



LONG POINT BASIN
LAND TRUST
VIEWPOINT
SPRING 2009 NEWSLETTER

From the President

This newsletter is being published at a particularly exciting time. The Land Trust has had its best year ever with heightened levels of support and participation from our growing community. Our capacity building project is now finished and surpassed many of the goals we had set. The Arthur Langford Nature Reserve project was fully funded, paper work tidied up, and a formal dedication was held on a spectacular day last October. This magnificent property is a very fitting tribute to Arthur.

We are gearing up now for a busy field season. We have just received funding to launch our "Conserving Carolinian Reptiles" project – a vitally important initiative. This year's focus



Photo © Joe Crowley

The Blanding's Turtle is one of seven species of native turtle found in the Long Point Basin area. Its dome-shaped shell and yellow chin are good field marks. It is designated as Threatened. Six of our region's seven turtle species are listed as at-risk.

will be on habitat creation and enhancements, plus volunteer-based surveys for turtles and snakes across the region.

The Trust will continue to remove invasive plant species from sensitive areas to restore native biodiversity. And, our annual fall work day is yet another way to roll up our sleeves for conservation (see p. 8).

As a small, charitable organization, the Trust relies on individuals, businesses and grants to fund our vital conservation work. Your continued support is much appreciated.

*Yours in conservation,
Peter Carson*

Conserving Carolinian Reptiles

by Gregor Beck

Reptiles. They are among the oldest surviving relics of the dinosaur age. Many are among the longest-lived vertebrates on the planet. And, numerous species can be found within the Long Point Basin in just about every type of habitat, making this a vitally important location for their conservation. This also makes the Long Point area an excellent location to observe some of Ontario's most interesting and intriguing wildlife species.

The Long Point Basin's rich and impressive diversity of reptiles includes 19 species of turtles and snakes. And, whether you are a reptile-lover or a little bit leery of things that slither and crawl, it is hard not to be fascinated by turtles and snakes. Names like Map Turtle, Spotted Turtle, Stinkpot (or Musk Turtle), Spiny Softshell, or Ring-necked, Red-bellied and Hog-nosed Snake are evocative and reflect a diversity of shapes, sizes, colours, habits and habitats.

Our reptile fauna includes several species that are still relatively common, such as the Midland Painted Turtle and

Garter Snake. However, the trend for a great many snakes and the majority of turtles is very worrisome since the range and population of numerous species continues to dwindle locally, provincially and nationally. The plight of wildlife becomes particularly obvious when species known formerly to be common and widespread suddenly become noted as "at risk."

The current decline of the Snapping Turtle is a good example of how the prospects for a formerly common and widespread species can change quickly. Late in 2008, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) listed the Snapping Turtle as "Special concern," meaning that it may become threatened or endangered because of a combination of biological characteristics and identified threats. This widely-occurring species is Canada's largest freshwater reptile; it can live for over 100 years.

COSEWIC notes that long-lived animals, such as the Snapping Turtle, breed later in life, making them highly susceptible to threats that increase adult mortality. COSEWIC states that the Snapping Turtle "was assessed as Special concern because of illegal harvesting, persecu-

tion and mortality on roads that increase adult death rates.” Road kill is particularly acute when adult females leave the water in search of nesting sites. The loss of breeding age adults, along with predation of nests and young, are leading causes for the species’ decline.

Unfortunately, the Snapping Turtle is just one of many local reptile species now listed as “at risk.” In fact, 12 of our region’s 19 turtle and snake species share the dubious distinction of being on the species at risk list. At present, our local reptile list includes 3 Endangered species (facing imminent extinction or extirpation), 5 Threatened species (likely to become endangered unless contributing factors are reversed), and 4 Special concern species. Threats to reptiles are diverse, but are known to include: habitat loss; habitat alteration (e.g. dams, shoreline reinforcements); pollution; direct mortality (e.g. road kill, boat traffic, persecution, pet trade, food collection); and, predation of nests, young and adults by wildlife attracted by human activity (e.g. raccoons, skunks, possum).

With a mission that includes the protection of natural habitats and biodiversity, and the recovery of species at risk, the Long Point Basin Land Trust is greatly concerned about the status and well-being of our region’s turtle and snake species. With this in mind, the Land Trust will be

starting in 2009 a new conservation and outreach program to help protect and recover reptile populations in the region.

