

## THAMES TALBOT LAND TRUST

# TaTTler

## Hawk Cliff Woods: Expanding Nature's Horizons

On September 23rd during the Hawk Cliff Woods Migration Weekend, Thames Talbot Land Trust (TTLT) and Long Point Basin Land Trust (LPBLT) announced the expansion of the Hawk Cliff Woods nature reserve. This new 30-hectare project is a unique opportunity to expand the nature reserve on the shores of Lake Erie in Elgin County, adding 30% more habitat through the creation and restoration of meadows.

The project is the vision of Cheryl Barendregt whose family has lived and thrived on the land since the 1950's. The farm was the family's livelihood and the woods their classroom. Cheryl's grandchildren now explore the woods and meadows, finding salamanders, admiring butterflies, and listening to bird

song. The thrill of spending the day in nature with "Mima" is a highlight of the visit to her house. Cheryl's enthusiasm for nature is evident to all who share a walk in the woods with her. Cheryl first collaborated with TTLT in 2016 to protect the 93-hectare block of mostly wooded ravines. This new project will see portions of the land restored to a vibrant and diverse natural habitat, complementing the existing woodland and meadow habitats, and completing the original vision of protecting and restoring the entirety of Hawk Cliff Woods.

Hawk Cliff Woods is home to a wide diversity of species including 15 species at risk, several of which will benefit from the creation of additional habitat.

**- continued on page 3 -**



Left to right: Rob Flack (MPP), Jordan Banninga (TTLT), Daria Koscinski (TTLT), Kallum Brown (Cheryl's grandson), Cheryl Barendregt, Aubree Brown (Cheryl's granddaughter), Sophie Brown (Cheryl's granddaughter), Keeghan Brown (Cheryl's son), Gwen Barendregt (Cheryl's Mom), Karen Vecchio (MP), Rick Levick (LPBLT) at Hawk Cliff Woods for the announcement. Photo by David Wake.

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## UPCOMING EVENTS

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

### 🌲 Passport to Nature: Buds and Bark 🌲

January 20, 2023, 1pm-3pm at Meadowlily Nature Preserve

Dust off your snowshoes and join tree enthusiast and retired educator Bernie VanDenBelt for a leisurely mid-winter exploration of tree identification.

### 🌱 Seed Processing Workshop 🌱

January 30, 2024, 6pm-7pm - location TBD

Help process and package seeds for restoration projects and community outreach!

### ★ Passport to Nature: Wonders of Our Universe (Webinar) ★

February 8, 2024, 7pm online via Zoom

Join astrophotographer Ryan Fraser for a view of our solar system, galaxy, and the universe beyond.

### 🦉 Passport to Nature: The Mysteries of Owl Pellets

March 12, 2024, 10am-12pm at Westminster Ponds Centre

Join Luke King to learn how to dissect an owl pellet and solve the mystery of what the owl has been eating. All ages welcome.

### 🚶 TTLT Volunteer Orientation 🚶

March 27, 2024, 7pm-8:30pm online via Zoom

Learn about the different volunteer roles and opportunities TTLT has to offer. There's something for everyone!

**We hope to see you soon!**

## Time to Renew Your Membership

As we approach the new year, now is the perfect time to **renew your commitment to nature protection** through the renewal or first-time purchase of your membership. You can renew/begin your membership on TTLT's website, by e-transfer, or by mailing a cheque to TTLT.

### Are you looking to level up your support of nature protection ?

Then you may want to **consider 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 give us a call at 519-858-3442 for more information.



thamestalbotlandtrust



thamestalbot

## Hawk Cliff Woods: Expanding Nature's Horizons

Grasslands are some of the most endangered habitat types in Canada. Through restoration, more than 25 hectares of new grasslands will be created. This will provide a wide array of benefits for species such as Monarch, Brown Myotis, and Bobolink that rely on large blocks of this rare habitat. In addition, the restoration project will provide services to the local community such as carbon sequestration, pollinator habitat, and recreational opportunities.

