



Caring for Nature in Essex

Including Pelee Island and Windsor

Landowner Action in Carolinian Canada

Farmers and the Land

Farmers in Essex are proud of their heritage and their ties to the land. Farming has been a tradition here for over 200 years. Today, the region's farmers grow wheat, soybeans and corn and a wide variety of other crops such as tomatoes, lettuce, strawberries and grapes for wine. Farm-related businesses employ 22% of workers in the County. Farmers' understanding of the land is deep: their livelihood depends on healthy soils and clean water. These resources in turn are dependent on a healthy and diverse landscape with wetlands, woodlands, hedgerows and buffers around watercourses. Many Essex farmers work with the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association to access financial incentives which help them convert to low or no-till cropping, manage their nutrient program for cleaner water, and create stream buffers to retain soil. Others plant woodland and prairie habitats with help from the **Essex County Stewardship Network** and **Essex Region Conservation Authority**. Projects like these allow farmers to enjoy their land and to watch native species return to the healthy landscapes.



The Carolinian Zone, the country's southernmost ecoregion, stands out as one of Canada's true national treasures. The Tulip Tree leaf is a symbol of the many unique plants and animals found here.

Caring For Nature factsheet series is published by the Carolinian Canada Coalition www.carolinian.org • 519-433-7077

The Unique Nature of Essex

Essex is Canada's 'Secret Garden'. From remote Middle Island, Canada's southernmost landmass, to prairie pockets, underwater ecosystems and mysterious swamps concealed among vast tracts of farmland, Essex is a place of hidden natural wonders.

If you take time to explore Essex, you will find natural dramas at your doorstep. People flock from around the world to view the stunning migrations at Point Pelee, Carolinian Canada's only National Park. Pelee Island is a cultural and ecological gem. Windsor and LaSalle are home to globally rare savannas and prairies. Immense lakeshore marshes have been protected by conservation-focused hunting groups. Essex has an incredible 330 species at risk including Red Mulberry, Blue Racer, and Eastern Prickly Pear Cactus. No wonder that 8 of Carolinian Canada's 38 Signature Sites are found here!

Most natural habitats in Essex exist thanks to private landowners who love and steward the land. Dedicated community groups such as the **Canada South Land Trust**, **Little River Enhancement Group**, the **Naturalized Habitat Network**, and the **Essex County Field Naturalists' Club** work together to protect and restore unique habitats.



David Ainslie and friends

Farmer Benefits from Habitat Projects

Since 1980, **David Ainslie** has worked with nature to improve the value of his farm near Comber. He started by planting cedar and spruce windbreaks to reduce soil erosion and creating a small woodlot and pond to hold and filter water. The Ainslie farm was one of the first in northeast Essex to adopt a no-till system. He then tackled other projects including woodlot diversification, snake hibernacula, rock chutes, buffer strips and marsh sedimentation basins. His projects have attracted beneficial wildlife so successfully that they have been used for amphibian research. David believes that maximizing the natural diversity on the farm ensures that it will be healthy and productive in the long term. Funding was provided through **Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA)**, **Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA)** and the **Essex County Stewardship Network**.



Ojibway Prairie

FACES OF FARMING

Biodiversity sustains farming

Gary Aalbers has been interested in forests and wildlife as long as he can remember. Almost half of his 120 ha (300 ac) property near McGregor is forested. In 2003, the **Essex Region Conservation Authority** had a 28 ha (70 ac) field bull-dozed into 'pits and mounds' that mimic the topography of a natural forest floor and encourage regeneration of a wide range of native species. The site was planted with 23,000 native seedlings as well as indigenous, custom-blended tree, grass and flower seed mixes. Projects like this one help to retain moisture and soil on the landscape, prevent contaminants from running into near-by watercourses, and build connections between existing natural areas. Funds for the project came from **Environment Canada** through the **Great Lakes Sustainability Fund**, the **Ontario Great Lakes Renewal Foundation**, and from Gary himself.