The goals of the “Conserving Carolinian Reptiles” project include: the recovery and conservation of reptile species at risk and their habitats, and the building of community support and public participation in reptile conservation efforts. The project aims to reduce human-induced mortality of reptiles; raise public awareness about reptiles, their population status and trends, and recovery efforts; document important habitats; and, engage partners, youth, landowners and conservation groups in practical reptile recovery projects.

In the coming months and years, Long Point Basin Land Trust will be working with partners, landowners and the public to help protect and recover our region’s rich diversity of reptiles. In so doing, the Land Trust will be promoting conservation and stewardship awareness and helping to benefit diverse natural habitats and wildlife communities. Since the Long Point Basin is vitally important to reptile populations across the lower Great Lakes region, our collective efforts here will be vitally important for the long-term survival of these ancient creatures across Ontario and beyond.

Reptiles of the Long Point Basin

Turtles and Snakes	Conservation status (COSEWIC)
Spotted Turtle	Endangered
Blanding’s Turtle	Threatened
Stinkpot (Musk Turtle)	Threatened
Spiny Softshell Turtle	Threatened
Northern Map Turtle	Special concern
Snapping Turtle	Special concern
Midland Painted Turtle	Not designated at risk
Eastern Foxsnake	Endangered
Gray Ratsnake	Endangered (Carolinian population)
Eastern Hog-nosed Snake	Threatened
Queensnake	Threatened
Eastern Ribbonsnake	Special concern
Milksnake	Special concern
Dekay’s Brownsnake	Not designated at risk
Garter Snake	Not designated at risk
Northern Watersnake	Not designated at risk
Northern Ring-necked Snake	Not designated at risk
Red-bellied Snake	Not designated at risk, uncommon
Smooth Greensnake	Not designated at risk, locally uncommon



Photo: © Mary Gantzboore

The Eastern Hog-nosed Snake is a medium-sized, generally mottled snake species. When threatened, it may coil its body and spread its neck – or sometimes ‘play dead.’

The Hog-nosed Snake, like all other snakes in the Long Point region, is non-venomous.

Newport Forest: A Perpetual Natural Legacy

by Peter Carson

In June 2007, Kee and Pat Dewdney through their company Omnibus Research Inc. made a generous donation of a 110-acre property to the Thames Talbot Land Trust (TTLT). This gift of an ecologically-rich conservation area bordering the Thames River was a planned and thoughtful project. The property, which they named the Newport Forest, is part of a much larger forest and field complex known as Skunk's Misery.

The Dewdneys are well known for their appreciation of nature and willingness to act to promote and protect it. For years, they grew a collection of native trees in their yard and then each spring gave them away to anyone who shared their enthusiasm and appreciation of these lovely plants. They are long-time members of the McIlwraith Field Naturalists of London and have always been generous in their contributions towards worthy conservation undertakings such as the Long Point Basin Land Trust's (LPBLT) Jackson – Gunn Old Growth Forest.

Kee and Pat purchased the property in 2000 with the intention of protecting it as a sanctuary and then leaving it to a conservation organization through their estate. In 2007, they decided to gift the property outright to TTLT rather than wait until some time in the future. By making the gift while they are still active they have been able to work with TTLT to help build the vision that they have for the property.

The Dewdneys' gift qualified for the federal government's Ecogifts Program which provides enhanced tax benefits and reduced capital gains implications. An additional benefit provided through the program is a legal recognition of the gift under the Income Tax Act; this recognition provides for penalties for any unapproved land use changes or disposition in the future. Pat and Kee's actions have set an example for the many other community-minded people who are concerned about protecting some of southern Ontario's natural areas and species for future generations.

The Long Point Basin Land Trust is a "qualified charitable conservation organization" under Environment Canada's Ecological Gifts Program. For more information on LPBLT, please visit www.longpointlandtrust.ca. For more information on the Ecological Gifts Program, visit www.on.ec.gc.ca/ecogifts.

