THAMES TALBOT LAND TRUST

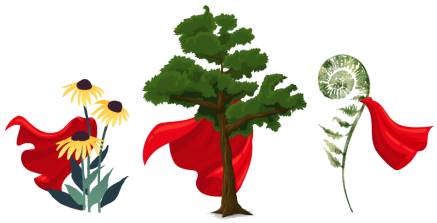
# TaTTLer

## Nature-based Climate Solutions

Climate change is a reality facing the entire global community and action is needed at many levels to slow the trend, mitigate, and adapt to the impacts. Many of us have already made changes in our lives to reduce our carbon footprint but there is another superhero working among us that fights climate change: **NATURE**.

Plants (and other cool organisms like algae) take carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere and store it long-term in their tissues and in soil. Habitats such as forests, wetlands, and grasslands store immense amounts of carbon while also providing a home for wildlife. Nature-based climate solutions are a powerful tool but we need to make sure that we protect natural habitats to allow them to do this work and create more habitat to take extra carbon out of the atmosphere. You've likely heard about planting trees to address climate change but other plants do this work too!

**Plants:**
**Climate Action Superheros**



Restoration and creation of new habitats are great at taking carbon out of the atmosphere. Studies have shown that restoration projects with higher native plant diversity are better at storing carbon through higher biomass and plant and microbe interactions in the soils. If you have visited TTLT's restoration projects, you will recognize that we always start with a diverse mix of wildflowers and grasses to create grassland habitats. These plants establish quickly, start to sequester carbon right away, and provide habitat for wildlife. Over time trees and shrubs will move in and continue the work.

When natural habitats are converted to other land uses, they release their stored carbon and cease to work in fighting climate change. Taking climate action requires that we **protect** natural habitats and **create** more habitat. TTLT works on both of these fronts every day. You too can take climate action by supporting the protection and restoration of nature. You will also support biodiversity and enjoy the beauty of our native habitats!

*- Daria Koscinski*

### Forests

Forests are often called the "lungs" of the planet. They absorb carbon dioxide and release the oxygen animals need to breathe. Trees store a lot of carbon in their trunks, branches, and roots – and they can get very big! Forests also provide shade and cool the surrounding environment.

### Wetlands

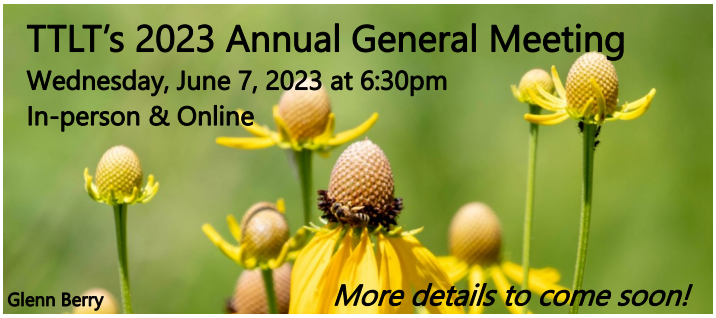
Wetlands store more carbon than any other ecosystem – yes, more than forests! Peatlands alone store twice as much carbon as the world's forests. They also absorb water to mitigate flooding and filter out pollutants. Southern Canada has lost more than 70% of its wetlands.

### Grasslands

Although grassland plants are shorter than trees, they store an incredible amount of carbon in their roots and the soil. What you see above ground is a just a small fraction of the total plant biomass! Grasslands store carbon, support agriculture, and are home to many species at risk.

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE






## Help Protect Nature by Becoming a Nature Guardian!

Your love of nature can contribute to a legacy of protected areas that are rich in biodiversity, sustain life and nourish a sense of wonder and inspiration for all people.

Become a Nature Guardian online or call us at 519-858-3442 for more information.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

*Learn more and register for events at www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca or contact us at 519-858-3442.*

**Passport to Nature: Catching Warbler Neck**
*May 7, 2023, 8am & 10am at Sitler Woods*

Get your Spring birding started with Dr. Mhairi McFarlane.

**Native Wildflower Gardening**
*May 19, 2023, 1pm-4pm at Hawk Cliff Woods*

Help us weed, mulch, and clean the path at the Auzins Community Wildflower Garden.