Gary was ecstatic: ***"I think the pit and mound site is great! The best part was the immediate response by wildlife...the site was buzzing with wildlife within the first year."***



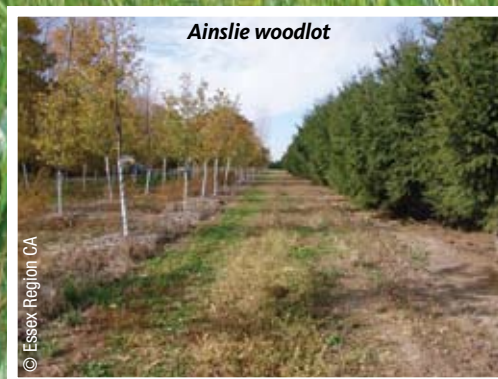
© Essex Region CA

Aalbers Pits and Mounds just dug 2002



© Essex Region CA

Aalbers Pits and Mounds 2007



© Essex Region CA

Ainslie woodlot

Managing a woodland for love and money

After **Bill and Jack Balkwill** took over the family farm in the 1970s, they became interested in tree identification. With over 40 tree species in Essex, their study of the property's 19 ha (47 ac) bush was a great learning experience and inspired them to formulate a plan for sustainable woodland management. Their plan includes removal of diseased trees and invasive species. Today, the woodland which provided the Balkwills with a steady income for many years, is full of flowering plants every spring.

In 2001, they asked the **Essex County Stewardship Network** to help them plant a small prairie beside their restored pond. In 2004, the brothers began working with the **Canada South Land Trust** to enter into a Conservation Agreement whereby the natural features of their property will be protected into the future.

The Balkwill's commitment to conservation benefits surrounding neighbours and communities. Their restored natural areas are important in the "Big Picture" to maintain a natural corridor along the northeastern branch of Cedar Creek.



© Betty Learmouth

Bill Balkwill leads a walk in his woods.



A Woodland for Life

Until 2003, Mark Bovenkamp was share cropping on his 13 ha (32 ac) farm. At that point he turned to the **Essex Region Conservation Authority** to help him realize his dream of living in a woodland. As a result, almost all of his land was planted with more than 12,000 native trees and shrubs. Now Mark is happy to watch the trees grow up around his home, knowing that his personal dream is also helping to improve the environment in his neighbourhood. **ERCA** typically funds up to 90% of these projects.

“The best part of the whole experience for us was watching the wide variety of trees growing larger, looking more like a woodlot every year and creating a natural fence around our property. We are also amazed at how quickly wildlife has returned to the area. There are many hawks, rabbits, and lots of other birds including pheasants to name just a few. We enjoyed working with ERCA and it’s a great feeling knowing that we are improving the environment.”



Denotter trees and grassway

Healthy Soils for the Future

Henry and Eric Denotter work hard to ensure that the soil they farm stays healthy. Denotter Farms converted to conservation tillage and uses equipment with wide tires to reduce compaction. To prevent soil on

the farm near Kingsville from washing downstream, the family re-contoured the ditch to make it shallow, grassed it over and planted a row of trees that help filter run-off and hold moisture. *‘Keeping the land alive and the soil organisms thriving leads to greater productivity.’* says Henry. *‘Using these methods, the soil fertility can be maintained with moderate amounts of additional fertilizer for a long time into the future.’* Funds and on-site assistance came from his conservation partners. Typically, funding up to 30 to 50% can be obtained through the **Environmental Farm Plan Program**, while the **Essex Region Conservation Authority** and **Essex County Stewardship Network** can provide top-up funding, up to 100%.

