

Thames Talbot Land Trust

Protecting our legacy for future generations
P.O. Box 25054, London, Ont., N6C 6A8



INCH TRAIL SIGN 1 WELCOME!

Welcome to Joany's Woods.

Joany's Woods is a 148 ha (365 acre) gem which includes woodlands, wetlands, meadows, plantations and shrub thickets. It was purchased by the Thames Talbot Land Trust in 2007 from the estate of Thomas Doherty and is recognized for its significant natural features. The name "Joany" honours the memory of the daughter of Thomas Doherty.

Joany's Woods is nestled in the Ausable River Area of Natural and Scientific Interest. The Ausable River winds along the west edge of Joany's Woods and the creeks in Joany's Woods feed into the river. The condition of rivers and watersheds of the region depend on large natural areas like Joany's Woods.

More broadly, Joany's Woods is part of Canada's Carolinian region, which lies south of a line roughly between Toronto and Grand Bend. The name *Carolinian* comes from the presence of animals, and plants such as Tulip Trees and Sassafras that are more common in areas to the south, including the Carolinas.

The Thames Talbot Land Trust invites you to enjoy Joany's Woods on three trails. We manage this significant area for conservation, public education, hiking and appreciation of its beauty and its many species.

You are now on the Inch trail which runs 3.2 km (about 2 miles) through swamps, meadows, woodlands, shrub thickets and plantations. At a pace that allows for your own curiosity, the trail will take you about 1.5-2 hours to walk. Please be careful, some sections of the trail are rough!

Halfway along the Inch trail, you will overlap with the Ivey trail. This trail is approximately 4.4 km long (2.7 miles). It explores steeper slopes and a fine Carolinian forest. The Ivey Trail takes about 2-2.5 hours to complete and loops south toward Vernon Road and the Elginfield Road bridge.

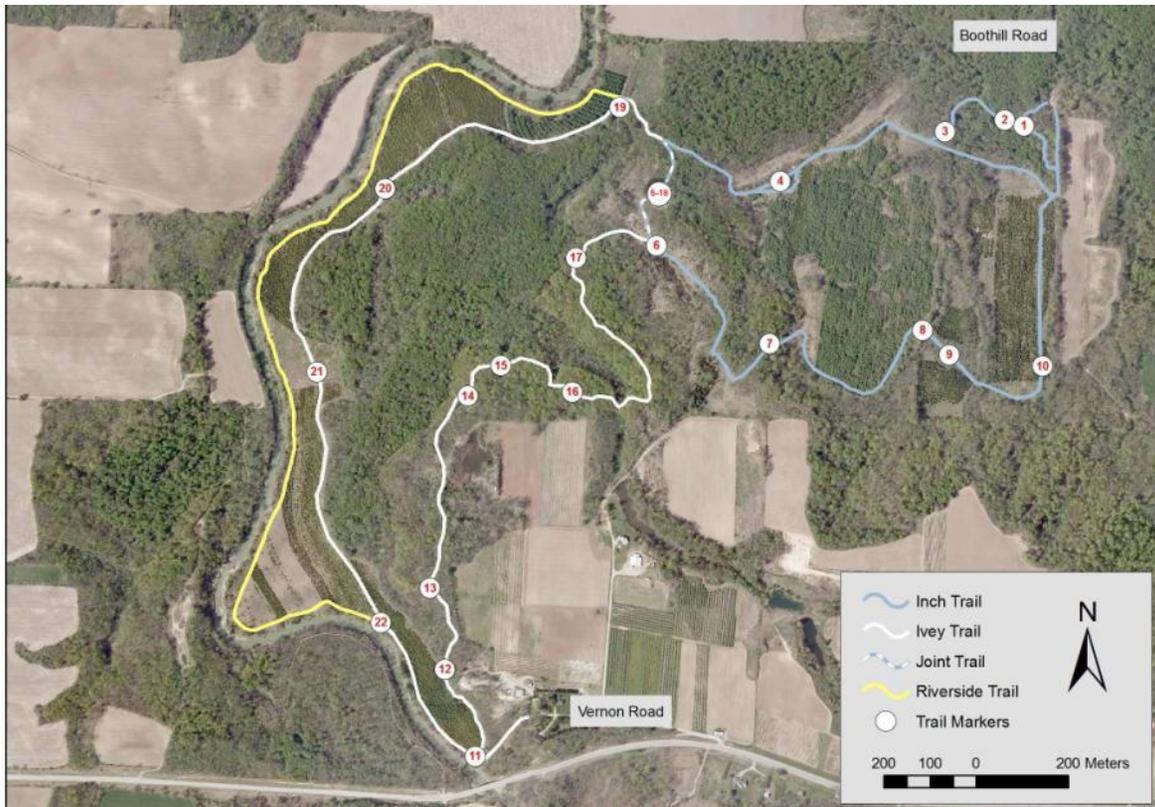
**Let me keep my mind on what matters,
Which is mostly standing still
And learning
to be astonished.** [Mary Oliver from the poem Messenger]

