

THE THAMES TALBOT LAND TRUST

TaTTLeR




Chicken of the Woods Fungus by Dave Wake

Inside This Issue

- * Trees in Trouble — 1
- * Upcoming Events — 2
- * Book Review: Nature's Best Hope— 4
- * Protected Forever — 5
- * President's Message — 5
- * Sitler Woods — 6
- * Eco Folk — 6
- * Species Spotlight: New England Aster and Tall Goldenrod — 7
- * Stewardship Volunteer Program — 7
- * Crossword — 8
- * Bloopers in the Field— 8

Trees in Trouble

Every time we turn around, it appears that another of our native trees is in trouble. The list of non-native invasive insects and diseases attacking our native trees continues to grow. From Dutch elm disease (first confirmed in Ontario in 1964) to oak wilt (thankfully not found in Ontario yet), threats abound. Since 2014, the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) Forestry Program has been partnering with researchers to combat Emerald Ash Borer, Butternut Canker and, most recently, oak wilt disease. In this article, I will highlight some of the results of this research for each of these three threats.

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)

Between 2014 and 2016, a 20-year-old ash plantation at Wildwood Conservation Area (St. Marys) became one of six release sites across Ontario for two non-native parasitic wasps to combat EAB. This research work involved a partnership between the Canadian Forestry Service (CFS) and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Both departments had determined that these two parasitoids were specific to EAB and therefore not a threat to other native insects. The first parasitic wasp to be released was *Tetrastichus planipennisi*, a very small (<3mm) non-stinging wasp native to China. These wasps were raised at a USDA lab in Brighton, Michigan and provided free of charge to the CFS.

These wasp larvae arrived in short pieces of ash tree branches, called bolts, about 15 cm in length. Each bolt had 10-15 EAB larvae that had already been parasitized in the lab. The female wasp can determine where an EAB larva is feeding inside the ash tree. She then inserts her ovipositor through the bark and into the EAB larva where she lays her eggs. Upon hatching, the wasp larvae feed and develop in the EAB larva, resulting in its death. The wasp completes multiple generations each year, and 130 adult wasps can emerge from one EAB larva.

A limiting factor for this wasp is bark thickness. The female's ovipositor can only penetrate bark thickness of up to 3.2 mm. This means that it is most effective on small trees less than 12 cm in diameter. The ash trees in the Wildwood plantation were the ideal size for this type of release. From mid-August to mid-September, 12 ash bolts (four bolts every two weeks) were delivered to the Wildwood site and attached to ash trees. Over a one-to-two-week period, approximately 150 female parasitic wasps would emerge from each bolt.



*Small bolt of ash wood containing EAB larvae parasitized with *Tetrastichus planipennisi* by John Enright*

(Continued on page 3)

Upcoming Events

All events are subject to postponement or cancellation depending on the status of the COVID-19 pandemic. Please see the "Upcoming Events" page on our website (www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca) to view the status of each event and to RSVP.

PASSPORT TO NATURE

Passport to Nature is a series of free events hosted by TTLT and its volunteers. Pre-registration is required.

More information about each event is available at www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca

Heritage Hike

Saturday, February 13th, 10 am - Noon

@ Tourism London Building

Westminster Ponds is a complex of wetlands and woodlands, one of London's Environmentally Significant Areas and long appreciated by generations of Londoners. Join David Wake for an interpretive walk with a focus on the glacial and human history of this unusual property.



Nature Art for Kids

Saturday, March 13th, 1 pm - 3 pm

@ Westminster Ponds Centre

Get inspired by the colours, textures, and shapes in nature to create your own piece of unique art. Join Maria Calleja, Ontario Certified Teacher and owner of "Budding Artists Studio", for an afternoon of discovery and creation in the outdoors. Come prepared for a fun and imaginative afternoon. For children/youth ages 6-12. Must be accompanied by an adult. All material supplied.



STEWARDSHIP EVENTS

Abolish the Olive

Saturday, November 21st, 10 am - 1 pm

@ Wardsville Woods

Join us at Wardsville Woods on November 21st to clean up Autumn Olive and other invasive shrubbery from the restored butterfly meadow. Autumn Olive has become very problematic in habitats such as meadows and sparse woodlands, where it aggressively grows and spreads to form dense thickets. Native plants are eventually shaded or crowded out, meaning that insects, birds, and other wildlife no longer have the food and habitat they need and overall biodiversity is reduced.



