



Carolinian Canada

Winter 2009

Species and Habitats at Risk Special Edition Newsletter

Bronwen Buck, Editor, Carolinian Canada Coalition newsletter

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Assistance for this newsletter is provided by the Ministry of Natural Resources

Welcome to this special edition newsletter. We are excited to bring you positive stories about rare species and habitats and report on the actions you are taking to sustain them. With so much to tell, we will keep this focus in forthcoming issues. Ideas for future topics are welcome, as are submissions related to habitat enhancement, research, youth involvement, education and land stewardship. For editorial guidelines, please contact: newsletter@carolinian.org.”

Connecting our Community

Help break a record by signing up for our e-news. We hope to connect record numbers of subscribers through our monthly newsletter this year. Through your free subscription, you can receive and post events, publications, and program updates across Carolinian Canada. To subscribe, send an e-mail to enews@carolinian.org.

A First for the Coalition

The Carolinian Canada Coalition is proud to announce its new Charitable status. For the first time, Coalition donors can receive a charitable tax receipt directly from the organization. We have just completed a non-profit business plan for improved donor services and information. Now you can support us on-line, on a monthly plan or make a special dedication in the name of a person or event significant to you. Your support is a reflection of the progress, effectiveness and credibility of the shared message of our conservation community.



Getting to Know an Old-Growth Forest at the CCC AGM in May 2008

Greening the Future for Species at Risk in Carolinian Canada

The Carolinian Canada Coalition launched an ambitious ecoregional program for ecosystem and species recovery in collaboration with a wide range of partners in 2008.

The Coalition is the recipient of a \$267,000 grant from the Ministry of Natural Resources Species at Risk Stewardship Fund. This is matched by financial and in-kind contributions from Environment Canada, Ontario Stewardship Rangers, University of Waterloo, Nature Conservancy of Canada, Parks Research Forum of Ontario, Tallgrass Ontario and many others. The program takes a comprehensive and community-based approach to species at risk stewardship through Conservation Action Plans for Biodiversity Hotspots, Youth helping SAR, a Habitat Outreach Strategy and the Carolinian Woodland Network. Recovery Implementation Groups are currently working on habitat restoration guidelines to support ecosystem recovery. Join the Recovery Network at woodland@carolinian.org.



Assistance for this project is provided by the Ministry of Natural Resources.



Linking Landowners with Healthy Landscapes

Did you know many landowners in southern Ontario are enthusiastic stewards of rare habitats and species? This is what Nikki May, Project Coordinator for the Carolinian Canada Coalition (CCC) found while developing factsheets focusing on landowner action in the Carolinian Life Zone. In fact, while interviewing landowners about their stewardship initiatives, she gathered so many stories it was impossible to publish them all.

Aptly titled "Caring for Nature," part of the *Landowner Links Project*, this suite of factsheets tell compelling stories of private landowners, community groups, agencies and youth who steward the natural habitat and rare species in each municipality. These publications have so far have reached over 120,000 households and businesses within the Zone. By providing many "how-to" tips and answering the questions "Why should I care?" and "What can I do?" the publications seek to inspire stewardship.

Nikki is well on her way to realizing her goal of creating factsheets for all counties within Carolinian Canada. By November 2008, CCC distributed publications for 9 districts including Chatham-Kent, Lambton, Elgin, Essex, Middlesex, Norfolk, Halton, Hamilton and Niagara. Nikki's ambition is to launch factsheets for Haldimand, Oxford and Brant in the spring; and to develop similar products for the Greater Toronto Area.

After receiving their factsheets, many landowners contacted the Coalition to learn more about the organization or to find assistance for their habitat projects. These are the kind of responses Nikki was hoping for. She believes the more people are aware and involved in stewardship, the healthier the Carolinian landscape will be.

Spread the message. Use Caring for Nature factsheets in your stewardship projects. Bulk copies free (as available) from office@carolinian.org. This project is supported generously by the EcoAction Community Funding program of Environment Canada, TD Friends of the Environment, Ontario Power Generation and many other partners.



Factsheet author Nikki May thinks this picture from the Halton factsheet perfectly represents the spirit of the factsheet project. Here, councilors Tom Adams, Renee Sandelowsky, Linda Elgar (the beaver) and Allan Elgar, pose for a photo after the government's announcement that over 284 ha (700 ac) of land would be protected in Halton Region, demonstrating how one community cares for nature.



The Carolinian Canada Coalition connects hundreds of groups and individuals across southwestern Ontario to protect and restore the unique nature and healthy landscapes of the Carolinian Life Zone, Ontario's most ecologically diverse region and home to 1/3 of Canada's Species at Risk.

We invite submissions of articles for the newsletter. For editorial guidelines, please contact: newsletter@carolinian.org.