Great wine needs clean water

Dennis Sanson’s interests in conservation and wine-making led him to search for the ideal place to practice both. A 35.6 Ha (88 ac) site in the Canard River Valley met his requirements perfectly. Working with the **Essex County Stewardship Network (ECSN)**, he had 15 ha (38 ac) of woodland and wetland restored. They provide habitat for Great Blue Herons, Spotted Sandpipers, Square-stemmed Monkey Flower, Broad-leaved Arrowhead and Soft-stemmed Rush, retain soil, filter run-off, and purify the water on his land. The remainder of the farm consists of pasture, meadowland, vineyard and an organic garden. These support Limousin cattle, several varieties of grapes, heirloom peppers, squash, eggplant other vegetables, as well as habitat for Meadowlarks, Bobolink, Eastern Bluebirds, Tree Swallows, and Savannah Sparrows. Funding to support projects on the winery properties has been made available through **Ducks Unlimited Canada**, the **Great Lakes Sustainability Fund**, and the **Community Fish and Wildlife Involvement Program**. Approximately 85% of the total cost of the projects has been provided through ECSN partners.



Planting Bovenkamp Project



Bovenkamp Habitat Project 2007



Sanson Pond - Habitat Restoration

Find out about other projects happening across the zone through Carolinian Canada’s Big Picture Network. Visit www.carolinian.org for more information.

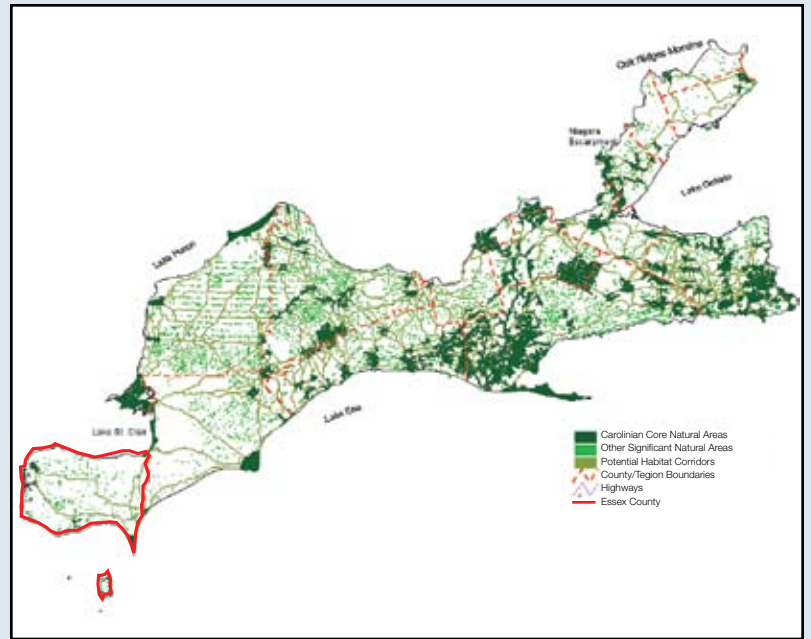


The Big Picture in Essex

Healthy landscapes need large natural core habitats connected by habitat corridors to keep our air and water clean. This type of natural system benefits both wild and human communities. Federal guidelines recommend that landscapes need 20 -30% natural cover to stay healthy and sustainable. In Essex, natural cover is as low as 7.5%.

The “Big Picture” is the Carolinian Canada Coalition’s vision of a network of green spread out across the Southwestern Ontario landscape. Existing natural areas, such as forests, wetlands and meadows form the backbone of the system. These are connected by streams, rivers, drains, hedgerows, smaller woodlands and even backyard habitat. It shows how Essex natural areas can be conserved and linked across the landscape with help from many public and private stewards and volunteers.

The Big Picture shows 140 core natural areas that act as important reservoirs of natural diversity across the zone. Twenty are found in Essex and Pelee Island. Locally, 60 Environmentally Significant Areas are recognized as important to regional natural systems.



Visit www.carolinian.org to zoom in on any part of the Big Picture and find out more about habitat cores and corridors in your area.

“Little” Community Group Makes a Big Difference

The **Little River Enhancement Group (Lil’ Reg)** is an example of how communities can work together to create healthy landscapes. It was initiated to improve the quality of the Little River Watershed, which drains portions of Essex County and the City of Windsor. It is a non-profit umbrella group that coordinates beneficial environmental activities throughout the river basin using a multi-stakeholder approach in the community.

