



President's Message

The visiting of Covid-19 upon our rather routine lives at Long Point Basin Land Trust (LPBLT) has caused disruption and has presented us with uncertainty as to how to interact with one another, how to plan ahead, and what life will look like when society gets the upper hand on this. Workplace challenges were quickly sorted out with staff working from home, and, when having to meet in person, the distancing and masking precautions were easily accommodated. The challenges of board life caused some delays in meeting, and when meeting by electronic means, some less than satisfactory results. Yes, some of the usual technical problems encountered in rural living; but more than that, the lack of real face to face which allows the transfer of the facial subtleties and body gestures that human communication incorporates. It has been suggested that introverts and antisocial beings do not miss these interactions, but I sure do.

Under provincial and local enactments, our nature reserves were made off-limits, but with no direction as to what LPBLT's responsibility was to enforce this. To play safe all events, hikes, and other activities were cancelled until further notice by talking directly to those involved, and posting this information on the web site. Happily, the reserves and trails are now open, but events are still being sorted out, with some moving to the web and others being modified.



LPBLT, with prudent planning and the recent success of securing a large grant, will

be able to keep the doors open.

But what to do about ongoing acquisition? Should the Land Trust be actively looking for new opportunities and formalizing existing ones? The elephant in the room is the need to raise funds to continue the core mission of the organization. Would asking for funds at this time be viewed as insensitive and elicit negative feelings? I personally feel that LPBLT should not disrupt its acquisitions program, and that people who are willing and able to support us at this time will do so.

One of the interesting outcomes of the Covid-19 situation seems to be an increased appreciation that nature is paramount to human well-being, and that people need to get outside to experience it. Hopefully this realization will help build the case for the protection of a meaningful part of our planet which is necessary for the protection of biodiversity, maintenance of ecological services, reduction of climate change and the general well-being of our species. I am optimistic that involvement in and support for LPBLT's mission will grow as we move to a new normal.

Stay safe and apart when needed.

Explore the Outdoors

With the inaugural 2019 Explore the Outdoors program being a huge success, we became more ambitious for 2020, doubling the number of events to 16!

Most of last year's favourite events were scheduled, like Monarch Tagging and the Mushroom Walk, for an encore. Several new and exciting events were also added – Orienteering, Field Sketching, Wildflower Walk, and a Star Party, to name a few. Like last year, the workshops are being held at several of our locations, showcasing our beautiful nature reserves.

Then, unfortunately, Covid-19 hit. The pandemic has cancelled some of our early events, but we are adapting and overcoming! We have hosted two fantastic virtual talks so far - a Tick Talk, and Gardening with Native Plants.

At this writing, things are beginning to return to

normal, and we plan to present many of the events as scheduled, with social distancing in effect. We will also continue to offer virtual talks for those of you that prefer to stay home right now.

Many of us are anxious to get outside and get going again, so to stay up to date, download the Explore the Outdoors booklet on the Events Page of our website: www.longpointlandtrust.ca/events.

You can also learn about individual events there – including new virtual ones - that are being added.

- Events are free, but registration is required.
- Check on the status of events using our social media.

We would like to extend an extra-special thank you to our sponsors for their patience and continued support in these uncertain times.

A. Scott Milne



Top: Kathryn Boothby demonstrates Monarch tagging to an eager group



Bottom: Inga Hinnerichsen, mushroom walk leader, showing off one of the fungi finds

Cynthia Tosswill



LPBLT's New Development Coordinator

Long Point Basin Land Trust recently received a generous three-year Grow Grant from Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF). OTF is an agency of the Government of Ontario and one of Canada's leading granting foundations. This funding will help us significantly grow our land securement and stewardship program. That will help make sure that our network of ecologically-significant nature reserves is conserved for the long-term.