Subscribe to our free, monthly on-line CCC ECO-NEWS, and you can receive (and post) updates on events and projects across Carolinian Canada. To subscribe, send an e-mail to enews@carolinian.org

Carolinian Canada News, Jan. 2009

Publisher: Carolinian Canada Coalition

Editor: Bronwen Buck

Design: Jane Thomson,
Over The Moon

Greening the Future in Southwestern Ontario

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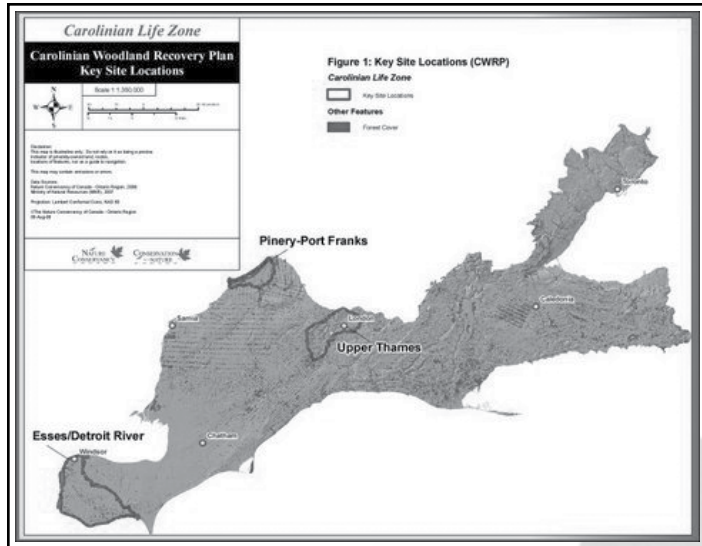
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Conservation Action Planning 101: An Introduction

Authors: Bronwen Buck and Jarmo Jalava for the Carolinian Canada Coalition

Innovative. Collaborative. Inclusive. Adaptive. These are some of the qualities of Conservation Action Planning (CAP), a process that is transforming the way we plan, implement and monitor conservation projects. Staff at the Carolinian Canada Coalition (CCC) along with both Canadian and US Nature Conservancies, has just initiated CAP with representatives from First Nations groups and public, private and non-governmental organizations in southern Ontario.



Carolinian Woodland Recovery Strategy Pilot CAP Areas coinciding with biodiversity hotspots

CCC is facilitating the implementation of these conservation plans within three of fifteen biodiverse “hotspots” located throughout Carolinian Canada. These places require urgent action to recover threatened species and habitats. They are also areas where conservation planning will bring the greatest benefits. The pilot areas include (1) Southwest Essex County; (2) Ausable River – Kettle Point to Pinery; and (3) The Upper Thames River watershed. The inaugural CAP meeting took place in October when approximately 30 individuals representing eighteen conservation groups met to begin refining project boundaries and defining their conservation priorities. By undertaking this initiative, participants join the ranks of leaders around the globe who are successfully creating positive environmental change.

CAP evolved through the global conservation efforts of US Nature Conservancy scientists. By testing their approach over decades, they honed methods of uniting conservation practitioners and diverse

stakeholders in constructive dialogue. They also learned how to set the stage for the successful completion of rigorous conservation projects such as those carried out in the Condor Bioreserve, Ecuador and La Amistad Park in Costa Rica and Panama.

CAP works because it lays out steps to define project boundaries, develop strategies for implementation and adapt these strategies to specific circumstances. Because the process normally invites input from various community stakeholders, discussion revolves around how conservation planning can complement the diverse interests of all involved.

Typically, those involved in the conservation field are already so overburdened that it would seem odd to promote yet another process. However, for practitioners charged with creating and maintaining ecological communities that balance with human interests, CAP can reduce stresses associated with the complexities of their work. It thus enables them to move large-scale ecosystem recovery projects forward with greater efficiency.

Most significantly for Carolinian Canada, CAP can rapidly address the needs of overlapping species at risk on a working landscape to move forward a larger vision for ecosystem recovery. Each pilot CAP area has over 50 species at risk that are dependent on stakeholder stewardship. CAP provides a clear path to develop, link, implement and monitor cooperative actions for species at risk. Practitioners can benefit from associated tools such as workbooks, guidelines, software and technical assistance.

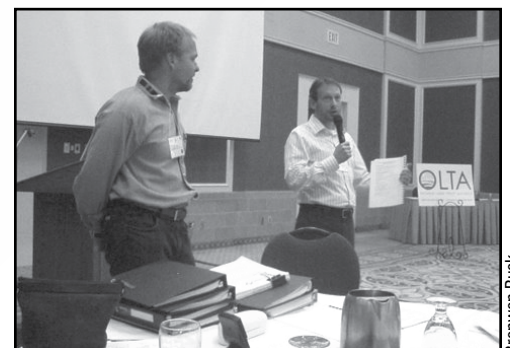
Citizen groups also find CAP helpful because it offers a forum to contribute in a non-partisan atmosphere. Despite their geographic proximity, many conservation-oriented groups in southern Ontario find themselves working in isolation. Lack of time and money are contributing factors. However, different philosophical standpoints and competition for scarce resources such as funding and membership may also limit communication. By facilitating the cross-pollination of ideas, CAP enables groups to streamline work and prevent duplication of efforts. Furthermore, the clear, achievable and measured approach CAP offers appeals to funders. Participants who partner through the CAP process become well positioned to apply for grants.

