

Thames Talbot Land Trust

# THE CORRIDOR

## Restore

### A Budding Sign of Habitat Health

An exciting sign of successful restoration has been spotted at our nature reserve, Hawk Cliff Woods!

Located in Union, Ontario, in Elgin County, Hawk Cliff Woods is surely a familiar place to many TTLT supporters. Home of the annual Migration Weekend event, the internationally-recognized “Hawk Watch” site, and our most visited public trails, it is likely that if you’ve been to any TTLT nature reserve, it’s this one.



David Wake

Yet, much more than a wonderful place to visit and experience nature, the Lake Erie-fronted site consists of conservationally valuable deep interior forests and several meadows filled with pollinators and wildflowers. After protecting the site in 2015, TTLT began a restoration project in its northern area. The area had previously been farmland, and was transformed into a thriving grassland through our restoration process.

During a volunteer seed collection event in 2025, our Stewardship and Outreach Coordinator, Payton Landsborough, spotted a budding sign of healthy grassland habitat – a blossoming Northern Oval Ladies’ Tresses (*Spiranthes ovalis* var. *Erstellata*) in the restored grassland! This adorable orchid is an indicator species for tallgrass prairie and savannah habitats in Ontario, typically growing in “disturbed, wet-mesic prairie on calcareous sandy loam and clay soils.” Fun fact - at

only around 10-15 cm in height, the tiny plant meets most cities’ standards for lawn height! The species was first observed at Hawk Cliff Woods in 2019, where it continues to grow in one of the natural grassland remnants that are scattered across the southern portion of the nature reserve. However, the recent sighting at



Payton Landsborough

the constructed grassland, without any assisted dispersal, suggests that the restored habitat is of sufficient quality to support species indicative of rare prairie and savannah habitats.

The sighting comes at greater excitement than the conservation value of the single orchid. Its natural occurrence at the restored Hawk Cliff Woods grassland habitat marks the increase of the small flower’s presence in Ontario. Its first sighting in Elgin County was in 2018, when the species was considered under S1 conservation status in Ontario, meaning it was critically imperiled. Its improved classification, S2 - Imperiled, is a hopeful sign of habitats healing and revitalizing across the province, as demonstrated in the Hawk Cliff Woods grasslands. With multiple large-scale restoration projects planned for the coming years, we can’t wait to continue to enhance existing nature and grow new sustainable habitats.

By Payton Landsborough and Skye Martineau

# Protect

## 300 Acres Closer to Nature Nearby!

The last few months at TTLT have been a whirlwind of conservation success. Not only did we close two new nature reserves in December, but outdid ourselves in January with an additional three sites – one of which may be familiar to long-time supporters. The success in protecting these sites brings us more than 325 acres closer towards our *Nature Nearby* goal!

Many of these projects have been in the making since 2024, when initial conversations were held with prospective landholders. The securement process takes time, and there are often surprises throughout its course that push back closing dates. With a lot of patience and support from incredible partners, we are so excited to be sharing these new projects with you! Learn more about each new site on the TTLT website at [https://www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca/nature\\_reserves](https://www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca/nature_reserves).

### MapleCross - Bass Woods (30 ha/73 ac)



David Wake

Located along the Thames River, this nature reserve contains mature intact forest and a meadow beside a small agricultural field. The land was in the Bass family for many decades.

### Bradshaw Conservation Lands (42 ha/103 ac)



David Wake

Located in the Township of St. Clair, this site is protected

in partnership with the St. Clair Region Conservation Foundation. It is part of a larger complex of protected lands along Black Creek.

### SpringRush Farm CEA (40 ha/100 ac)



Bren Martinez

Located near Lucan, ON, SpringRush Farm is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Conservation Easement Agreement (CEA) in Middlesex County. It contains forest, woodland, meadow, plantation, wetland, agricultural, and stream habitats.

### Eberhardt Farm (41 ha/101 ac)



Lily Vuong

Located in Perth East, this site, formerly a CEA since 2005, is now fully held and managed by TTLT. The land boasts mature forest of maple, beech, and pine as well as restored farmlands that are now thriving woodlands.

