



CANADA SOUTH LAND TRUST

Newsletter

Spring 2013 Volume 10, No.1

Balkwill Lands Conservation Agreement Monitoring Report, May 2013

Day One of the Balkwill Lands monitoring was booked for Monday, May 6, 2013 with the following persons in attendance including Landowner Bill Balkwill, Chief Monitor Terry Anderson and Assistant Monitors Ernie Kennette, Linda Kennette, Betty Learmouth, Larry Onysko and Parma Yarkin.

The monitoring began with two questions directed to Landowner Bill Balkwill : Has any lease, easement, or right of way in, over, on, under or through the Lands, including grant or renewal of a lease for the exploration or development of petroleum or gas been granted? Bill Balkwill replied “no” to this question.

Question 2: Has there been any efforts to sell, convey, mortgage, charge or lease or otherwise dispose of any part of the Lands separate from any other part of the Lands, or apply for or make any application for plans of subdivision or consent for severance of the Lands? Bill Balkwill replied “no” to this question.

Monitoring began at the Agricultural Area, Part 1. A metal pin close to a tree on the mowed area next to the Agricultural Area could not be located.

Following the day’s monitoring, Bill Balkwill spent considerable time locating this pin. The following morning, May 7, 2013, Ernie Kennette excavated the soil around the pin. Then Ernie placed an empty margarine container over the pin with a hole cut in the container so the pin was visible. The site was covered with small stones. This effort should make finding the pin easier on future visits.

The next area to be monitored on May 6, 2013, was the Old Logging Road. The pin at the north end of the Old Logging Road was located due to the visibility of the small stones around the pin.

The monitors walked east along the grassy lane, then north along the grassy lane. Some work has been undertaken on the agricultural with respect to draining water. Bill Balkwill commented that work will be done here to make the area smoother for walking.

The monitors checked the most easterly part of the drain where a few Garlic Mustard plants were located.

Lane 11 passes close to the northern boundary of the Lands. Chief Monitor Terry Anderson found the old fence on the boundary line had been damaged by a fallen tree.

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Canada South Land Trust Directors

David C. Ainslie (Vice President)

Telephone: 519- 726-4892
 e-mail: daveains@sympatico.ca

Terry R. Anderson

Telephone: 519-733-3796
 e-mail: terry.anderson4497@yahoo.ca

Thomas P. Hurst (Treasurer)

Telephone: 519-839-4635
 Fax: 519-839-4795

e-mail: tphurst@gosfieldtel.com

Larry Onysko

Telephone: 519-735-6571
 e-mail: lonysko@sympatico.ca

Elizabeth M. Learmouth (Chair)

Telephone: 519-944-0825
 e-mail: bettlear@mnsi.net

Patricia D. McGorman

Telephone: 519-257-8314

Parma J. Yarkin

Telephone: 519-256-7917
 e-mail: pjyarkin@yahoo.ca

Mark Your Calendar

Save this date, December 5, 2013, for a speaker and topic to be announced. Event to be held in Room C at the Essex Civic Centre at 7:30 p.m.



Thank you to members who have recently renewed their Land Trust memberships. Welcome to Michael Wyatt.

Mark Your Calendar

Enjoy a prairie walk on the Ojibway Provincial Prairie: **Sunday, May 26, 2013 at 2:00 p.m.** Meet in the Ojibway Nature Centre's parking lot.

The three walks listed below will meet on Titcombe Road directly across from the Ojibway Nature Centre's parking lot at the entrance to the Ojibway Prairie.
Thursday, June 27, 2013 at 6:30 p.m.
Wednesday, July 24, 2013 at 6:30 p.m.
Thursday, August 29, 2013 at 6:30 p.m.

Donation of \$10.00 towards the Land Trust's Legacy Fund. are welcome.

Call Betty at 519-944-08 25 to let us know you will be attending .

Save this date: **December 5, 2013**, for a speaker and topic to be announced. Room C at 7:30 p.m. in the Essex Civic Centre.