This article is the first in series about Conservation Action Planning in Carolinian Canada.

Canada Assistance for this project is provided by the the Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk and the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Second Woodland Recovery Update a Success

On October 23rd, around eighty conservationists, industry leaders and nature enthusiasts gathered at the second Woodland Network Forum to learn about conservation action planning (CAP) and share ideas about the future of southern Ontario's natural areas. Keynote speakers from the US Nature Conservancy and the Nature Conservancy of Canada spoke about conservation planning projects from global and national perspectives. Representatives from local conservation groups then described how they are streamlining their conservation efforts in southern Ontario. The forum kicked off the three-day Partners for Land Protection Conference held in London hosted by the Carolinian Canada Coalition, the Ontario Land Trust Alliance and the Thames Talbot Land Trust.



Jarmo Jalava and John Legge answer questions about Conservation Action Planning



A Voice for the Voiceless

The Coalition's New Venture into Social Marketing for Species and Habitats at Risk

Author: Bronwen Buck, Ecosystem Recovery Network Coordinator

Advances in science are increasing our effectiveness at recovering species at risk (SAR) but science alone cannot accomplish the wide range of conservation tasks at hand. On this highly settled landscape, people must be part of the solution. Success depends on our ability to engage more people in local stewardship, and enhance their understanding of how their well-being can benefit from such a commitment.

In response to the need for compelling outreach materials for science-based programs, the Coalition is excited to launch a multi-partner social marketing strategy for rare habitats and species. Our goal is to foster stewardship for SAR by promoting messages that resonate with key audiences across southwestern Ontario in partnership with a network of groups involved in SAR outreach. In the process, we will maximize our impact by working together and build capacity by developing 'outreach toolkits' that each group can customize to serve their own unique SAR programs. This program builds on the momentum of interest developed through the Caring for Nature factsheet project.

Social Marketing uses principles from traditional marketing and social psychology to influence positive actions. Instead of selling a product, social marketers use their powers of persuasion to instill specific values. The pink ribbon campaign for breast cancer awareness and the "Flick off" campaign for energy conservation are notable examples. Among the many social marketing strategies that are effectively changing habits and popularizing issues, most tend to focus on health or reduction of how to reduce ecological impact by changing consumer habits. The time has come for the conservation community to realize similar gains for habitat stewardship.

Around eight million people live within the Carolinian Life Zone, most of whom know little about the rare plants and animals of this region. How do

people learn to care about the fate of a diminutive lichen or a wart-covered toad? Can we convey our own fascination for Carolinian SAR as effectively as others have done for more charismatic species such as the panda or koala? What are the most effective ways to tailor messages about SAR for different audiences?

This program will explore the benefits of a social marketing approach focused on nature conservation.

As a first step in our strategy, we are inviting professionals and volunteers from stewardship organizations to join us in developing a plan to address these questions. A social marketing consultant will lead a working group of communication experts to define shared goals, create key messages and provide the basis for a joint marketing concept. All interested groups and individuals can be involved at a variety of levels, or as part of an outreach network where you can provide input, review our ideas and test the products.

To learn more about this initiative or find out how you can participate, please contact Bronwen Buck, Ecosystem Recovery Network Coordinator at 519-341-3199 or woodland@carolinian.org.



How do people learn to care about species at risk such as this Fowler's Toad?

MNR

Youth Helping SAR

Teenage Gangs Save Habitats

Author: Jennifer Standaert, Program Coordinator for Youth Programs within the MNR

On August 5, 2008, the Carolinian Canada Coalition (CCC) gathered seven Southwestern Ontario Stewardship Ranger Teams together at a Species at Risk (SAR) Training Camp. This educational camp was delivered in partnership with Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority, Camp Sylvan Scout camp and the Ministry of Natural Resources. Teams attending included the Chippewas of the Thames, Middlesex-Lambton, Waterloo-Wellington, Oxford-Elgin, Walpole Island First Nation, Brant-Hamilton and Chatham.

Stewardship Rangers and their Team Leaders spent their time in the rustic camp setting learning about the biologically diverse areas and rare species in southwestern Ontario. The two day event focused on Carolinian SAR, their level of risk and their recovery plans. Rangers became aware of their SAR habitat footprint and envisioned a SAR-friendly community through a group mapping exercise.