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Environment Canada's Habitat
Stewardship Program for Species-at-Risk.





INCH TRAIL SIGN 2 - WET AND WILD

Wetlands are important habitats for many plants and animals. The type of wetland this boardwalk crosses is dominated by woody plants and is known as a swamp. It holds water through spring and early summer, but it may be dry in August and September. The dominant trees here are Silver Maples (*Acer saccharinum*). These trees thrive in the rich wetland soil. Look upward and you will see the smooth silvery grey bark of their limbs arching over your head. The name Silver Maple also refers to the backs of the leaves that are silvery white.

Stop, smell and listen. In each of the distinct parts of Joany's Woods, invite your senses to open to something different.

Swamps have not garnered a very good reputation because they are mostly known for mud and mosquitoes. The "pesky" mosquitoes are a nuisance to humans and can carry diseases such as West Nile Virus, but they do help to support other swamp dwellers such as birds, dragonflies and even bats. They may even help protect natural areas by keeping humans away!



In the spring listen for the persistent call of Spring Peepers (*Pseudacris crucifer*) or the "quack" of Wood Frogs (*Rana sylvatica*) here. As tadpoles these tiny frogs are mainly vegetarian, living on algae that they scrape off decaying vegetation in the ponds. As adults they feed on ground dwelling invertebrates such as beetles, ants, caterpillars, pillbugs and spiders.

In early spring look for the Skunk Cabbage (*Symlocarpus foetidus*) flowers that poke through the ice and wet ground before any other plants are growing. The flowers actually produce heat that causes the snow around them to melt! The warmth, the dark red colour and the smell of the flowers help attract flies that pollinate them. Later, the large emerald green leaves of this plant start to unfurl. If you smell either the flowers or a bruised leaf you will realize how the Skunk Cabbage got its name.



INCH TRAIL SIGN 3— COOL MEETS WARM



The evergreen tree in front of you to the left (as you face the sign) is an Eastern Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*). Hemlock is one of only a few needle-leaved conifers found in the Carolinian region. It needs cool, damp habitats for healthy growth and is usually found on shaded, north facing slopes and in cool lowlands like the area below you.

Now look in front of you to the right. This tree has a tall straight trunk rising almost 15 m into the canopy before it has any branches. You are observing one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Tulip Tree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*).

Joany's Woods is near the northern limit of the distribution for this species. The trees need warm, well drained soil, a mild climate, good light and shelter to grow quickly and reach the canopy. Note the unusual colour and pattern on the bark of this tree and watch for more.



INCH TRAIL SIGN 4 — LOOKOUT HILL

Look around! You have an excellent view of both the plantations and mature forest of Joany's Woods. The area around you was once old growth forest, but it was cleared to make way for agriculture. Thomas Doherty of Sarnia had the vision to purchase this land in 1986 and start planting it with trees. What was once forest, and was converted to farmland, is now becoming forest again.

Lookout Hill is part of a delta formed at the end of the last ice age. Geologists tell us that about 10,000 years ago, this area was covered by glacial Lake Warren. The shoreline of this vast lake was upstream from here, about where modern-day Sylvan now stands. Silt-laden melt-waters from the ice sheets spilled into the lake, dropping their load of sand and gravel and forming a delta that stretched for several kilometers. Down on the flats below you, under the deep still waters of the lake, the lakebed was covered in finer silts and clay. These denser soils drain more slowly and can hold water later into the year. This is where wetlands occur.