**Garlic Mustard Pull & Thames River Clean Up**
*May 27, 2023, Time TBD at Meadowlily Nature Preserve and Urban Roots*

See the immediate impacts your actions can make by helping us remove Garlic Mustard and cleaning up garbage.

**Garlic Mustard Pull**

*June 3, 2023, 10am-1pm at Five Points Forest—Driedger Tract*

Help us to clear Garlic Mustard from the forest and allow native plants some room to grow.

**Passport to Nature: Yoga in Nature**
*June 11, 2023, 9am & 10am at Meadowlily Nature Preserve*

*Relax with some outdoor yoga with Leigh Shand.*

**Passport to Nature: Butterfly Catch & Release**
*June 24, 2023, 12pm-3pm at Meadowlily Nature Preserve*

Drop-in to explore the meadow with butterfly nets with Dr. Nusha Keyghobadi.

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# 'Tis the Season for Trails

Hiking is a fantastic way to explore and appreciate the great outdoors while also providing health benefits such as reducing stress, improving fitness, and boosting overall well-being. We're pleased to share that with funding from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF), we've expanded and upgraded our trail offerings here at TTLT. We're thrilled to be able to give nature lovers and hikers more options to get outside and enjoy some time in nature.

*TTLT Executive Director Daria Koscinski, OTF representative Ameila Sloan, and Elgin -Middlesex-London MPP Rob Flack cutting the ribbon to celebrate the opening of the new trail at Hawk Cliff Woods. Photo by Rebecca Launchbury*

New trails to explore include a short but diverse trail loop at Hawk Cliff Woods that takes hikers through meadow, thicket, and forest habitats, and a gorgeous trail through the mosaic of Oak-Maple forest and Silver Maple swamp at Sitler Woods. Existing trails have also received some new features, such as painted trail blazes and trail map signage to help hikers navigate the trails and avoid getting lost. If you haven't explored these trails before, a couple of great options are Joany's Woods, featuring over 8 km of mostly woodland trails, and Wardsville Woods, a shorter loop with both woodland and meadow views.

We're grateful to the more than 15 volunteers who recently completed their chainsaw safety training and will help to monitor and maintain these trails in good condition. We would also like to extend our sincerest gratitude to Ontario Trillium Foundation for their generous support of this project.

*- Rebecca Launchbury*

# Recognizing the Visionary Leadership of Brent Jones

On the evening of March 20th 2023, Geoff Vogt, TTLT Board President; Daria Koscinski, Executive Director of TTLT; and Jim Rule, Past President of TTLT, met with Brent Jones at his family farm in Thames Centre to acknowledge his dedication and efforts in curating EcoFolk for several years.

*Geoff Vogt, Daria Koscinski, Brent Jones, and Jim Rule at Quiet Earth. Photo by Bryan Jones*

Brent has been a fixture in the musical arts community as a composer, performer, producer, engineer, session player, festival organizer, venue and production manger, radio host, writer, and adviser. Just outside of London at his family farm, Brent runs Quiet Earth (https://quietearth.ca/), a space created to bring the arts and nature together and to foster "an atmosphere of creative expressions and balanced living in a subtle, unrushed, immersive environment."

Under Brent's visionary leadership, EcoFolk, a musical extravaganza of community-minded performers, occurred at Aeolian Hall consecutively from 2016-2019. Brent successfully integrated 'the arts' into the environmental movement through this memorable initiative. Ecofolk was a catalyst that attracted a diverse array of supporters who mirrored Brent's passion and the sense of 'well being' that music brings to the world.

Former TTLT Executive Director, Suzanne McDonald Gysbers, once stated that EcoFolk was a 'friend-raiser' rather than a 'fundraiser'. Upon reflection, TTLT could not have asked for a better friend than Brent!

*- Jim Rule*

# Celebrating Deer Haven

Thames Talbot Land Trust (TTLT) is thrilled to protect Deer Haven, a 19.4-hectare property with a diverse mix of habitats near the Skunk's Misery Natural Area. This former farm has been actively restored by the property donors Heather and Peter Scott for more than 25 years. Restoration work on the property has included planting a tallgrass prairie, installing wetlands to support amphibians, and a large native tree planting program. The 1-hectare tallgrass prairie is a rare and diverse habitat that supports insects and insect-dependent birds. Large parts of the former farmland have also been planted with a diverse mix of native tree and shrub species to recreate a Carolinian Forest.