Each Ranger was supplied with a newly developed SAR Youth Training Manual. The Rangers learned from CCC representatives, Bronwen Buck, Jarmo Jalava and Nikki May who spoke about woodland recovery and how individuals can influence habitat protection. Denise Biega of Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority engaged the Rangers in interactive activities such as a SAR scavenger hunt, a GPS race, an owl prowl and an interpretive hike.



In "the barn": Bronwen Buck gives tips to the rangers about developing a career in conservation.

Jennifer Standaert



The Quest to Remove Invasive Exotic Species in Southwestern Ontario Continues

Author: Lauren Cymbaly

Lauren was hired as a co-op student through the Carolinian Canada Student Intern (CCSI) program in partnership with the University of Waterloo's Faculty of Environment. Cymbaly discusses her research here.

Restoration and invasive plant removal projects are underway at **rare Charitable Research Reserve**. Research on invasive plants is booming! New knowledge generated by the scientific community includes how invasive species spread, what triggers their spread, how persistent they are and how to best get rid of them. At **rare**, we are using this information to increase our efficiency at invasive species eradication.

With the invasive exotic plants mapped last summer, we now have the data to create action plans. Removing aggressive invasive species can be arduous, but thanks to funding from the Carolinian Canada Coalition's Student Intern Program, **rare** took on the challenge.



Lauren Cymbaly

Canada Thistle – *Cirsium arvense*

Projects range from removing individual patches of invasive herbaceous plants, to large landscape scale restoration projects. Community members, students and researchers help to carry out these initiatives. Given rare's unique habitats including cliffs and alvars, old growth forest and integrated streams and wetlands, removing species capable of altering ecosystem function takes priority. Examples of species with this capacity include: woody species such as buckthorn, Norway maple, Scot's pine and autumn olive; herbaceous species include leafy spurge, garlic mustard and Canada Thistle (which is actually native to Europe); as well as aquatics like Purple Loosestrife, and Flowering Rush.

Even armed with the latest removal methods, ridding the property of aggressive species is still a challenge. We are developing education and monitoring programs to ensure removal and restoration activities are well documented. This information will contribute to our knowledge base

about ecological, economical and successful strategies for removing these invaders from our landscapes.

Employers in Carolinian Canada may apply to cost-share a student for stewardship and research work for coastal species at risk in 2009. Details are posted on our website along with reports from Lauren and other students.



Lauren Cymbaly

Flowering Rush – *Butomus umbellatus*



Lauren Cymbaly

Leafy Spurge – *Euphorbia esula*

Each of the Ontario Stewardship Ranger Teams had the opportunity to give a presentation highlighting the projects they carried out, such as Fowler Toad research and butterfly tagging. Their presentations clearly conveyed the sense of pride they gained from these experiences.

CCC funded one of the Ontario Stewardship Ranger teams this summer through the MNR Species at Risk Stewardship Fund. Education is as important as the work the Rangers did to support SAR this summer. This camp will greatly benefit this next generation of land and resource stewards. These rangers now have a better appreciation for the rich diversity of Carolinian Canada and are better prepared to share their knowledge within their classrooms and communities.



Assistance for CCC Ecosystem Recovery projects described in this newsletter is provided by the Ministry of Natural Resources and many other partners.



Bronwen Buck

Rangers complete a community mapping exercise.



Reflections of My Summer with the O

Author: Rebecca Lidster

Rebecca Lidster worked for the summer as the Crew Leader for the Middlesex-Lambton Stewardship Ranger Team. Here, she reflects on her work experience which involved leading a team of 17-year-old Stewardship Rangers to restore habitat and work with SAR in the Carolinian Life Zone.



Becky Lidster

Buckthorn Removal in Briscoe Woods (London) with Reforest London

From Left: Cale Sprague, Lauren Schryvers, Chris Surita, Ryan Johnson, Becky Lidster In front of one of the piles of Buckthorn that we removed from Briscoe Woods

If you were asked to define the ideal job, what would this position involve? For me, it would involve working outdoors, meeting new people and carrying out a variety of tasks.

When I look at these criteria, I realize that I had my perfect job over three months in the summer as a team leader for the Ontario Stewardship Ranger Program. The program is a Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) initiative that provides seventeen year-olds with opportunities to work for the summer alongside various partner-based conservation projects. My position involved supervising the safety and work of the four Rangers that make up a ranger team.

My team participated in conservation work within Middlesex and Lambton Counties. An important aspect of my position was to develop a work plan for the summer. I involved existing partners and also initiated new partnerships with local conservation groups.

Our team worked on many exciting projects. The Rangers enjoyed the hands-on nature of the tasks. They also responded well to work they knew made a difference. Their favorite projects included: species at risk monitoring, the development and implementation of an environmental festival, assisting wildlife rehabilitation centres, invasive plant removal and management of tallgrass restoration sites.

