

Glossary

Endangered Species – species that are threatened with immediate extinction or extirpation if the factors threatening them continue to operate. Included are species whose numbers have been reduced to a critical level or whose habitats have been so drastically reduced that they are deemed to be in immediate danger of extinction

Extirpated Species – species that are no longer found in the wild in the portion of their natural range that is within Ontario but that still exist elsewhere in the world



Cerulean Warbler



Hog-nosed Snake

Species at Risk – any wild plant or animal threatened by, or vulnerable to extirpation in Ontario or extinction. Species at Risk are assigned a designation (i.e. Special Concern, Threatened, Endangered or Extirpated) to represent the degree of imperilment

Species of Special Concern – a species that is particularly sensitive to human activities or natural events but is not an endangered and/or threatened species

Threatened Species – species that are likely to become endangered if the natural and/or human pressures limiting them are not reversed

Sustainable Development – development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs

Sustainable Use – the use of components of biodiversity in a way and at a rate that does not lead to their long-term decline, thereby maintaining the potential for future generations to meet their needs and aspirations. Sustainable use in this strategy refers to consumptive uses of biological resources

Thames Talbot Land Trust
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Did you know?

The Monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) is of “special concern” in Ontario and Canada! This means it is a native species that is sensitive to human activities or natural events. Declines in the Ontario populations of monarchs are related to logging and disturbance of the over-wintering sites in Mexico and use of pesticides and herbicides, as well as loss of habitat in Ontario.



Monarchs are common where there is open land, along roadsides and in city gardens and parks. Canada and Mexico have made a joint declaration to nominate sites within both

countries as part of an International Network of Monarch Butterfly Reserves. Areas along the north shore of lakes Ontario and Erie have been designated as reserves.

What can you do? Plant a garden with native wildflowers as a nectar source, including milkweed as a food source for its caterpillar.



Skunk's Misery

Newsletter Issue 1
Thames Talbot Land Trust
www.ttlc.ca



See you at the Fair!

The Thames Talbot Land Trust and Community Futures Development Corporation of Middlesex County are joining up to provide information about both organizations at this year's Glencoe Fair.

Come out and visit with us, bring along your questions, we'll have things to do, lots to see and gifts of unbelievable value!

**Can't wait?
Call us or visit our website.
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A citation in the Dictionary of American Regional English says that Skunk's Misery is a nickname for an unimportant or out-of-the-way place. If you search the name, you'll find dozens of examples of villages and towns that at one time were referred to as Skunk's Misery. Scranton, Pennsylvania, for example, started out as Skunk's Misery. But none can claim the colourful history or natural backdrop that's found in Southwest Middlesex County.

Life was tough for area farmers a century ago. Hog farmers in Mosa Township might get \$6 for selling a select pig, but could make a better living selling skunk pelts to buyers in Europe, where skunk was in fashion. Later, during the “Dirty 30s”, skunk pelts (traded under the pseudonyms “Alaskan” or “American Sable”) were in demand as the fashion trend to wear fur garments remained popular at a time when the supply of fur from other furbearing animals was limited. Many farmers living near the forested wilderness marked on early maps as Mosa Forest made money trapping skunks instead of raising hogs. When Joe Tunks (75), born and raised in Mosa Township (but now a Chatham resident), was asked recently how Mosa Forest came by its popular name ‘The Misery’, his succinct reply was “because it was misery for the skunks”. While participants in the annual Middlesex Butterfly Count at Skunks' Misery in July may argue that it is the pestiferous mosquitoes in The Misery that drive the local skunks to distraction, we suspect that Joe Tunks' opinion, based on the practice of skunk trapping, is historically more accurate - although we sympathize with naturalists involved in the butterfly count.

Then there's the Misery's ability to harbour the likes of Orval Shaw who, in the late 1920s, eluded hundreds of OPP and local law enforcement officials by hiding in the bush and swamps of the local badlands, filling a year's worth of newspapers with headlines and bringing a touch of Bonnie and Clyde to the area.