Nature lovers from far and wide have been visiting Hawk Cliff and vicinity for generations as a premier destination for viewing fall raptor, songbird, and Monarch migrations. The annual migration celebration, running for more than 50 years, is a public event that celebrates the fall migration and typically sees over 300 visitors. The nature reserve also boasts two public trails and a community garden, which provide different ways to connect with nature year-

round. Additional trails and community opportunities will be added on the new lands.

To complete the protection of these ecologically significant lands, TTLT and LPBLT need to raise \$273,000 to reach their \$2 million campaign goal. The funds will support the protection, restoration and long-term care of the lands, ensuring wildlife have a permanent home at Hawk Cliff Woods. Donations to the campaign can be made through TTLT by mail or online at [www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca/hawk\\_cliff\\_woods\\_expansion](http://www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca/hawk_cliff_woods_expansion).

Permanent protection of the Hawk Cliff Woods expansion site by TTLT and LPBLT will ensure these natural features and wildlife are protected forever. In the face of biodiversity loss and climate change we are working together to find nature-based solutions for our communities. Projects like these ensure a greener future for nature and people to thrive.

- 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

Fondation **ECHO** Foundation

Ontario 

**OLTA**  
ONTARIO LAND TRUST ALLIANCE

## TD FEF Funding for Important Outreach Programming

We would like to give a shout out to TD Friends of the Environment Foundation for providing grant funding for our environmental outreach programming this year! These funds support fun, experiential, and educational opportunities for the community that are designed to be welcoming, accessible, and reduce barriers to participation.

Some of the events we've hosted, or participated



*The gentle handing off a Viceroy butterfly for a young attendee to hold. Photo by Lisa Mason.*

in, include the City Nature Challenge, the Butterfly Catch and Release event, educational workshops for young people in partnership with the South London Neighbourhood Resource Centre, and community events such as Gathering on the Green and Wortley Pride. We hope to see you at some of our upcoming events this fall and winter.

- Rebecca Launchbury



## Autumn Birding and Migration

Each spring, bird migration coincides with heightened interest in birding. As birds become more silent and cryptic during the late summer, and dense foliage in the autumn makes it harder to see, many birders pay less attention. However, observations of birds all year-round allow for a thorough understanding of their behaviors, so don't put away those binoculars just yet!

**September:** Breeding, moulting and pre-migration foraging - the essential activities of summer - are largely completed by this time, and many of Ontario's songbirds are migrating south. Bird species from dense forests, such as Ovenbirds and Wood Thrushes, can be seen in city parks, and non-migratory species begin their preparation for winter. Blue Jays in particular become very active, forming large flocks as they forage for acorns and beechnuts. You may be surprised by what you can see just in your backyard!



*Broad-winged Hawks catch thermals on their southbound migration. Photo by Matthew Palarchio.*

TTLT's Hawk Cliff Woods is an optimal place for birding. The high diversity of habitats and nearness to Lake Erie attract many species. Large populations of songbirds can be seen on their migratory routes. Hawk Cliff is also renowned for its fall hawk migration. On the most favorable days, dozens of raptors ("birds-of-prey") will gather here. These birds seek thermals (upward rotating masses of air) which propel them high into the sky, making it much easier to cross Lake Erie. The highest raptor activity is in late September to early November.



*Left: Common Nighthawk at dusk. Right: Red-eyed Vireo. Photos by Matthew Palarchio.*



**October:** Songbird migration continues, though most of the heat-loving warblers, vireos, and flycatchers have already moved on towards warmer climates. Yellow-rumped Warblers (now in their winter plumage), and Ruby-crowned kinglets are observable through the peak of autumn, often among the vibrant fall foliage of deciduous trees. Cold



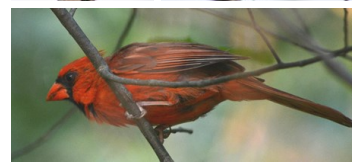
drives many northern species into southern Ontario, such as the Dark-eyed Junco and American Tree Sparrow that often frequent bird feeders throughout the winter.

