



The Bebensee Tract - TTLT's new property in Skunk's Misery By Stan Caveney

Growing up in the 1930s on the Patterson family farm on the former site of the village of Cashmere on the Thames River in Mosa township, Elaine Patterson and her chums looked forward to the Cashmere Public School's annual outing to the Mosa Forest to enjoy the Spring flowers. Time has moved on, and while Mosa's deep forest and its spring flowers thankfully endure, Cashmere lives on in memory as one of the most famous "vanished villages" of Middlesex County; Mosa Forest is more widely known as "Skunk's Misery", and Mosa Township has been amalgamated into the Municipality of Southwest Middlesex.

As a teenager in the 1940s, Elaine attended the Bothwell Continuation High School in nearby Kent County, where she met her future husband Lloyd Bebensee of Zone Township (now in the Municipality of Chatham-Kent). The Bebensees moved to Calgary after Lloyd's graduation from Western University as a geologist in 1950. Nevertheless they maintained close ties with family and friends in Mosa, and in 1984 bought a wooded 200-acre farm between Longwoods Road and Trillium Drive, just east of Sassafras Road, situated at the south edge of the Skunk's Misery Forest. Lloyd, who died in 1996, loved to ramble through his precious forest at Skunk's Misery. He had a particular fondness for its Sassafras trees. Skunk's Misery, as many of you will recall, is arguably the largest and most biologically diverse remnant block of mature Carolinian Forest in southern Ontario.

Concerned about the future protection of the family woods at "The Misery", Elaine Bebensee contacted the Nature Conservancy of Canada in March 2013. In 2007, NCC had partnered with TTLT to develop a conservation plan for the greater Skunk's Misery natural area. When privately-owned parcels of deciduous forest in Skunk's Misery become available, TTLT's role is to secure them as protected natural areas. The NCC, as well as Elaine's good friend and American Chestnut grower Murray Alward of Port Burwell, referred her to TTLT. Elaine contacted Suzanne McDonald Aziz, our Executive Director. In July, Suzanne and I met with Elaine in London to discuss ways in which her land might be secured for nature conservation. After consultation with family and her accountant, Elaine chose to donate the land to TTLT under the terms of the federal Ecological Gifts Program. This program provides favourable tax treatment for lands of ecological value gifted to registered conservation charities such as TTLT. The fair market value of the Bebensee property was determined in late 2013, its certification as an Ecogift and the its appraised value accepted by Environment Canada in March 2014. The ownership of the property is being transferred to TTLT as this article is being written.

TTLT is privileged to name the property the Bebensee Tract, in memory of Elaine's husband Lloyd Bebensee. This new TTLT nature reserve comprises a 26-ha (64 acre) woodland lying within the core of the Skunk's Misery swamp. Over 1200-ha in size, the swamp forest at Skunk's Misery is designated a provincial Life Sciences Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI), a Carolinian Canada Signature Site and a Bird Studies Canada Important Bird Area. The Bebensee Tract is bordered by large forested blocks owned and managed by the County of Middlesex and the Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority. This forested core forms part of the 35-km² mosaic of farmland and woodland identified as the Skunk's Misery Natural Area and which importantly links the Carolinian forest to the Thames River to the south.



Left: Spicebush.
Right: Hepatica.
Photos: Cathy
Quinlan.

Story continued on
page 2.

Walks with Bill Maddeford

Our largest property is Joany's Woods. It is 367 acres of rolling land along the Ausable River in West Middlesex County. It's an example of someone who loved their property and sold it to TTLT, to keep it for the future. In May 2013, I took our Take a Hike walk on this property (our fundraiser to provide funds for the stewardship of the areas we own). I walked the Inch Trail in the north end of this environmentally sensitive area. This trail takes you from one natural habitat to another, starting off in a hardwood swamp then rising gradually to an upland woods. From there I came into a secondary growth area with a small pond in it, possibly an old gravel pit leftover but now a lovely wildlife area with red wing blackbirds, yellowthroats and swamp sparrows, painted turtles and green frogs. From there the trail wound through hawthorn and scattered oak, home to catbirds and thrashers and down to another swampy, hardwood area with a small creek. Here I heard pileated woodpeckers, woodthrush and yellow throated vireo. The whole area had the smell and aura of Spring.

