



LONG POINT BASIN
LAND TRUST
VIEWPOINT

SPRING & SUMMER 2011

President's message

The past year has been an exciting time for Long Point Basin Land Trust. Our conservation programs continue to deliver timely and needed support for various environmental initiatives ranging from reptile conservation to the establishment of new nature reserves. The organization was founded 15 years ago and over the last year or so we have hit our stride which is reflected in our growing base of volunteers and supporters, the increasing number of enquiries we receive regarding land stewardship options, and in the diversification of our programs – programs that now include social networking and other online resources.

LPBLT's reptile conservation efforts are showing positive results and most encouragingly fostering a growing support and sympathy for the plight of turtles and snakes. The



LPBLT's newest nature reserve contains a range of habitat types, including this pond in the Big Creek valley fringed by Eastern White Cedars.

publication of our two biodiversity handbooks has put valuable tools into the hands of hundreds of people who are using these resources to protect and restore habitat and wildlife populations.

A generous gift from the Woytas estate by the Cecilia and Joe Kiss family has led to the recent expansion of LPBLT's network with the creation of our third reserve – a provincially-significant wetland near Delhi in Norfolk County. Finally, we look forward to launching a campaign for our fourth nature reserve later this year. Long Point Basin Land Trust extends heartfelt thanks to all of its generous supporters, from donors of ecologically-significant lands, to local business and individual donors, and our growing team of volunteers.

Yours in conservation,
Peter J. Carson

LPBLT Celebrates New Nature Reserve Donated Delhi wetland a Great Gift to Nature

By Gregor Beck

The donation of a provincially-significant wetland property near Delhi in Norfolk County has signalled the start of what is shaping up to be a busy and banner year for Long Point Basin Land Trust (LPBLT). The property becomes LPBLT's third nature reserve and is a generous gift from the Woytas estate by the Cecilia and Joe Kiss family. Long Point Basin Land Trust is very excited about the securement of this new nature reserve and expresses its sincere thanks to the family.

Nestled in a deep valley alongside Big Creek north of Delhi, the property is as diverse ecologically as it is varied topographically. Despite its relatively small size (12 acres), the property includes a diversity of habitat types, including: mature hemlock and hardwood forests on the ravine slopes and uplands; a small stream flowing through the narrow

valley; a perched grass and sedge wetland; and, a cedar-fringed ox-bow pond at the property's lowest elevations (visible just east of Swimming Pool Road).

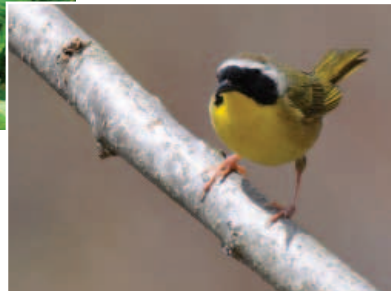
Preliminary field surveys by LPBLT biologists in 2010 and 2011 have confirmed the ecological significance of this provincially-designated wetland. Given the property's diverse topography, drainage patterns, soils and location, it is not surprising that the vegetation is equally diverse. Upland areas are lush with a canopy of Sugar Maple, American Beech, Black Cherry, White Pine, Eastern Hemlock, hickories and oaks, with an understory rich in dogwoods, Hop Hornbeam, Wild Ginger, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Bloodroot and trilliums. The lowland areas near the creek and wetlands are thick with Skunk Cabbage, Marsh Marigold, Great Blue Lobelia, Joe Pye Weed and a diversity of sedges and grasses.

Wildlife species observed are equally diverse. The rapidly growing list of birds observed at the property includes:

Wood Duck, Red-tailed Hawk, Chimney Swift, Belted Kingfisher, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Great Crested Flycatcher, Eastern Wood Pewee, Red-eyed Vireo, Wood Thrush, Baltimore Oriole and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. With biological inventory only just beginning, LPBLT has



A small stream on the property flows from Eastern Hemlock and hardwood hillsides down through a series of wetlands providing habitat for diverse flora and fauna, including Skunk Cabbage (above), Common Yellowthroat (right) and Marsh Marigold (far right).