Since 1991, Lil’ Reg has mobilized volunteers to participate in dozens of events. As a result, tonnes of human debris have been removed from the river valley and over 20,000 native trees and shrubs have been planted, improving aquatic and upland habitat for local wildlife. Lil’ Reg supported the extension of the Ganatchio Trail system through Little River Corridor Park to improve local community connections with natural areas.

Lil’ Reg assists landowners and other community groups to improve the natural environment of Essex. Examples include the Detroit River Canadian Cleanup in Windsor, LaSalle and Amherstburg, the Millennium Park habitat planting and prairie butterfly garden with **A. V. Graham Public School** in Tecumseh, and the Ford – Nemak Natural Corridor Project with the **Essex County Field Naturalists’ Club** and the **Windsor Campground**.

Ford-Nemak corridor site after planting



Lil’ Reg’s littlest volunteer

© Lil’ Reg

Every Bit Helps!

Healthy landscapes are created by many people working together for the same goal. The Big Picture is enhanced by even the smallest conservation action. As more landowners get involved in stewardship, who knows? Perhaps that acre that you restored years ago will become a part of a healthy habitat network as our Big Picture landscape evolves. Every natural area is important and we can work together as a community to create a network of green that will be a healthy and functioning place to live now, and into the future. You don’t need a large property to help out. Backyard, community and schoolyard naturalization projects play an important ecological and educational role.



4

Buckeye

© G. Clements

Conserving Nature Across Essex



Enjoying Pt. Pelee's wetlands

NATIONAL LANDMARKS: **Point Pelee @ Middle Island**

Point Pelee National Park was established in 1918 to protect migratory birds thanks to the vision of men like W. E. Saunders and Jack Miner. These men were hunters who were also keen birders, and they saw how the birds valued this sand spit extending 9 km into Lake Erie as a resting place and

launching point to cross the lake. One of the smallest and oldest of Canada's national parks and the first to be established for conservation purposes, Point Pelee National Park covers 15 km². Some 6.5 million people live within the Greater Park Ecosystem, including the urban populations of Windsor and Detroit. Park staff have identified a small 'zone of greatest influence' outside the park to focus efforts and partnerships to enhance ecological health and educational activities. **Friends of Point Pelee** are important supporting volunteers. Middle Island was recently added to the park through a partnership with the **Nature Conservancy of Canada** and others. Canada's southernmost point is warmer than the mainland resulting in a unique community of plants and animals, many of which are rare in Canada, such as the endangered Lake Erie Watersnake and Clustered Sedge. Middle Island is one of the best examples of Carolinian ecosystems remaining in North America, representing an important transition point between northern and southern habitats.

PELEE ISLAND: **Where Farming, Nature, Recreation @ Business Mix**

Pelee Island is the largest island in the Western Lake Erie Archipelago: a chain of Canadian and US islands linking Pt. Pelee to Ohio's Marblehead Peninsula. It is one of the most significant natural hotspots in Canada and attracts visitors from around the world to experience its natural wonders and soak in its warm waters and peaceful atmosphere, a welcome contrast to intense development on the US islands. Ideal for bicycle touring and dotted with Bed and Breakfasts, this island has a long history of bringing wild and human communities together. Originally 3 islands, an ambitious drainage program created fertile farmland that continues to be the mainstay of the local economy. **The Pelee Island Winery** has made great strides in developing ecologically-

friendly vineyards and promoting the unique species of the island, partnering with many groups for events. **The Pelee Island Heritage Centre** has become a hub of cultural and natural heritage for both locals and tourists. It has led the way in promoting a stewardship approach to preserve the unique flavour of the island, in collaboration with the local municipality and landowners. It helped restore the lighthouse in the Lighthouse Point Provincial Nature Reserve. Both Lighthouse Point and Fish Point Provincial Nature Reserve provide hiking trails, migratory bird resting points, and additional protection for species at risk.



Mary's in heaven at the Stone Road Alvar.



