



Thickson's Woods Land Trust

Spring 2021
Newsletter 59

Digging Garlic Mustard can be a Therapeutic Experience

Fed up with another lockdown? Looking for a way to relieve your frustrations? Here's a perfect solution. Why not attack a patch of garlic mustard?

Or maybe your favourite team lost again in the last minute of the game. Why not uproot some garlic mustard? Better than throwing things at your TV. Less expensive, too.

Second-year plants that stayed green all winter are already pushing aside the leaf litter and sprouting new blue-green leaves to produce energy for the small white flowers and the myriad tiny black seeds to follow. Grab your favourite shovel or trowel and dig furiously into the patch. Don't worry about damaging tree seedlings or wildflowers. Between the noxious chemicals garlic mustard releases into the soil and the smothering canopy of shade its growing plants produce, nothing else will survive there anyway without your help. Collect the uprooted plants to be disposed of later.

When you're out of breath and stop for a rest, look around the edge of destruction for tiny, newly sprouted seedlings with two leaves that seem to be floating in space, unattached to their main stem. These are next year's scourge taking advantage of the brief flood of sunlight before opening leaves shade them. Grab a handful of debris off the forest floor and furiously scrub the ground where they're growing. In Thickson's Woods, last fall's crop of White Pine cones now littering the ground make a good scrubbing tool as well. While their rough, bristly bracts that opened to release a shower of winged seeds last autumn may look like a good back scratcher, don't try it. For sure their sticky pine pitch will glue you to the sheets when you arrive home for your nap.

Now that you're feeling more relaxed, stop to notice the chorus of spring bird song enveloping you. Of course, there'll be the familiar melodies of robins, cardinals and song sparrows you enjoy daily in your yard. But perhaps you'll be rewarded with the music of a Fox Sparrow, the most accomplished songster in the clan. Sit still a bit longer and it may appear nearby, digging as furiously as you recently were, unearthing tasty hidden morsels. Feast your eyes on its spring finery, a crisp pattern of grays, snowy whites and brilliant rusts for which it's named. If you're extremely lucky you may be treated to the exquisite melodies of a Hermit Thrush, in my opinion the most talented songster of all. They don't often sing during migration, but I was fortunate to hear two in Thickson's yesterday, once early in the morning and again toward evening.



Fox Sparrow (Ed McAskill)

Not to be outdone are the Winter Wrens and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, two of the smallest singers. But what they lack in physical size they more than make up for in volume, enthusiasm and stamina.

By now I hope you're feeling more calm and relaxed. More and more studies show what you've always known, that time spent in nature is essential to human health.

So next time you're feeling frustrated and in need of a nature break, why not attack a grove of garlic mustard, then stop to take in the sights, sounds and smells of the natural world. There are no doubt many places, a neighbourhood ravine or along a nearby trail, that could use your expertise.

And my understanding is that one permitted reason to go outside is to get some exercise. So if you live within walking or cycling distance of Thickson's Woods, we still need your help to maintain the reserve for the plants and animals that live here, and those that depend on this oasis as a rest and refueling stop on their annual migrations.

And when life gets back to normal, Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve with all its beauty and magic will be here to welcome you.



Ruby-crowned Kinglet (*Mike McEvoy*)

Recent donations have been made in memory of these special people

Dave Calvert
Laurie Gartland-Glecoff
Peter Justo
Barbara Kalthoff
Harry Kerr
Kelly Nuckle
Harlan Sano
Nigel Schilling



We join their families and friends in mourning their passing, and acknowledge their unique contribution to the rich web of life on planet earth.

On our website we recognize all past donations made in memory of friends and loved ones.

Phill Holder

Stopping, Watching and Remembering

by Dennis Barry

If there's anything good that's come from our forced confinement to home and neighbourhood for the past year, it may be that we've relearned to sometimes "stop and smell the roses." Most of us probably don't remember the wonder and excitement we felt, having just learned to walk, when we spotted our first golden dandelion blossom by the driveway, or how much we enjoyed splashing in a muddy puddle after a spring rain. But just watch a toddler starting out on this lifelong awakening, and you'll recall some of the joy at the little things in life that today's hectic pace may have stolen from you.

My wife, Margaret, remembers details of her second birthday, the new dress she wore, an older sister leading her by the hand to invite neighbourhood children to her party, how special she felt, in a family with six siblings close in age, to be the centre of attention for one day.

