

# the TaTTLer

*a newsletter of the*

## Thames Talbot Land Trust

*Protecting our legacy for future generations*

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### Meadowlily Nature Preserve

*Terry Grawey*



In October of 2004, work was undertaken on site improvements at the Meadowlily Nature Preserve with the construction of a bridge across the tributary stream that bisects the main trail. This work represents the second phase of a site improvement project that was funded through a grant from the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation.

The first phase of the site improvement work, which was undertaken earlier in the year, included the installation of a cedar post & rail fence and gateway entrance along the Meadowlily Road frontage. The bridge construction component was postponed to allow for the completion of design drawings and the retention of an on-site contractor to supervise the bridge construction. The on-site work was undertaken by the personnel from the 31 Combat Engineer Regiment (the Elgins), a Canadian Army reserve group from St. Thomas, who generously volunteered their time and expertise on the project.

The new bridge is constructed of red cedar planks and rails over steel I-beam supports. The crossing will help to improve pedestrian safety by providing a dry and unobstructed access over the tributary stream, which can experience significant flows during high run-off periods. The bridge will also help to minimize damage along the banks of the stream, which has occurred in previous years as a result of improvised grade level stream crossings.

The bridge project represents the second phase of a comprehensive site improvement project at the Meadowlily property. The final phase of this project, scheduled for the Spring of 2005, will include a small extension to the gateway fence along Meadowlily Road, and the installation of signage at the main trail entrances to identify permitted activities for the public. The Thames Talbot Land Trust acknowledges the assistance of all those who have participated in

this worthwhile management project - in particular the TD Friends of the Environment Foundation and the 31 Combat Engineer Regiment.



# President's Report

*Bernie VanDenBelt*

In this, our Spring 2005 newsletter, we are pleased to highlight some of the Trust's recent and current initiatives. In August of 2004, TTLT received confirmation of funding from the HIVA Environmental Fund to assist with several profile building initiatives. These include the development of a new website, a new brochure and a portable display as well as the purchase of a digital camera.

Our new camera was on-duty at this year's AGM (see AGM story on page 4) and our website at <www.ttl.ca> has been up and running since early March. Please take the time to check it out sometime in the near future. We also welcome any feedback you might want to share with us about the site.

## 2004

In October of 2004, three TTLT delegates - Muriel Andreae, Terry Grawey and I - attended the OLTA Fall Gathering. Attendance at the Gathering is part of TTLT's Board development program. It provided us with the opportunity to further enhance our knowledge and skills in a variety of areas as well as develop valuable contacts in the land trust community. See Muriel Andreae's article on page 6 for further details.

The end of 2004 also marked the completion of plans for additional site improvements at our Meadowlily Nature Preserve. These included a new stream crossing, additional signage and an entrance gate at Meadowlily Road. A successful grant application was made to TD's Friends of the Environment to assist with the cost of materials for this project.

The stream crossing and entrance gate were completed last fall with the assistance of volunteers from the 31st Combat Engineer Regiment, and new signage relating to public use of the property will be installed later this spring. You can view pictures of the new bridge and entrance on the website. For a more detailed account of management activities at the Meadowlily property, see Terry Grawey's cover page story.

## 2005

In February of 2005, the Trust registered its first conservation easement on the 100 acre property of Eric and Marsha Eberhardt in Perth County. This easement will protect a diverse and mature woodland located on the property, one of the oldest reforestation projects in Ontario. It will also protect over 45 acres of renaturalizing land while allowing organic agricultural production to continue.

A dedication ceremony will be held on June 5th to celebrate the completion of the conservation easement on this remarkable property. See the notice in this newsletter for full details. We hope you can join us in marking this important milestone for the property, its stewards and the Trust.

In March, the TTLT received notification of approval from the Canada Revenue Agency to accumulate property (funds). Normally, charitable organizations must spend at least 80% of their receipted donations from the previous year on their charitable works.

This letter of permission grants the Trust a temporary exemption from this provision, allowing us to set aside funds over time for a future land purchase. Currently, the Trust is talking with potential partner organizations regarding the securement of sites with especially high ecological value.