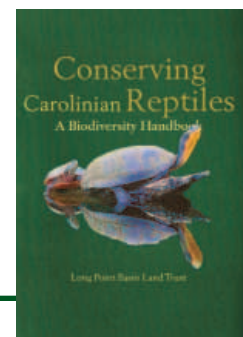
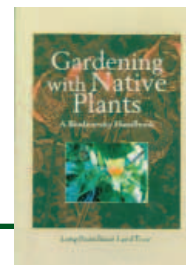
already documented a few reptiles: Snapping Turtle, Midland Painted Turtle and Eastern Gartersnake.

Long Point Basin Land Trust is very excited about its newest nature reserve not only because of its ecological significance, but also because it demonstrates the importance of long-term stewardship of natural areas by private landowners. LPBLT is grateful to the Kiss and Woytas family for entrusting us with the future stewardship of this property. For further details and information, please visit LPBLT's website or Facebook page.

Note: Because of the rugged and steep terrain, the property is not currently open to the public.

It may be hard to believe, but 2011 marks Long Point Basin Land Trust's 15th year of operation as a charitable conservation organization! This makes LPBLT one of the more established members of the Ontario land trust community. The following short chronology lists a few of LPBLT's milestones:

- 1996 • LPBLT incorporated as a registered charitable conservation organization; assists Nature Conservancy of Canada in campaign to acquire Konrad property; start of large-scale habitat restoration efforts (an ongoing program)
- 1998-2002 • assists with Picketum (i.e. spruce) research with Dr. Al Gordon
- 2003-2004 • LPBLT undertakes campaign and acquires Jackson – Gunn Old Growth Forest; assists Nature Conservancy of Canada in Lake Erie Farms campaign
- 2006-2007 • launch of conservation capacity-building project; hiring of project manager; launch of LPBLT website and newsletter
- 2007-2008 • LPBLT undertakes campaign and acquires Arthur Langford Nature Reserve
- 2009 • launch of Conserving Carolinian Reptiles project, including construction of reptile habitats and establishment of reptile reporting program
- 2010 • publication of "Gardening with Native Plants" biodiversity handbook ; first Autumn Eco-Fest and Hawkwatch weekend
- 2011 • donation of Delhi wetland nature reserve; publication of "Conserving Carolinian Reptiles" handbook and launch of new internet conservation resources; launch of new nature reserve campaign



Celebrating Biodiversity Long Point Basin Land Trust's new handbooks

By Adam Timpf and Gregor Beck

LPBLT has published two handbooks which celebrate biodiversity and inform practical conservation measures. The series' first publication focuses on native plant gardening and the second focuses on reptile identification and conservation. Both are profusely illustrated with colour photographs and beautifully designed.

In 2010, Long Point Basin Land Trust launched "Gardening with Native Plants: A Biodiversity Handbook." This 24-page, colour booklet was written with local gardeners and nature enthusiasts in mind. The handbook features plants, gardening tips and ways to attract wildlife, such as butterflies and song-birds, to gardens in the central Carolinian Region.

The handbook introduces the unique ecological and gardening conditions of the Carolinian Region and provides an overview of natural habitats. It lists 150 species suitable for local gardens, including trees, shrubs, vines, grasses, sedges and wildflowers. A checklist of native plants summarizes preferred soil, light

and moisture conditions required by each species. For wild-flowers, flower colour is described also. "Gardening with Native Plants" illustrates that the action of individuals, even on a relatively small scale, can make a difference and benefit native flora and fauna.

Building on the success of its first handbook, LPBLT published in 2011 "Conserving Carolinian Reptiles." This 60-page publication serves as an excellent guide for all Ontario turtles, snakes and skinks, and includes over 150 photographs and illustrations to assist with identifications.

The publication includes: an overview of the Carolinian Region and its reptile fauna; information and photographs for all Ontario reptile species; a summary of threats to reptiles; examples of conservation projects; and, information on how the public can help conserve reptiles.