Picetum Research: Acting Locally with Global Applications

by Gregor Beck

The Land Trust was honoured in 2000 when asked by Dr. Alan Gordon to collaborate in his "Rescue and Conservation of Unique Gene Pools of Spruce" project. Over subsequent years, the Trust worked with Al Gordon to secure funds from TD Friends of the Environment and The Ontario Trillium Foundation to transplant seedlings from nursery beds at the St. William Nursery to the Picetum near Turkey Point. (A Picetum is a collection of spruce trees, and Picea is Latin for spruce.)

This unique collection includes representatives from across Canada and around the world, including high and low elevation specimens as well as spruces from northern and southern climes. Many are unique crosses which Dr. Gordon has been able to cultivate, whereas others are representatives of populations now gone from the wild. This important assemblage of genetic material has important implications in a world threatened with changing climates.

With the support of countless community volunteers and local businesses, Dr. Gordon has been able to move the young trees to their new home, steward the collection and continue his life's work. The collection represents an important research project but is also important to conservation. The Picetum lands themselves are used by hikers, hunters, birdwatchers and botanists, as well as families out for a stroll.



Photo: © Gregor Beck

Photo: © Al Gordon

The late Doug Jenereaux was extremely active in helping to maintain and steward the spruces at the Picetum.

Spruce boughs and cones from one of the Picetum plots.

Advancing conservation in the heart of the Carolinian region

Long Point Basin Land Trust works in one of the most ecologically-diverse parts of the country. This area is also home to a very large number of species at risk, making our efforts particularly timely and important. To help make a difference locally, LPBLT has been engaging in a number of hands-on habitat restoration activities, helping species

at risk, and planning future conservation efforts.

Over the last many months, LPBLT has been working diligently to raise awareness and understanding within our community about the organization's mission and activities. As a young charitable, non-governmental organization, LPBLT knows how important it is to build partnerships with other conservation groups, landowners and the public.

Here's a snapshot of just some of LPBLT's recent activities:



Photo: © David Agro



Photo: © Gregor Beck

Long Point Basin Land Trust received 3 awards of distinction from the Norfolk

County Great Tree Hunt. LPBLT received awards for the greatest Yellow Birch, American Beech and Sugar Maple. All 3 giant trees were found in LPBLT's Jackson – Gunn Old Growth Forest, highlighting the significance of this important natural treasure. LPBLT treasurer, Al Robinson, and secretary, Jim Harlow, received the recognition plaques at the NWOA meeting.

- Participated in a dozen major outreach activities, including community events and presentations to landowners and groups about land trusts and species at risk.
- Hosted field trips and natural heritage training sessions for 4 university and college courses.
- Promoted conservation messages to the whole community through dozens of news articles, interviews, web-based media and our new newsletter.
- Hosted 3 outdoor public walks and events on LPBLT nature reserves.
- Completed a strategic review of conservation needs and opportunities to ensure future conservation activities are effective and science based.
- Forged and strengthened partnerships with conservation groups and corporate supporters, including acclaimed musician Fred Eaglesmith.
- Completed numerous hands-on habitat restoration activities, such as installing bird houses for rare Prothonotary Warblers, removing invasive species from Important Bird Areas, and clean-ups of nature reserve properties.
- Hosted a special dedication ceremony and work day for LPBLT's new Arthur Langford Nature Reserve.
- 53 LPBLT volunteers participated in local conservation activities in 2008, donating over 800 hours of their time. Thank you to our volunteers!

Breaking news: Long Point Basin Land Trust is very pleased to announce it has received grants from The McLean Foundation, Environment Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources' Species at Risk Stewardship Fund in support of the "Conserving Carolinian Reptiles" project. This funding will allow the Land Trust to start conservation activities in 2009. Long Point Basin Land Trust expresses its sincere thanks to these funders for their support of this important new conservation initiative.

Photo: © Mary Garrisshore



In August 2008, LPBLT was invited to be part of the 14th Annual Fred Eaglesmith Charity Picnic. Hundreds of people visited our display booth and learned about the Carolinian region. LPBLT expresses its sincere thanks to Fred, concert organizers and all the other musicians for their very generous support. LPBLT also attended Fred's Christmas concert in Dover and will be at the 15th Annual Charity Picnic again this August – see p. 8 for details. Pictured (L to R): Peter Carson, Fred Eaglesmith, Gregor Beck.

Photo: © Peter Carson



Long Point Basin Land Trust hosted a hike at the Jackson - Gunn Old Growth Forest as part of Carolinian Canada Coalition's 2008 Annual General Meeting.

