



# Thickson's Woods Land Trust

Autumn 2023  
Newsletter 64

# 40

## Thickson's Woods Fortieth

by Margaret Bain

Forty years on, and I still think of Thickson's Woods as one of my favourite places. It was where I really started birding, some ten years earlier, dazzled by the fact that Dennis Barry could point out to our small, inexperienced birding group a Black-throated Green Warbler – just because of its song!! Very quickly, birding there by eye and ear became habit-forming. The woods were a perfect place to enjoy spring warblers in breathtaking variety as well as exciting rarities like a Varied Thrush, a Le Conte's Sparrow, Summer Tanagers. The mudbanks of the creek often attracted shorebirds in spring and fall, and of course the wide sweep of the lake was a thoroughfare for many notable species, my favourite perhaps an early winter glimpse of two diving Northern Gannets, way out on the horizon.



Black-throated Green Warbler (*Jim Richards*).

So, it's forty years since we first saw the loggers' slash marks on the trunks of the tall pines in our favourite birding place. Our frantic efforts to save the pines are well recorded but almost taken for granted now. The novel idea of establishing non-profit land trusts to preserve ecologically sensitive habitats was only just starting in Canada then, fortunately suggesting a possible future for our pines. There were even a few nay-sayers, believing the woods covered such a small area that saving them would be of negligible importance in the grand scheme of things. But land conservation is becoming more widely discussed these days and land trusts, big and small, are forming in many diverse areas around the province.

Many congratulations to Thickson's Woods Land Trust for its leadership and fortitude over the last forty years!

Thickson's Woods Land Trust, Box 541 Whitby, Ontario L1N 5V3

Tel: (905) 725-2116. Email: [nature@thicksonswoods.com](mailto:nature@thicksonswoods.com). Web Site: [www.thicksonswoods.com](http://www.thicksonswoods.com)

Charitable Registration # 11926 3176 RR0001

# A Forty-year Love Affair

by Phill Holder

We arrived at Pearson Airport just after midnight on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1982 with a new life ahead of us, my family and I. Birding was our passion and we were keen to start adding to our life lists.

As light broke early on that April 1<sup>st</sup> morning my first bird in Ontario was a European Starling - not at all exciting. But that was followed by Common Grackles and a Red-winged Blackbird; now we're talking. American Robin, Brown-headed Cowbird, American Crow and Mourning Dove followed, and I was excited.

Looking for work severely impacted chances to go birding, but I did manage to tick off the odd lifer between interviews during April, Red-tailed Hawk, Killdeer, Belted Kingfisher and Eastern Meadowlark amongst them.

A chance encounter with Clive Goodwin on May 18<sup>th</sup> at James Gardens in Toronto was really the first time I met a Canadian birder and we chatted for quite a while. He gave me information on places to bird east of Scarborough, including Cranberry Marsh and Thicksen's Woods. We exchanged our details and I was very happy that I had a contact.



Red-winged Blackbird (Phill Holder).

On May 21<sup>st</sup>, I was shocked to get a phone call from a quiet-spoken man, who simply said "Want to go birdwatching?" Of course I said yes, but I didn't have a car. So the man, Dr. Murray Speirs, came out to Scarborough, picked me up and we went birding to Corner Marsh, Cranberry Marsh and Thicksen's Woods.

This was the start of wonderful friendship and Dr. Speirs introduced us to some wonderful people at Thicksen's and a lifetime love of the woods. On that day I found my first Least Bittern in the marsh, singing Bobolinks and meadowlarks in the meadow and several warblers new to me. I also saw my first Muskrat. What an impact it had on a birder new to the country.

For our family, Thicksen's Woods was the highlight of a day's birding. Dawn or dusk, we always started or ended our day in the woods. Parking along what is now the Waterfront Trail and looking over the meadow, walking down to the marsh, straining neck muscles to look at warblers, or lake watching.

Although relatively small in area, the reserve offered it all and the kids loved wandering about, like it was a wilderness experience. Once you entered the woods you were transported back in history to a time before industrialization.

Starting in 1983, the struggles to save Thicksen's Woods are well documented, but the challenge to raise the money to pay the mortgage became incredible fun. At pancake breakfasts in the "old meadow" it was a whole family affair where we made so many good friends - friendships that last until this day. My friend "big George" was the amazing volunteer cook and we had to tell him to reduce the size of the pancakes, advice he completely ignored!