Buckthorn Bust

Saturday, December 5th, 10 am - 1 pm

@ Five Points Forest

Buckthorn is a non-native invasive species that forms extensive thickets out-competing native plants and altering soil chemistry. We need to bust them out of Five Points Forest! The event will include pulling out young seedlings by hand and larger seedlings with weed wrenches. Help us create space for native species to flourish!

Volunteer removing buckthorn by Daria Koscinski

FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

An easy way to stay up to date on all things TTLT is to follow us on our various social media platforms.

If you have photos from any of our properties or events, please don't forget to tag us or send them our way!



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Trees in Trouble (Continued from Page 1)

These female wasps would then lay their eggs in EAB larvae feeding beneath the bark of nearby ash trees. Once the eggs hatch, they overwinter within the EAB larva before emerging as adult wasps the following spring to complete the life cycle. A second and third release of this parasitoid occurred in 2015 and 2016.

In early July 2015, Canada approved the release of a second non-native Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) parasitoid. Like *Tetrastichus planipennisi* (the first parasitoid approved for release), *Oobius agrili* is a tiny non-stinging wasp native to North Asia. Unlike *Tetrastichus planipennisi* females, who lay their eggs inside the EAB larva, *Oobius agrili* wasps lay their eggs inside the egg of an EAB. The *Oobius agrili* arrived in small pill bottles containing EAB eggs that had already been parasitized. Each bottle produced up to 100 female *Oobius agrili*. Six bottles were placed in the plantation each week for three weeks. The first release took place on July 22. The parasitized EAB eggs were attached to coffee filter material. The bottom of the pill bottle is covered with a fine mesh that allows the *Oobius agrili* to escape once it hatches. Once released, the insects will mate and the females will then start laying their eggs inside of the eggs of EAB. The ratio of females to males is 14.5:1. Each female will parasitize on average 24 EAB eggs. A second release of this egg parasitoid occurred in 2016.

Since 2016, the CFS has been monitoring the site and has determined that both of the parasitoids have established naturally reproducing populations. In 2019/2020, the CFS monitored for range of spread from the release site. Today, this ash plantation is relatively healthy. If you had asked me in 2016, I would have guessed that most of the ash would be dead, so it appears the parasitoids are working.

The most encouraging thing about ash is that, in the last couple of years, we are observing more and more healthy ash. Some of these ash have been attacked by EAB, but have

recovered and are putting on new growth. Many questions remain. Is it possible that some of these ash have a genetic resistance to EAB, or was it by chance they were missed? Are both native and introduced parasitoids starting to provide control? Has the



The small bolt of ash wood containing EAB larvae parasitized with *Tetrastichus planipennisi* and the pill bottle containing EAB eggs parasitized with *Oobius agrili*

EAB population collapsed locally? With lots of natural regeneration of ash occurring in our woodlands, it appears that ash still has a fighting chance.

Butternut Canker

In 2014, the UTRCA formed a partnership with Forest Gene Conservation Association (FGCA), the lead agency in the

recovery program for Butternut in Ontario. Butternut canker, a non-native fungal disease, was first identified in Wisconsin in 1967 and, since 1991, has spread across Ontario. In 2007, Butternut was listed as endangered under the Ontario Endangered Species Act. Butternut is being lost at an alarming rate due to development, canker and hybridization. Butternut hybridizes readily with Japanese Walnut. Many of what we thought were pure Butternut are actually hybrids. Sometimes the only way to distinguish between the two is through DNA testing.



Planting butternut at the Southern Ontario Butternut Seed Orchard by John Enright

In 2009, FGCA established the first Butternut seed orchard at the Ferguson Forest Centre in Kemptonville. Another orchard was established at Glencarin in 2010 and, finally, the UTRCA Pittock orchard in 2014. Since it is very costly to archive Butternut, the thought was to diversify the planting sites as a bit of an insurance policy. The goal of the orchards is to preserve the genetics of as many healthy Butternut as possible from across Ontario. There is still a small percentage of Butternut trees on the landscape that are, for one reason or another, relatively healthy. Is it by chance, or do they have some natural genetic resistance to Butternut canker?