A large component of this funding is dedicated to increasing LPBLT's organizational capacity by enhancing staff capacity and expertise, including creating a new position. The Development Coordinator, working alongside the Development Committee, has the task of helping to grow our land trust. This position will be responsible for developing and implementing communications and fundraising strategies. This will help grow our community so we

have a healthy support base and can preserve land for years to come.

We are so excited to welcome Joelle Chille Cale to take on this exciting new venture! Joelle grew up exploring the nature of the escarpment in her hometown of Niagara Falls. She then went to university in central New York before moving to Edmonton, Alberta, and settling in southwestern Ontario last fall.

She has over 8 years of experience in outreach, development, and communications with a focus on non-profits. She also has Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Forest Health and Ecology, respectively. These strengths combine to make her a great fit for LPBLT! She's excited to bring her skill set to further the mission and goals of the land trust. In her free time, she loves trail running, gardening, cooking, and fiber crafts.

Stewardship Shorts

Farm Clean-up – August 2019 – Volunteers spent a day in August removing irrigation pipes (some buried) from **Spring Arbour Farm Nature Reserve**. They had been in place from the former farming operation. Woody invasives have also been cut here to open up the walking trail.

Improving Habitat – November 2019 - Students from the Fanshawe College Environmental and Ecotourism class visited **Trout Creek Nature Reserve** in November to help improve Oak Savanna habitat by removing maple and Scots pine saplings.

Invasives Removal – January to March 2020 -- Intrepid volunteers worked through the winter months at **Stead Family Scientific Reserve** to remove exotic, invasive species such as Autumn Olive and Multiflora Rose. Eastern Flowering Dogwood trees were given more air flow and light by trimming neighbouring branches.

Guide for Volunteer Stewards – Mary Gartshore has been busy preparing documents to guide volunteer stewardship work at all of LPBLT's nature reserves.



Mary Gartshore

Fanshawe students removing an invasive Scots pine.

Focus on Wildlife: The Miracle of Oaks

Mary E. Gartshore

Oaks (*Quercus sp.*) are some of our most important forest trees. Not only do they feed many insects – which feed the birds- they also create their own ecosystems.

Red and White Oaks

There are eleven oak species in Ontario, five in the red oak group and six in the white oak group. These groups differ in their life history as well as their physical details. Red oaks have pointed leaf lobes, and take two seasons for acorns to develop; while white oaks, bearing rounded leaf lobes, produce acorns – which can germinate soon after falling – in only one growing season.

Oak trees flower in late spring. The flowers are wind-pollinated so the pollen is dry and easily shed, unlike the sticky pollen of insect-pollinated flowers. The male and female flowers are separate but on the same branches. The male flowers are visible catkins while the female flowers are acorn-like tufts with a visible stigma that receives pollen.

Acorn crops vary between years. The red oaks tend to have two consecutive big crops, followed by sporadic crops for two or more years. Red oaks are susceptible to acorn weevils, the larvae of which feed on the kernel as it ripens. The first crop usually has few weevils, but the second is almost entirely infected. Red oaks thus starve out the weevils for a few years by producing no acorns. The rest period may give the tree time to build resources. Any acorn crop may be subject to environmental factors such as drought or insect defoliation, whereupon, the oak tree may simply drop its entire crop early. Red oak acorns that drop before 26 September are unlikely to be viable.

Dwarf Chinquapin an oak shrub rare in southern Ontario produced abundant acorns at the beginning of September every year. These acorns are rapidly consumed by wildlife and also may have been consumed by First Nations as the seeds have a relatively mild flavour.

Oak Trees Feed Many Insects

Oaks feed an impressive array of insects without showing any ill effects. Doug Tallamy (2019) suggests that as many as 557 moth species' caterpillars feed on oaks in the mid-American states.

Birds feed caterpillars from oak trees to their nestlings. Thus oaks support our forest bird species, most of which winter in the neo-tropics. Caterpillars turn oak leaves into bird food and birds travel through the northern and southern hemispheres on that protein and energy to carry out ecological services such as fruit seed dispersal and pollination in tropical forests.