## Autumn Garlic Mustard Blitz

We live in hope that one day there'll be no need for this to be an annual event, but given the resilience of this cross-ocean invasive, that seems unlikely. This summer the understory growth in the woods was so lush that finding stray plants later in the season was impossible.

So, on **Saturday, December 2**, we'll meet to resume the search, now that most of the other vegetation has died back.

**Park along Thicksen Road near the Waterfront Trail (avoid the "no parking" section to the north), walk east down the trail to the entrance to the woods on the right, follow the path south all the way through the woods to the house on your right, where tools and directions will get you started.**

Keen birders will already be working on their winter lists. Who knows what surprises the bumper crop of tree seeds may have attracted to Thicksen's. The myriad white pine seeds helicoptering down over the past month should spur a population boom in white-footed mice and meadow voles to encourage visiting owls to linger.

In later years our son, Matt, took great delight in leading young people down to the marsh for pond dipping. I don't know who had more fun, Matt or the youngsters.

We had a lot of fun building the platform in the meadow. Somehow, I managed to convince my grumbling maintenance employees to volunteer their time, grumbles that quickly turned to pride in the project.

Birding Thickson's was never dull. In 1989, I co-led a British birding tour to Pelee and Algonquin, and decided that a morning visit to Thickson's should be their last memory of birding Canada before heading for the airport. It was a particularly good day, with a fallout of warblers seen at eye level in glorious colourful detail. Most participants stated it was the best birding of the trip.

Over the years Thickson's Woods never lost its wonder, and although renowned as a birding hot spot, there was much more to see. The garter snake hibernacula on the first warm day in April; dragonflies dancing in the marsh, which became the inspiration for Matt to complete his Masters degree on dragonflies. The unique vascular plants George Scott carefully documented, and the European Hares and groundhogs commonly seen in the long-gone fields.

Matt and I spent many hours at Thickson's just puttering. One bird-quiet day, we were determined to find salamanders and spent hours turning over logs. It was great fun but we never did find any. There are no records of salamanders in the reserve, although historically they must have occurred.



Common Green Darner (Ed McAskill).

In October 2011 our son passed away, and we decided that in his memory we should try and document all the informal sightings we and others have had over the last forty-plus years. The result was our first TW publication *The Birds of Thickson's Woods* which I wrote with my friend Margaret Bain.

During the research it became clear that loss of habitat surrounding the reserve has had a huge impact on its biodiversity .

So we decided to create the Matt Holder Environmental Research Fund to document today's biodiversity, so that any future changes can be monitored.

Birding friend and moth expert David Beadle casually suggested that we should be able to record over a thousand moth species. The challenge was on and together with Mike King, Dennis Barry, Mike McEvoy, Phil Reyenga and Margaret Carney, we easily surpassed the 1000 species after only three years, which resulted in the *Checklist of Moths of Thickson's Woods*. From this we were inspired to expand the publications first with *Ontario Moths a Checklist* and just recently the *Photographic Guide to the Moths of Ontario*.

Toby Thorne led our bat studies and discovered we have six of the eight species of bats recorded in Ontario. Big Brown Bat and Silver-haired Bat were the most populous and we had an exciting night catching bats in a mist net, determining their age and sex. Other surveys by young volunteers have discovered maternity colonies in some of the old cottages.

Nigel Parr placed snake boards around the meadow and we were able to confirm that Eastern Milk Snake and Eastern Garter Snake have small but stable populations.

With help from Fiona Reid and Nigel Parr, and permits from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forests, we researched nocturnal mammals. By placing live traps around the woods and meadow, we were able to identify our deer mice as White-footed Mice and confirm a healthy population of Meadow Voles. We also found Northern Short-tailed shrews and the rarely seen highlight of the mammal study, the Masked Shrew.



Masked Shrew (Mike McEvoy).

With the help of expert Richard Aaron, we started surveys to document and photograph the fungi, a fascinating aspect of the reserve's biodiversity never before investigated. We have also documented butterflies, dragonflies, turtles, frogs and gastropods, but there is still so much more to discover, judging from all the bugs, beetles, flies and spiders attracted to our moth traps.

The diversity is remarkable, despite the alarming decline in global populations of flying insects. We can only imagine what we would have discovered had we started the project forty years ago, but there's still so much left to learn.

Brilliant photographer Mike McEvoy was with us every step of the way, using his skills to teach us macro photography, and photographing basically everything that moves (or doesn't move) within the reserve.