INCH TRAIL SIGN 5 – CONTRASTS

This steep hill slope offers you a view of both a well-drained upland slope and a bottomland swamp. Because of the steepness of the slope, the division between the two contrasting ecosystems is quite sharp, with almost no intermediate transition.

A fine stand of young Tulip Trees has established on the slope. The four-lobed leaves of this tree are easily recognized; they look like a maple leaf with the end cut off.

The big greenish yellow flowers with an orange centre resemble those of a Dutch tulip, hence the name of the tree. The flowers appear in June, but are easy to miss because they are so high above the ground. Look for petals or fallen flowers lying on the ground. In winter you can see the cone-shaped clusters of seeds still attached to the tree and you may find winged seeds on the ground.



Tulip Trees grow fast, and because of this the wood is soft and not very strong, but it is easily worked and does not split. It has many uses in making furniture, musical instruments and plywood veneers. First Nations people called this species “Canoe wood” since a dug-out canoe could be fashioned from a single trunk. The intensely acrid inner bark of the roots contains tulipiferine, said to be a powerful heart stimulant. Tea made from the bark has been used to treat upset stomachs, rheumatism and fever.

INCH TRAIL SIGN 6 — SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF THE GRAVEL HIGHLAND

The series of depressions and ponds you can see on this gravel highland are not natural. Examine the ground you are standing on. These sands and gravels are the outwash material deposited as a delta in glacial Lake Warren. Gravel was excavated from this site sometime before the 1980's and these ponds are the scars from that activity.

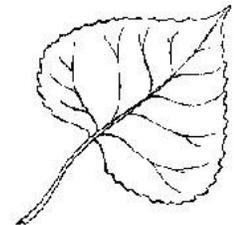


In spring and early summer there may still be open water in some of the ponds, supporting frogs and newts. Cattails (*Typha* spp.) are an indicator of open water that lasts for at least part of the growing season. They provide habitat for Red-winged Blackbirds (*Agelaius phoeniceus*) that you can hear here from March to September making their distinctive “gurg-a-lee” call.



In summer and fall you may see and even hear dragonflies hunting their prey of smaller insects.

If you stand still and listen carefully when the leaves are on the trees you will hear the leaves of the Trembling Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) trees flickering in the wind. The “trembling” happens in the slightest breeze because the leaf stalk is flat and bends easily, causing the leaf to flutter. The Onondaga Indian name for this tree is Nut-ki-e which means “noisy leaf”.



Just in front of the sign are some Eastern White Cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*) trees with distinctively bare “waists”. Since the scale-like leaves of White Cedar are evergreen, they provide browse for White-tailed Deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) in winter when other food is scarce. The strange shape of these trees is as a result of browsing by deer.

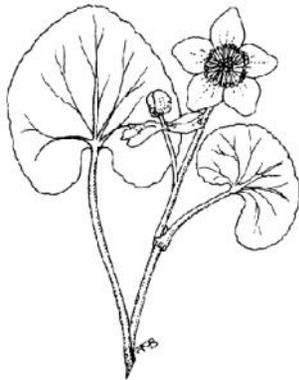
INCH TRAIL SIGN 7 - SECOND GROWTH, SECOND CHANCE

Near this sign is a large Sugar Maple (*Acer saccharum*), an iconic species for Canada. The spreading limbs of this tree indicate that it grew up in the open and did not have to compete with other trees for sunlight. Look around carefully at the other trees and see how many kinds you can distinguish based on the colour, texture and patterns of the bark. You should be able to find at least six species, ranging from the smooth white papery bark of the European Birch (*Betula pubescens*), (an introduced relative of the Paper Birch (*B. papyrifera*) of our northern woodlands) to the dark flaky bark of Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*) that resembles burnt cornflakes. Note that almost all the surrounding trees are smaller than the Sugar Maple.