I have mixed memories of an early birthday, perhaps when I was four. I grew up in Haliburton County where conditions were still more reminiscent of pioneer times. There was no access to electricity in our neighbourhood, so if you wanted ice cream for a birthday party, you had to make it.

The ice cream maker, as well as I can remember, consisted of a round tub sort of like a miniature butter churn. In the centre was a container to place the ingredients for the ice cream. The space around that would be filled with broken pieces of ice to which salt was added to lower the melting point of the ice and allow the ice cream ingredients to freeze. Stirring the milk, cream, vanilla and sugar long enough at this colder temperature would make a very tasty treat.

The ice probably came from the ice house, down near the lake. During the previous January large blocks of clear bluish ice had been sawn by hand from the lake, hauled out with ice tongs, and loaded onto a horse-drawn sleigh to be transported to the ice house, where they were packed tightly together and covered with a thick layer of fresh, clean sawdust to keep them from melting until summer.

Tired of waiting for the ice cream to form, I decided to suck on one of the pieces of salty ice from the bucket. Suddenly it slipped down my throat, or at least partway down. I remember spending a very uncomfortable few minutes until the chunk of ice melted enough so I could finish swallowing it. By the time the ice cream was ready, I had no trouble enjoying a large bowlful. Vanilla is still my favourite.

Other early memories of life on our farm include the feel of soft grass on bare feet along the path to our log barn, wading along the shore of South Lake searching for frogs and tadpoles, and admiring dozens of golden swallowtail butterflies probing in damp debris along the beach.

This spring I've taken to stopping more often during walks to really appreciate what I was racing past previously. I carry a small stool with a cloth seat so I can stop anywhere for as long as I wish. The stool weighs only a few ounces and is scarcely noticeable hanging from a strap over my shoulder.

There are two main reasons why one tends to miss things while walking. For one, your own movements cause those of the creatures you're passing to be obscured. As well, they hear and see you long before you notice them, and either freeze or slip away.

Stopping and sitting motionless allows background actions and sounds to come into focus, and wildlife large and small to return to their normal routines.

Yesterday we sat along a trail through the woods. After a few minutes we noticed a female Mourning Dove fly up into a Yellow Birch and disappear into a hollow above a large limb some twenty feet high. Almost immediately she reappeared, paused, then flew off into a nearby ravine. Within minutes she returned, landed in the tree and visited the same hollow briefly. This routine was repeated more than a dozen times while we sat nearby. We couldn't see if she was carrying nesting material, yet clearly this behaviour suggested nest building, a category of "Confirmed Breeding" for the third Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, beginning this year.

As we sat silently, a chipmunk appeared on the other side of the trail, ran in our direction, investigated our boots, then continued on its journey.

Farther along the trail a check of Beaked Hazel showed buds clearly swelling, but not yet bursting to reveal tiny, delicate fuchsia blooms.

Back in our yard there were no sparrows feeding beside the brush pile, nor visible nearby. I'd heard Fox Sparrows singing earlier, but hadn't been lucky enough to spot one. I parked my stool with a clear view of the space where we'd been scattering seeds for juncos and whitethroats all winter, got comfortable and sat quietly. Almost immediately a Song Sparrow appeared from the brush pile and began scratching in the pine needles in search of buried



A Song Sparrow appeared from the brush pile (*Phill Holder*)

morsels. Then a much larger bird popped out and started digging a hole, tossing debris behind, stopping frequently to pick up something to eat. Despite deep shade under overhead cedars, the rich rusts and grays and crisp whites clearly identified the bird as my first Fox Sparrow of the spring. Soon a Tree Sparrow joined the others. This was a great chance to compare size and patterns, since the three were only a foot or so apart. Within minutes a total of four Song Sparrows in varying plumage patterns and four Tree Sparrows were busily foraging. Proof that sitting quietly will reveal hidden surprises.

In midafternoon I glanced out the window and noticed a pair of Mourning Doves sitting facing each other on the wooden border of a flower bed. They began stroking each other's faces with their beaks. This continued for several minutes until the male spotted me at the window. I backed away, but he moved off a short distance, then both began preening their own feathers. Clearly this "billing" was courtship behaviour, considered probable evidence of breeding for the Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas.