The flexibility I had in organizing our work plan proved beneficial to me. I had the ability to develop a schedule that catered to the Ranger's interests so their experiences were enjoyable and educational. For example, all four Rangers had expressed to me that they enjoyed fishing in their spare time, so I knew that they may like to participate in an electro-fishing project.

FOREST FESTIVAL A HIT

With Games Like “Species Invaders” and “Oh Possum”, Who Can Resist Learning About Carolinian Habitats?

Author: Bronwen Buck, Carolinian Canada’s Ecosystem Recovery Network Coordinator

For three days, the woods around Jaffa resounded with the laughter of hundreds of children as they participated in the first ever Carolinian Forest Festival hosted by the Kettle Creek Conservation Authority. The event, which took place from October 7-9 at Springwater Conservation Area and the Jaffa Education centre near Aylmer, served to teach more than 900 grade six and seven students about the Carolinian Life Zone and forest ecosystems through dynamic displays and hands-on experiments.

Interactive games like “Species Invaders”, “Oh Possum!” and “Don’t be Cavity Free” introduced participants to invasive species, Carolinian habitats and the importance of cavity trees. I had a fantastic time hosting a fast-paced, competitive game of “Carolinian Pursuit” with Sharon Graham, a high-school student with Central Elgin Collegiate’s leadership class. The game, which pitted teams against each other to test knowledge of the Carolinian ecozone, kept us both on our toes because the students answered questions almost faster than we could ask them.

“The goal of the festival was to help students discover the importance

of local forests and the Carolinian Life Zone,” explained Betsy McClure, the Festival Coordinator. She added, “We hope the lessons they learned at the festival will help motivate behavioral changes and encourage good stewardship.” Overall, the students participated in 31 activities that focused on topics such as climate change, biodiversity and species at risk, conservation and forest ecosystems.

It took McClure’s superior organization skills and the concerted efforts of 70 volunteers daily to pull off the event. Professionals from government agencies, environmental organizations and private businesses as well as local community members and high school students presented activities. The festival was funded largely by the Ministry of the Environment’s Community Go Green Fund and the Ministry of Natural Resources’ Species at Risk Stewardship Fund. Additional support for the Festival was provided by the St. Thomas Chapter of the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, the Ministry of Education’s CODE Funding and numerous local and regional organizations.



Ontario Stewardship Ranger Program

Electro-fishing and practical application at the Brant Rod and Gun Club in July



Becky Lidster

From left: Cale Sprague, Ryan Johnson, Chris Surita, Lauren Schryvers



Becky Lidster

From left: Lauren Schryvers, Cale Sprague, Steve May, Ryan Johnson, Chris Surita, jumping trout

Did I mention camping? Our team was fortunate to be able to participate in two camping trips with other Rangers. We had one camping trip at Rondeau Provincial Park, where we helped with trail maintenance and mussel surveying. We also attended a Species at Risk Camp hosted by the Carolinian Canada Coalition at Camp Sylvan. Camping was a fantastic team-building activity for the Rangers.

One of my favourite aspects of the Stewardship Ranger program is that Rangers work locally within their community. This allows them to see the difference that they have made. I also appreciate the opportunities the

youths have to receive inspiration and advice from experts who work in the conservation field. I truly wish that I had known about this program when I was seventeen. The contacts, experiences and the skills Rangers acquire are absolutely invaluable.

Although supervising four seventeen year-olds had challenging moments, I took away so much from my experience. Did I enjoy the work? Definitely. Would I do it again next summer? In a heartbeat!



Rob McIlveen

Sharon Graham (L.) and Bronwen Buck (R.) host a game of Carolinian Pursuit at the Carolinian Forest Festival.

HOW ARE YOU GREENING CAROLINIAN CANADA?

Send Us Your Stories!

Thousands of people across Carolinian Canada are facing similar conservation challenges. Your experience can inform and inspire others and sharing our stories makes our conservation community stronger. Send us notes and photos about your interesting project, conservation success, innovative idea, dedicated volunteers or favourite natural area to newsletter@carolinian.org.

Road Kills Spark a Community Effort at Long Point *Spin-off Benefits May Enhance Local Economy*

Submitted by: Brian Craig

Making the landscape safer for wildlife and people, the Long Point Causeway Improvement Project (LPCIP) recently showcased its success to the many organizations involved. At the Canadian Wildlife Service property on Sept. 24, participants toured the temporary barrier fencing and artificial nesting mounds installed by local contractor Steve Armstrong and four students working for the Norfolk Environmental Stewardship Team – Adam Biddle, Jacob Cavan, Kevin Verkindt and Kyle Manthe.