Before a Butternut is archived, it is DNA tested to ensure it is pure. Butternut scions are then collected in March and grafted onto Black Walnut rootstock in April at the Ferguson Forest Centre. Black Walnut is used, as we know it will not carry the canker. After grafting, the Butternuts are held at the Ferguson Forest Centre for two years before out planting at one of the three orchards.

In 2014, the UTRCA dedicated two hectares of agricultural land for the Southern Ontario Butternut Seed Orchard. That fall, a 2.5-metre-high wildlife fence was installed and a cover crop planted. In spring 2015, the UTRCA out planted our first Butternut and, since then, each spring we have added between 40 and 90 additional Butternut. To date, we have archived 255 pure Butternuts, representing 72 parent trees from right across Ontario. While these trees look young, physiologically they act more as mature trees and will start producing seed almost immediately. In the initial years, we remove the female flowers, as we would prefer the trees put their energy into establishment as opposed to seed production. After year five, we will begin to collect seed. The goal then will be to have the seed grown into seedlings and made available to the public through our Private Land Tree Planting Program. We are always on the lookout for local Butternut that appears healthy so, if anyone knows of such a tree, please contact UTRCA.

(Continued on page 4)

Trees in Trouble (Continued from Page 3)

Oak Wilt Disease – The Next Threat!

Oak wilt appears to be the next in a long list of exotic diseases to threaten our forest cover. Oak wilt is a vascular disease caused by the fungus *Bretziella fagacearum*. The fungus grows on the outer sapwood of oak trees, restricting the flow of water and nutrients through the tree. Oak wilt was first identified in Wisconsin in 1947. Since that time, it has spread across 23 states. In 2016, oak wilt was confirmed on Belle Isle (Michigan) in the middle of the Detroit River, 500 metres from the shores of Windsor. To date, oak wilt has not been found in Ontario. While all oak species are susceptible, the red oak group (red, black and pin) appears to be the most susceptible, with mortality frequently occurring within one growing season.

The fungus can be spread by nitidulid beetles (sap beetles) and through root grafting. These beetles are often referred to as raspberry or beer beetles.

There are many species of sap beetles that are attracted to fresh wounds or pruning cuts during the active growing season. To reduce the spread of oak wilt, avoid pruning oak trees between April and August, the period when these beetles are most active. If a tree is wounded or pruned during this period, it is recommended that the damaged area be covered immediately with

a latex paint or wound dressing.

In 2019, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) began a flight trap study to get a better handle on when the various species of sap beetles are flying. Three study locations were chosen: the University of Guelph Arboretum, the Royal Botanical Gardens (Hamilton/Burlington), and the UTRCA's Fanshawe Conservation Area (London). The flight traps are baited with two pheromone lures and bread dough. From March until November, UTRCA forestry staff members have been monitoring three flight traps weekly, and shipping sap beetles collected to the MNRF lab in Sault Ste. Marie for identification.



Oak wilt disease flight trap at Fanshawe Conservation Area by John Enright

While the news of a new threat to our native trees is never good, we must remain hopeful. The research work around EAB and Butternut canker – and the fact that oak wilt disease has not arrived in Ontario, although it has been in Michigan for many years – shows that there is still hope. To augment that hope, we all need to

do our part in nurturing our woodlands. One of our best bets is to continue to plant a diversity of site-suitable native trees to protect against the next unknown threat. Through our collective efforts, we can turn “Trees in Trouble” to “Trees will Triumph”.

- John Enright, Forester at UTRCA

Book Review: Nature's Best Hope

Nature's Best Hope. Douglas W. Tallamy. Timber Press Inc. 2019.

Readers of The TaTTLer may already be familiar with the name Douglas W. Tallamy. His 2010 book, *Bringing Nature Home*, has been referenced frequently in conservation circles.

Tallamy is a professor in the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware. In the academic world, he studies how insects interact with plants. In *Nature's Best Hope* he presents scientific information in a pleasant, easy-to-read style, showing readers how they can create wildlife habitat in their home gardens by introducing native plants.