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Canada South Land Trust Mission

To preserve natural areas in the City of Windsor, Essex County, Pelee Island, and the Municipality of Chatham/Kent for future generations.

Membership fees

Single: \$20.00
 Family: \$25.00
 Please mail to 2405 Princess Avenue,
 Windsor, Ontario N8T 1V2

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Day 2, Tuesday, May 7, 2013 of the Balkwill monitoring was attended by Landowner Bill Balkwill, Chief Monitor Terry Anderson, Ernie Kennette, Linda Kennette, and Betty Learmouth.

The monitors walked Lane 10 and Lane 9 where a Garter Snake was noted at the intersection of Lane 7. Other lanes walked were Lane 8, Lane 7 and Lane 6. Landowner Bill Balkwill showed the monitors a Pin Oak in the woodland that had fallen and which was hollow. This tree was thought to be the tallest Pin Oak in the woodland.

Day 3, Wednesday, May 8, 2013 of the Balkwill Lands monitoring was attended by Landowner Bill Balkwill, Chief Monitor Terry Anderson and Betty Learmouth. The last three lanes in the woodland were walked. Then the monitors turned their attention to monitoring the pond and restoration sites.

The group walked beside the pond restoration site as well as the tallgrass prairie site where Tree Swallows have chosen to nest in the nesting boxes near the pond and prairie. The pin at the southwest edge of the prairie could not be located. Then the group walked across the winter wheat crop to the eastern boundary of the Balkwill Lands, locating the pins by the wooden stakes. Terry Anderson chose to walk back to locate the pin near the old cattle barn.

Jack Balkwill drove his truck over to the most eastern boundary where he picked up Bill Balkwill, Betty Learmouth and Mac the Dog and dropped everyone and the dog off near the garden to locate the last pin.

Binders are maintained for all the paper work for each year of monitoring. There is a binder for all "the original copies," a binder which can be used "in the office" and a binder which is kept up-to date for the Landowners in their home office.

Thank you to everyone who assisted with the 2013 monitoring of the Balkwill Lands.

Wildlife Observations on the Balkwill Lands, January 2013 & March 2013

Following the Cedar Creek Christmas Bird Count on the next day, December 16, 2012, these bird species were observed: 6 Black-capped Chickadees, 1 Northern Flicker, 1 Red-bellied Woodpecker, several Blue Jays and an American Tree Sparrow. Raptors reported were a Red-tailed Hawk and a light phase Rough-legged Hawk.

A few days later, three Brewer's Blackbirds were observed; two males and a female. Also seen were American Tree Sparrows, five or six, and a House Finch and a Purple Finch.

With cold and a storm on New Year's eve, a flock of Horned Larks lit on the lane way. The birds stayed all day in spite of the fact there was no food.

On New Year's Day, Jack placed some bird seed for the Horned Larks. A larger flock appeared, along with a few Snow Buntings which mixed in with the flock of Horned Larks. On January 2, 2013, a flock of 100 Snow Buntings mixed in with the Horned Larks. Bill Balkwill was intrigued by the flight of the Snow Buntings as they always "circled around." Snow Buntings will settle in trees as well as agricultural lands.

On January 3, 2013, a large flock of Snow Buntings was mixed in with the Horned Larks along with Dark-eyed Juncos, a few American Tree Sparrows, three Brewer's Blackbirds (one male and two females), along with large flocks of Mourning Doves and Brown-headed Cowbirds.

January 11, 2013 was quiet although there were over one hundred Mourning Doves in the area along with two Downy Woodpeckers and nuthatches.

During the second week of January 2013, Bill Balkwill noted a pair of hawks swooping and diving at each other. A Red-tailed Hawk and a light phase Rough-legged Hawk were mixing it up over hunting on the neighbor's hay field. The Red-tailed Hawk won.

Bill Balkwill reported that a Bald Eagle flew over his lands. A large hawk seen several times flew low over the front yard. Bill thought this individual was a Red-shouldered Hawk.

Bill Balkwill commented that as he drove into the Balkwill lane, he saw what he thought was a dove swooping down towards a flock of doves on the lane. The doves flew across the field. Bill then saw the bird more clearly, which was an ambitious Sharp-shinned Hawk.