**November:** By winter's first snowfall, migratory songbirds have mostly left Ontario. Birders are left with a reduced but still vibrant selection of species, including Chickadees, Titmice, Nuthatches, Brown Creepers, Northern Cardinals, Blue Jays, Woodpeckers, Kingfishers, Cedar Waxwings and a few others. The lack of leaves on the trees makes bird photography much easier, too! The winter waterfowl season also starts in November.

Ring-necked ducks can be seen in large numbers on rural ponds. Mid-month, Common Goldeneyes will reach their wintering grounds on southern Ontario's major rivers, such as the Deskan Zibi/Thames River. Lucky birders will witness large flocks of Tundra Swans flying over southwestern Ontario as they return to Chesapeake Bay from their breeding grounds in the Arctic Tundra.



*Left: Male Downy Woodpecker. Right: Cedar Waxwing. Bottom: Northern Cardinal. Photos by Matthew Palarchio.*



- Matthew Palarchio

## A Local Nature Hero: Bernie VanDenBelt

Since the beginning, Thames Talbot Land Trust (TTLT) has been powered by many amazing volunteers who have helped make TTLT a leader in the land trust community. Everyone brings something unique and valuable with them, helping to cultivate TTLT's passionate community and commitments to nature protection. When we think of volunteers with dedication and zeal, Bernie VanDenBelt comes to mind. Bernie has been involved with TTLT since its inception in 2000. As one of the founding members, Bernie has continued to work closely with TTLT and the community. He served as Board Chair from 2000 to 2006 and has been an active member of

various committees and the Board of Directors.

Bernie's hard work and dedication to protecting and conserving natural habitats was recently recognized through the grand achievement of winning the Ontario Nature Conservation Leadership Award. The leadership award is presented to a nominee who has made significant contributions to the protection of wild species and spaces in Ontario. Even more recent, Bernie was the recipient of Nature London's W.E. Saunders Award of Merit, which recognizes a Nature London member "who has made an exceptional personal contribution through long and conscientious



*Just another day of hugging trees and saving nature for Bernie VanDenBelt. Photo by Daria Kosciński.*

service" (Bernie has served 34 years as a Nature London member!).

Bernie's journey in nature conservation has been a long and steady one, and is one that he continues through his involvement with TTLT because of the organization's dedication in being positive, proactive, and permanent in its work. Reflecting on his experiences, Bernie highlights the privilege of "participating in the securement process of several sites" as an outstanding moment of volunteerism, and he finds meaning in helping to "achieve permanent protection for these special places..." Words of advice that Bernie would offer to prospective volun-

teers is that "the best antidote to eco-anxiety and despair is to take action, no matter how small at first. Find something that looks interesting to you and dive in! You'll meet other amazing volunteers along the way."

TTLT is extraordinarily grateful for all the years of hard work and commitment Bernie has shown to nature protection. Due to his passion and initiative, TTLT has blossomed into a trusted Land Trust that is making a lasting impact and change on the land and waters in our communities.

*- Kit Roffey & Riley Buist*

***"Playing a part in building an organization that is really hitting its stride today is the most rewarding thing."***

***- Bernie VanDenBelt***

### Giving Tuesday Featuring Finley the Fox

We had a lot of fun last year creating and sharing Shelley's story with you as part of TTLT's Giving Tuesday campaign. This year, we would like to introduce you to Finley the Fox (they/them).

Finley went on a little choose-your-own-adventure leading up to Giving Tuesday, where TTLT

supporters helped us tell Finley's story. You can read all about it at [www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca/finley\\_the\\_fox](http://www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca/finley_the_fox).

A big thank you to everyone that donated and to the several generous donors who provided \$10,000 in match funding!