One chapter is entitled Restoring Insects, the Little Things that Run the World. Here, Tallamy points out that oaks are the best plants to include in your home garden because they support hundreds of species of insects. Insects provide essential food for songbirds. As Tallamy says, “Most terrestrial birds in North America feed their nestlings caterpillars far more often than any other type of insect.”



TTLT volunteers planting an oak tree by Colin Johnson

Another example highlights the importance of goldenrod. In Pennsylvania, goldenrod leaves feed more than 100 species of caterpillars. The flowers provide pollen and nectar for bees, wasps, and many native beetles. Goldenrod pollen is a food source for migrating Monarchs, while the stems of the plants provide homes for native bees in summer and winter.

Alien invasive plants are a major focus for TTLT. Tallamy describes research that shows chickadees search native plants for food 86 percent of the time. If a chickadee pair nests in a territory dominated by non-natives, the birds raise fewer youngsters.

The book concludes with 15 pages in a convenient question-and-answer format. I found *Nature's Best Hope* to be enjoyable and informative. I hope it will help readers modify their own approach to gardening and encourage them to share

information with friends and neighbours.

- David Wake

Protected Forever

This year has been unlike any other in recent history due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. More than ever, we are coming to realize that human health – including the legacy we will leave to future generations – is inextricably linked to ecosystem health. We know too that the retention and restoration of natural cover is the foundation of healthy ecosystems and a key component to mitigating the effects of climate change. Given the unprecedented pressures on the landscape today, natural heritage protection will not simply be the result of wishful thinking or good fortune; it will require deliberate action on our part.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, TTLT has continued to work hard to protect special natural areas in our region. The goal of our ambitious Vision 20/20 Campaign is to fund the purchase and management of important conservation lands in the counties of Elgin, Oxford and Middlesex. This campaign features seven sites that are a combination of purchased and donated properties. Each property has its own unique attributes (geography, habitats, species) and, combined, they protect 32 Species at Risk, 10 of



Interior forest by David Wake

which are not found on any current TTLT property. See the article about Sitler Woods on page 6.

To date, we have acquired six of the seven properties and raised 78% of the campaign goal (including donated lands).

We would like to thank all our supporters for contributing generously to the campaign. If you haven't had a chance to make your donation yet there is still time! Your support for the Vision 20/20 Campaign helps to protect and restore the ecological health of the increasingly imperiled Carolinian region of south-western Ontario.

We had hoped to celebrate our newest nature reserves with you this year, but the pandemic made gatherings impossible. We have postponed official

celebrations to next year. If you would like to visit some of our new nature reserves in the meantime, please get in touch with Daria Koscinski (daria.koscinski@ttl.ca or 519-858-3442). More information about the campaign can be found at www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca/vision2020_campaign.

- Daria Koscinski, Acting Executive Director

President's Message

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to challenge our usual operations, but our adaptable staff team has been working hard to deliver our key stewardship and programming goals despite these challenges. With our usual array of volunteer and outreach events moving to an online platform, we have been able to engage new supporters of TTLT, offer virtual property tours and educational webinars on a variety of subjects.

I congratulate Daria Koscinski on accepting the position of Acting Executive Director in June of this year – congrats, Daria! Daria joined TTLT in April 2014 as the Conservation Property Manager. She has been actively involved in conservation and land stewardship in Ontario since 2000 through her education, work and volunteer experience with environmental groups. She has been a volunteer with TTLT since 2008 as a member and Chair of the Property Management Committee and a Director on the Board. Daria received her BSc and MSc from Queen's University and her PhD from Western University and has a strong background in ecology, population genetics and habitat fragmentation. Daria is also an Assistant Professor at Western University and teaches part-time in the Department of Biology. Daria has made considerable progress in a short amount of time as Acting ED. In addition to her regular duties, she has been

leading our Vision 20/20 Campaign and working hard with the Board of Directors on our 2020-2025 Strategic Plan.

Of course, Daria will be the first one to tell you that she wouldn't have been able to make all of this happen without the dedicated team of staff and volunteers at TTLT. Rebecca Launchbury has been a great asset to the stewardship of our properties, planning and leading fieldwork as well as continuing to provide her valuable organizational skills to our Finance Committee. Colin Johnson has been a tremendous help to the stewardship team, completing fieldwork in addition to his office administration duties. Darby Alderson has been the clever face behind our spike in social media activity, as well as continuing to run our educational programming. Thank you to the TTLT staff team for all their progress in this unpredictable year!