Bill recalled a Sharp-shinned Hawk catching a Blue Jay (a long time ago) which was too heavy for the Sharp-shinned Hawk and which ended up dragging the Blue Jay.

Bill's neighbor reports a sighting of a Snowy Owl on his entrance roadway.

Bill reports the woods are full of squirrels. Deer are eating the acorns of Pin Oak and Shumard Oak. Tracks are everywhere in the woodland. Several large deer are around including a grey deer which is larger with horns and a second, smaller deer, both of which are feeding on the winter wheat crop.

On January 16, 2013, two Cooper's Hawks flew back and forth in the backyard while a black squirrel was hiding under the yew.

On March 17, 2013, Bill Balkwill reported a Bald Eagle, Turkey Vulture and a Red-tailed Hawk fighting above the agricultural lands to the south of Concession 2.

On March 20 and 21, 2013, forty Wild Turkeys were around the Balkwill residence. On March 20, 2013, two or three were perched on the residence while others fed on the bird seed at feeders approximately ten feet away from the residence. As long as Bill and Jack Balkwill remained indoors, the Turkeys stayed to feed on the seed. Eventually the flock flew off to the south.

Jack Balkwill put out more seed on March 21, 2013 for the Turkeys which returned but flew overhead and did not return.

A Meadowlark was seen on Clifford Balkwill's nearby property on March 27, 2013.

The first Tree Swallows were noted on March 30, 2013 along with Killdeer.

On March 31, 2013, a Red-shouldered Hawk was observed.

A Brown Thrasher was observed on April 8, 2013.

A Yellow-rumped Warbler was seen on April 18, 2013.

Barn Swallows were noted on April 21, 2013. Sparrow species included two or three White-throated, Chipping and Field Sparrows feeding. Also seen on this date was a Kinglet species chasing a moth which the Kinglet caught and ate.

Bill Balkwill reported hearing the distinct call of the Savannah Sparrow on April 22, 2013. House Wrens are back.

Canada South Land Trust's Fifth Annual Dinner and Silent Auction

Canada South Land Trust's Fifth Annual Dinner and Silent Auction was held on Friday, April 19, 2013 in the Da Vinci Room of the G. Caboto Club. The evening featured dinner, a silent auction and a talk concerning the American Chestnut by CSLT Director Terry Anderson. Forty persons attended the event.

Doors opened at 6:00 p.m. with an opportunity to bid on a variety of items including native plants, natural history books, a honey basket, framed pictures, camera back pack, jams and jellies, and more.

Dinner was served family style which included an appetizer of Italian antipasto and green salad. Roast chicken was accompanied by baked wedges of potato, mixed vegetables and rolls. Dessert included a selection of Italian pastries, tea and coffee.

Master of Ceremonies and Land Trust Director David Ainslie invited Director Patricia McGorman to introduce guest speaker and Land Trust Director Terry Anderson. Terry Anderson is a retired plant pathologist with an interest in trees and woodlands. Terry has held various roles with the Canadian Chestnut Council including president, vice president, secretary, and at present, membership secretary. Terry is a founding director of the Canada South Land Trust. Terry owns a beautiful woodland and is an advocate for conservation of natural heritage.

Roasted American Chestnuts were placed on each table for everyone to enjoy. The nuts had been roasted by Caboto Club kitchen staff so were warm. The chestnuts were delicious and enjoyed by all. The American Chestnuts were supplied from the nursery located in Brantford.

Terry stated that the aim of the Canadian Chestnut Council is to restore the American Chestnut. to our woodlands.

Terry provided some information on the supporters of the American Chestnut Council. There are about 160 members located from Alberta to Nova Scotia. Most members are located within Ontario in the Aylmer to the Golden Horseshoe region. There are nine directors with a part time paid employee. Twenty regular volunteers help with the field work and lab work.