*Towering Red Oak in the woodland. Photo by Cathy Quinlan*

The lovely Oak woodland contains towering Red Oak, White Oak, Hickories, Ironwood, Black Cherry, and Basswood. Pockets of Red Maple swamp are found along the stream and part of the ravine is covered in young Sugar Maples. The small White Pine plantation provides shelter to birds during adverse winter weather and contributes a unique element to the property.

Deer Haven contains a tributary of the Thames River, which it joins with less than 500m after leaving the property. This section of the Thames River and its tributaries are critical habitat for species at risk fish and mussels. Protecting Deer Haven and ongoing conservation practices that minimize sediment entering the waterways are crucial. Restoration activities have created diverse habitats that support wildlife while also protecting water quality for the stream and the Thames River.

This generous gift contributes to TTLTs holdings in the Skunk's Misery Natural Area, one of the largest remnant Carolinian forest blocks in southwestern Ontario. TTLT currently protects five nature reserves (188 hectares) within this focal area, two of which are only 1 km from Deer Haven.

The vision for Deer Haven, developed by the Scotts and TTLT, is to share the land with Indigenous Peoples for cultural practices, such as harvesting plants and medicines, hunting, and practicing ceremony, while preserving ecologically significant habitats and continuing restoration projects. We are working to develop meaningful relationships with Indigenous partners for the long-term care of Deer Haven. Our hope is to develop a framework for land conservation in this region that is rooted in partnership and relationship with Indigenous Peoples.

TTLT would like to acknowledge the financial support of Environment and Climate Change Canada through the Natural Heritage Conservation Program, the Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund, Ontario's Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks through the Greenlands Conservation Partner Program, administered by the Ontario Land Trust Alliance, MapleCross Fund, and the Echo Foundation. Thank you to Heather and Peter for placing their trust in TTLT.

*- Daria Koscinski*

This project was undertaken with the financial support of:
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier de :

Environment and Climate Change Canada
Environnement et Changement climatique Canada

Ontario

MapleCross
Investing in Canada – Investing in Nature

Fondation ECHO Foundation

OLTA
ONTARIO LAND TRUST ALLIANCE

# Celebrating Ridgeview Wetlands (Five Points Forest)

Ridgeview Wetlands is TTLT's newest nature reserve and its third parcel within the Five Points Woods wetland complex. Straddling the border of Middlesex and Oxford counties near Putnam, the Five Points Woods complex covers more than 178 ha. At 13 ha, Ridgeview Wetlands is an important addition to TTLT's existing holdings in the area, Driedger Tract (30 ha) and Ross's Woods (23 ha).

Les and Almeda Charlton owned this land for more than 30 years. About 15 years ago, they dredged three ponds, re-establishing some areas of open water. While tracking the movement of turtles in and around Driedger Tract, TTLT staff became acquainted with the Charltons. Nature lovers themselves, the Charltons were happy to allow staff to access their ponds. TTLT's work revealed the importance of these ponds to the local turtle population. Wood Ducks also use the ponds and nest in the boxes provided.

*View of one of the ponds at Ridgeview Wetlands. Photo by Cathy Quinlan*

As the Charltons neared retirement, they sought a means of protecting their beloved natural area, while allowing them to stay in their home and maintain their small farm. In 2023, the natural portion of the property was severed and sold to TTLT.

Situated on the Ingersoll Moraine, Ridgeview Wetlands presents a great mix of upland wooded rolling ridges surrounding lowland habitat including Butler Drain. The upland woods on the ridges are quite diverse and dominated by Black Cherry, American Beech, hickories, and Hackberry. There are some natural stands of White Pine and Eastern Hemlock. The lowland areas are dominated by Silver Maple. Spring wildflowers have not yet been explored, but Wild Ginger was evident during a fall site visit.

The ponds themselves are bordered by a narrow band of wetland species such as Nannyberry, Boneset, and Joe Pye Weed. In time, the ponds will likely fill in with wetland/marsh plants.

To date, incidental wildlife observations include beaver activity, deer trails, and tree cavities suitable for nesting birds. More biological inventories are planned. The site will need relatively little management except for removal of some invasive plants and control of ATV trespassing.

An unopened road allowance adjacent to Ridgeview Wetlands was acquired by TTLT and will provide pedestrian access from Driedger Tract.