The guides can be purchased from Long Point Basin Land Trust directly or from a growing number of merchants and conservation groups. For information on ordering, please contact LPBLT or visit our website or Facebook page. Note: LPBLT is pleased to provide complimentary copies to local schools and libraries.

Project Profiles

Conserving Carolinian Reptiles Making a Difference for Turtles and Snakes in the Long Point Basin

By Gregor Beck

Long Point Basin Land Trust's Conserving Carolinian Reptiles project is now into its third year and the number of people participating in efforts to protect and recover local snake and turtle populations continues to grow. Conservation partners across the region are noting that despite the ongoing challenges facing reptiles, the tide of public opinion seems to be shifting and more and more people are going out of their way to protect these imperilled ancient reptiles.

LPBLT's reptile conservation project was developed in direct response to declining turtle, snake and lizard populations and ongoing habitat threats in the central Carolinian Region. It was also developed because our Region represents a significant refuge for reptiles which provides an excellent opportunity to

conserve many species. The importance of this work remains critical and must be viewed as a long term effort since six of seven turtles and half of our dozen snake species remain listed "at risk."

Reptiles face many threats, including habitat loss, persecution, poaching, pollution and multiple threats relating to roads. To address the various threats, LPBLT is continuing its multi-faceted conservation program. Our efforts include: reptile surveys and population monitoring; public outreach and awareness; direct landowner contact and stewardship support; installation and monitoring of constructed reptile habitats; and, a public reptile reporting program.

The public reptile reporting program has proven a particularly valuable way for LPBLT to meet wildlife enthusiasts and to gather vital information about reptile populations and distributions. Since 2009, over 170 LPBLT friends and volunteers have participated in the program. Incredibly, these dedicated individuals have submitted records for more than 1,400 reptiles. This information informs conservation actions and is invaluable

to LPBLT and conservation partners in establishing a baseline for monitoring populations. The information has also helped with planning for nature reserves, informed decisions about where constructed reptile habitats could be installed, and identified areas where road signage or other measures can be implemented to help reduce road mortality.

To illustrate the importance of the reptile reporting program, one needs to look no further than Long Point Provincial Park. In fall 2010, project volunteers, LPBLT biologists and Ontario Parks' staff noticed large numbers of snakes on the roadways within the Park. LPBLT continued to document the occurrence of reptiles on the road through the Thanksgiving weekend and compiled a short report illustrating the high incidence of road mortality. Over the subsequent months, LPBLT and park staff worked together to raise the funds necessary to install reptile barrier fencing in priority areas within the Park. The work of the Long Point Causeway Improvement Project had illustrated how successful this type of wildlife barrier can be in reducing road kill which made decisions about methods and material very straight forward. With the help of LPBLT volunteers, a significant issue of road mortality was swiftly identified and addressed; installation of the fencing will be complete by summer 2011. Hopefully, this new fencing will help reduce the problem of road mortality in the Park.

LPBLT's reptile conservation program continues to advance its goals using a combination of other activities also. To date, LPBLT has installed close to 30 reptile habitats across the region, working in close cooperation with landowners, public agencies and other conservation groups. These habitats include turtle nesting sites and pond enhancements, snake nesting structures, and hibernacula (i.e. snake over-wintering sites).

While it is expected that it will take several years for new habitats to be discovered by reptiles, LPBLT is encouraged by some early usage of these habitats by turtles and snakes. These exciting observations include: an adult Blanding's Turtle seen at a constructed turtle nesting site during the 2010 nesting season; colonization of a rehabilitated (i.e. "naturalized") former irrigation pond by Midland Painted Turtles; and, the presence of several species of snakes at or adjacent to LPBLT-constructed hibernacula, nesting and sunning sites.

The Conserving Carolinian Reptiles project continues to gain momentum and the increasing levels of public support and enthusiasm is most encouraging. While the challenges for reptile conservation remain very great, LPBLT is excited about refreshed public concern and growing participation in conservation efforts.