As spring advances, there'll be many more opportunities to pause and become a quiet part of your surroundings. Who knows what secrets will be revealed.

Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!

Tyler Dawson of Dawson Tree Services volunteered to clear trees that were blocking trails or creating safety hazards in the woods. He and his friend Tyler McIntosh came in late winter and cleared trails to make them safe for visitors. He says many people thanked them when they were here doing the work, but on behalf of Thicksen's Woods board of directors, we'd like to add a great big official thank-you.

Tyler also donated a nest box that we can use to replace the kestrel box in the meadow, and has some ideas to make breeding for great horned owls safer in future years, after, as too often happens, this year's nest blew down in a storm.

Thanks also to Jack Alvo for once again designating Thicksen's Woods as the organization to receive the club share of the money he raised for Birds Canada's Great Canadian Birdathon. We really appreciate his efforts to help promote bird protection both locally and around the world.



We Get Mail

It's always encouraging to hear from visitors and supporters of your experiences on outings and your appreciation for those who work to keep the reserve safe for its residents and visitors. Here are some recent messages.

- ✉ Dear Ms. Bain,
My introduction to Thickson's Woods was many years ago on a field trip with Joy and Clive Goodwin. Over the years since I have "introduced" a number of folks to birds and flowers, spreading the joy you preserved. You personally acknowledged my first donation and touched me by personally inviting me to share a walk with you. Regretfully, I never made that happen. But your recent article in the newsletter prompts this note of deep gratitude for your foresight, courage and tenacity. My feelings of appreciation are heartfelt. In my mind's eye I see Scarlet Tanagers, Black-throated Blue Warblers and faces of those holding seeds out for chickadees and nuthatches. Just one visitor has become a full-time researcher, but many have fond memories. The opportunity to help "our nesting birds" in their wintering homes is an example of the confidence the board held for their readership's commitment. May you have enduring good sightings,
Gratefully,
Pat
- ✉ Thank you so much for the wonderful fall newsletter! Beautiful pictures and interesting reading for these "shut in" days.
Josephine & Clayton
- ✉ Thank you so much on behalf of our wildlife. Having a safe spot that is secure for them is so important, especially this year.
Candice

Gifts That Will Last Forever

Metres of the nature reserve have been saved in the name of:

David Hiscox, Lisa Dost & Family

Thank you to everyone
who gave a friend or loved one a share in this living legacy—a gift that will last forever!

On our website we recognize all past donations made to honour friends and loved ones.

The Evolving Meadow and Its Amazing Moths

by Dennis Barry

On February 5, 1833, John Corbett purchased 60 acres in Lot 20, Broken Front Concession, including the 16 acres now known as Thickson's Woods, and 8 acres north of the Waterfront Trail known as "The Meadow," which together make up Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve. Broken Front Concession was the terminology used to describe the row of lots bordering Lake Ontario. The size of these lots varied due to the topography of the shoreline, with bays and promontories creating an uneven pattern.

How much of what we now call The Meadow was already cleared in 1833 I'm not sure. Townships and lots began to be surveyed and laid out in the area only a few decades earlier, in 1791.

Why Thickson's Woods itself was never cleared may be due partly to its rolling ridges and valleys. Also, the towering White Pines were reserved for masts for ships in the Royal Navy.

We do know that most of the meadow was cleared, but may have been devoted largely to gardens and orchards, since John Corbett owned an additional several hundred acres nearby.

A few gnarled pioneer apple trees still survive in the meadow, varieties such as Northern Spy and Greenings.

The last farm use of the meadow was as a cow pasture. Forest clearing and grazing would have eliminated most of the native plants growing in upland areas.

By the time Thickson's Woods Land Trust purchased the property, it had not been pastured for a number of years. Among the first shrubs to spread throughout the meadow were Red Osier Dogwood, especially suited to wetter shallow drainage channels where the ground sloped to the east. A mature hedge of Nannyberry along the edge of Corbett Creek Valley provided seed stock for birds to spread across the open ground in drier parts. Birds or small rodents probably also planted hawthorns now growing in small numbers throughout the meadow. A few Red Cedars sprouted from seeds from bird droppings appeared on higher ground to the west.

Seeds from White Pines, White Spruce and White Ash trees in the woods were blown in on strong south winds, infiltrating mainly the nearby southern portions.