Adam Wilson, a young scientist, presented his monitoring findings using methods that can be compared with previous years. So far, it appears that the number of animals killed on the road is lower than in previous years, especially in the fenced-off area. Nevertheless, Wilson has identified 132 reptiles, 419 amphibians, 85 birds and 44 mammals that were killed on the causeway between July 1 and September 19. He found 94 dead turtles including one Blanding's Turtle considered a Species at Risk (SAR). Wilson was hired by the Long Point World Biosphere Reserve Foundation (LPWBRF) with funding assistance from Environment Canada's Science Horizons program and works with Scott Petrie of the Long Point Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Fund, which stores road kill remains for identification.

LPCIP chair Paula Jongerden said the reduced death toll could result from a combination of factors - better public awareness, fencing and nest mounds, weather and even people stopping to help turtles across the road. "Unfortunately, the lower numbers could also be an indication of significant declines in some species' populations due to the annual amount of road kill year after year", said Jongerden.

A positive move is the recent decision by Norfolk County Council, endorsed by the Long Point Ratepayers, to reduce speed limits on the causeway from 70 to 60 kph. Over the long term, the LPCIP hopes to install a system of barrier walls and culverts or "ecopassages" for wildlife, wider shoulders for motorists, a trail for cyclists and pedestrians, making the area safer and more enjoyable for all. As well, several of the proposed culverts will be designed to re-establish strong water flows between the inner bay and the marsh, opening up more areas to fish spawning and reducing siltation in the bay.

Ultimately, by addressing the need to save its species at risk, this community is discovering that actions to benefit wildlife also improve the landscape for local residents, visitors, cottagers and the recreational economy.



Brian Craig

Barrier fence at Canadian Wildlife Service property on the Long Point causeway



Brian Craig

Project Manager, Rick Levick, pointing to a constructed turtle nesting mound

LONDON'S SIGNIFICANT WOODLANDS

Author: Sandy Levin

In September 2006, with the exception of one dissenting vote, London's City Council passed an amendment to its Official Plan. It changed the criteria for the identification of significant woodlands to one high criteria from the previous three high. This action was taken as a result of an earlier Ontario Municipal Board hearing where a Board member seemed to suggest that the city needed to do so. Not surprisingly, the Official Plan amendment was appealed by land owners, most of whom are in the development business. Joining as a party to the hearing was former city councillor, Sandy Levin. With the support of a number of environmental organizations, that brought together the London Woodlands Coalition, Sandy retained a lawyer and a planning consultant to provide support to the city's defence. The hearing, in January 2008, lasted 11 days (quite a long hearing when in essence, the argument was over one new sentence in the Official Plan Amendment). There was good news in July when the Ontario Municipal Board dismissed the appeal challenging the city's new standards for protecting woodlands from development. Unfortunately, the London Development Institute and the landowners were successful and were granted leave to appeal the decision of the Ontario Municipal Board. No date has been set, but the hearing will likely take place during 2009. For more information, contact Sandy Levin at s.levin@sympatico.ca

Pelee Island Bird Observatory Update

Author: Claire Sanders

The Pelee Island Bird Observatory (PIBO) (est. 2002) is a research station to track songbird migration. Each spring and fall, staff and volunteers conduct counts and band migrant songbirds at Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve as part of a long-term population study. PIBO is one of twenty stations that make up the Canadian Migration Monitoring Network. The network tracks population trends for over 200 species of songbirds that nest in Canada's boreal forest region and winter far south in Central and South America.



Kerry McGuire

Yellow Breasted Chat

The Blackpoll Warbler is an example of one of the species we capture during fall migration. In preparation for its transatlantic trek, it accumulates enough fat to double its weight, giving it enough energy for 90 hours of continuous flight. This would be equivalent to a 150-pound person gaining 15 pounds of fat per day until tipping the scale at 300 pounds, and then shedding 1.8 pounds per hour through vigorous exercise! Many of the birds passing through the island travel another 4000 km to get to their southern wintering grounds, which makes Pelee an incredibly important place for them to stop and refuel.

In addition studying migration, the data we've collected over the last six years also emphasizes the importance of the island for breeding birds and species at risk. The Canadian Western Lake Erie Islands provide some of the most biologically diverse natural habitats in the country and have one of the highest densities of at-risk species. Thanks to organizations like the Nature Conservancy of Canada, Pelee Island now has over 20% of its land conserved. Through a joint ecosystem-based

initiative with the Township of Pelee, and with funding through the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources Species at Risk Fund, in 2008 the Bird Observatory launched a comprehensive project to search for at-risk bird species in these protected areas.

We had several exciting finds during the study, including the discovery of several Yellow-breasted Chat territories. The Yellow-breasted Chat, a large secretive warbler that spends much of its time skulking in shrubby brush, is a Species of Concern in Canada. Remaining eastern populations are concentrated in Point Pelee

National Park and Pelee Island. A little bird with a lot of 'personality', their unique song consists of a strange assortment of whistles, cackles, mews, chuckles, rattles, gurgles, and pops. Though perhaps never very common here, the Yellow-breasted Chat prefers habitats where clearings have become overgrown with scrub and thickets. These successional habitats are disappearing as they get cleared for farming or development and as they become overgrown because of fire suppression.