Black Oak Savanna

WINDSOR: **A City with Vision**

The **City of Windsor** has worked for over 50 years to protect some of Canada's most endangered spaces: tallgrass prairie and oak savannah. Less than 1% of Ontario's original prairie remains and Windsor is home to one of the largest protected prairie complexes in Ontario including a globally significant oak savannah. Since 1957 when the city traded mineral rights to acquire Ojibway Park (45 ha/111 ac) from the Canadian

Salt Company, it has taken a proactive approach to balancing property rights with natural heritage protection. Conservation in highly populated areas requires vision, patience and persistence. The Ojibway Prairie Complex was created over decades with the support of many partners, donors, volunteers and community groups using a mix of land purchase, donation, and local and provincial planning solutions. As a result, Windsor is now home to a world class natural area including Ojibway Prairie Provincial Nature Reserve, Black Oak Heritage Park, Ojibway Park, Spring Garden Natural Area and Tallgrass Prairie Heritage Park. Partners included **Nature Conservancy of Canada, Ontario Heritage Foundation, Carolinian Canada Coalition** and **Habitat Stewardship Program**.

The Natural Wonders of Essex Region

Eastern Fox Snake



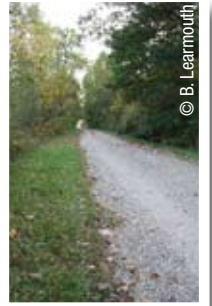
© P. Pratt

Ojibway Prairie Complex

Five neighbouring natural areas that cover 349 ha (834ac) of globally significant tallgrass prairie and oak savanna habitat are protected within 10 minutes of downtown Windsor. Read more on page 5.

Fairplay Woods

Fairplay Woods is the largest intact woods in the northern portion of the Essex region. Higher areas with sandy soils support a forest of Sugar Maple, White Oak, Red Oak, Beech, Black Cherry, White Ash and Sassafras. Spring flowers include White Trillium and Dwarf Ginseng; both unusual species for the clay plains. The lower, wetter soils support a forest more typical of the clay plains dominated by Bur Oak, Swamp White Oak, Pin Oak, American Elm, Shumard Oak, Red Ash, Silver Maple, Black Ash, Black Maple, and Big Shellbark Hickory.



© B. Learmouth

LaSalle Woods

La Salle Woods is one of 27 Natural Heritage Sites recognized by the **Town of LaSalle**. The endangered Red Mulberry and rare Eastern Fox Snake are among 75 significant species found here. Portions have been purchased by the **Windsor Rotary Club** and **Essex Region Conservation Authority**.