The endangered Spotted Turtle (above) is a seldom-seen resident of the Long Point Basin. Its preferred habitats include bogs, ponds, marshes and wet woodlands. While best known for its striped pattern, the Eastern Gartersnake (above right) can be quite variable in colouration. The all-black (or melanistic) form is common at Long Point and Turkey Point.

LPBLT reptile reporting volunteers John and Cornelia Fitzpatrick get a chance see a Milksnake and Eastern Foxsnake up close at Autumn Eco-Fest & Hawkwatch weekend. Reptiles courtesy of Sciensational Ssnakes!!



Conserving Carolinian Reptiles: How to Help

Protect and restore habitat: leave buffer strips along streams and shores; retain hedgerows and leave natural areas; visit LPBLT’s website for ideas on how to create reptile habitat

Help reduce road deaths: drive carefully and slow down near wetlands, woodlands and green spaces to avoid hitting turtles or snakes

Help reptiles in the water: please boat slowly near wetlands and in shallow water to help avoid collisions with reptiles; dispose of fishing line and tackle properly

Reduce pollution: dispose of toxins safely at hazardous waste depots and implement sound environmental practices at home, work, cottage or farm to reduce pollution

Help reduce predation: clean up litter and secure garbage since garbage attracts predators, such as raccoons and gulls, which may feed on young reptiles and nests

Report poaching: report illegal activities, such as the collection of wild turtles and snakes to the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources’ Tips Line: 1-877-TIPS-MNR (1-877-847-7667)

Understand and respect: learn more about the turtles and snakes in the Long Point Basin and help in conservation efforts



Long Point Basin Land Trust biologist Adam Timpf surveys the Delhi wetland nature reserve for wildlife.



LPBLT has undertaken numerous habitat construction projects for at-risk reptile species, including snake nesting structures (above left), turtle nesting areas (above right) and snake hibernacula (i.e. over-winter habitats). Projects are undertaken close to natural habitats and distant from known threats, such as roads. To minimize potential disturbance, construction is sometimes undertaken in early winter.



Landowners can help create reptile habitat very simply. For example, adding logs to a pond is a great way to provide safe basking sites for turtles (above). Creating or retaining areas with natural vegetation helps turtles, snakes, birds and other wildlife. Visit LPBLT’s website for further information on reptile habitat creation.

Reptile sightings wanted!

Please report sightings of all turtles and snakes to our website. Thank you - your observations are protecting turtles and snakes

Check out our website!

LPBLT has produced several new resources about reptiles and reptile habitats. Interested in how to create turtle habitat on your farm? Want to know what a hibernaculum is? Having trouble identifying a snake or turtle? Visit us online for free factsheets longpointlandtrust.ca !



***Did you know?** Eastern Hog-nosed Snakes are harmless to humans, but they can put on a threatening act. They will flatten their necks mimicking a cobra and hiss – and they will even roll over and ‘play dead.’*

Protecting Grassland Birds and Habitat

By *Jeremy Hatt*

Grasslands are teeming with life, although this may not be evident to a casual observer at first glance. From subterranean havens of ants and voles, and the interconnected lives of wildflowers, bees, butterflies and insects, to the secret lives of spiders and the nesting places of birds.

Grasslands provide vital habitat for many species, including many species at risk. And, with less than 3% of Canada's original grasslands remaining, it is clear that the habitat itself is highly threatened. This, in turn, is having a significant negative impact on birds and other species that rely on them.

One of those species is the Bobolink, now designated as Threatened by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC). With its complex, gurgled song of warbles and whistles, its motley plumage of black, white, and yellow, and unusual mating display, the Bobolink is a beautiful grassland resident.

Ranging across much of North America, Bobolinks nest near the ground in agricultural fields and grasslands, arriving in Ontario in mid-May. According to Breeding Bird Survey data, in the period between 1970 and 2009, the Bobolink experienced *annual* declines of 4.2% across Canada and 2.9% in Ontario.

The relatively recent and critical decline of the Bobolink is likely caused by a number of factors. Reforestation of former agricultural lands, intensive farming practices, pesticides, and climate change in Ontario may all be affecting the species in its breeding range. In the southern United States, hunting by grain farmers and habitat degradation affect numbers during migration. In the Caribbean, they are sold in food markets, and in their overwintering grounds of South America male Bobolinks are captured and sold as pets.