Oaks create their own special ecosystems including oak savannas, oak woodlands and oak barrens. These ecosystems have unique assemblages of flora and fauna, many of which can be experienced by residents and visitors to Norfolk County.

Apart from the oaks' contribution to ecosystems, all oak species have contributed to the economic and cultural well-being of people. Processed acorns can be valuable as food and species such as Dwarf Chinquapin Oak are very productive every year. White Oak logs from Norfolk County were important for building and re-building the Welland Canal.



Mary Gartshore

Mary Garrishore



These Pink-banded Oakworms are showing processional (following) behaviour whereby they have followed each other to the end of a Black Oak branch.

Trouble on The Horizon

The presence of oak trees in forests is declining due to lack of fire, forestry high-grading, and proliferation of trees like red maple, which create a shadier, more humid environment. This process, called mesophication, is causing loss of oak-dependent parasitic wild flowers, Yellow False Foxgloves, three of which occur in Norfolk County.

Sadly, oak trees in Ontario may eventually succumb to two emerging oak diseases.

Oak Wilt is a vascular disease caused by the fungus *Bretziella fagacearum*. This fungus infects sapwood and sporulating mats between the sapwood and bark attract sap beetles that spread the fungus to other trees. Transport of wood products and nursery stock can also spread the disease long distances. Oak wilt occurs in at least 24 U.S. states near Ontario, but we have not yet detected the disease.

In the west, Sudden Oak Death is another invading disease that may eventually infect oaks in the east. This disease is caused by a fungal-like organism called *Phytophthora ramorum*. Both diseases are thought to be invasive exotics accidentally introduced through global trade.

LPBLT is working hard to resist these disturbing trends by managing Trout Creek Nature Reserve and Stead Family Scientific Reserve for Oak Savanna habitat.

These Polyphemus caterpillars have each commandeered their own red oak leaf.

Mary Garrishore



Highlights of the Long Point BLT Birders' Birdathon 2020

Audrey Heagy and David Okines

This year David and I decided to do a team Birdathon in support of the Long Point Basin Land Trust. The Great Canadian Birdathon is an annual fund-raising event run by Birds Canada. Funds raised by those pledging go to Birds Canada for its bird conservation programs. Birds Canada will pass on 25% of the funds we raise to our choice of conservation organization, in this case LPBLT.

A Birdathon is a competitive birdwatching event and fundraiser, in this case taking place over 24 hours. The goal is to see as many species as possible in a 24-hour period, so a lot of planning goes into picking the right day! This was challenging, as spring 2020 was abnormal in so many ways. The snow, sub-zero nights, and then shocking start to summer didn't give us any optimal times to start. By May 27th we were getting tired of the waiting game so we decided to "get 'er done". So, with binoculars and spotting scopes ready, (also sunscreen, hats, bug dope, and lots of water) we headed to Long Point and got birding.

Our first stop at 9:55 a.m. was at a hayfield to see Bobolinks and a Wild Turkey pecking away. Further down the road, we saw Purple Finches that were breeding in young spruce trees. On the drive to Long Point, we visited different habitats to pick up Horned Larks, a Downy Woodpecker, and a Red-tailed Hawk. Crossing the causeway, we spotted many Canada Geese, Mute Swans, Common Gallinules, and a Marsh Wren.

A drive along Hastings Drive on the Erie shoreline yielded Belted Kingfishers, several Bald Eagles, and a few gulls. We then noticed a tern that had a different flight pattern and long outer tail feathers which looked like streamers - an Arctic Tern! Arctic Terns are super-migrants that commute 70,000 km or more between their breeding area in the Arctic to their non-breeding areas in the Antarctic each year. There are only a few records for Long Point. Chance encounters such as seeing an Arctic Tern on Lake Erie is one of the reasons I love doing Birdathons.