Canard River Corridor

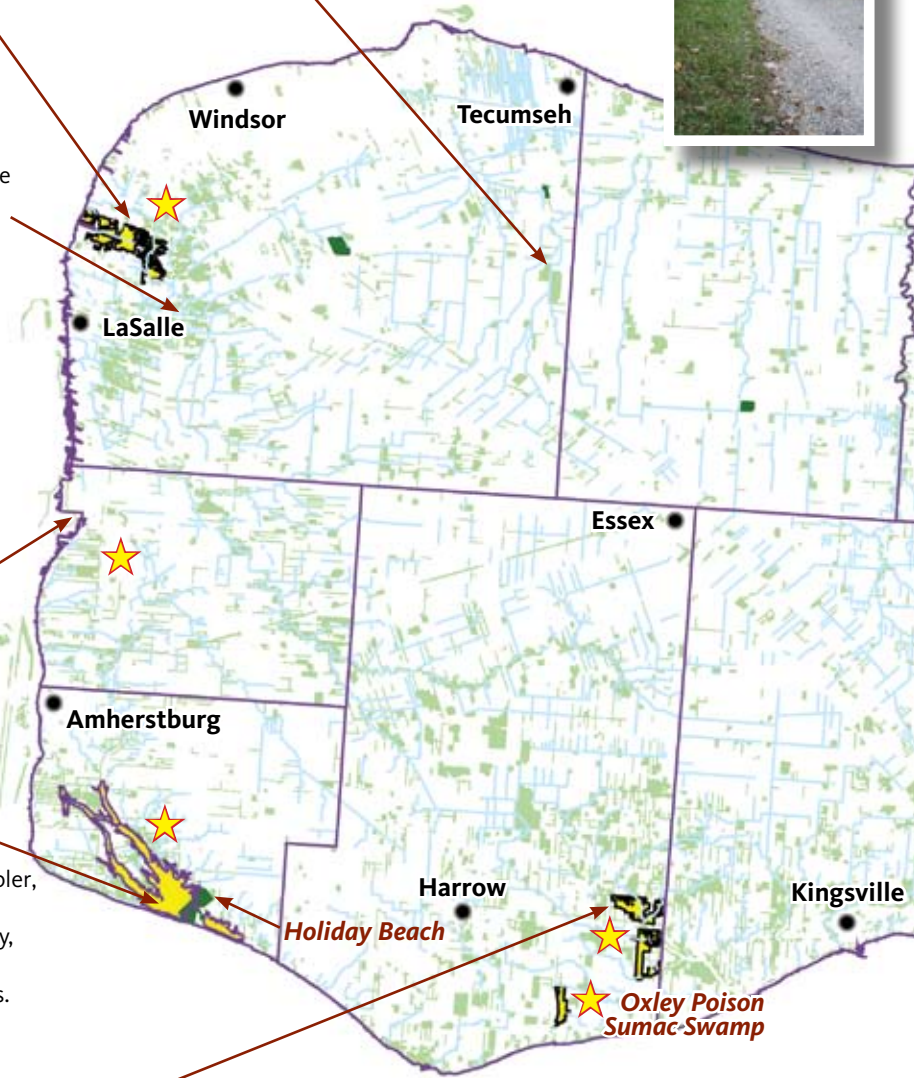
Two highlights along this significant natural area are the Canard River Kentucky Coffee-Tree Woods that contain both male and female trees so that this population can reproduce, and the River Canard Mouth Marsh, a relatively undisturbed 250 ha (625 ac) marsh on the Detroit River that is a Migratory Stopover for many bird species and one of the few homes of the rare American Lotus.

Big Creek Marsh

Big Creek Marsh is the largest wetland in Essex County. Situated on a major bird migration route, this is a major waterfowl staging area. The marsh provides breeding grounds for endangered birds such as Bald Eagle and Prothonotary Warbler, and habitat for rare reptiles such as Spotted Turtle and Eastern Fox Snake. Rare flora here includes Wild Yam, Shellbark Hickory, American Lotus, Hoptree, Prairie Dock, and Ironweed. The Big Creek Marsh is stewarded in part by private landowners.

Cedar Creek Corridor

A continuous band of forest lines both sides of Cedar Creek over much of its 524 ha (1,294 ac). Tributaries of the creek flow through the rolling landscape; in places there are dramatic, 10-m-high ravines. The area includes high-quality upland forest and rich floodplain woods along the creek's tributaries. Most of the basin is privately owned and stewarded, but the **Essex Region Conservation Authority** owns several properties along the creek. The Cedar Creek Provincial Nature Reserve will be established in 2008 by **Ontario Parks**, providing additional protection along this corridor.