TTLT would like to acknowledge the financial support of Environment and Climate Change Canada through the Natural Heritage Conservation Program, Ontario's Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks through the Greenlands Conservation Partner Program, administered by the Ontario Land Trust Alliance, the Echo Foundation, the Oxford Community Foundation (Stevens Fund and Ken and Lynda Whiteford Fund), and the Bruce Flowers Legacy Fund for Oxford County. Thank you to Les and Almeda for placing their trust in TTLT.

*- Cathy Quinlan & David Wake*

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Environment and Climate Change Canada
Environnement et Changement climatique Canada

Ontario

Bruce Flowers Legacy Fund

Oxford Community Foundation
Looking Forward...Giving Back!

Fondation ECHO Foundation

OLTA
ONTARIO LAND TRUST ALLIANCE

# Taking a Deep Dive into Another Land Trust

Since 2000, Thames Talbot Land Trust (TTLT) has been securing, protecting, and restoring a network of natural ecosystems in southwestern Ontario. We aim to conserve lands to enrich local biodiversity and connect people with nature.

Have you ever wondered about other land trusts in Ontario and how they function? Do they have the same goals as we do, and what other environmental contributions or programs do they have to offer? There are many other land trusts in Ontario, but some may be in disguise as far as their names go! Here are a few organizations that you may not realize are actually land trusts: Georgian Bay Land Trust, Muskoka Heritage Foundation, Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy, rare Charitable Research Reserve, and Hamilton Naturalists' Club. A rose by any other name still smells as sweet! We all share the common goal of preserving natural areas forever. Collectively, Ontario's land trusts have over 100,000 acres of land under their care.

While we are talking about other land trusts, let's examine another organization that has been around a lot longer than TTLT. We can learn a lot from these older and more experienced land trusts, and understand how land protection has changed over time.

## Hamilton Naturalists' Club (HNC)

HNC calls their lands Nature Sanctuaries and began protecting lands in 1919. Their land trust program is named the *Head-of-the-Lake Land Trust* and is driven by volunteers. Like TTLT, they lead nature outings, monitor native species, encourage public involvement, and restore areas to their natural state. HNC was a pioneer in the land trust movement as it was the first naturalist organization in Ontario to purchase a swath of land to become a sanctuary; this property is named Spooky Hollow and was purchased in 1961. Currently, HNC has eight sanctuaries totalling 444 acres.

*Coaching Kids:* HNC also has a Junior Naturalists' Club for kids aged 7-12 that is run jointly with Royal Botanical Gardens. The purpose of mentoring children is to train future advocates for the environment. Junior Naturalists enjoy nature-based activities every month with the guidance of local experts. They build bird boxes, identify pond creatures, track flying squirrels, and learn how to survive in the wilderness and basic astronomy. Up to 50 kids complete this program every year.

*Birds:* There is a very strong bird component to HNC. They have a bird checklist as part of their "What's Alive in Hamilton" program. Residents can download a custom-made-for-Hamilton bird checklist to see what species they may see and whether it is rare, common, or breeds in the area. The purpose of the freely available checklist is to help people enjoy the local natural areas by being able to identify species. HNC also hosts ongoing bird counts, an annual waterfowl census, many IBA (Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas) surveys, and manages FalconWatch which monitors Peregrine Falcons in Hamilton using webcams.

*Scientific Research:* Working with McMaster University researchers, HNC helps bird populations such as the Eastern Meadowlark and Bobolink by attracting these grassland obligate species to HNC protected grasslands using pre-recorded birdsong playback. This is very helpful to these birds which have been designated as threatened by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC).

*Mutual Support:* Ontario's land trusts, however known and structured, are making a substantial contribution to the protection of the province's biodiversity. Through the exchange of ideas and resources, land trusts have the opportunity to learn from each other while retaining their own unique character. TTLT is steadfastly committed to this pathway of mutual support, in part through its membership with the Ontario Land Trust Alliance (OLTA).

*-Wendy Boucher, B.Sc. Student of the Master of Bioenvironmental Monitoring and Assessment program at Trent University*

# American Beech in Serious Trouble

In Southwestern Ontario's "Carolinian Forest", American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) is an important canopy tree primarily of upland forests, where it is often co-dominant with Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*), White Ash (*Fraxinus americana*), Tulip Tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), and other upland species. With sturdy branches and multiple cavities, beech provides valuable nesting and denning sites for a wide variety of mammals and birds. Beechnuts, the fruit of American Beech, are a prized food resource. Beech forests can be found in many TTLT nature reserves, such as Hawk Cliff Woods, Joany's Woods, Bebensee Tract, and Gillies Nature Tract.