However Skunk's Misery got its name (if you have your own version, let us know) one thing remains, at least for now; the natural heritage of the flora and fauna in the area. Skunks' Misery is one of the most significant remnant forests in the Carolinian Life Zone and is noted for its diversity of upland and wetland plant communities (some globally rare), as well as its animal and plant inhabitants.

What history will be written depends on us.

Southwestern Ontario's Natural Paradise

A small Presbyterian church in Wardsville has practiced careful selective logging over two decades to protect Skunk's Misery. This unique name conjures up a past when swamps dominated the landscape. Today, at 1,215 ha (3000 ac), it is one of the largest woodlands in southwestern Ontario, protecting the headwaters of the Thames and Sydenham Rivers and stretching from Newbury to Bothwell.

Rare wetland, prairie and woodland ecosystems are stewarded by over 50 private landowners, as well as, the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority and the Middlesex County Woodland Advisory Committee, a group of caring citizens that uses best woodland management practices to sustain the site's rich natural heritage and community values.

- Middlesex County Factsheet 2008



Why Does Nature Count?

Health, Wealth and Southern Ontario's Greenspace

Many of us may not make a connection between protecting a wetland and our municipal water bill, or between fields covered with vegetation and the success of local businesses. Nonetheless, our understanding of these linkages is growing. And the more we learn, the more we see that healthy natural areas are crucially important for long-term economic success and societal well-being.

Natural areas provide valuable green services that include flood protection and water filtration that can generate savings on public works such as water treatment plants. The sustainable use of natural assets in forestry, eco-tourism and green energy can provide direct economic benefits to communities and landowners. Emerging research illustrates how greenspace has positive impacts on human health and well-being.



When we lose greenspace, we lose opportunities for new businesses; we lose the natural systems that clean our water and air; and we lose access to nature that is so integral to our emotional and physical health.

For these reasons, there is growing support for the idea that we should value natural areas for the socio-economic benefits they provide, as well as for their character or scenic beauty. Accordingly, we should also appropriately recognize that stewardship and conservation make southern Ontarians richer – as individuals and as a community.

Nature Counts, an initiative of many agencies and organizations, is intended to promote a better understanding of the social and economic benefits of greenspace and to encourage a dialogue about the challenges and opportunities ahead. It is based on a variety of research and information, from local to international, and it considers the issues in the context of southern Ontario.

There are opportunities for policy makers and municipal leaders, as well as those in the development, business and environmental communities to work toward an integrated vision of town and country – one that balances growth with greenspace conservation, seeing greenspace as an attractor for economic success and the foundation of our healthy communities.

Maintaining a Legacy

Skunk's Misery is one of the largest and most significant forested blocks remaining in the Carolinian Region of southern Ontario.



It has been identified as a Carolinian Canada site, a Provincially Significant Wetland, an Area of Natural and Scientific Interest, an Important Bird Area, and as a key biodiversity area within the Great Lakes Region. Skunk's Misery is surrounded by the communities of Newbury, Wardsville and Bothwell. The residents of these communities and the surrounding rural area have demonstrated considerable civic pride and interest in the natural features of "The Misery".



Skunk's Misery is noted for its diversity of upland and wetland plant communities, some of which are globally significant. It is home to a great diversity of animal and plant inhabitants, including many that are rare or at risk. The heart of Skunk's Misery is a 1200-ha complex of old-growth hardwood forest and swamp in Middlesex County that is connected by wooded ravines to the Thames Canadian Heritage River to the south.

Active in the Thames River watershed, The Thames Talbot Land Trust is a registered charity that works to create natural legacies through the permanent protection of lands of natural and agricultural significance.



The Trust works with landowners to ensure that conservation and careful stewardship will be their legacy for future generations.

Several important new nature reserves have been established in the region including Joany's Woods near Sylvan, Newport Forest near Wardsville, and the Meadowlily Nature Preserve in London.



Whether Skunk's Misery's rare habitats survive and its endangered animal and plant species thrive depends on decisions we make today. On behalf of all our descendants we thank you for your support in this important conservation venture.

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