Included with evergreen seedlings transplanted from areas farther north were Bracken Fern and Wild Bergamot. The bracken never spread far, but bergamot has colonized much of the meadow, providing a valuable nectar source for bees, butterflies and many other insects.

Canada Goldenrod is very aggressive and has spread over much of the meadow. Its tiny seeds spread on the wind. This and other goldenrod and aster flowers are prime nectar sources for migrating Monarch Butterflies in September.

Wild Bergamot (*Mike McEvoy*)



While we tend to think about plant species that provide nectar for insects, often more important are those that nurture their larvae.

During the course of trying to determine what moth species live in the nature reserve, the Matt Holder Environmental Research team has come to realize how little is known about the lives of moths. In many cases, even the host plant is a mystery. And when it's known what the larvae feed on, little has been recorded about the life cycle. A check of several entries in field guides or moth websites usually turns up the same cryptic data, obviously from the same source.

I'd like to introduce you to some of the moths that live in the reserve and the plants that they depend on. In most cases when insects feed on a specific plant, they do so in small enough numbers that they're not going to have a major negative impact on the host plant population.

One family of moths that show up in light traps late in summer are borers. They tend to be of medium size, rusty orange in colour with fairly distinctive patterns of pale or white spots and blotches. At first glance one might think that the pattern of lines and spots on moths are completely random. However, a careful look at the drawings on the first pages of the Peterson *Field Guide to Moths of North-eastern North America* will show this is far from true. In fact, the series of lines and spots are common enough to many species of moths that each is named, and variations in their size, shape and colour are key to moth identification.

While there are very few Bracken Ferns in the reserve, Bracken Borer moths seem more common than the handful of this fern here should warrant. Does this mean the species also utilizes other ferns? Plenty of intriguing questions waiting to be answered.

Several other borer moths live in the reserve. These include Turtlehead Borer, Sensitive Fern Borer, two species of burdock borers, and American Ear Moth. Stalk Borer has not been recorded so far. It can be a pest of corn, so, as is the case with most agricultural pests, its life cycle has been extensively documented.

Brown Scoopwing feeds on Nannyberry, which is abundant in the meadow. The only other local member of this family of relatively small cut-winged moths, Gray Scoopwing, feeds on Honeysuckle.

With goldenrod being one of the commonest plants in the meadow, you'd expect Goldenrod Flower Moth to be common, but we've only ever found one.

The common perception is that moths are sort of wedge-shaped, about the size of a fingernail and dingy brown or gray. Many moths do fit that stereotype, but many vary greatly in shape, size and colour.



Sensitive Fern Borer (Phill Holder)



Brown Scoopwing (Phill Holder)



Gray Scoopwing (Phill Holder)



Goldenrod Flower Moth (Phill Holder)



We were lucky enough to observe mating Cecropia Moths laying eggs (*Mike McEvoy*)

Moths that create the greatest excitement are the large showy ones, such as the Cecropia Moth that sometimes appear in gardens during the day, or around porch lights on warm June evenings. Like a majority of moths, the larvae of this species are generalists, feeding on the leaves of a variety of trees and shrubs. The adults have no mouth parts for eating. Their one purpose is to exude pheromones to attract a mate, after which the female lays her eggs and both adults die.

But there are many moths so tiny you will probably never see one, and even if you did, you'd never guess it was a moth. One really interesting family are leaf blotch miner moths. When first hatched they feed by burrowing into leaves on their host plant. Later stages become leaf folders. Most of the family are known as Caloptilia. They're only 7 millimetres long and tend to stand propped up on their front legs. My impression when I first saw one was of a stallion rearing up on its hind legs.

Each member of the group tends to specialize on one species of tree. Two of the many species found in the reserve are Dogwood Caloptilia and Cherry Leaf Cone Roller.



Dogwood Caloptilia (*Phill Holder*)



Cherry Leaf Cone Roller (*Phill Holder*)



Bronze Alder Moth (*Phill Holder*)



Cherry Shoot Borer (*Phill Holder*)

Even slightly smaller, at 6 millimetres, are two look-alike species, Cherry Shoot Borer and Bronze Alder Moth. Rather than rearing up on tall front legs, these two very attractive moths tend to adopt a headstand posture.