Over the last forty years we've lost surrounding habitat and consequently some of our breeding grassland birds like Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks and Eastern Kingbirds, and mammals like European Hare. The growth of cattails and phragmites has taken over the fall mudflats in the marsh that produced habitat for migrating shorebirds, but Wild Turkeys have returned after more than a century.

Pollution from surrounding industry and the loss of connectivity with other natural habitats are an ongoing threat, but the creation of habitats within the reserve, like the pond in the meadow, will be essential to maintaining biodiversity. It continues to be critically important to protect what we love, and we love Thickson's Woods.



Deadly Galerina (Mike McEvoy).

## Recent donations have been made in memory of these special people

Margaret Beagley  
Ron Pittaway

Harry & Eileen Kerr  
Mark Joseph Ramsay

Norman Schipper



Silver-bordered Fritillary (Phill Holder).

**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.

# Pollinator Garden in Thickson's Woods Meadow

By Dianne Pazaratz

Last fall, you may have seen an old silver rowboat full of dirt near the new pond in the meadow and wondered what was going on. Now, you should see small pollinator plants growing there, and hopefully some insects visiting them.

I read an article about people planting canoe gardens in parks and open spaces, and thought that might be a good idea for our nature reserve. Dennis Barry and Margaret Carney agreed, and began looking for an unused canoe. What they found, thanks to a summer student, was a leaky old rowboat her family had dragged out of the lake at their cottage. Dennis towed the boat home in his trailer and when the pond was dug last fall, had it filled with soil from the excavation.

Having introduced the idea, I was keen to get started. I added some manure and topsoil and planted pollinator plants as they came up in the spring. Thank you to Falmai Page, Lisa Bulford, Lois Gillette, and the Rossland Road Butterfly Garden for their generous donations of plants.

I got the original list of suitable plants from the article I read: Prairie Smoke, Pearly Everlasting, Monarda, Wild Strawberry and Wild Columbine. I added Butterfly Milkweed (because it's magnificent!), Golden Ragwort (because Falmai had some), Bloodroot (because I had some) and Black-eyed Susan. All these plants are beautiful and I would encourage you to try them in your own gardens to provide food and nectar for our very important pollinators. You can learn more about them online to see whether they're suitable for your yard, and how to care for them.

Hopefully these plants will survive and flourish in the meadow and be enjoyed by human and insect visitors alike.



Brown-eyed Susan (top) and Bloodroot (*Mike McEvoy*).

---

## Volunteers Needed!

From time-to-time tasks suddenly come up at the nature reserve that require urgent action. We always seem to call on board members, and they never fail to come through. But we know many of you have offered in the past to help with whatever needs doing to keep the reserve welcoming and safe for the plants and animals that call it home, and for human visitors. With that in mind, we're calling for those who'd like to join a team to take care of such jobs as need doing, and, perhaps, for someone to help coordinate the group. We apologize for dropping the ball in terms of taking advantage of your offers to help out in the past. We're sure this approach will be much more effective.

---

# Buying the Meadow

by Brian Steele

In honour of the fortieth anniversary of Thickson's Woods Land Trust I'd like to tell the story of how we acquired the meadow. This column is dedicated to you, the supporters of Thickson's Woods, because without you, the woods and meadow would not exist.

Late in 2000 or early 2001 we became aware that the meadow was for sale again. The parcel of land abutting the woods, marsh and creek valley had been on the market for ten years at an impossible price, but a sharp economic downturn resulted in a recent buyer – for a waste facility – walking away, and the price plummeted. The prospect of industrial buildings and noisy trucks right across from the woods had long caused great consternation, so we held an emergency board meeting to discuss the new possibilities. We knew that buying the meadow even then would cost more than half a million dollars. The prospect was daunting. During the discussion, board member Norm Schipper kept saying “We can do this.” By the end of the meeting we agreed to make an offer to purchase.

On June 23, 2001, our offer was submitted and it was accepted on July 4. The terms were 8.5 acres at a price of \$62,500 per acre, for a total of \$531,250. We submitted \$5,000 once the offer was accepted. The closing date was set for February 6, 2002, at which time we had to come up with another deposit of \$95,000. Our feeling was that if we could not raise that much in seven months, we had no hope of buying the property.