After a brief stop in Port Rowan to list Chimney Swifts, we went further inland. There we spotted the glowing yellow flash of a pair of Prothonotary

Warblers, which nest at only a few locations in south-western Ontario.

After heading home to feed the dogs and ourselves we left again at dusk to listen for Eastern Whip-poor-wills and American Woodcock before calling it a day. We awoke extra early for our final round of birding with high expectations. But a wide band of rain south of Lake Erie grounded migrants before they reached us. Fortunately, the rain held off until mid-morning and we added a few more species to our list. Our 2020 Birdathon wrapped up with an Orchard Oriole seen at a feeder just before 10 am.

The final total for our 24-hour team effort was a very satisfying 126 species. But the best satisfaction is that we exceeded our target of raising at least \$500 to help Birds Canada and LPBLT! This will help carry out their important work conserving Canada's birds, including protecting vital habitat for birds in the Long Point Important Bird Area. If you haven't already, there's still time to contribute to Audrey's Birdathon in support of LPBLT.

**Thanks so much for supporting the
BLT Birder team effort!**

*Audrey (left)
and David
inspect some
birds during
the Birdathon*



Cathy Giesbrecht

Long Point Basin Land Trust: A Record of Strong Financial Management

Joe Stephenson

L PBLT endeavours to be a fiscally responsible charitable organization. Donations and grants find a good, well-managed home with us!

Stewardship Monies

In 2016, LPBLT decided that external investment management was needed for our property stewardship endowment fund. This fund, pegged at 15% of the properties' value at the time of purchase, is needed for the long-term management of the nature reserves, and covers such expenses as taxes and insurance. This capital is managed by a major Canadian bank's investment arm, with review by LPBLT on an ongoing basis. The Land Trust, with the bank's assistance, sets targets for the allocation of the funds. These include relatively conservative investments, primarily in the Canadian and US markets. Partly because of this diversification, the capital dipped by only about 6% from the February 2020 peak value before the impact of the Coronavirus affected the investments, a much better performance than the overall investment markets.

Other Financial Measures

LPBLT also undertakes these measures: Other operating funds are managed through a major Canadian bank. For control, we require two signatures on all cheques and financial transactions. Each fiscal year, the Land Trust develops an operating budget for revenue and expenses, which is adopted by the Board of Directors. Every year our financial statements are audited by an external Professional Accountant; this includes our annual CRA charitable return as well. These procedures follow Standards and Practices that have been developed for land trusts across Canada.

Cost Control

The Land Trust tries to keep property management costs in control. For example, local naturalist clubs assist with certain management goals such as trail maintenance and other tasks. To alleviate direct costs, LPBLT diligently applies for grants to cover many of the operating needs; these include funds for such items as property plan development and control of invasive species. Historically, we have been successful in receiving grants for these activities, and we hope this will continue.



Diane Salter

An adult male Orchard Oriole, the last species of bird spotted during Audrey and David's birdathon

LPBLT SUPPORTERS

We would like to thank the many individuals who have generously supported our acquiring of nature reserves, stewardship efforts, and Explore the Outdoors program.

Long Point Basin Land Trust thanks the following for their financial support:



Long Point Basin Land Trust thanks the following foundations and agencies for their support of our conservation projects:

This project was undertaken with the financial support of:
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier de :



Environment and
Climate Change Canada

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Ontario
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Foundation



Fondation
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An agency of the Government of Ontario
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

LPBLT is in need of an Opportunity Reserve. This would allow us to have a fast response to fleeting land opportunities. Sometimes significant property becomes available for such a short period that there is not time for a lengthy campaign to raise the needed funds. Your contribution to our Acquisition Fund could help us build this reserve that allows us to respond quickly and conserve more land.

LPBLT could not carry out its mission of protecting and restoring land in our region without financial support from generous people like you.

Please also remember LPBLT in your yearly giving and estate planning exercises.

**Thank you for your support of our efforts to preserve
the natural resources of the Long Point Basin.**

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