A full report of our surveys will be soon published so the information will help conservation organizations make informed decisions for the Chat and other breeding birds on Pelee. Whether visiting for the spring or fall migration or looking for breeding birds and other wildlife, Pelee Island has a myriad of wonderful natural areas to explore.

For more information about the Pelee Island Bird Observatory or migratory songbirds, please contact us at info@pibo.ca or visit www.pibo.ca.

Chatham-Kent Greening Partnership

Author: Randall Van Wagner, Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority

June of 2007 was an important date for environmentalists and landowners within the Municipality of Chatham-Kent. Council members voted 100% to approve a proposal for a Chatham-Kent "Greening Partnership". This unique partnership involves the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority, Stewardship Kent, St. Clair Region Conservation Authority and the Municipality of Chatham-Kent to promote tree planting and restoration activities in the heart of the Carolinian Zone.

The partners have their work cut out. The area has very little remaining natural tree cover, and the Emerald Ash Borer beetle has destroyed much of what remains. To help forest recovery, municipal woodlots will undergo management plans. In addition, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's compensation funds from the removal of ash trees will be spent on trees for the region. Other funds, set aside from the chipping of ash trees from the Emerald Ash Borer Cut Zone, will also be spent on reforestation.

Two positions were created for program administration, landowner assistance, workshop facilitation and fundraising. While landowner assistance is the main focus, the Greening Partnership is also going to be growing their own tree seedlings in a Municipal greenhouse. During 2007, local tree seed was collected and stratified. This spring, we successfully grew over 10,000 seedlings including Shumard Oak, American Sycamore, and Kentucky Coffee tree. With assistance from Community Living residents, local school groups and Communities in Bloom volunteers, the program is setting higher goals for next year. Trees produced from this program will be used for community projects.



R. Van Wagner

Growing over 10,000 seedlings from local seed sources

Since the partnership's inception:

- We received grants of \$10,000 from the Evergreen Foundation and a grant of \$2,500 from the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation for a restoration project on Lower Thames Valley Conservation Area land.

Continued on page 10



Species @ Risk

By Laura Mousseau, Nature Conservancy of Canada

Volunteers Find Rare Iris on Pelee Island



Allen Woodliffe

Lamance Iris or Leafy Blue Flag

How well do you know your irises? Would you recognize a rare iris from a common iris if you saw it? To find out how not to miss it, read about this incredible discovery.

Within Canada, the **critically imperilled** Lamance Iris is found only in Ontario. Known by many names including the Zigzag Iris or Leafy Blue Flag, this native iris is considered endangered in two states in the U.S., and rare in many others. The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) lists the Lamance Iris as a high priority candidate for assessment as a species at risk.

The Lamance Iris can grow 25 to 30 centimetres high and has a beautiful blue, lavender or white flower with dark veins and yellow patches on the sepals. The stem of the iris is somewhat zig-zag in shape, being the origin of one of its common names, and has long, glossy leaves.

The Lamance Iris grows in the Mixedwood Plains ecozone of Canada and prefers moist, shaded woods but will also grow in swamps, prairies and meadows. The flowers bloom from May to June and attract bumblebees and other pollinators such as hummingbirds. Bumblebees easily transfer pollen as they collect nectar from the iris while

hummingbirds must use their head to push back the iris' petals in order to gain access to the nectar. Pollen is then transferred on a hummingbird's forehead.

A recent bioblitz conducted on Pelee Island re-confirmed a population of this rare iris. Natural Heritage Centre and Ministry of the Environment staff volunteering for the bioblitz discovered the population which is Canada's largest known at this point. NCC will include management details for this species in long-term stewardship planning for Pelee Island, including on-going monitoring of this population.

The Dwarf Lake Iris is another rare iris found on some of NCC's protected areas on the Northern Bruce Peninsula and Manitoulin Island. It is a globally rare species restricted to the coast of the Great Lakes and is both a federal and provincial species at risk.

You can help NCC protect and manage rare species like the Lamance Iris by donation to Ontario's Stewardship Endowment fund. To find out how please call Marnie Wellwood at 1-800-465-0029, extension 263 or email ontario@natureconservancy.ca.

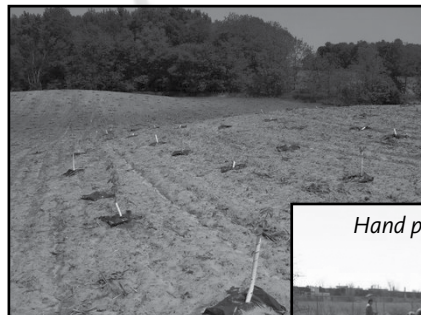
Chatham-Kent Greening Partnership

Continued from page 9

- Over 60,000 trees were planted in Chatham-Kent this past spring, through such programs as the Emerald Ash Borer Response Program (EABRP) and the Trees Ontario Foundation.
- Over 19 landowner's participated in the EABRP (Emerald Ash Borer Response Program) which resulted in over 50 acres of land restored within the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, including Auto Liv Manufacturing in Tilbury, which hand planted over 2500 seedlings on Earth Day.
- Over 4000 seedlings were planted in the Rondeau Bay Watershed.