Our newsletter #16 told our supporters what had transpired and how much money we needed. And you came through! By the closing date we had raised enough money to complete the purchase. The next step was to pay off the mortgage of \$431,250 in the next five years. The interest rate on the mortgage was 7% and we could pay quarterly, with interest applied first and then the balance of our payment applied to the principal. This was another financial crisis, as the interest alone each quarter was over \$7,000.

My late wife Susan Morgan, who was also a board member, took charge of fundraising. She wrote to all substantial businesses in Whitby, as well as foundations and charities that she felt might help. Our newsletter kept our supporters informed of our progress and the donations kept pouring in.

There were times when there were so many donations that I had to have help writing the charitable receipts just to keep up. Other than donations from board members, one of our first large donations was from EJLB Foundation for \$10,000, and I remember how excited Susan was to open the envelope in front of Dennis, Margaret and me and see that large cheque.

There were quarters when we were barely able to make the interest, but we kept plugging away at reducing the principal. Then in the spring of 2005 we received our largest donation ever, of \$41,000 from a new supporter, and that was followed by a \$25,000 donation from my employer, Crestview Investment Corporation. Then I knew we would be successful. In the spring of 2006 we paid off the mortgage – one year early.

The process of acquiring the meadow was a huge undertaking. Other land trusts were flabbergasted that little Thickson's Woods would make the attempt. It was the urging of the late Norm Schipper that persuaded the board that we could do it. And he was right.

It was the financial generosity of our supporters that made the purchase possible. When the opportunity to acquire two small lots with towering pines came up years later, we did not hesitate, because we knew so many people cared so much. As the one who writes out the tax receipts and makes the deposits, I am humbled by the support we receive and how you've come through every time we've needed you. Thank You, Thickson's Woods supporters!!



## These Compact Kite Binoculars Could be Yours!

Always wanted a small pair of bins to carry in your travel bag?

You could be the proud owner of a shiny new pair of **Kite Vireo 8x24** binoculars generously donated by **Red Raven Marketing**, retailing for \$512.99 plus tax.

Just email your bid to [nature@thicksonswoods.com](mailto:nature@thicksonswoods.com) or mail it to Thickson's Woods Land Trust, Box 541, Whitby, Ontario L1N 5V3 to be received before midnight November 30<sup>th</sup>.

Label the subject/title “**Bid for Kite Compact Binoculars.**” Be sure to include your contact information.

**What a great holiday gift for a beginning birder!**



# A September Morning in the Meadow

by Dennis Barry

On a bright sunny morning in mid-September, forecasts for brisk northwest winds raised our excitement level in anticipation of a significant hawk flight along the Lake Ontario shore, the first of the autumn. And it happened, starting right in our front yard.

I knew 8:00 a. m. was too early for thermals to develop in the cool air, but raptors such as kestrels and sharp-shins often fly low early in the day, depending on muscle power to carry them westward. They also tend to follow fence rows and other treed areas, perhaps as potential hiding spots in case of attack by larger raptors. Or they may hope to surprise possible food items like smaller birds or large insects.

Margaret and I positioned chairs on our balcony to be able to spot any birds as they appeared over the spruce hedge to the east. First to show up was a group of five kestrels. With pointed, swept-back wings and pale tummies, they zipped around the tops of tall pines in the neighbour's yard and disappeared. Was this a family travelling together, or unrelated individuals? The fact that kestrels often seem to travel in twos or small groups suggests they may have some family affiliation.

Next to appear were a couple of sharp-shins. Short deep wings and tails longer than the kestrels' are key for zig-zagging between trees in pursuit of warblers or white-throats. Two ospreys moving west in a deliberate direct flight stood out from the casual haphazard flight of passing ring-billed gulls.

The first flock of broad-winged hawks, about eight, seemed to materialize out of the clear blue sky without warning. Travelling close to treetop level, they searched for any updrafts over the woods, soaring in overlapping circles, first west then back eastward. Their larger buteo wings allow them to rise to dizzying heights as the sun warms the land below.

When the stream of raptors seemed to shift northward, disappearing behind the towering white pines, we decided to move to the platform in the meadow to continue watching the parade. Goldenrod blossoms along the laneway in from the entrance were starting to fade, replaced by the fresher blooms of small white asters and the glowing purple of New England asters, visited by bright orange monarchs pausing to refuel on the morning's fresh nectar supply.