This area contains what is known as second growth forest. The small size and species mix of the trees tell us that this is a young forest that has grown up within the lifetime of the large open grown Sugar Maple. Many of the trees growing here are what are known as pioneer or “early successional” trees. They are opportunists, jostling together and making a living while they can. They germinate in open areas, in youth they require lots of light, they grow fast, and die relatively young. During their lifetime they help create conditions that are needed by the slower growing, longer lived, shade-loving forest species. Some of these are already settling in here. Come back to Joany’s Woods in a hundred years to celebrate the next generation!

INCH TRAIL SIGN 8 - MARSH MARIGOLD CREEK

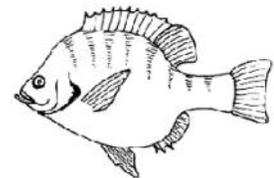


In spring Marsh Marigolds (*Caltha palustris*) blanket the floodplain of this creek with flowers like large golden buttercups. Marsh Marigolds thrive in swamps and wet meadows where there is shallow, slow-flowing water.



Well-shaded creeks like this one are important habitats in themselves and also supply clear cool water that helps sustain the fish, rare freshwater mussels and other

creatures in the Ausable River. The shade and the muck soils of the creek bed, help to clean, cool and filter the water running off the surrounding farmland. If the creek was muddy it would carry silt down to the river. If sand and gravel bars in the river were buried in sediment it could smother fish eggs and kill the mussels that live there. If the water heated up in full sun, the temperature balance of the river could be altered, like running the wrong water into your bath. Many aquatic creatures have very narrow temperature limits and might not survive.





Dead trees and branches, known as “coarse woody debris” provide habitat for numerous insects, fungi and other organisms. Take a look down the creek and you will notice that some trees have died. Death is an important part of the life of a forest. The rotten wood also acts like a sponge holding moisture and preventing nutrients from being washed away. These important nutrients will be returned slowly to the soil at a rate that can be used by other plants. Gaps caused by falling trees allow sunlight to reach the forest floor, stimulating the growth of regenerating trees and shrubs.



INCH TRAIL SIGN 9 — ALIEN INVADERS!

You are now in an Autumn Olive Zone! These tall grey-leaved shrubs lining the path shouldn't be here. This Asian species was once widely used in Canada and the United States as a “wildlife”



planting to provide food and cover for wildlife. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Conservation Authorities encouraged landowners to plant it to enhance natural areas. Many were planted at Joany's Woods in the 1980s and 1990s. Now the species is recognized as a problematic invasive species and is not recommended for planting anywhere. It spreads quickly as the birds eat the soft red berries and spread the seeds in their

droppings. Autumn Olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*) is difficult to eradicate once it is established and it spreads over meadows and into natural areas competing with native plants. It isn't even that great as a food source for the wildlife! Keeping the Autumn Olive from overgrowing the trail is a management problem for Thames Talbot Land Trust, let alone trying to eradicate this weed. We now understand that natural areas and wildlife do not benefit from the addition of exotic species like Autumn Olive.

INCH TRAIL SIGN 10 - TRANSITION

Norway Spruce (*Picea abies*) has been planted here. This is another introduced species, in fact it is the most widely used non-native tree for plantations in the US and Canada. It is a popular plantation tree because it is easily grown from seed and is thus inexpensive and it transplants well into plantation sites. Its pungent resin is relatively unattractive to the mice, rabbits and deer that love to eat young trees. It is susceptible to drought, but once established can grow fast and tall. Norway Spruce plantations are usually managed for eventual harvest of wood, and fibre for pulp and paper. At Joany's Woods there are no plans for a commercial harvest. This plantation will be managed by gradual thinning to allow native species to seed in. Cut stems and branches of Norway Spruce can be used on-site to help with trail management, to make fence posts and to create brush piles as shelter for wildlife.

WE HOPE YOU ENJOYED YOUR EXPLORATION OF JOANY'S WOODS. PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.TTLT.CA TO VIEW THE INTERACTIVE TRAIL GUIDE AND TO LEARN MORE ABOUT OTHER THAMES TALBOT LAND TRUST PROPERTIES.