Fall 2007 has seen several wetland projects excavated through Stewardship Kent in partnership with the LTVCA providing the tree portion of the project.

Landowners can learn more about the Greening Partnership by contacting Randall Van Wagner, Environmental Project Coordinator, at LT7@mdirect.net.



R. Van Wagner

Seedlings in the Rondeau Bay Watershed



Hand planting seedlings on Earth Day

R. Van Wagner



BRINGING NATURE HOME

Review By: Lorraine Johnson

I can just imagine the marketing meeting at Timber Press when it came time to discuss the subtitle for Douglas Tallamy's amazing book, *Bringing Nature Home*. An accurate subtitle would have been something like "Plant Suburbia with Insect-Friendly Native Species." But I suspect that the publisher was allergic to any mention of the word "insects"; the subtitle is the cozier sounding "How Native Plants Sustain Wildlife in Our Gardens." I'm all in favour of minor misrepresentation if it means that more people will read this important book. And it's not really misrepresentation anyway--as Tallamy argues (passionately, exhaustively, convincingly), wildlife is sustained by the all-important herbivores--the insects--at the lowest levels of the food chain, and if we want wildlife, we need to plant species that feed insects.

Insects are a hard sell, particularly for gardeners. We may be willing to allow some larvae to nibble away on plant leaves, but only if they turn into butterflies. Tallamy, however, encourages us to take a broader view: "a large percentage of the world's fauna depends entirely on insects to access the energy stored in plants." Insects eat the plants and then become food themselves for creatures higher up the food chain. As Tallamy puts it, "I cannot overemphasize how important insect herbivores are to the health of all terrestrial ecosystems."

Another possible subtitle for this book would have been something like "Why Alien Plants Just Don't Cut It." This is where Tallamy has made his most major contribution in a book chock full of major contributions. With simple, clear logic, he shows the fallacy of the argument that non-native plants contribute to biodiversity, an argument that any native plant proponent has probably heard numerous times. The problem Tallamy points out is that a numeric accounting (saying, for example, that the 5,000 non-native plant species currently inhabiting the natural areas of North America increase biodiversity) doesn't take into account these plants' lack of any functional contribution to the ecosystem. Focusing on the food-for-insects angle, for example, Tallamy shows that the non-native additions to our flora do virtually nothing in terms of providing food for native insects. He cautions that few researchers are compiling the data, but his summary of the research to date is compelling--for species after species, he enumerates the few native insects that feed on non-native plants (which he calls "alien" throughout), and compares it with the dozens or hundreds that feed on these same plants in their home range. The implication is clear: most insect herbivores can only eat plants with which they share an evolutionary history.

There's another side to this that will gladden the heart of any native plant proponent who has been enmeshed in endless arguments about what constitutes a native plant. Many have been challenged with the question, "if a plant has been here for hundreds of years and has naturalized in the wild, why shouldn't it be considered native?" Tallamy has a refreshing (and refreshingly simple) take on this: "When 'native' and 'alien' are defined in terms of the presence or absence of historical evolutionary relationships, the confusion over these concepts disappears." Thus, a plant is native when it has evolved to interact with the whole complex system, when it contributes to this functioning web of relationships. In other words, sure European buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) berries feed the birds, but this non-native (and invasive)

plant does little in the way of supporting insects, which most birds depend on for protein and fat. Like most alien plants, the non-native buckthorn has yet to evolve into ecosystem usefulness in its new home, to become "native" in any meaningful sense.

Despite the potentially depressing nature of Tallamy's message, the book is strangely hopeful. Yes, the landscapes of North America have

been transformed to the point that few places could be considered "wild." But suburban ecosystems offer a huge opportunity, and likewise an important role, for gardeners. If native plants are being decimated in the wild, if non-native plants now form a large component of our "wild" flora, then we can and should plant natives in our gardens because we "can no longer rely on natural areas alone to provide food and shelter for biodiversity."

This is one of those life-changing books that has the power and persuasiveness and scientific credibility to transform our actions and our landscapes. Highly recommended.

Lorraine Johnson is the editor of the recently published collection of essays The Natural Treasures of Carolinian Canada.

Article originally published in the Blazing Star, the newsletter of the North American Native Plant Society



Swallowtail on a Dense Blazingstar

Graham Buck



WHAT'S HAPPENING IN OUR BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOTS?

Friday, June 5, 2009

Ball's Falls Centre for Conservation
Vineland, Ontario



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