The last stretch of the Inch trail goes through a conifer-poplar area that was a former cultivated field. It is weedy with many flowering varieties and so there were many butterflies trying out their spring wings to be seen. The shrubbery yielded blue winged warbler, redstart and gnatcatchers. I saw no snakes but Queensnake is a variety that has been seen here. Eastern flowering dogwood also grows on this property. I returned to the car park area and filled up on cookies offered up by Ms. Dee.

A rewarding trip, lots of nature in a healthy natural community preserved for us by our own TTLT. Our members can access these trails (there is a longer one to the South). They are looked after in the main by stewards, Blair and Muriel and by any members willing to help on workdays. Do participate in Take a Hike and our new fundraiser Bike and Hike and our annual workdays at Joany's Woods. It's yours to enjoy. You will realize the importance of keeping these special areas for future generations.



Marsh
Marigolds
and Spring
Beauty.
Photos:
Dave Wake.

The Bebensee Tract (continued)

The Bebensee Tract is mainly deciduous swamp forest lying on untilled land with a well-developed swale and hummock (pit-and-mound) micro topography. Several rare breeding songbirds (such as Acadian Flycatcher, Cerulean Warbler and Hooded Warbler) are reported to breed on the property, which contains a diverse selection of Carolinian trees, including hard and soft maple (Sugar, Silver and Red), Black, White and Swamp oaks, Green, Black, and White ash, Black Cherry, American beech, Shagbark and Bitternut hickory and Hackberry. The understory includes Eastern Flowering Dogwood and Witch Hazel as well as the swallowtail caterpillar food plants such as Spicebush and Prickly Ash. Tallgrass Ontario has identified prairie remnants on the property.

The Bebensee Tract is the most recent of four nature reserves within the Skunk's Misery Natural Area now owned and stewarded by TTLT. Significantly, it is our first reserve situated within the mature Carolinian forest ANSI. TTLT will now develop a stewardship plan to guide the future management of the property, which will include allowing the forest to attain an "older-growth" stature. At this time there is no intent to develop a formal trail system on the Bebensee Tract. It will remain a closed conservation area for scientific research, and will be open to the public by invitation only. Aspects of the property may be appreciated from the Sassafras Road and Trillium Drive.

TTLT greatly appreciates Elaine Bebensee's trust in the organization and its conservation mission. This forested nature reserve is a magnificent addition to the land trust's portfolio of conservation properties, now over 1000 acres in extent. An on-site dedication event is planned for the late summer, and TTLT hopes Elaine will be able to join us.

Annual Meeting 2014 By David Daugharty

The best ever!

As I write this article and reflect on our AGM night, I have many memories. The degree of organization, the location at the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority headquarters, the meal, the ability to rub shoulders with others whom you have not seen since last year, the slide show before the meeting, Jim Rule's slide show and presentation with its content, clarity and delivery, the official meeting and how Gordon Saylor walked us through the finances and David Wake through the governance discussion; and, of course, Mhairi McFarlane (one of our own TTLT Board Members) with her talk on her work at Pelee Island. All of this was done to a full house. Pretty awesome. We have come of age! A big thank you goes out to Jim Rule (outgoing President), Suzanne McDonald Aziz (Executive Director), Julia Eastabrook (Development and Communications Officer), Linda McDougall (new incoming President) and Dee Crilly (part-time employee).



President Jim Rule, our AGM guests and Jim presents Mary Kerr and Bernie VanDenBelt, two of our founding members with plaques. Photos: Dave Wake.

Minutes of the 2013 AGM were approved and the President's Report was given by Jim Rule. He repeated Mary Kerr's quote for TTLT that "A land trust is really a promise made to future generations" and went on to speak of our 2013 Strategic Planning Workshop day in the fall and how all our work is connected in some fashion in the areas of Membership, Money and Management. He also put forward the work of the Governance, Land Securement, Membership and Marketing, and Property Management Committees.