We will need to continue to be flexible and adaptable going forward. I believe we are well suited to weather the storm with the support of our strong staff team, Board of Directors, committee members and countless dedicated volunteers.

We've got this!

- Kaitlin Richardson, TTLT President



Daria inspecting a wetland by Justin Langille

Sitler Woods

An old woods road leads into Sitler Woods, in Southwest Middlesex. This beautiful 50-acre (20-ha) parcel of Carolinian Forest is within the provincially designated Skunk's Misery Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI). Thames Talbot Land Trust (TTLT) knew this property was important and, after more than a decade of waiting and hoping, the trust was able to purchase it in 2019.

Sitler Woods is a mosaic of upland deciduous woods and swamp forest, much of which has been designated as Pro-



Turtlehead at Sitler Woods by David Wake

vincially Significant Wetland. Oaks dominate the uplands while Red and Silver Maple typify the swamp forests. This reserve is in Canada's Carolinian zone, and specialties such as Sassafras

and Tulip-tree are present along with the endangered American Chestnut and Eastern Flowering Dogwood. Spicebush, Maple-leaved Viburnum and Witch-hazel are prominent in the understory. A portion of the wetland is a Buttonbush swamp.

Many of the trees are large, indicating that logging has not taken place here for a long time. The growing conditions are very favourable for ferns. In our visits to the property in 2020, my wife Winifred and I recorded 10 species and there may be others we missed. Cinnamon Fern and Interrupted Fern are

widespread, growing in large vigorous stands.

Restrictions associated with COVID-19 prevented us from visiting the reserve in early spring, so we missed seeing some of the earliest wildflowers. On our visits in late May and early June, we observed a diverse array of wildflowers including Solomon's Seal, Sessile-leaved Bellwort, Wild Geranium, trilliums and several species of violets. In late summer we noted White Snakeroot, Turtlehead, Wingstem and an assortment of asters.

Skunk's Misery is known to the birding community as a place to find rarities such as Acadian Flycatcher and Hooded Warbler. Both have been recorded within Sitler Woods.

The name Sitler Woods acknowledges the Sitler family, long-time residents of the Wardsville area. Until his death in 2005, Delbert Sitler had owned the woodlot for many years. He and other members of the Sitler family enjoyed spending time in this forest, appreciating its natural beauty and hunting wild game.

Sitler Woods is an exciting addition to TTLT's portfolio of protected lands. Currently there are no formal trails. It is hoped that post-pandemic, a celebration with tours will take place.

- David Wake



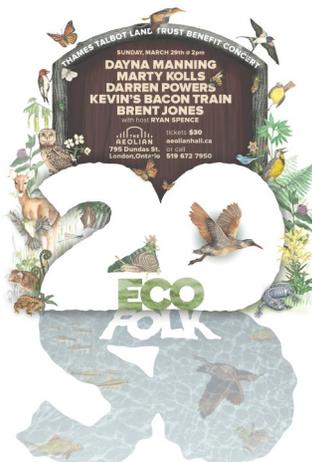
Maple-leaved Viburnum at Sitler Woods by David Wake

Eco Folk

On March 29th, 2020, TTLT was to host its fifth annual Eco Folk concert. Of course, COVID-19 has changed our world since that date. For the past five years, the primary goal of this friend raising / fundraising initiative has been to foster a greater awareness of TTLT's work in the conservation and preservation of properties within the city of London and throughout surrounding counties.

This initiative was originally conceived in 2016 by Jim Rule, a former TTLT president and Brent Jones, a very talented local musician from Dorchester. Both individuals believed that the TTLT vision required a wider audience and music was the perfect medium to accomplish this goal. This objective has been enhanced by the involvement of community-oriented businesses and individuals and local musicians who share the same environmental ethics as TTLT itself.