## Looking Forward

Within the next few weeks, we anticipate the completion of a new three year fund raising and communications strategy that is currently being prepared under the direction of our Fund raising and Marketing Committee. The plan will outline measures to further build the profile of the Trust within the region and help us secure the required financial resources as our scope of activity increases.

We also hope to have our new portable display and brochure completed by early summer. The display will allow us to have a greater presence at community events and the updated brochure will provide a more current statement of the Trust's mandate and activities. We look forward to educating more people about the land trust movement, and TTLT in particular, through these new resources.

And, most importantly, we look forward to furthering and expanding our work with landowners throughout the region who are looking at conservation options for their properties.

Shortly after last year's AGM, in the summer of 2004, the Trust formalized its first planned gift - the future bequest of a property with high ecological significance in Middlesex County. We are very grateful to the owners for the confidence they have placed in the Trust and look forward to further developing our planned giving program.

TTLT is currently involved in active discussions with several other landowners in Elgin, London/Middlesex and Perth Counties to determine whether we can assist them in achieving their conservation objectives. Suffice to say, there are a lot of exciting initiatives underway with much to look forward to over the coming year.

In closing, I would like to thank our all volunteers, our members and all our other generous supporters. Our many achievements have been possible only through your continued goodwill and assistance. Best wishes for spring and coming summer!

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### Contributors to this issue

*Muriel Andreae  
Bonnie Bergsma  
Bill DeYoung  
Terry Grawey  
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# Wildness in the Forest City

Bonnie Bergsma, M.Sc.

I came to London as an ecologist and botanist who began her studies in the High Arctic on Ellesmere Island. I have slowly made my way south through the boreal forest and then spent 10 wonderful years living and working in Muskoka on the Canadian Shield in the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Forest Zone. Now I am in the Carolinian Life Zone and the diversity of species I encounter has increased again, many of them new to my eyes and an exciting challenge to my botanical skills.

As I visit places like the Meadowlily Nature Preserve along the South Branch I pass by trees familiar to the Thames River flood plain environment. Sycamore, Hackberry, Cottonwood are distinctive Carolinian trees. Sycamore with its mottled bark of grayish brown colour; Hackberry with its deeply grooved bark; and Cottonwoods which achieve girths of great width and release clouds of cottony seeds in the spring time that float in the wind.



When I am lonely for the North Country I can go to the Sifton Bog in the summer and feel like I am in the boreal forest. Not only does it look like, but also it smells like a northern forest, which is a good thing in my mind. The cotton grass at Sifton Bog in bloom reminds me of the fields of cotton grass of the High Arctic that I enjoyed walking through.

I have now spent over eight years as the City Ecologist, dealing with issues of urban ecology. I need to include the word urban, because there is nothing that I have seen that has been unaffected in some way by people. Somehow many believe this to be an indication of

a degraded environment and that it is okay for development to encroach as it is no longer "ecologically significant" and thus not worth saving. I have just been to Clara Brenton Woods where the City invested a great deal of money to purchase a small piece of woods that were zoned and approved for development. Was it worth it? I think so, but it distresses me to observe the indicators of an uncared for resource. Construction debris and other forms of litter, trampled pathways that run all over the place and lawn and garden refuse dumped into the natural area from yards that back on to the woods. There are some majestic trees in this wood: American Beech and Black Cherry to name a couple. The Beech is most prominent and spectacular. It grows on the high knolls and slopes and valleys that make this woodland so unique.

I have been involved in other efforts to save our remaining woodlands and wetlands. Some have been won and some lost, but my role is to state our reasons why something should be saved or not. These are hard choices to make, as some of the natural areas really are in such poor condition that they are unsustainable and some form of development may be a better use of the land. But I like to find the good in every natural area that I go into, because it gives me hope for the future and what could be done to restore or rehabilitate the area. If there is anything of significance then it is worth saving, in my opinion. Fortunately, we have a guideline to determine significance and this is the fair tool to use so that science can determine the right decision. In this way science can help to preserve wilderness just as Thoreau reminds us, "in wildness is the preservation of the world".