Gordon Saylor presented the Treasurer's Report and a motion to appoint Collins Barrow as auditors for 2014 was approved. Overall, TTLT is in a good financial position and has benefited from a number of grants and fundraising initiatives.

Next we held the election of the Board of Directors. Biographies for our Board Members can be found on the TTLT web site. David Wake, Chair of Governance, spoke of the need to apply for a "Certificate of Continuance of the Corporation" under the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act. Both of these replace the federal Letters Patent and Canada Corporations Act respectively. Motions were approved and passed. Linda McDougall was acknowledged as the new incoming President for 2014. Bernie VanDenBelt and Mary Kerr, two founding members, were present and awarded plaques to thank them for their hard work and insight.



Dr. Mhairi McFarlane gave a wonderful, spirited and witty talk on her work on Pelee Island. From early spring to late fall Mhairi is doing research and field work for the Nature Conservancy of Canada on the island.

McFarlane is a Board member of the Thames Talbot Land Trust. She has been an active member of the Property Management Committee for several years and this year agreed to Chair the Committee.

If you'd like to learn more about Pelee Island, Nature Conservancy of Canada and Pelee Island Bird Observatory are teaming up with a local B&B to run a "retreat" on Pelee Island May 23 - 25, 2014.

President's Report By Jim Rule

Two Years as President: A Brief Reflection

As my term as president ends, I wish to highlight a few priorities. First, the need to maintain and strengthen the financial foundation of TTLT during a period of uncertain economic conditions. Second, the importance of sharing the 'story' of TTLT as a maturing organization to new and varied audiences. And, third, to solidify the management of its growing number of properties through the establishment of a new conservation management position.

I am confident that these priorities will flourish under the strong leadership of the TTLT staff, the new president, Linda McDougall and its Board, stewards, and general membership. It has been an honour to be part of this great team and I look forward to more positive initiatives in the future.
Thanks, Jim.

New President: Linda McDougall by Suzanne McDonald Aziz



Effective May 14, 2014 the TTLT will have a new President. Linda McDougall has been a member of the TTLT Board of Directors for 3 years and is best described as a down to earth, enthusiastic person with a love for nature.

As a member of the Board, Linda served on all of the committees (except governance) and organized a new annual TTLT event at Mykonos Restaurant as part of the Take a Hike fundraising initiative.

Linda brings her knowledge and experience as a Registered Professional Planner, and a full member of the Ontario Association of Landscape Architects to the role.

I know she embraces this new challenge and hopes to be as successful in the role as the past President Jim Rule certainly has been.

Take a Hike 2014

Update ... On Saturday May 3rd, more than 20 people participated in our Take a Hike at Joany's woods. The weather was overcast and rainy but everyone had a wonderful time! Photos: Dave Wake.



Membership and Marketing By David Daugharty

If you attended the Annual General Meeting, an overview of our work was presented by Jim Rule. We have come a long way in the past three years, including a new web site, a slide show to go with our public presentations, programs for our members (e.g. butterfly walk; MEC, Chapters and Columbia store invitations) and much more. Regarding memberships, Robbie Bloomfield won our membership renewal draw last November and now sports a hand crafted walking stick.

We would like to draw your attention to a few items:

Greeters: As you know, we count on our volunteers for our site work parties (2-3 hours on those days) but we also have a need for volunteers to be 'greeters' on the sites. If you would like to find out more, please call or email me.

Getting Our Story Out: Do you have an organization or small group of people who would like to hear about our work? We would welcome an invitation to speak and show off our slides.

Visiting Our Web Site: If you would like to see what is happening, just visit our web site for up-to-date information.

New Members: Membership growth mostly comes from word of mouth. Are you speaking to others about our work? Why not set this as a goal for 2014?