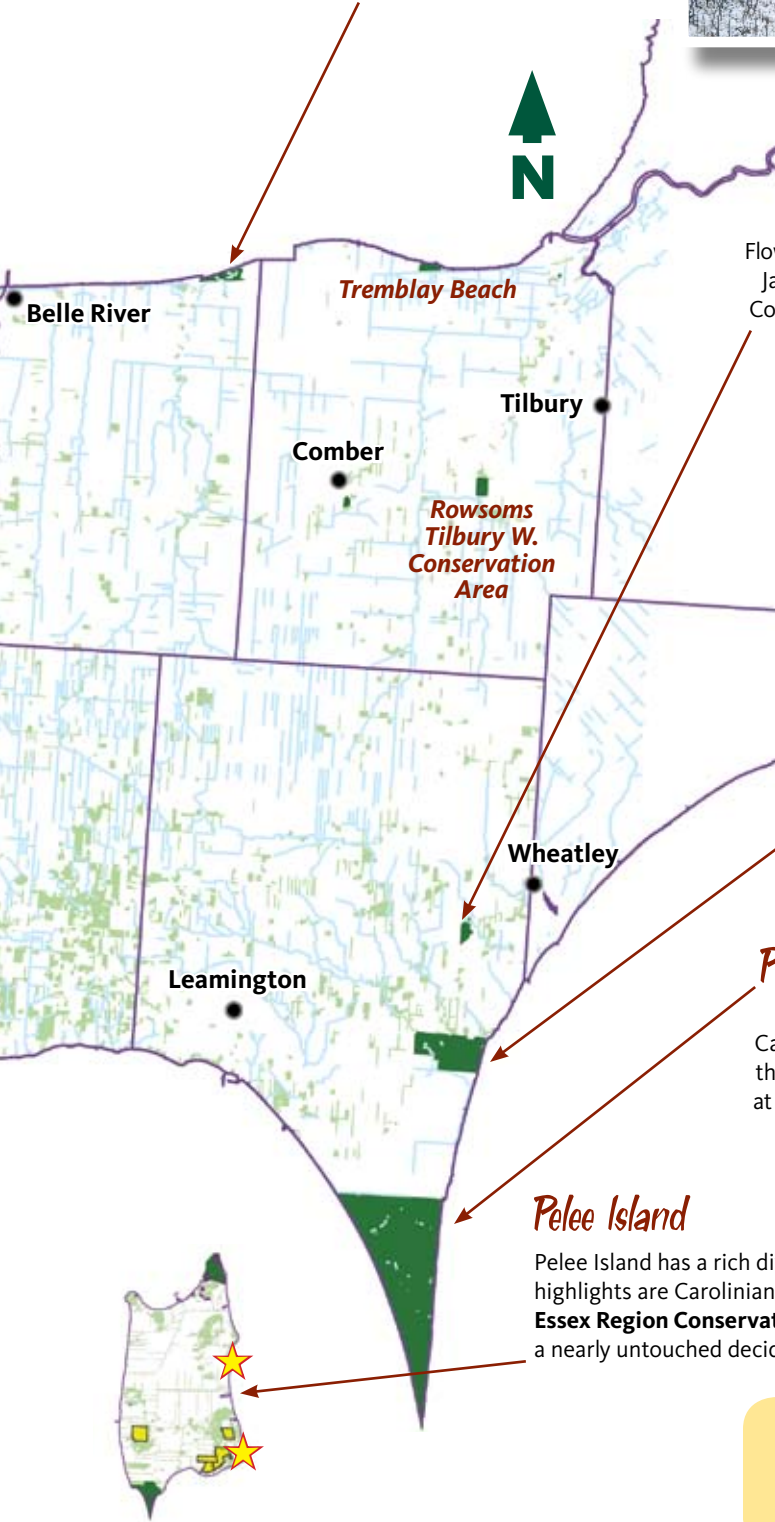
Big Picture Core Habitats in Essex

- public ownership
- a mix of public and private ownership
- County & Township Boundaries
- Other Natural Areas
- Carolinian Canada Signature Site

These folks and other neighbours too numerous to mention are quietly helping to restore our landscape, to protect rare wildlife, and to make your home a safer place to live by keeping the air and water clean. You can help too, in many ways.

Ruscom River Corridor

One of the last two remaining marshes on Essex's north shore is found at the mouth of the River. Shorebirds, waterfowl, and other spring migrants can be seen along the trails. The rare Northern Map Turtle resides in Ruscom Shores which is designated as an Environmentally Significant Area.



Kopegaron Woods

This 19 ha (47 ac) Carolinian woodland includes Tulip-tree, Sassafras, Black Gum, Sycamore and Flowering Dogwood. Wildflowers such as Trillium, Jack-in-the-pulpit, May Apple, Spring Beauty and Columbine can be found on the forest floor in the spring. A boardwalk trail has been built by **Essex Region Conservation Authority** to protect the forest floor.