What kind of people support the Canadian Chestnut Council? Terry told his audience that most are old. Young persons have not seen a living large chestnut. Terry showed an image of eighty year old Dorothy MacLeod planting chestnut trees. Seventy percent of the “crew” come back each year.

Why is the Canadian Chestnut Council interested in this tree species? The American Chestnut offered food for settlers and wildlife. Now this tree species is endangered.

The American Chestnut tree range was in Appalachia and into Ontario. This tree species was a canopy tree, flowering in late spring and growing to a height of 35 metres. An American Chestnut could live for 200 years. Blossoms have a strong odor while the nuts are edible.

The leaf of the American Chestnut are not to be confused with the Horse Chestnut which have a palmate leaf and the Chinese Chestnut leaf which has hairs on the lower surface. The American Chestnut has narrow, smooth leaves.

Terry showed an image of a very large American Chestnut located in St. Williams. The wood of the American Chestnut has a straight grain. Its wood had many uses and was considered an excellent wood.

The nuts of the American Chestnut were roasted and sold. American Chestnut was used in cookery and was considered very healthy. The bark of the American Chestnut produced tannins which were used in the dyeing industry.

The chestnut blight came from China years ago where it killed American Chestnut trees very quickly. Large formations of canker appeared which killed trees within a year. Wilted leaves were noted on dying trees. Some trees were resistant and were fighting the disease. What is the status of American Chestnuts today? There are a few scattered individuals but not many. The trees never get big enough to reproduce.

The first job of the Canadian Chestnut Council was to collect mother trees and establish two farms. Nurseries were planted with close to 2,000 trees. A breeding program was established in 2001 with a cross of Canadian and Chinese and American trees. The pollen came from Connecticut. Nuts have been produced in seven years. All trees have been inoculated.

The American Chestnut has been declared a species at risk.

At the nursery, the American Chestnut has temporary stewardship as work may be done within the nursery. There is a long term plan for twenty years. The Council wishes to distribute trees within

its membership. Terry is optimistic that there will be resistant trees by 2020.

How can you help? Canadian Chestnut Council membership fees are \$25.00 per year. Volunteers assist with planting and inoculating.

At present, there are other concerns such as the Butternut Canker, the Chestnut Gall Wasp and Root Rot. Butternut Canker is under study at the University of Guelph. The Chestnut Gall Wasp attacks Chestnut trees, preventing growth. Root Rot is passed from tree to tree.

Terry was thanked by Director Larry Onysko for his fine presentation.

Thank you to all who attended the Annual Dinner, donated silent auction items, set up the auction, as well as bidding on various auction items. The silent auction raised \$690.00.

A special thank you to the Caboto staff who prepared and served a delicious meal.

Ainslie Woodland Walk, May 4, 2013

Saturday, May 4, 2013 was a wonderful spring day with blue skies that attracted twenty visitors to David Ainslie's woodland within the Town of Leamington for a wild-flower walk. Everyone gathered at the back of the woodland near the pond, tree house, solar panel, and an elderly red storage building which had been removed to the site from Comber. The old building was open, displaying its attractive interior stained doors. Of interest inside the building were photographs of native plants found in the woodland. On display were a collection of books used to assist with identification of native plant species. David Ainslie has developed several woodchip trails within the woodland. Visitors were able to walk on two loops which provided good opportunities to see the woodland landscape. These two trails were dry this year in contrast to last year when rubber boots were a necessity.

Some of the flowering plant species David identified during the walk included Spring Beauty, Red Trillium, Jack-in-the-pulpit, Downy Yellow Violet, Mitrewort, and Large-flowered Bellwort. Other plant species observed were Brambles (Blackberries), Prickly Ash, Wild Leek, Sedges, Canada Mayflower in bud, Sensitive Fern, the stalk and leaves of Michigan Lily, Baneberry and Spicebush. Trees observed included Hop Hornbeam, Red Oak which is a dominant species, and Shumard Oak which is a species at risk.

David's woodland provides some excellent examples of pit and mound topography. On the second trail the group observed a large mound with a variety of native plants growing on the mound including Black Cohosh, Dwarf Ginseng, Red Trillium, Wild Leek and ferns. David estimated this mound has developed over two or three centuries.