Past Eco Folk acts have included Broomsticks and Hammers, Emm Gryner, Christine Newland, Pete Denomme, Cosmic Cowboys, The Marrieds and Rant Maggie Rant. Eco



Folk 2020 was to feature performances from Dayna Manning, Marty Kolls, Darren Powers, Brent Jones, Kevin's Bacon Train and the long-time Eco Folk incredible host, radio's Ryan Spence.

Eco Folk has been noted for its concert poster by artist/ musician Breck Campbell of Lyrical Design, who has received national recognition for his Eco Folk work.

This particular concert, in 2020, was planned especially to recognize the 20th anniversary of TTLT and to this end, attracted 20 local sponsors who had financially supported the event. Equally impressive was the recognition by all the organizers of the dedication and commitment demonstrated by the musicians themselves toward a more healthy environment.

While the future of Eco Folk as a live event remains uncertain for the foreseeable future, a live album of past Eco Folk concerts is being made to keep the spirit of the celebration alive.

- Jim Rule and Brent Jones

Species Spotlight: New England Aster and Tall Goldenrod

A sure sign that summer is waning is the blooming of the goldenrods and asters in meadows, fields, and along roadsides throughout the Thames River watershed. There are about 70 native species of goldenrods and 60 native species of asters in eastern North America. Both are members of the Composite or Aster Family, a very large family that includes daisies, sunflowers, thistles, and lettuce. The flowers are an important nectar source for bees, butterflies and moths late in the season.

New England Aster (*Symphotrichum* or *Aster novae-angliae*) is a common aster in our area (despite its name), growing 1-2 m tall. The flower heads are 2.5-5.0 cm (1-2 in) wide with 40-50 violet-purple petal-like structures called rays surrounding a yellow disk of minute, true flowers. The narrow leaves have smooth margins and they clasp the stem. Aster comes from the Latin root meaning star.

Tall Goldenrod (*Solidago altissima*) is a common goldenrod in the watershed, growing 0.5-1.5 m tall. The leaves are narrow with sharp teeth along the margins. The bright yellow flowers consist of clusters of tiny florets. Often there is a round gall on the stem, which is created by the larva of a small fly that parasitizes the plant. The larva inside the stem produces a chemical, which causes the plant to grow abnormally, creating a gall. Goldenrods have many medicinal uses and the genus name, *Solidago*, is from the Latin *solidus* (meaning whole) and *ago* (meaning to make), thus "to make whole or cure".

Goldenrods and asters do NOT cause hay fever allergies; Common Ragweed (*Ambrosia artemisiifolia*) and Giant Ragweed (*Ambrosia trifida*) are the usual culprits. Ragweeds grow in similar habitats and start flowering in late summer, but often go unnoticed because of their drab green flowers. Goldenrods and asters use colourful and fragrant flowers to attract insect pollinators to their heavy pollen, while ragweeds produce large volumes of light pollen that is wind blown.

Some less common species of goldenrods and asters are planted in naturalization projects, especially tallgrass prairie plantings. The common asters and goldenrods do not need to be planted as they will show up on their own, helping to heal the land and provide a food source for insects.

- Cathy Quinlan, Terrestrial Ecologist at UTRCA and Brenda Gallagher, Vegetation Specialist at UTRCA



Tall Goldenrod by Cathy Quinlan



New England Aster by Cathy Quinlan

Stewardship Volunteer Program

You've been asking for more opportunities to get involved in volunteering — and we've been listening. We're pleased to announce that our revamped Stewardship Volunteer Program has officially launched.



TTLT volunteers after a work day at Hawk Cliff Woods by Sandra Leys

Stewardship and restoration contribute to healthy ecosystems and wildlife populations, as well as safe and positive visitor experiences at our nature reserves. We're offering an increased range of opportunities to help out with this work, including some weekend opportunities. There's still a chance to get involved this fall, and we'll be hosting a volunteer orientation and a range of volunteer events in Spring 2021. We also have some longer-term volunteer roles for those of you who are ready to take on more.

You can find all the information on our website at www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca/volunteer. You can also see some of our upcoming events on page 2.

In addition to helping with conservation, volunteering with TTLT is a great way to spend some time in nature, meet like minded-people, learn and share your knowledge and experience, and have some fun along the way.

