter being applied to a Snapping Turtle's shell. Photo by Cathy Hamel

ment; and giving time or resources to the organizations and laboratories hatching, studying, and fighting for the preservation of these incredible animals.

- Luke King

*Brumating: being in a state of sluggishness or inactivity

Logic Puzzle: TTLT Nature Reserves Open to the Public

Make it a challenge – donate to TTLT if you can't finish the puzzle! Solution available on our website.

Several TTLT nature reserves are open to the public. The five nature reserves featured here (labelled A to E) are for you to identify based on the clues provided, which include information on the surface area, generous donors, and special features unique to each nature reserve. Use the grid below to match these features. Use "x" and "." to help you solve the puzzle. The problem can be solved entirely by logical deduction, but your familiarity with the nature reserves may make things easier and will be required to attach a specific name to each label.

1. The following nature reserves are listed in order of increasing size: E, A, B, C.
2. Nature Reserve A features 13 trail markers with QR codes.
3. The first TTLT nature reserve, donated by Carol & Rick Richardson, is either the largest or the smallest.
4. The former golf course features a butterfly meadow named in honour of naturalist Ann White. It is neither the largest or the smallest nature reserve.
5. Nature reserves C and D are the smallest and the largest, in some order. One is located within London city boundaries. Neither is the nature reserve that features a wildflower garden honouring Karen and Eric Auzins.
6. The 73-acre nature reserve was a gift from Lilianne & Al Driedger.
7. The former golf course is smaller than the nature reserve featuring a boardwalk that crosses a wetland.
8. The nature reserve with the boardwalk also features two trails, respectively named after Beryl & Richard Ivey and Helen & Spencer Inch.

& Spencer Inch.

9. Visiting the second largest nature reserve can help you populate your own wildflower garden.

		Nature Reserve					People					Special feature				
		A	B	C	D	E	Auzins	Driedger	Ivey/Inch	Richardson	White	Boardwalk	Golf	London	13 QR codes	Wildflower
Area (acres)	15															
	50															
	73															
	230															
	364															
Special feature	Boardwalk															
	Golf															
	London															
	13 QR codes															
	Wildflower															
People	Auzins															
	Driedger															
	Ivey/Inch															
	Richardson															
	White															

Name of Nature Reserve

A
B
C
D
E