The Last Comment: We are trying to ensure every member and friend of TTLT is not only aware of our work (e.g. through the TaTTLer, web, electronic e-mails, advertising) but also has transportation to any of our site tours or work days. If you are not receiving our communications and/or need transportation, please contact our office at (519) 858-3442 or info@thamestalbotlandtrust.ca.

Have you spotted any interesting animals or plants on our properties?

We would like to hear about them! Please send descriptions and pictures (where possible) to sightings@ttl.ca

Want to receive the TaTTLer via e-mail?

TTLT would like to offer the TaTTLer via e-mail to those that are interested. Please e-mail info@thamestalbotlandtrust.ca with the subject TaTTLer mailing list.

Musical Mykonos TTLT "Take a Hike" Fundraising Event By Linda McDougall and Mark Anderson

On a cold February night about 40 guests, TTLT members, staff and musicians gathered in the warm candlelight of Mykonos restaurant to celebrate together at a fundraiser for the TTLT. We enjoyed Greek food and drinks while being entertained by two local musical acts that had generously donated their time (and more) to play for us. The Celtic Intermediate Band was up first and they delighted us with soft flute, whistle and string instruments. Door prizes were circulated to a lucky few then the 50/50 raffle was drawn. The winner was Brenda Finch who is one of our Take a Hike Champions who very kindly donated her winnings back to the TTLT.

Then some members of the Southern Ontario Ukulele Players (SOUP) took the stage and delighted us all with their cheery repertoire inviting us to sign along. We cut the big cake and enjoyed fancy cupcakes made by SOUP member Jennifer Manley. All in all it was a fun night and we want to thank everyone for his or her generous support as together we raised \$735 for the TTLT to continue to protect the lands of cultural and natural heritage in SW Ontario. It was so much fun that we have already re-booked for next year making it an annual event. See you at Mykonos Restaurant on Thursday February 5, 2015 and have fun enjoying great company, great food, and live local music while supporting the TTLT.

New Conservation Property Manager By Jim Rule

With great enthusiasm and anticipation, the TTLT Board hired its first Property Conservation Manager, Daria Koscinski, at its March 19th meeting. At our strategic planning session last fall, the Board identified property management as a very high priority for the foreseeable future.

TTLT was able to fulfil this mandate through a very generous legacy gift from the late Jane Bowles. Jane was a person whose mission in life was TTLT particularly the well being of its properties. Every member of TTLT has a role to play in ensuring that Jane's goals are fulfilled for future generations by continually supporting our cause.

Please join me in extending your warmest wishes to Daria as she begins her journey as a new chapter in the TTLT story begins.



Daria Koscinski: A Profile

Daria 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.

She previously worked with Carolinian Canada Coalition as an Ecosystem Recovery Specialist focusing on conservation planning in southwestern Ontario. Daria brings a wealth of knowledge about local conservation, and strong management and leadership skills to this new position.

Daria will be focusing on a variety of property management tasks. Some of her initial priorities include preparing, reviewing and updating management plans for each property, preparing strate-

gic documents for larger management issues and implementing improved tracking of the status of habitats and species on each property.

Daria will be working closely with property stewards and the Property Management Committee to continue monitoring, restoring and caring for properties. She will also be involved with the Land Securement Committee to help assess new properties for securement. Daria also hopes to develop more educational outreach programs for our members and the public such as nature walks focusing on specific organisms (e.g. bat walks, butterfly counts) and "adopt-a-patch" for monitoring specific species or habitats.

Daria is a nature enthusiast and is particularly interested in amphibians, reptiles, butterflies and plants. You can find her in the woods looking for salamanders under logs or chasing butterflies across the meadow. Of course, she will be in the office some of the time too.

Bike and Hike May 31, 2014

On Saturday May 31, 2014, Thames Talbot Land Trust is having a Bike and Hike Event., starting at the Komoka Community Centre and ending at Tiedje Woods. You can register as a participant or sponsor a biker! All proceeds go to TTLT operations. Visit the website for more details at www.ttl.ca.