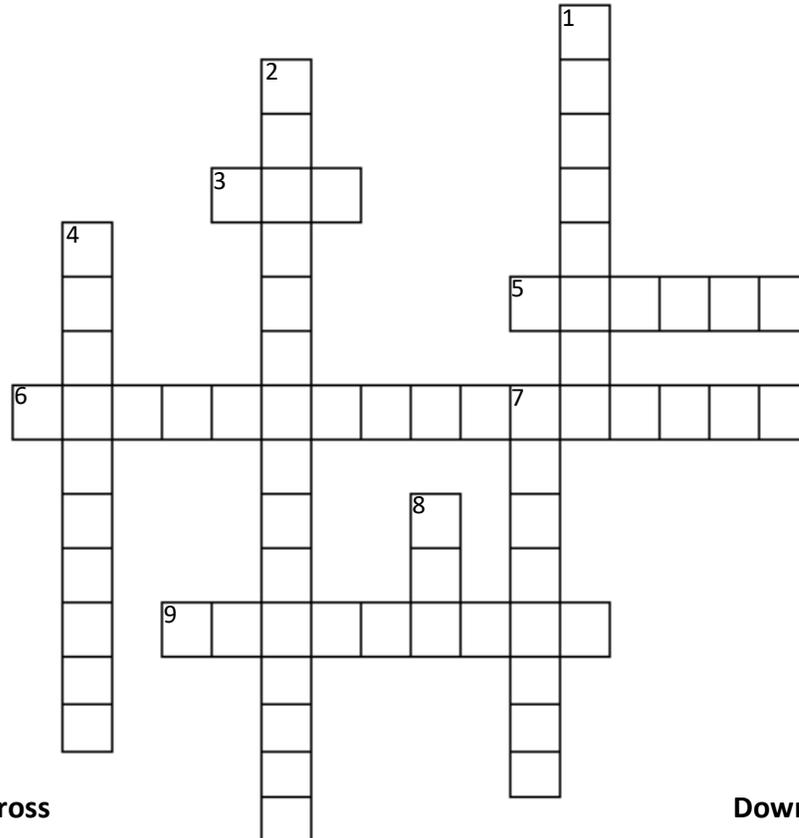
Volunteers are at the heart of everything we do, and we couldn't operate without you. We look forward to providing you with a better volunteer experience and a wider range of opportunities. Thank you for all you do!

Crossword: Southern Ontario Trees

How well do you know southern Ontario's trees?

Solutions will be posted at https://www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca/the_tattler.

Make it a challenge and donate to TTLT if you can't finish the puzzle. Tax receipts will be issued for donations over \$20.



Across

Down

3. Trees in this genus are known for hosting the greatest biodiversity of caterpillars in southern Ontario
5. This genus of tree is known to be very fast growing
6. Ontario's tallest-growing tree (3 words)
9. This invasive species is the most abundant tree in London Ontario

1. The bark of this mature tree flakes off
2. Bats are known to roost under this live tree's bark (2 words)
4. This tree is often "tapped" for its sweet sap in the spring (2 words)
7. This conifer will shed its needles in the fall
8. This genus of tree used to make up a large percentage of forests until a boring beetle made its way to Ontario

Bloopers on the Trail

One day, I was soil sampling in a field that surrounded an airport where a model plane club liked to meet. They were flying over the field I was in, doing tricks and diving down low to the ground. As I continued my sampling, I moved on, away from the area they were recklessly flying over, and not 10 minutes later I hear 'Nnnnyyooooommmmmmm....boooooofffff!' I turn around and see the model plane had dove too low to the ground and has crashed (*facepalm*). Keep in mind, this was mid-summer, it was super hot out, and they were flying over a dry clay field that had wheat stubble left over from harvesting. Again, it was very dry and since the model planes were fancy planes, they

had gas engines. The field then caught on fire and people were frantically running over to put the blaze out. I zoomed back to my truck to get my fire extinguisher, but by the time I had got back to the area, people had already stomped it out or had used blankets. The owner of the farm came out all livid and asked what I had seen and proceeded to keep an eye on the area after the people had left. I was still sampling for the rest of the day in his field, due to intensive sampling requirements, so I told him I'd keep an eye on the area in case it reignited from the heat of the day. Luckily, no other fires occurred.

- Michael Coady

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