One of the primary causes of nest failure in Ontario is cutting of hay fields which the species favours for breeding. Delaying or modifying the timing of hay cutting is one of a number of practices that could make a big difference for Bobolink in Ontario and elsewhere.

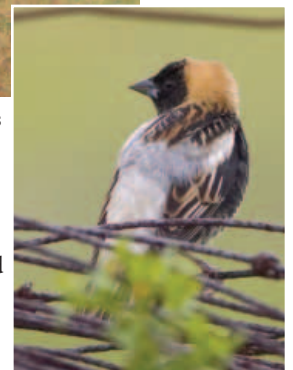
The Eastern Meadowlark is another species dependent on grassland habitat and a healthy insect population, and it too is being increasingly viewed as at risk. They are often first noticed

by their song. A showy species, the Eastern Meadowlark boasts a streaked pattern of soft brown on the back and dark brown streaking down its sides, contrasted with a striking yellow front with a bold black V-shaped breast band. When flushed, it displays conspicuous white outer tail feathers.

The Vesper Sparrow not only shares its habitat with the Eastern Meadowlark but also a diagnostic field mark – white outer tail feathers. Its song is also distinct with a series of accelerating warbles and trills. Like other grassland species, the Vesper Sparrow has experienced declines in recent years. It, too, depends on healthy insect populations during the breeding season.

An uncommon breeder in Ontario, the Upland Sandpiper is a dignified, slender-necked species preferring grassy fields with patches of open ground. Although difficult to find in the Long Point Basin, this species could benefit from grassland habitat stewardship, especially in Haldimand County toward the east end of the Land Trust's catchment.

Conservation of grasslands and grassland species is of increasing conservation concern. Planting native grasses and other prairie plants in unused agricultural fields, reducing pesticide use and controlling invasive species are a few ways to help. For more information, visit www.tallgrassontario.org or contact LPBLT (nature@longpointlandtrust.ca). LPBLT is particularly interested in hearing from rural landowners who would be interested in participating in future grassland conservation efforts.



The threatened Bobolink (right) faces many perils during the year ranging from the loss of nests and nesting habitat on the breeding grounds (above) to persecution and collection for the pet trade during migration and on the wintering grounds.

Jeremy Hatt, LPBLT project biologist 2010.



LPBLT treasurer Al Robinson (left) speaks with volunteer science advisor, Kevin Kavanagh, during Autumn Eco-Fest and Hawkwatch weekend 2010 at Long Point Eco-Adventures.

Building Conservation Capacity

Over the last year, LPBLT has been working hard to reach new audiences and provide more support for individuals and groups working to better the environment in our community. In essence, LPBLT has been diversifying and strengthening its supporter base through the establishment of a number of new or enhanced conservation programs. These efforts seek to address emerging conservation needs in our region, provide additional resources to our traditional supporters and volunteers, while at the same time engaging new people in environmental and volunteer activities.

The following is a snap shot of some of the highlights of these enhanced capacity building efforts over the last year:

- Celebration of a huge increase in volunteerism in local conservation efforts – LPBLT has more than doubled its base of volunteers and supporters since 2009. **Thank you!**
- Publication of biodiversity handbooks has attracted scores of new volunteers through LPBLT’s native plant gardening and reptile conservation efforts
- Increased conservation resources available on our newly re-launched website: www.longpointlandtrust.ca
- Creation of the first regionally-focused nature sightings board on our website
- Launch of LPBLT’s social media presence on Facebook and Twitter (@lpblt)
- Co-hosting, with Long Point Eco-Adventures, “Autumn EcoFest and Hawkwatch” weekend
- Establishment of monthly donor and business sponsor programs which are providing vital support for LPBLT’s mission
- Development of new business partners in the Carolinian Region who are helping to promote the Land Trust’s mission through our publications
- Provision of conservation support and stewardship advice to scores of landowners and members of the public on diverse environmental topics.