The shorter trees and shrubs around the platform should have made seeing hawks easy, but the bright sun in the eastern sky and the lack of cloud cover made it a challenge. Sharp-shins were the most common, arriving in ones and twos, following a path along the north edge of the woods to our south. As the northwest wind gained strength, scattered wispy white clouds began to form against the blue, giving hope for better viewing.

One or two small groups of broad-wings flew over, but nothing like the thousands that would appear at hawk watches along the west end of Lake Erie. The couple of northern harriers that passed travelled low on teetering wings, as did three turkey vultures, forerunners of many thousands that would show up in huge swirling flocks by Thanksgiving.

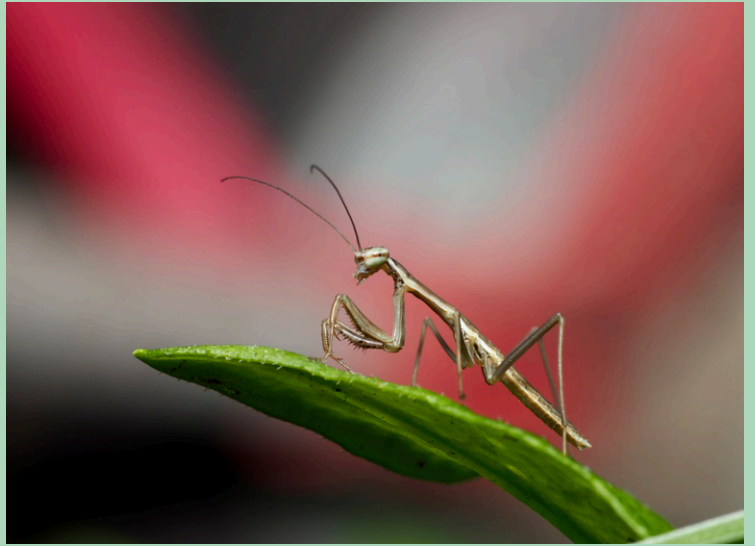
Larger cloud patches later in the morning and improved thermals meant that hawks were more visible, but often not until they were far off to the west. This was the first time I got to appreciate what an advantage my Kite 16-power stabilized binoculars are for spotting and identifying hawks at a distance. My hands seem to shake more every year, and holding regular, even ten-power binoculars steady enough to bird effectively is no longer possible. These electronically stabilized binoculars have given me a whole new lease on my birding life. I couldn't function without them. Raptors against cloud banks to the west were easily seen and identified at distances where they would have appeared as wobbly dots before.



Migrating Turkey Vulture (*Mike McEvoy*).



Black Saddlebags (Mike McEvoy).



Young Preying Mantis (Mike McEvoy).

As well as being a great place to view passing raptors, the platform in the meadow seemed to be the center of insect life that morning. Swarms of green darter dragonflies coursed back and forth overhead in pursuit of insect food to fuel their own southward migration. Two black saddlebags perched on nearby colourful nannyberry leaves showed off the dark pigments at the base of their wings that give them their name. Yellow dots on several abdominal segments are noticeable only when this dragonfly is at rest.

Silvery wings and a weak fluttery flight identified a praying mantis as it flew from one patch of long grass to a clump of goldenrod, perhaps searching for an ideal spot to lay her clutch of eggs. Encased in foam that hardens into a protecting insulating case, the eggs await the warmth of May sun to hatch into miniature copies of their mother, long since dead.

Though I've visited Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve thousands of times over the past sixty years, there's always something new to excite. As I leaned against the railing behind my seat, a fly landed on the weathered wood at my feet.

It was large, more than an inch long, with a short bulbous abdomen and eyes thrust forward on its narrow head. But the most striking feature was its wings, which were swept back beyond its abdomen and checkered with a dark-and-transparent pattern. I backed away to get it in focus in my binoculars, but later it landed right beside me on the bench.

Intrigued, I searched unsuccessfully through insect books in our library when I returned home. Finally, as a last resort, I typed into the search pane on my computer "large fly with black and white wings." As if by magic, its picture appeared on the screen, along with its name and life history. Turns out it was a Tiger Bee Fly, a parasite and biological control for carpenter bees in human-built structures. The female fly lays eggs at the entrance to a carpenter bee tunnel. When an egg hatches, the larva crawls down the tunnel, attaches itself to a bee larva and, as the report rather gruesomely put it, "sucks it dry."

So, no matter how many times you visit, Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve, there's always something new to discover if you just sit quietly, watch and wait.