Following the woodland walk, electric car owner Alan Richardson offered three of the woodland walkers a chance to enjoy a ride in his car. While the walkers had been in the woodland, Alan's battery was being charged through electricity produced by David's solar panel.

Alan's vehicle is a Ford C-Max Energi - a plug-in hybrid. With its battery fully charged, Alan can drive twenty miles. As we were enjoying the woodland, Alan's car was charging with the hope that there would be enough charge to drive home to Windsor.

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If not, gasoline would need to be used. Alan stated that a vehicle can go four times further on a dollar of electricity compared to a dollar of gasoline. Therefore, it is cheaper to run on electricity .

Following the walk, participants enjoyed refreshments including fruit, delicious samosas (an Indian appetizer) from the India Palace Sweet Restaurant on Ottawa Street in Windsor, and grilled hotdogs and hamburgers.

Thank you to David for his invitation to once again enjoy his woodland.

South Africa: Land of Surprises

Tom Hince kindly accepted an invitation to present a digital slide program about South Africa, January 24, 2013 as a fund raiser for the Canada South Land Trust. Tom was introduced by Director Larry Onysko. Tom is a professional tour operator and guide who has led six trips to South Africa. This past September and October 2012 Tom journeyed there again, with this group including five participants from Essex County. Tom's next visit to South Africa will be in the Fall of 2014.

Our speaker commented that South Africa provides a wonderful African experience that includes big cats and open savanna. Tom stated that South Africa is the most diverse country he has visited. The first group of images were of birds, flowers and landscape in the Cape Town area. A trail in a nature reserve called Jonkersdam provided an opportunity to observe the rich mountain fynbos environment and the birds that live there including Blue Malachite Sunbird, Cape Siskin and Cape Grassbird.

Cape Town's Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens are a wonderful place to observe a number of bird species. Spotted Eagle Owl have lived in the gardens for twenty years. Tom's group saw both the adult male in a tree and the adult female on the nest close to the pedestrian walkway. The protea gardens attract a variety of bird species including Cape Sugar Bird, Cape Robin Chat, Cape Wagtail and Cape Bunting.

The shoreline in the Cape Town region is spectacular, providing opportunities to view seabirds. A good site is the town of Kommitjie where African Black Oystercatcher, Great Heron, cormorants, White-chinned Petrel, four species of Albatross and Giant Petrel were seen.

The scenic Cape of Good Hope National Park features a rugged coastal landscape, the rich fynbos environment and an opportunity to see wildlife. Tom showed an image of a small herd of "glowing with health" Bontebok antelope.

Every birding trip features a sewage lagoon. The Strandfontein lagoons are large, covering an area of several square miles. A sampling of bird species seen at the lagoons included Dabchick, Greater Flamingo, Red-billed Teal, and Black-winged Stilt.

The West Coast National Park is a beautiful park where an outstanding spring floral display may be viewed along with bird species such as Blue Crane, Cape Francolin, Cape Weaver, African Marsh Harrier, Black Harrier, and Southern Black Korhaan.

A Cape Gannet colony is another area that can be visited in the Cape Town region.

Betty's Bay is a spot where African Penguin can be easily observed and enjoyed at their rocky mainland colony.

Tom showed his audience some images from Tanqua Karoo, an area that is rocky and barren with very sparse vegetation. A pair of Karoo Korhaan were seen along with a variety of other bird species.

The participants in Tom's tour had the pleasure of meeting birding guide David Letsalo who guided the group in the reserve of Polokwane. David is a well known South African birder, and one of the first trained and accredited under the Bird Life South African local guides program. Tom showed his images of Blue Waxbill and Violet-eared Waxbill seen with David Letsalo.

The next morning, Tom followed David Letsalo's instructions to Agatha Forest where a Bat Hawk roosts during the day near an artificial nest platform which was built several years ago by David and others. Tom showed an image of this bizarre raptor which is crepuscular and which feeds on bats.