These activities dovetail with existing LPBLT programs and have helped the organization deliver support and resources to a growing number of volunteers, environmental stewards, youth, landowners, businesses, as well as community and conservation partners.

LPBLT Supporters

LPBLT extends its sincere thanks to the following for supporting the Conserving Carolinian Reptiles project in 2010-2011:

- Fred Eaglesmith Annual Charity Picnic,
- HIVA Environmental Fund,
- The John and Pat McCutcheon Charitable Foundation,
- The Government of Canada Habitat Stewardship Program for Species at Risk,
- the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources’ Species at Risk Stewardship Fund



LPBLT extends its sincere thanks to the Ontario Trillium Foundation for supporting its capacity building efforts:



A leading grantmaker in Canada, the Ontario Trillium Foundation strengthens the capacity of the voluntary sector through investments in community-based initiatives. An agency of the Government of Ontario, OTF builds healthy and vibrant communities.

LPBLT thanks the following businesses for their support:

Steve Armstrong Excavating



Monthly Donation Form

Long Point Basin Land Trust welcomes monthly donors whose financial assistance provides invaluable ongoing support for the organization's charitable conservation programs. If you are interested in becoming a monthly donor, please complete and return this form to Long Point Basin Land Trust, along with a cheque marked "Void." If you require additional information, please contact us.

I (we) authorize Long Point Basin Land Trust to process a debit, electronic or other payment form in the amount \$ _____ from my (our) account on a monthly basis, beginning _____. I (we) understand that I (we) may change or cancel this monthly conservation contribution in future by providing written confirmation to Long Point Basin Land Trust. I (we) enclose a cheque marked "Void" from the account to be debited.

Signature of Donor(s) _____

Print name(s) _____

Address _____

City/town _____

Postal code _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Date _____

Please return this form with a "Void" cheque to:

Long Point Basin Land Trust
P.O. Box 468
Port Rowan, Ontario N0E 1M0

The Long Point Basin Land Trust is a registered charitable non-governmental organization (Charitable Registration Number 89113 5493 RR0001). We respect your privacy – please see our privacy policy at www.longpointlandtrust.ca.



Join LPBLT at **Forest Fest** at St. Williams Nursery & Ecology Centre (885 Norfolk County Road 24, St. Williams). This year's theme: "Celebrating All Things Wood." Dates: August 13 and 14, 2011, 10am to 4pm.

Mark your calendar for a fantastic day, evening or weekend of music and outdoor fun: **The 17th Annual Fred Eaglesmith Charity Picnic** at Springwater Conservation Area near Aylmer. Info: www.fredeaglesmith.com Dates: August 19 to 21, 2011.

Join LPBLT for **Autumn Eco-Fest & Hawkatch** at Long Point Eco-Adventures (1730 Front Road near Turkey Point). Dates: October 1 and 2, 2011.

Congratulations to the winners of LPBLT's 2010 charity raffle: Kevin Kavanagh (KOWA binoculars), Rob Stephenson (Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Ontario) and Megan Olgilvie (hasty notes and native plant handbook), with special thanks to KOWA optics for donation of binoculars.

LPBLT congratulates the Nature Conservancy of Canada on recent announcements regarding several highly significant conservation achievements in Norfolk County: major nature reserve expansions at multiple sites in the Southern Norfolk Sand Plain; the purchase and permanent protection of Backus Woods; and, securement of a conservation easement on wetlands owned and stewarded by the Turkey Point Company.

Please help us save paper and costs. Sign up to receive your newsletter and updates electronically. To subscribe, visit our updated website and check out the new conservation resources and factsheets: longpointlandtrust.ca

Connect with Long Point Basin Land Trust online.... Follow us on Twitter (@lpblt) or become a fan on Facebook. You can also read about or report local nature sightings on the new sightings board.

Photo credits: Bobolink, p. 6 © Carol Horner; Eastern Hog-nosed Snake, p. 7 © Joe Crowley; all other photos © Gregor Beck



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**Please support the Land Trust!
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* LPBLT nature reserves