Photo: © Gregor Beck



Among other public events, LPBLT participated again in the Norfolk Woodlot Owners' Association Annual General Meeting in Delhi in February. The large crowd heard speakers, visited informational booths, and gathered information from volunteers about the Land Trust's activities.

Photo: © Gregor Beck



Photo: © Gregor Beck

On a beautiful October day, 40 LPBLT supporters gathered for the formal dedication of the Arthur

Langford Nature Reserve. The 180-acre property is a vital headwater area for South Otter and Venison Creeks. The woodland and wetland property is home to Scarlet Tanagers, which prefer large forested areas, and several species at risk, including Jefferson Salamander and Acadian Flycatcher. Land Trust Vice-President, Ken McMullen, thanks supporters and Science Advisory Committee Chair, Mary Gartshore, leads a nature hike.

Focus on Wildlife

The Prothonotary Warbler

by David Agro

Once called the Golden Swamp Warbler, the beautiful Prothonotary Warbler lives in flooded areas and bottomlands, usually deep in forest. Not at all shy, this personable and brightly-coloured bird is usually easy to find in its specialized habitat. Prothonotary Warblers nest in cavities in standing trees, usually overhanging ponds or slow-moving water, which protects them from many predators including mammals and snakes.

The Prothonotary Warbler breeds mainly in southeastern North America reaching just into the Carolinian Region of southern Canada. During the non-breeding season it migrates to Central and South America where it lives in coastal mangrove areas. Even during migration, it is usually found near water, sometimes foraging for food in backyard ponds or beside a swimming pool.

The wetland areas on which this species depends in both its breeding and wintering ranges is being lost increasingly to development and habitat degradation. In North America, loss of forested wetlands, logging, drainage of swamps, and reduction of water quality in stream beds are the main problems; in Latin America, loss of Mangroves for shrimp cultivation is a major problem. Like many migrants, these birds are also suffering from a loss of habitat between their breeding and wintering ranges: habitat which serves as important short-term “pit-stops” along the way.

The impact of development on the Prothonotary Warbler is shown in data from North American Breeding Bird Survey which demonstrates an overall rate decline of 1.1% annually between 1966 and 2007, and a 1.8% decline from 1980 to 2007. Even steeper declines have been noted where the species reaches its highest abundances, such as the lower Mississippi Valley.

The Prothonotary Warbler is listed as Endangered in Canada. The species occurs in only a few places in southern Ontario, including a few locations in the Long Point area. The solution to protecting this species, like many other threatened migratory species in North America, will require efforts on a number of fronts. The first is through education to raise public awareness. The second, and perhaps most important, is to protect

suitable habitat both in quantity and quality. A third, and more complex, is to develop a multi-national awareness of the needs of species which live in different places at different times of the year and develop coordinated plans for conservation. Our best efforts to protect these species are only as strong as the weakest link in the chain. In Canada, very few of the breeding sites for Prothonotary Warbler are protected and managed for conservation by government agencies. Consequently, the best hopes for this imperilled species depend on the efforts of non-government agencies and private individuals.

Recently, the Long Point Basin Land Trust established the Arthur Langford Nature Reserve which is a headwaters area for Venison and South Otter creeks. The reserve has Silver Maple and Buttonbush thicket swamp habitat areas large enough to support a couple of pairs of Prothonotary Warblers. While the forest is young and there are not enough standing dead trees to provide natural cavities, LPBLT has installed several nest boxes in hope that Prothonotary Warblers may nest there someday.

For more information about the Prothonotary Warbler in Canada (and elsewhere), visit the Bird Studies Canada website and follow links to www.bsc-eoc.org/prowmain.html.



Photo: © Michael Patrikeev

The brightly-coloured Prothonotary Warbler is an endangered species in Canada. It breeds in swamp woodlands in only a few areas in southern Ontario.



Photo: © Peter Carson

The Prothonotary Warbler nests in natural tree cavities or nest boxes. Long Point Basin Land Trust has installed nest boxes at its Arthur Langford Nature Reserve in the hopes of attracting a breeding pair to this important 180-acre swamp forest.



Photo: © Joe Crowsley

The endangered Spotted Turtle is another species which can be found at inland wetland sites. Protecting sensitive natural habitats is important regardless of their size or location.