# Annual General Members Meeting

7 April 2005



Approximately 45 supporters gathered at the Stoneridge Inn & Conference Centre on April 7th for TTLT's 2005 Annual General Meeting. The event began at 7:00 p.m. with registration and the viewing of displays.

The Business Meeting portion of the AGM commenced at 7:30 p.m. Bernie VanDenBelt, TTLT's President, welcomed those in attendance and provided an overview of the Trust's recent and current activities. Terry Grawey, Secretary-Treasurer, then reviewed TTLT's 2004 financial statements, noting that the Trust's financial position remains strong.

Prior to electing the Board for 2005 /2006, the President thanked this year's two departing Board members, Shelley Kaufman and Bill Prieksaitis. Both Shelley and Bill have served the Board well since its inception in 2000. Their departure is part of a phased transition; over a period of three years, those directors who have been with the Trust since its inception are stepping aside to allow for an orderly transition to a new set of directors.

Elected to a third two year term at this year's AGM were Bonnie Bergsma and Ian Seddon. Newly elected to the Board this year were Jane Bowles and Stan Caveney. The balance of the Board is entering the second year of their current two year term.

Jane Bowles works as a freelance ecologist, principally in southwestern Ontario but also internationally. For the last three years she has worked with Walpole Island First Nation and Environment Canada on species at risk and

habitat stewardship on Walpole Island. Jane is also Adjunct Professor in Biology and Geography at the University of Western Ontario, Curator of the UWO Herbarium and Director of the Sherwood Fox Arboretum. Stan Caveney is a Professor in the Biology Department at the University of Western Ontario, where he teaches courses in insect biology and molecular science. He has served on the Board of the McIlwraith Field Naturalists of London and on the Environmental and Ecological Advisory Committee of the City of London. In his spare time he writes articles on his encounters with our local natural environment.

Following the adjournment of the Business meeting, those in attendance enjoyed an informative and inspiring presentation by Mathis Natvik. Mathis is a restoration ecologist who has worked in Chatham-Kent and surrounding counties for ten years experimenting with new techniques of restoring diverse habitats.

In his presentation, Mathis reviewed restoration techniques for forest, wetland, and grassland habitats in southern Ontario. The importance of proper site preparation was emphasized as was consideration of a site's hydrology. In introducing and thanking Mathis, Board member Bill Prieksaitis paid tribute not only to Mathis' considerable expertise in the field of ecological restoration, but also his obvious passion for the cause. The evening concluded with many conversations during a refreshing reception.



# Eberhardt Farm

## TTLT's first conservation easement completed!!



In February of 2005, the Thames Talbot Land Trust entered into its first conservation easement agreement. This agreement - with Eric and Marsha Eberhardt - will protect the natural and agricultural features of a remarkable 100 acre property whose conservation history dates back nearly a century. The Eberhardt farm is located in the municipality of Perth East north of Sebringville.

The site has several distinct zones which are reflected in the easement agreement. Approximately 30 acres are devoted to the production of certified organic grains and vegetables with each of its three fields surrounded by hedgerows.

An eight acre former pasture at the back of the property was reforested in the 1920s and is recognized as one of the oldest reforestation efforts of its kind in southwestern Ontario. While the site was formerly grazed, a number of the original sugar maple and beech trees survive

to this date, and much of the native ground cover - including a variety of spring ephemerals - has regenerated and is now well re-established. The arrangement and variety of species planted - including cheery, walnut, ash, basswood and pine - give the site a distinctly "natural" appearance.

Most of the balance of the property has been allowed to regenerate to natural cover over the past few decades, and features many early successional species including ash and elm. With the assistance of area school children and Scouts in the 1990s, 30 000 trees and shrubs - including white pine - were planted. This part of the property is now largely reforested, providing additional wildlife habitat.

In signing this easement agreement, the Eberhardts seek to fulfill the wishes of Hamitage Richardson who entrusted the property to their care. It was the Richardson family who had begun the work of restoring the site which was, by all accounts, particularly barren at the turn of the century. In 1910, the Richardsons embarked on an 80 year effort that transformed the face of the farm. It is a work that the Eberhardts have faithfully continued. Today, the property stands as a testament to the remarkable stewardship efforts of these two families.