*A mature beech tree showing a higher amount of tolerance to Beech Leaf Disease. Photo by Matthew Palarchio*

Unfortunately, American Beech has fallen on hard times in recent years. Beech Leaf Disease, introduced to Ontario around 2015, is causing mortality in American Beech trees and saplings. A microscopic, worm-like animal called the Beech Leaf Nematode (*Litylenchus crenatae*), is likely responsible for the disease. This is an invasive species believed to be introduced from Japan. Symptoms include dark-green bands between lateral leaf veins and thickened or yellow leaves. Dieback and mortality is common following multiple consecutive years of infestation.

*Beech Leaf Disease at Sitler Woods. Photo by Matthew Palarchio*

The more well-known Beech Bark Disease, caused by the invasive European Beech Scale, is also entering TTLT's area of work. This is caused by the European Beech Scale (*Cryptococcus fagisuga*), a bark-feeding insect. The European Beech Scale insect creates wounds, which eventually result in the infection of American Beech by a native *Neonectria* fungus, killing the tree.

In the Carolinian Life Zone, Beech Leaf Disease seems to be the more aggressive of the two diseases, but the presence of Beech Bark Disease will worsen the situation. A significant population loss of American Beech is anticipated. At Hawk Cliff Woods, where both diseases are present, a majority of the mature beech are in poor condition. Near-complete stand mortality has been observed - comparable to the damage of the Emerald Ash Borer to ash trees. Canopy gaps left by beech mortality have resulted in vigorous understory growth of Tulip Tree and White Ash.

*Beech Sale at Springwater, Catfish Creek. Photo by Matthew Palarchio*

Unfortunately, there is currently no effective management strategy for either disease. There is hope that some individual trees may be resistant to Beech Leaf Disease. The propagation of resistant trees to both diseases is essential for the recovery of the beech population. This resistance has not been observed at Hawk Cliff Woods but encouraging results may be seen elsewhere. Only time will tell.

You can help by restricting the movement of beech firewood and leaf litter, and by reporting sightings of Beech Leaf Disease or Beech Bark Disease presence to a local conservation authority, iNaturalist, or the Invasive Species Centre.

*- Matthew Palarchio*

# Wildflower Wordsearch

What better way to get ready for Spring than to search for some native Spring wildflowers! Words are arranged horizontally, vertically, and diagonally. Thank you to Winnie Wake for providing the list! See if you can beat the TTLT Staff top score of **2 mins 15 seconds**. The solution is available on our website. *This worksheet was created with the Word Search Generator on Super Teacher Worksheets (www.superteacherworksheets.com).*

## Spring Wildflowers

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| D | E | I | E | E | H | S | W | Z | E | F | O | M | I | A | E | K | O |
| O | R | U | L | A | D | Z | O | F | H | W | L | D | B | C | T | J | R |
| W | R | M | L | F | L | C | R | H | U | T | O | O | R | I | C | C | T |
| R | Y | F | S | A | F | V | T | N | B | H | V | R | W | O | N | H | X |
| U | M | B | U | T | T | E | R | C | U | P | V | I | T | E | O | E | V |
| E | H | E | P | A | T | I | C | A | Y | I | P | S | Y | A | R | T | K |
| X | K | B | P | M | S | W | A | T | E | R | L | E | A | F | P | T | C |

BANEBERRY
BELLWORT
BLOODROOT
BLUEBELLS
BUTTERCUP
COLUMBINE
FOAMFLOWER
HEPATICA
MAYAPPLE
MEADOWRUE
MITREWORT
TOOTHWORT
TRILLIUM
TWINLEAF
VIOLET
WATERLEAF

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Thames Talbot Land Trust (TTLT) is a registered charity. Our mission is to protect, restore, and nurture nature within Elgin, Middlesex, Oxford, and Perth counties and the City of London, contributing to a stable climate, human well-being, and healthy habitats for all species. We recognize that these lands have been cared for and remain under the care of Indigenous Peoples from time immemorial. We aim to work in the spirit and practice of reconciliation, and we are honoured to take part in sustaining and nurturing nature in this region.