Morning-glory Plume Moth (*Phill Holder*)

While moths in flight may have somewhat similarly shaped wings, when they land some fold their wings into very unusual patterns. Plume moths fold their wings at rest to look like a glider aircraft. Most common in the reserve is Morning-glory Plume Moth, which is more of a generalist feeding on Bindweed, Lamb's Quarters and several other plants. Rose Plume Moth, as expected, feeds on roses. But for some members of the family, the guide lists the host plant as "unknown."

Beautiful Wood-nymph and Pearly Wood-nymph are two other moths with unusual shapes. They're among many moths whose larvae feed on wild grape.



Beautiful Wood-nymph (*Phill Holder*)



Pearly Wood-nymph (*Phill Holder*)

Since moths provide food for many species of birds and other wildlife, it's vital that they're able to blend in with their surroundings to avoid detection. While many moths are patterned to blend in with bark, one group achieves camouflage by looking like bird droppings.



Tufted Bird-dropping Moth (*Phill Holder*)

Another group, lichen moths, feed on lichens and mosses. The Painted Lichen Moth is colourful and quite common here.



Painted Lichen Moth (*Phill Holder*)

Another colourful moth with an interesting wing shape is Olive Angle Shades.



Olive Angle Shades (*Phill Holder*)



Double-banded Grass-veneer (*Phill Holder*)

Grass-veneers are numerous, small, narrow-winged moths found in the meadow. They hide very well among the various grasses their larvae eat.

Over the last several years investigating the moths that live in Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve, we have discovered nearly eleven hundred different species in an amazing variety of shapes, sizes and colours. So this summer when you notice a large, pretty moth on the wall of your house, look carefully for its smaller relatives that may be hiding nearby.

The Butterflies of Thickson's Woods



A Photo Checklist

Phill Holder



Least Skipper *Ancyloxypha numitor*
(David Beadle).



European Skipper *Thymelicus lineola*
(Mike McEvoy).



Wild Indigo Duskywing *Erynnis baptisiae*
(Mike McEvoy).



Pipevine Swallowtail *Battus philenor*
(Mike McEvoy).



Black Swallowtail *Papilio polyxenes*
(Mike McEvoy).



Giant Swallowtail *Papilio cresphontes*
(Phill Holder).



Canadian Tiger Swallowtail
Papilio canadensis
(Mike McEvoy).



Eastern Tiger Swallowtail
Papilio glaucus
(Jenna Siu).



Spicebush Swallowtail *Papilio Troilus*
(David Beadle).



Cabbage White *Pieris rapae*
(Mike McEvoy).



Clouded Sulphur *Colias philodice*
(Mike McEvoy).



Orange Sulphur *Colias eurytheme*
(Michael King).



Bronze Copper *Lycaena hyllus*
(Mike McEvoy).



Acadian Hairstreak *Satyrium acadica*
(Michael King).



Coral Hairstreak *Satyrium titus*
(Michael King).



Banded Hairstreak *Satyrium calanus*
(Michael King).



White M Hairstreak *Parrhasius m-album*
(Michael King).



Eastern Tailed Blue *Cupido comyntas*
(Mike McEvoy).



Spring Azure *Celastrina ladon*
(Mike McEvoy).



Summer Azure *Celastrina neglecta*
(Mike McEvoy).



Silvery Blue *Glaucopsyche lygdamus*
(Mike McEvoy).



American Snout *Libytheana carinenta*
(Mike McEvoy).



Great Spangled Fritillary *Speyeria cybele*
(Mike McEvoy).



Pearl Crescent *Phyciodes tharos*
(Mike McEvoy).



Northern Crescent *Phyciodes cocyta*
(Mike McEvoy).



Question Mark *Polygonia interrogationis*
(Mike McEvoy).



Eastern Comma *Polygonia comma*
(Mike McEvoy).



Mourning Cloak *Nymphalis antiopa*
(Ed McAskill).



American Lady *Vanessa virginiensis*
(Mike McEvoy).



Painted Lady *Vanessa cardui*
(Mike McEvoy).



Red Admiral *Vanessa atalanta*
(Mike McEvoy).



Common Buckeye *Junonia coenia*
(Mike McEvoy).



White Admiral *Limenitis arthemis arthemis*
(Phill Holder).



Red-spotted Purple *Limenitis arthemis astyanax*
(Michael King).



Viceroy *Limenitis archippus*
(David Beadle).



Eyed Brown *Satyrodes eurydice*
(Mike McEvoy).