The Eberhardt easement represents the first formal agreement arising from the Trust's Headwaters initiative. This initiative seeks to protect lands of ecological significance at the headwaters of the Thames River which has been designated a Canadian Heritage River.

### EBERHARDT DEDICATION CEREMONY

**Sunday, June 5, 2005**

**2:00 ~ 4:00 p.m. – Rain or Shine**

**2:00 p.m. Welcome**

**2:15 p.m. Dedication Ceremony**

**2:30 p.m. Reception**

**3:00 p.m. Property Tour**

*Please bring footwear suitable for hiking, a hat, insect repellent and rain gear.*

#### **For more information, contact:**

- ◆ Bernie VanDenBelt at 652-2189
- ◆ Eric or Marsha Eberhardt at 393-6951
- ◆ The TTLT website at <[www.ttl.ca](http://www.ttl.ca)>

#### **DIRECTIONS**

The Eberhardt property is located at # **5063 on Line 39**  
**From London / Mitchell:** Take Hwy 23 north to Mitchell.

Turn right (east) in Mitchell onto Hwy 8 towards Stratford. Turn left (north) on Road 140 (It's right after the Hillside Nursing Home; a Lutheran church is at the corner). Go to the second sideroad (Line 39) and turn left (west). Turn into the first lane on your left.

**From Stratford:** Take Hwy 8 west through Sebringville. Turn right (north) immediately after the O.P.P. station. Go to the second crossroad (Line 39) and turn left (west). Go past the first sideroad (Road 140) then turn into the first lane on your left.

# Ontario Land Trust Fall Gathering - 2004

*Muriel Andreae*

The Ontario Land Trust Alliance (OLTA) "2004 Gathering" was held at Chaffey's Locks, on the Rideau waterway, from October 22 to 24, 2004. The themes of this annual conference included: conservation easements; governance of trusts; recruiting and managing volunteers; the Great Lakes Conservation Blueprint; tax implications of charitable donations and planned giving, and stewardship of green space in urban areas.

This provincial conference was attended by delegates from land trusts from across Canada including three TTLT directors: Bernie VanDenBelt, Terry Grawey, and Muriel Andreae. A pre-conference meeting of the National Land Trust Coalition had agreed that they would proceed to form a formal national association. Bernie was chosen to chair the steering committee, which will develop a list of issues for the association, and plan methods to coordinate its activities with existing local and provincial land trust organizations.

Of particular interest was the conservation easement session - easements are a major challenge for land trusts. Two sessions were presented by staff from the American Land Trust Alliance (LTA). They spoke on the development of a code of Standards and Practices for the 1600 land trusts in the U.S., and their experience with conservation easements. Easements cost the American trusts more than land titles, because of the increased time required for record keeping. Suggestions for managing easements included:

- ◆ a "sign on" and "sign off" system so that when an easement property changes
- ◆ monitoring completed by both volunteers and by contract professionals, with the landowner in attendance
- ◆ developing an "institutional memory" for your land trust, so that fifty years from now the trust's directors will know why an easement was accepted, or why supporters were financing the trust.

One of the best parts of a gathering like this is exchanging ideas and meeting people from all over North America. The quiet and beautiful setting was also an asset to the Gathering, with highlights being frost-covered oak leaves on the lawn toward Lake Opinicon, and a moon-lit walk over the locks and through the rural setting. It was enlightening to learn how trusts are operating in other provinces, and of the many challenges for "mature" groups such as the Muskoka Trust and the Ontario Heritage Foundation. It was very encouraging to meet such a large group of enthusiastic volunteers and employees, willing to discuss challenges and to agree that the current landscapes and current situation aren't perfect, but also to agree that land trusts are a valuable force toward the conservation of land for the future. There are many challenges, but there are many supporters, and the OLTA Gathering was a good place to meet those supporters.