Tiger Bee Fly (Mike McEvoy).

## Whitby MP Ryan Turnbull Visits Thickson's Woods

Here's an excerpt from his weekly report.

"I visited the stunning Thickson's Woods Nature Reserve here in Whitby where I engaged with members of the Thickson's Woods Land Trust. Thickson's Woods is the last remnant of old-growth white pines on the north shore of Lake Ontario. The towering pines provide a vital resting place for countless migrating songbirds each spring and fall.

"Protected areas such as Thickson's Woods directly address the primary driver of extinction, habitat loss, which threatens over 80 percent of species at risk in Ontario and around the world. They help to mitigate extreme weather events, enhance carbon storage, and provide space for plants and animals to adapt to a changing climate. They provide clean air and water, healthy soils and wild foods. As cherished natural spaces for physical, mental and spiritual rejuvenation they contribute to our health and well-being through contact with nature.

**"Do visit Thickson's Woods".**

"Thank you Thickson's Woods Land Trust for your generous and able stewardship of this natural gem here in Whitby."

*(Ryan works tirelessly promoting programs to combat the ravages of earth's climate crisis. He has initiated a federal program to provide funding for grassroots startups that are environmentally sustainable.)*

## Forests: The Global Life Support System

From *The Forests of British Columbia*

Wooded land is believed to collect and return to the air at least ten times as much moisture as bare, deforested land, and twice as much moisture as land covered by plants other than trees. This recycling of the world's rain supply has a marked effect on the creation of clouds, which in turn affects the temperature of the land beneath them, which in turn affects wind patterns. In other words, the weather patterns of the entire world are affected by the role the forests play in recycling water.

The forests of the world recycle rain, create oxygen, absorb carbon dioxide, hold soil in place and control the flow of water to our rivers. They provide a secure habitat for a myriad of lifeforms. Directly or indirectly they give us the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the water we drink. Quite simply, forests are critical to life on the planet.



---

# TWNR and the Nature Smart Climate Solutions Program

by Dan Shire

This summer, we began participating in the federal government's Nature Smart program, the goal of which is to help conserve and restore nature as climate change accelerates.

At Thickson's, we're taking actions to store and capture carbon, and provide critical habitat for species at risk. We are working in partnership with the Ontario Land Trust Alliance, which is administering funds and providing support for the Nature Smart program. For each of the next four years, we're scheduled to receive \$9,000 that will support the hiring of two summer students for July and August to complete research and work necessary at the reserve. This summer we were pleased to hire Amanda Curran and Sam Cameron. Amanda is completing her final year in Environmental Science at Trent University, and Sam is now a 4<sup>th</sup> year high school student. Sam has been a volunteer at Thickson's for several years, where she's been doing plant inventories and bird surveys.

## Storing and capturing carbon

The woods south of the Waterfront Trail still maintain a high diversity of trees, many of them giant white pines. However, the pines are gradually being lost due to age and other factors such as changes in weather patterns. Widespread wild black currant, an intermediary host for white pine blister rust, has contributed to the death of white pine seedlings. Garlic mustard threatens the soil health of the forest and remains an ongoing problem, despite years of dedicated volunteer blitzes to find and remove the plants. In the meadow, we are seeing rapid succession as the former pasture is colonized by a mixture of desirable shrubs and trees, as well as invasive buckthorn. In the marsh, phragmites (European Reed) is a growing problem, choking out all other vegetation. All of these changes are threats to the health of the reserve and the animals that live there.



Sam Cameron, John Foster, Amanda Curran.  
Collecting soil samples in the meadow.

Thickson's Woods is a massive carbon sequestering resource. We are working now to understand its baseline state, and plan steps to improve its diversity and health. We've completed a forest management plan with a registered forester, and this summer Amanda and Sam did soil analysis research and invasive species mapping and removal. John Foster, a local expert botanist and board member of the provincial Invasive Plant Council, volunteered several days to work with Sam and Amanda to identify plant species, and measure a sampling of trees, data that can be plugged into the modeling tools provided by OLTA and Environment Canada to help calculate the carbon sequestering capacity of our nature reserve.