Little Wood Satyr *Megisto cymela*
(David Beadle).



Common Wood-nymph
Cercyonis pegala
(David Beadle).



Monarch *Danaus plexippus*
(Mike McEvoy)

White M Hairstreak *Parrhasius m-album*

Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve is one of the few unique places along the northshore of Lake Ontario where anything can turn up at any time.

Such was the case on the afternoon of August 23, 2012 when Margaret Carney found a White M Hairstreak, a very rare migrant to Ontario from the South East United States .

Margaret, was walking back to her house, with visiting family, when she saw a vibrant iridescent blue butterfly in the grass, just steps from her front door.

Instantly she knew it was a Hairstreak, but having never seen one just like this, she consulted the field guides and along with Dennis Barry made the incredible identification.

There are only a handful of sightings in Southern Ontario, several of them during 2012. The vibrant upper wing colour is not visible on a resting butterfly, but the French common name Porte-queue saphir, says it all.

Phill Holder



\$25.00
inc HST

Ontario Moths

A Checklist

David Beadle Michael King Phill Holder

The main checklist includes photographic plates with examples of the family of each species. Separate sections include photographic additions to the list and a few records awaiting verification. All these records include dates, locations, and finders' names.

With more than 230 photographs and spiral bound for easy use, we believe this checklist will be invaluable to all moth enthusiasts from beginner to expert.

Order your copy from: www.mattholderfund.com/shop

Now Available

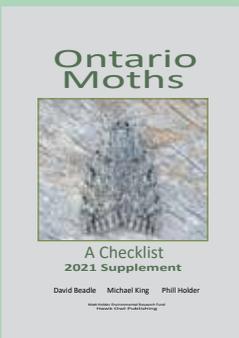
2021 Supplement To The Ontario Moth Checklist

Corrections - New Species - Taxonomic Changes
Name Changes - New Photographs

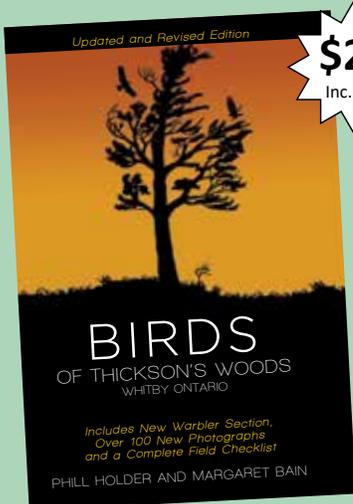
Available for free download at

<https://mattholderfund.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Ontario-Moth-Checklist-202-Update.pdf>

Copy the link into your browser



Hawk Owl Publishing



\$25
Inc. Tax

Birds

OF THICKSON'S WOODS

Second "Field" Edition

Revised and updated with over 100 new photographs. A new warbler section includes large photographs of each of the 38 recorded species, showing differing male and female plumages. Includes a Field Checklist and Trail Map.

This completely revised second edition, designed for use in the field, documents 323 species of birds that have been seen so far in the Reserve. Illustrated with exceptional full colour photographs of each species, including status and the specific dates of the rarities seen, this is a must have book for all birdwatchers.



**Order your copies at www.mattholderfund.com/shop
or contact Dennis Barry at 905 725 2116**

How to donate by e-transfer

Donors must sign on with their bank and select Interac e-transfer.

Next pick the account the money will come out of and enter the amount.

For recipient select "add new" and enter our e-mail address (nature@thicksonswoods.com)

Enter a security question and answer.

Under "Message" put your name and address so we can mail you a charitable receipt.

The next screen is a summary where the information can be double-checked. If okay, click Send.

Finally, you must send an e-mail to (nature@thicksonswoods.com) setting out the security question and answer.

Without that information our treasurer can't make the deposit.

Yes, I want to help protect Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve. It's a very special place!
We need spaces where plants and animals can thrive and people can relax in nature.

Here is my tax-deductible contribution of \$ _____ Date _____

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ Prov/State _____ Postal Code _____ Tel. _____

e-mail _____

Cheques can be payable to Thickson's Woods Land Trust.

Mail to: Box 541 Whitby, ON L1N 5V3 (Charitable Registration # 0674382-52-13)

Donations can also be made by e-transfer. See above for details.

**Thank you so much for helping to support
Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve, this precious corner of nature.**