## ARCTIC VISITOR

by Karen Auzins

*"In early spring of 2002, we had Redpolls come to our feeders for the first time. One of them sat on the wire we have on the window and was looking in at me so curiously that I wanted to write about it."*

I just dropped by  
To say hi  
And thank you for the feed.

Grey is the sky.  
Snow's nearby.  
So urgent is my need.

My flock and I  
Would soon die  
If not for your good deed.

Redpoll am I.  
From the high  
Arctic cold I did speed.

Until my eye  
Feed did spy  
Here in your yard well treed.

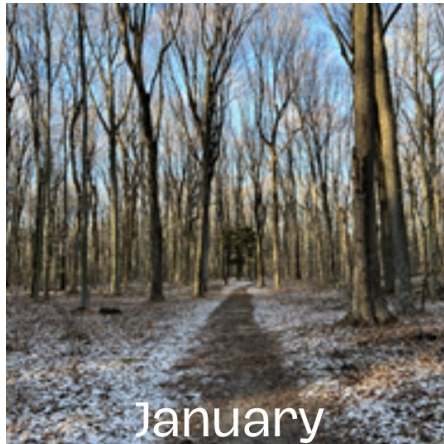
My friends & I  
Will soon fly  
Back home to sow our seed.

Till then will I  
Stay close by.  
Thank you so much indeed!

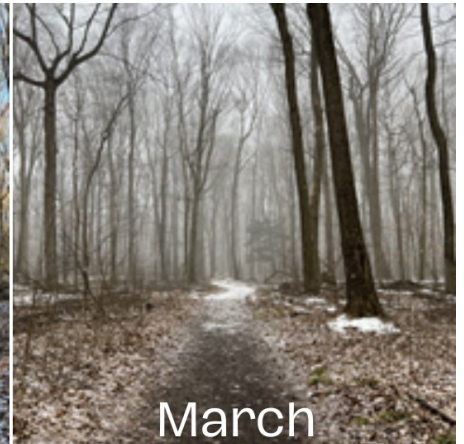


Photo by Karen Auzins.

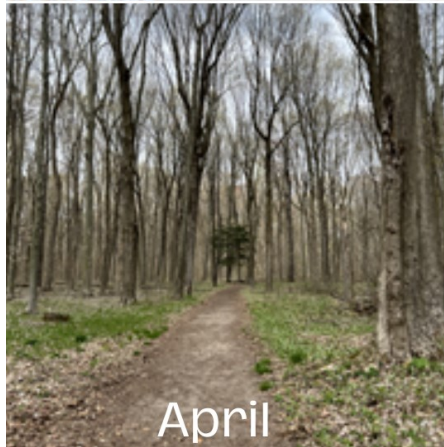
## The Art of Nature



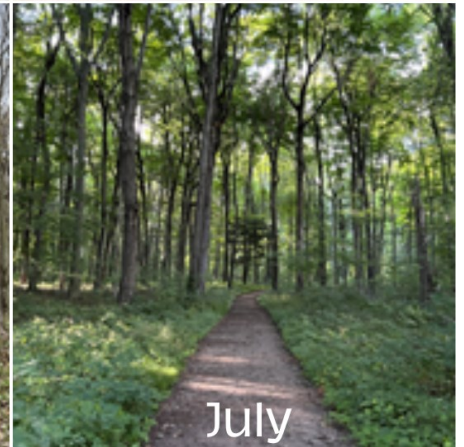
January



March



April



July

*A forest path in Springwater Forest pictured at four different times of the year.  
Photos by Matthew Palarchio.*

Nature is a "living art form". For centuries, humans have lived in awe of the vast landscapes of colours and shapes that nature has to offer. Artists continue to find inspiration in the vibrancy, darkness, texture, reality, and living stories of the plants, animals, and landscapes around them. Southwestern Ontario is no exception.

Across the seasons, landscape conditions are vastly different, and generate spectacular transitions, especially around Spring and Fall. It is no stretch to say that southwestern Ontario seasons are an art form in and of

themselves.