### Sycamore Valley (21 ha/52 ac)



Lily Vuong

Located in Oxford County, this nature reserve (formerly known as Camp Shegardaynou) features hardwood smaps dominated by Silver Maple, Yellow Birch, Red Maple, Black Walnut, and, of course, Sycamore.

By Lily Vuong

# Grow

## A Win for Species Conservation

TTLT's work is rooted in protecting the Carolinian Zone, a region that contains the greatest biodiversity and highest number of species at risk (SAR) in Canada. As of 2026, the nature reserves that TTLT cares for are home to over 100 SAR, which is one of the reasons we are excited to announce that TTLT is one of the recipients of the provincial Species Conservation Program (SCP) funding!

The SCP was established by the Ontario Government in 2025 to preserve and rehabilitate habitats, support public education, and advance activities that protect and conserve species at risk. This multi-year grant will support TTLT until 2030 with \$300,000 in funding, enabling the implementation of projects that will increase habitat quantity and quality through large-scale restoration, threat mitigation activities, and enhanced knowledge of population distribution and abundance.

For example, TTLT aims to create over 22 ha of woodland and meadow habitat, improve habitat quality for wetland SAR through invasive species management, and expand targeted SAR monitoring, surveying, and seed collection.

We will also increase forest habitat by planting 6 ha of native trees at 2 different sites, which will benefit species like the Acadian Flycatcher, the Red-headed Woodpecker, and the Eastern Whip-poor-will. Additionally it will help us to increase public awareness through enhancing our annual events and strengthening our relationships with community partners.



Lily Vuong

TTLT is incredibly grateful for this opportunity. We are excited to have the support of the province to initiate meaningful restoration work that will benefit a variety of species, including many at risk, we share a home with in the most ecologically diverse area of Canada.

By Lily Vuong

Title of Section

# Play

Connections is a word game that challenges players to find themes between words. Connect the following 16 words/phrases into groups of four thematically related items. Each group is related to nature and wildlife found in Ontario.

Purple

Pin

Red-tailed Hawk

Red Mulberry

Polar

American Chestnut

Blue

Yellow

Butternut

Canada Goose

Little Brown Bat

Blue Ash

Locus

Male

Azure

Atlantic Salmon

Answers available at <https://www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca/newsletter>

# Nurture

## The Real Nature Nearby Superstars

In case you haven't heard, TTLT launched *Nature Nearby*, our largest campaign to date, in November 2025. Paired with the announcement was a well-crafted video created by staff member Skye Martineau. Since its release, the *Nature Nearby* video has been viewed over 14,000 times with over 75% of those views by new people! Although these metrics are amazing, what is even more amazing about the video is the people who took part in bringing it to life.

As with any video, the goal is to make an impact, and from the very beginning it was obvious: our people are our impact. TTLT supporters are the backbone of our organization, so we wanted to make sure that real people, our people, were the faces of the organization and our shared mission.

We put out the call and received all the enthusiasm we were expecting and more! Long-time supporters of 20+ years to new supporters from 2025 participated in the filming. Some were introduced to TTLT through mutual connections, while others participated in our events and programming and gradually increased their involvement over time. We asked a few of our *Nature Nearby* superstars why they felt drawn to volunteer with TTLT and support projects like the video. The underlining commonality - their love for nature. "I believe we are a part of nature...this perspective drives my commitment to working both

with and for the natural world," said Olsson Lama. Cathy Quinlan shared that she "love[s] exploring and learning about the various plant communities that exist and the wildlife that call them home." Susan Price shared that "when you get older, you tend to think you know all there is to know, but then you go out into nature with nice, knowledgeable people and find out there's still so much more to find out from nature and new friends."

When asked why they took part in the *Nature Nearby* video, it was a unanimous sentiment, which Olsson puts quite nicely: "I know that even the smallest contribution can make a significant difference. TTLT's vision for protecting Ontario's natural landscapes resonates deeply with me...Fundraising is essential to sustaining this work, and I wanted to contribute my voice to help achieve those goals."

We are grateful to all those who supported the *Nature Nearby* video project. You can catch our superstars in action on our website at [https://www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca/nature\\_nearby](https://www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca/nature_nearby).

By Darby Alderson



Skye Martineau



Skye Martineau



Skye Martineau