Then it was on to Kruger National Park with a drive to Letaba camp with images of some of the raptor species seen during the drive including Martial Eagle and Bateleur, and the colourful Lilac-breasted Roller. Mammals seen on the afternoon drive included elephants, Cape Buffalo and Zebra. Yellow-billed Oxpecker, which remove parasites from the larger mammals, was seen. Continued on page 9

Night drives to see nocturnal activity in Kruger National Park are popular. Tom's group at Letaba rest camp had excellent views of Side-striped Jackal and a Leopard sitting on the edge of the road, then watched it slink off as it stalked a group of nearby Impala.

At Satara rest camp, an African Scops Owl was spotted as it sat quietly in its day time roost, just steps away from the entrance to Satara's gift shop. This tiny owl is the size of a child's fist.

During the night drive at Satara rest camp, Verraux's Eagle Owls and Spotted Hyena were observed along with Lions at a zebra kill.

During the drive on the last full day at Kruger National Park, a Giraffe kill with three Lions was seen, right beside the roadway. Tom explained that the Lions flush the Giraffe on to the roadway where the Giraffe often slip and fall, with the Lions taking the opportunity for easy prey.

Images from the last day in Kruger National Park included a hippo group, a hard to see Cheetah causing a traffic jam, and a White Rhinoceros.

From the high veldt near Wakkerstroom, Tom showed us images of Blue Korhaan, Secretary Bird and Crowned Cranes.

Bonamanzi Lodge provided an opportunity to walk as there are no "Big 5" mammals in this private reserve. A highlight was a mixed colony of Yellow, Southern Masked and Village Weavers building nests next to pond as well as sunbirds. Large dung beetles were seen on a roadway. An evening meal of traditional food and dance called a "braai" was enjoyed by all.

The last full day of the trip was a four wheel drive up the Sani Pass to the Kingdom of Lesotho with guides Stuart, Malcolm, and Ian. The weather was sunny, warm and calm. A highlight in this rugged environment were the Ground Woodpeckers with an image of a piece of rock excavated by this uncommon species. Trip participants were thrilled to have good views of a pair of Drakensburg (Orange-breasted) Rockjammers.

Tom's last image was that of an adult Lammergeyer high over head.

Altogether the group viewed 425 bird species and 68 mammal species.

Tom was thanked by Larry Onysko for his fine presentation. Refreshments were served.

Snapping Turtles In the News, Spring 2013

At the Carolinian Canada Coalition Land Owners meeting held on March 15, 2013, and attended by Canada South Land Trust directors and members, information was provided concerning Species at Risk (SAR) such as the Snapping Turtle. This species lives 60, 70 or 80 more years. We are seeing old turtles, not young turtles. Many Snapping Turtles are eaten by racoons, opossums and coyotes before they can hatch. Adult females lay about 60 eggs. The population is struggling. Roads are responsible for female mortality.

Rhonda Donley provided some information with regard to removing Snapping Turtles from roads. The first thing to remember is to keep hands away from the turtle's head. The safest way is to grasp the upper shell above the tail. Then slide the other hand underneath the belly. Lift and carry the turtle in the direction it is trying to go. Put the turtle down and jump away.

Other suggestions for moving a turtle include grasping the shell and dragging the turtle. With the assistance of a shovel, push the turtle off the road. Use a blanket and drag the turtle off the road. Another technique is to push the turtle into a container such as a large cardboard box, then drag off the road.

The Windsor Star reported an accident which occurred on May 3, 2013 on Front Road in the Town of Amherstburg which was caused by a large Snapping Turtle. There were minor injuries but the turtle escaped without injury.

A story in *The Windsor Star* in its May 18, 2013 edition describes how Rick Woodall of Windsor signed up as a volunteer wildlife rescue pilot. His first injured animal was a seven kilogram Snapping Turtle which needed an air lift.

The Snapping Turtle was discovered May 10, 2013 in the Sarnia area. Members of Heaven's Wildlife Rescue in Oil Springs tried to treat the turtle but realized the turtle needed the expertise of the Kawartha Turtle Trauma Centre in Peterborough.