Each time of the year offers a new perspective and a new palette of colours. Autumn is usually considered the most spectacular of all the seasons, providing striking and vibrant hues of red, orange, and yellow on the dominant deciduous trees before they drop their leaves for the winter.

The next time you're out in nature, take a deep breath in and allow the beauty and art of nature to wash over and inspire you.

- Matthew Palarchio &  
Darby Alderson

## Conservation Easement Agreements

Land protection is more important than ever and we need to use all available tools to secure a greener future. You are likely familiar with projects TTLT has done where the land comes into TTLT ownership through purchase or donation. Now, we are looking to expand the use of Conservation Easement Agreements (CEAs) to increase nature conservation by working with land holders who wish to continue owning and living on the land. Succession planning can be stressful for many land holders if they worry about how the land they have cherished can be protected into the future. We can help with CEAs.

Here are a few quick facts if you're new to Conservation Easement Agreements.

- A CEA is a voluntary agreement between a land holder and a conservation organization;
- A CEA is a legally binding agreement placed on land title. Conservation measures identified in the CEA will be maintained in perpetuity even if/when the land changes hands;
- There are 217 CEAs covering 20,000 acres of land currently held by 22 Ontario land trusts (source: Ontario Land Trust Alliance, January 2023).

Although CEAs are an effective and tested tool, to date few have been applied in our region. TTLT recently pulled together a stellar team of partners to change that. With funding from the London Community Foundation (LCF), this incredible team will be working together to increase land protection in our community.

Over the next three years, we are planning an ambitious program of outreach, connection, and land protection in the region. The London Community Foundation funding will support work in the City of London and Middlesex, but we hope to expand the work to the wider communities we serve in Perth, Oxford, and Elgin Counties.

Contact us if you are interested in learning more about this exciting new program.

- Daria Koscinski

### Project goals for next 3 years with funding from LCF

5,000

LAND HOLDERS  
REACHED

18

CONSERVATION  
EASEMENT  
AGREEMENTS

1,000+

ACRES OF LAND  
PROTECTED



LONDON  
COMMUNITY  
FOUNDATION

### Partners in Conservation:



## Logic puzzle: Nature Reserve Action

TTLT operates in five regions of southwestern Ontario, namely four counties and the City of London, each of which has at least one nature reserve. Various TTLT staff or volunteers interact in one way or another with one of our growing number of nature reserves. From your existing knowledge of where TTLT nature reserves are located and using the clues below, match each nature reserve with the county in which it is found as well as a particular activity. Mark positive matches with a star and negative matches with an "x". All nature reserves are found in different localities and each item or event took place in only one nature reserve.

1. The Conservation Lands Manager prepared a property management plan (PMP) for a nature reserve located in a county.
2. The most chainsaw oil in 2023 was used in a nature reserve located in Elgin County.
3. A team of volunteer and staff visited, in the following order, Boview Farm, a site located in London, a site for which the Land Securement Committee had a detailed map, and a site where loppers came in handy to remove Buckthorn.
4. The Passport to Nature event was located north of where loppers were used and south of the site where a detailed map was required.

	Oxford Co.	Elgin Co.	City of London	Perth Co.	Middlesex Co.	Loppers	Chainsaw	PMP	Map	Passport
Mud Lake										
Hawk Cliff Woods										
Meadowlily										
McTavish Tract										
Boview Farm										
Loppers										
Chainsaw oil										
PMP										
Map										
Passport										

**Hint:** You can visit [www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca/nature\\_reserves](http://www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca/nature_reserves) for more information on nature reserve locations.

Nature reserve	Locality	Activity



P.O. Box 25054

London, ON N6C 6A8

519-858-3442

[www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca](http://www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca)

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. These lands and waters have been cared for and remain under the care of Indigenous Peoples from time immemorial. We are committed to working in the spirit and practice of reconciliation while caring for nature with respect and collaboration to build a greener and more inclusive future for all people.