## Mitigating climate change

We are seeing gradual changes in our climate, and it seems as if extreme weather events are increasing. Many of the largest white pines in the forest have succumbed to strong winds in recent decades. Exceptionally high lake levels in 2017 and 2019 contributed to significant shoreline erosion, so we lost multiple trees along the bluff south of Crystal Beach Boulevard. Although local temperatures and humidity are moderated by the lake, we see a need to plan for changes in the vegetation that will be dominant in this area over time. Recently, we planted a number of Carolinian tree species, including eastern flowering dogwood. This summer white oak and shag bark hickory nuts were planted by Sam and Amanda. Our goal is to preserve as many white pines as we can, while introducing trees that will thrive in the warmer climate of the coming decades.

## Critical habitat for species at risk

Most visitors to Thickson's Woods are familiar with the role it plays during spring songbird migration and the fall migration of monarch butterflies. The reserve also hosts a number of at-risk and endangered plants, reptiles and insects. When we preserve the healthy diversity of our three habitats – marsh, mixed forest, and successional meadow – we provide an oasis for resident and migrating species. This summer we continued our program of identifying, mapping and removing invasive species, maintaining the small pond in the meadow that was built to support reptiles and amphibians, and planting additional native plants to support pollinators and butterflies. Sam and Amanda collected soil samples for analysis by an accredited laboratory, and performed benthic sampling and analysis in the marsh. The Nature Smart program funding helped us expand our work in maintaining the diverse plant life that hosts animal life.

## An exciting research partnership

Amanda and Sam reached out to two professors at the University of Toronto as part of their work in understanding control mechanisms for invasive species. Dr. Michael McTavish and Dr. Ian Jones are both associated with the Smith Forest Health Lab in the Institute of Forestry and Conservation, where they do research related to biological control of invasive species. They are evaluating a number of insects that show early promise for controlling phragmites and garlic mustard at multiple sites across southern Ontario.

After a survey of the property this summer, and another scheduled for late fall once access to the marsh is easier, we expect the reserve to be a test site for their ongoing study into the effectiveness of a European moth for controlling phragmites, and of a weevil for controlling garlic mustard. Our participation in this study is expected to extend over several years. Biological control mechanisms require a longer-term view than quick solutions like herbicide application or burning, but are a more sustainable approach. It's important to know whether introducing a biological control agent like a new moth may impact species already here. Thicksong's is an excellent test location because of the extensive work Phill Holder and his team have done over the last decade in documenting the diverse moth population, over 1,200 species, here in the reserve. This work is documented in multiple publications available through the Matt Holder Environmental Research Fund web site ([www.matholderfund.com](http://www.matholderfund.com)).



Amanda Curran, Phill Holder, Dennis Barry, Dr. Michael McTavish, Sam Cameron, Dr. Ian Jones.

We couldn't accomplish our duties as stewards of Thicksong's Woods Nature Reserve without the support of the many volunteers who contribute to our efforts. We thank the community members, neighbours of the woods, our donors, students and board members for their dedication to the effort.

## How can you help?

- ❖ volunteer your time at our twice-a-year invasive species removal days – these happen in April and late November or early December. Contact us at [nature@thicksonswoods.com](mailto:nature@thicksonswoods.com) if you have ideas for partnerships that will help us enhance the biodiversity of the nature reserve.
- ❖ be educated and aware of the risks that invasive species pose. These include plants like dog-strangling vine, phragmites and garlic mustard, which out-compete and displace native plants that wildlife depends on. As well, new insect threats in Ontario like the Spotted Lanternfly and Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, as well as new fungal pathogens like Oak Wilt will damage our forests. Watch for these invasive species and report them through Ontario's Invading Species Awareness Program ([www.invadingspecies.com](http://www.invadingspecies.com))
- ❖ when visiting Thickson's Woods, help us map the occurrence of animals, plants and trees you see, both native and invasive. You can log your sightings of birds on ebird, and use iNaturalist to record plant and tree identification. These records help us understand the diversity of life in the reserve, and show the changes that are happening.

## Donating to Thickson's Woods Land Trust via Interac e-transfer

by Treasurer Brian Steele

Please note that we've amended our on-line donation procedure, and no longer require a security question, making the transaction easier and simpler.

The steps to make a donation are as follows:

- (1) Sign on with your bank and select Interac e-transfer. Next pick the account the money will come from and enter the amount.
- (2) For recipient use Thickson's Woods Land Trust and our e-mail address ([nature@thicksonswoods.com](mailto:nature@thicksonswoods.com))
- (3) Under Message put your name and address so that I will be able to send a charitable receipt.

Of course cheques are still very much welcomed

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.**