## **TTLT Board of Directors 2005 / 2006**

**Muriel Andreae  
Bonnie Bergsma  
Jane Bowles  
Stan Caveney  
Terry Grawey  
Michelle Kanter  
Mary Kerr  
Jim McCoomb  
Ian Seddon  
BernieVanDenBelt**

### **to contact the Board**

Tel: 519-652-2189  
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**OLTA Gathering 2005  
November 11-13**

**Kempfenfelt Conference Centre  
Barrie, Ontario**

The Ontario Farmland Trust (OFT) is pleased to invite you to the 2005 Farmland Preservation Conference: Meeting the Challenge of Farming in the Urban Shadow.

The conference will take place at the University of Guelph on Tuesday, June 28th, 2005. (Apologies to our strawberry farming friends, but we hope this day works best for most)!

The registration fees are \$75 for OFT members and \$125 for non-members. The fee includes lunch and dinner. With the financial support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation we are able to offer financial assistance to individuals who find the cost of attending this event prohibitive.

Visit [www.farmland.uoguelph.ca](http://www.farmland.uoguelph.ca) for more information about the event and details on how to register.

*Cut along this line and send this form in using the label at the lower right.*

**Membership Application (membership period is Jan - Dec)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Postal Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
eMail \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Fees**

Individual Member (18 and older): \$50 \_\_\_\_\_  
Youth/Student (under 18): \$25 \_\_\_\_\_  
Corporate/Group Affiliate: \$100 \_\_\_\_\_

**Donations**

Donation amount: \_\_\_\_\_  
Payable to Thames Talbot Land Trust  
*(tax receipts are issued for all membership fees and donations)*

*Cut and tape this label to your envelope and mail to:*

Thames Talbot Land Trust2  
PO Box 25054, 385 Wellington Road2  
London ON N5X 5X92

# Capacity Building for a Sustainable Land Trust

*Bill DeYoung*



The Thames Talbot Land Trust took shape and became real in 2000 following a series of planning meetings that began in 1998. Part of that process was the identification of the Vision, Mission, Goals and Objectives for the new organization and its geographic area of activity. As a maturing Land Trust with five years of real-life experience to its credit, the Board initiated a review process to review and to refine, if necessary, those important guides to the ongoing work of TTLT.

In the formal language of its incorporation, the aims and objects of TTLT are:

To carry out the following aims and objects particularly throughout but not restricted to the London, Elgin and Middlesex regions and their contingent watersheds:

- i. To protect areas of ecological value in order to ensure the protection of plants and animals and to maintain ecological systems;
- ii. To protect, maintain and enhance lands and waters of importance to water supplies, water quality and sub-watershed functions;
- iii. To protect lands of recognized significance for their agricultural value, cultural value or scenic beauty;
- iv. To acquire and hold lands and waters of ecological and/or agricultural value for conservation purposes;
- v. To obtain money by way of gift or otherwise to accept, hold, sell, or administer funds, gifts, legacies, benefits to property of any sort, without limitation as to amount, value or source, and to use the income or any part of the principal of the funds of the Land Trust;
- vi. To implement conservation practices on lands under the Land Trust's management through the development of management plans and technical assistance;
- vii. To work cooperatively with governments, citizens, and organizations in furthering the mission of the Land Trust;
- viii. To educate the public about land stewardship through landowner contact, workshops and speaking engagements; and to conduct research on conservation and land stewardship and to publish and disseminate the research results; and
- viii. To do all things incidental and ancillary to achieving the objectives of exercising the powers of the Land Trust.

Over the past half-year the Board has been guided by a management consultant, Lyndan Communications, to develop an information package suitable to provide a case for support for funding from philanthropic foundations. A committee has worked on answering the simple yet tough questions of who, what, when, where, why and how.

The outcome will be a Fund Development Plan including an action plan for Philanthropy and Fundraising, and for Communication. This will support the growth of the Land Trust to ensure its organizational strength and its capacity for sustained activity to achieve its vision of leaving a legacy of healthy landscapes for future generations.

The committee and the consultant have prepared a draft document that describe strategic plans to achieve the goals of the Land Trust. Tactics and timelines are identified for building and sustaining membership, for securing and maintaining land acquisitions and conservation easements, and for obtaining the money necessary to manage the organization and to manage its operations through donations, bequests and grants.

The Board will report in the next issue of the TaTTler on its steps toward building the internal capacity of the Land Trust to fulfil its mission *in perpetuity*.