LPBLT acknowledges with sincere thanks gifts made over the last few years:

In Honour of Al & Pat Robinson – 55th Anniversary

Helen Davenport
Frank Robinson
Gary Robinson
Ted Robinson
John Binder
Stanley Hodgson
Dan Robinson

In Honour of Dr. Arthur Langford – 95th Birthday

J. Bernard Harlow

In Honour of Mr. Ernie Gyori

Linda Hoffman

In Memory of Don Baldwin

Gregor Beck

In Memory of Dr. Leslie Berman and Julian and Leora Berman

Leora T. Berman

In Memory of Alex Chanyi

Mary Gartshore and Peter Carson
Madeline Wilson

In Memory of Archial Degriek

I-Ping Wong

In Memory of Charles Jonkhere

Arthur Langford

In Memory of Dr. Arthur Langford

Winnifred Allan
Gerald Armstrong
Betty Chanyi
Jean Glover
J. Bernard Harlow
Renee Jarvis
Harold Kleiman
Donald G. Lawrence
Margaret McArthur
Alan McKeown
William Moore
Michael Reddan
Al Robinson
Robert Scott
Dolf Wynia
Jane Zukovs

In Memory of Dan Magnus

Madeline Wilson

In Memory of Lloyd and Frances Paton

Madeline Wilson

In Memory of Chuck Rockefeller

Betty Chanyi
Frank Demaiter
Frances Evans
Thomas Gent
Dave Hardie
Julie Korporal
George Pond
Muriel Swick
Betty Szilagy

In Memory of Ms. Evelyn Tindale

Olga Wallace

In Memory of Rose Toth

Madeline Wilson



THE LONG POINT BASIN

News and upcoming events:

- Join LPBLT at the 15th Annual Fred Eaglesmith Charity Picnic August 14-16, 2009 at Springwater Conservation Area near Aylmer. LPBLT thanks Fred and his fellow musicians for their charitable support through this great family event. Visit: www.fredeaglesmith.com for details.
- Join us for a fun stewardship work day at one of our nature reserve properties this autumn. Mark Saturday, October 3, 2009 on your calendar and call 519-586-8309 for details. Location to be determined.
- Celebrate Mother's Day 2010 with LPBLT's annual Mother's Day walk. Contact LPBLT for details.
- Help us cut costs, not trees! If you haven't already, please let us know if you would prefer to receive this newsletter electronically.
- Give a gift that lasts forever... Why not commemorate a birthday, anniversary, wedding or other special occasion with a gift to LPBLT in honour of the special event? With donations of \$100 or more, LPBLT can send an "Honorary Steward" certificate to the person named and provide the donor with a charitable receipt. Funds raised help with essential stewardship work on our nature reserves. Contact us for details.
- Want to make an online donation to the Long Point Basin Land Trust? LPBLT is a charitable partner with CanadaHelps. Follow the links to CanadaHelps.org from our website and make your donation. You can print your charitable receipt right away.

LPBLT welcomes the following corporate supporters:

The Bulldog, Waterford, Simcoe & Port Dover

Cobb & Jones, LLP, Simcoe and Port Dover

Long Point Eco-Adventures, St. Williams/Turkey Point

Perch Gallery, Port Dover

Pterophylla Native Plants, South Walsingham

Royal Oak Feeds, Simcoe

Sawdust Entertainment Inc. and Fred Eaglesmith, Port Dover

LPBLT sincerely thanks these new partners and encourages other businesses to contact us regarding the benefits of corporate sponsorships.

LPBLT thanks the following foundations and agencies for their support of our conservation and science projects in 2008/2009:

Environment Canada's Habitat Stewardship Program

The McLean Foundation

The Ontario Trillium Foundation

Shell Environmental Fund

Species at Risk Stewardship Fund – Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources



Pterophylla Native Plants



The Ontario Trillium Foundation is an agency of the Government of Ontario. For 25 years, it has supported the growth and vitality of communities across the province. OTF continues to strengthen the capacity of the volunteer sector through investments in community-based initiatives.



Reptile sightings wanted! Visit the LPBLT website to find out how to participate in our new "Conserving Carolinian Reptiles" project.

Please support the Land Trust!

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