Thank you to London Community Foundation By Julia Eastabrook



TTLT would like to thank the London Community Foundation for awarding us with a grant for a social enterprise feasibility study! This grant was made available through the Beryl Ivey Endowment for the Environment fund. TTLT is hoping to draw inspiration from some of the amazing social enterprise ventures that currently operate in London. Many ideas have been explored such as sustainable tree tapping for maple syrup production and educational workshops, amongst others. Please feel free to send ideas our way to info@thamestalbotlandtrust.ca.

The Wilder Side of Work Days By Daria Koscinski

Spring has finally arrived after a long and cold winter and many of us are bursting outside to enjoy the warmer weather. Spring is a time of renewal and much activity in southwestern Ontario as all the birds return, the amphibians gear up for reproduction, plants bring forth a new year of greenery and TTLT volunteers join in for spring work days. This year's work days were very well attended, by people and animals! We were often serenaded by wood frogs, spring peepers and chorus frogs. Not to mention the multitude of birds. Several quieter sightings included snakes and salamanders.

If you attended the Wardsville Woods opening ceremony last fall you will know that I am particularly fond of amphibians (frogs and salamanders) and reptiles (lizards, snakes and turtles). While everyone else is walking looking up at the colourful birds in the trees, I am walking staring at the ground looking for snakes, peaking under logs for salamanders and listening carefully for frogs. These mysterious animals fascinate me and perhaps there is a bit of the "thrill of the hunt" since they are so hard to find. To make sightings even harder many of the reptiles are rare in Ontario and their populations are declining. In fact 18 out of the 24 species of reptiles in Ontario are listed as Species at Risk. To help find these rarer animals, TTLT will be doing more targeted surveys on our properties. Every sighting helps us understand what species are found on our properties and how to manage our properties to ensure we are protecting all the biodiversity found there.



Left: Dekay's Brownsnake found at Newport Forest, April 2014. Photo: Justin Langille.

Middle: Eastern Newt found at Wardsville Woods, April 2014. Photo: Justin Langille.

Right: Red-backed Salamander at Wardsville Woods, April 2014. Photo: Daria Koscinski.

Work days are a great opportunity to explore our properties and see some wonderful spring arrivals. But the fun doesn't stop there. You are welcome at our open properties year round and we would love to hear from you about what you saw and found. Maybe you see a plant or animal you haven't seen there before – let us know so we can add it to our list. You can send a picture or a description of what you saw, and where and when you saw it. Improving our inventories will help us do the best job we can in stewarding these incredible properties.

To all our volunteers who attended the work days – thank you for your hard work! I hope you enjoyed the wilder side of the work days too.

Become a Member

*Charitable receipts are issued for all contributions
(Reg. # 86745 7475 RR0001)*

Membership Donations

Youth/Student (under 18): \$25
Individual Member (18+): \$50
Affiliate/Group/ Corporate: \$100

Additional Donations

Donation amount: \$ _____ Total: \$ _____

Membership Information

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/Postal Code: _____

Telephone: (____) _____

Email: _____

*You may also contribute online through our website, or
become a monthly donor and make a big impact.*

Supporters' Circle (Automatic monthly donations)

Advocate \$240 (\$20/month)

Protector \$480 (\$40/month)

Direct Bank Debit:

I (we) authorize the Thames Talbot Land Trust to process a debit, in paper, electronic or other form in the amount of \$ _____ on my (our) account on the first day of each month beginning 1, _____, 201_____.

I (we) acknowledge that we have read, understood and accepted all the provisions set out in the Terms and Conditions www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca.

I (we) enclose a cheque made payable to the Thames Talbot Land Trust and marked "VOID."

Signature(s) of Donor(s)

Date: _____

Please mail the completed application form and cheque to:

Thames Talbot Land Trust
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Work-days & Events



Linda McDougall and Pete Chapman blocking ATV trails with trees at Joany's Woods.
Photo: Justin Langille.



Workday volunteers at Joany's Woods, April 2014.
Photo: Justin Langille.



Daria Koscinski and Stan Caveney search for salamanders at Newport.
Photo: Justin Langille.

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