Hillman Marsh and Woodlands

This 340 ha (850 ac) marsh spills into Lake Erie at the mouth of the Hillman Creek and supports marsh, shore and field birds such as herons, egrets, terns, songbirds and ducks as well as a nesting pair of Bald Eagles. Over one hundred species of birds use Hillman as a migration stopover which draws sandpipers, ducks, warblers and rarities such as the Yellow-headed Blackbird, Willet, Marbled Godwit, Eurasian Wigeon, Glossy Ibis and Western Kingbird. Also included in the complex are the Hillman Sand Hills, Three Bird Woods, and Upper Hillman. Together these provide many special habitats for wildlife and a rich bird-watching or hunting experience.

Point Pelee National Park

Although relatively tiny, Carolinian Canada's only national park harbours the highest concentration of species at risk and the second greatest plant diversity of all Canadian national parks. Read more on page 5.



Pelee Island

Pelee Island has a rich diversity of natural communities and species crowded in a small area. Two highlights are Carolinian Canada Signature Sites – Stone Road Alvar, protected by **Ontario Nature, Essex Region Conservation Authority** and **Nature Conservancy Canada**, and Middle Point Woods, a nearly untouched deciduous woodland. Visit the **Pelee Island Heritage Centre** to learn more.



Carolinian Canada's Signature Sites Guide provides more information on several of the important natural areas in Essex region.

not to scale



Middle Island

PARTNERS IN CONSERVATION

Improving Landscape Health – One Property at a Time



Marsh Creek in Spring

Stewardship is a personal commitment and **Essex County Stewardship Network (ECSN)** is committed to caring for the natural resources of Essex for the benefit of today's and tomorrow's citizens and the land. By empowering private landowners to seek out environmentally-friendly ways to manage our lands, water, and air ECSN helps to foster sustainable agriculture and healthy landscapes. Since 1996, the ECSN has worked with over 75 landowners to create natural habitat on private land. It has hosted numerous tours and educational events. Volunteers, landowners and local businesses are essential to the success of the network.

ECSN works one-on-one with landowners to obtain resources, permits and funds, as needed for each project. Projects may include planting buffer strips using warm season grasses, wetland creation, species at risk stewardship and tree planting. For example, on the Thibert farm near Tilbury, ECSN helped the landowner create 2.8 Ha (7 acres) of habitat including wetland, woodland, meadow grasslands and windbreaks by involving the local drainage superintendent, the **Environmental Farm Plan** and surrounding neighbours. Now, the Thibert family enjoys the property for recreation and the farm is protected from winds and erosion.



Thibert Pond

A direct result of the Thibert Farm projects is new interest from three other local landowners who have also completed their EFPs. The ECSN is working with each landowner to source additional funds and permits to aid in completing their project ideas. These projects include planting buffer strips using warm season grasses, wetland creations, Species at Risk, and traditional tree and windbreak plantings.

Working Together Towards Sustainability

The Essex Region was once dominated by forest, prairie and wetlands. Urban development, agriculture and deforestation have greatly altered the landscape. By 1992, a mere 6.5% of the region's land base remained in a natural state, and surface water quality was very poor.

Recognizing the need to take immediate action towards creating a future of sustainability, the **Essex Region Conservation Authority (ERCA)**, together with support from the region's nine municipalities, launched its **Clean Water~Green Spaces** initiative.

Since that time, partnerships with landowners have allowed the region's natural areas to increase to 7.5%...still shy of the **United Nations** minimum of 12%, but a step in the right direction. Partnership stewardship projects continue to grow in importance as ERCA works with landowners to implement and provide funding assistance for projects like forest restoration, wetland construction, rock chutes, buffer strips, and septic upgrades. By working together, a legacy of sustainability can be realized for our children and grandchildren.



East Mersea Public School



Gore Hill Public School

Habitat is More than Trees – DRCC Volunteers Get their Feet Wet

The **Detroit River Canadian Cleanup (DRCC)** is a coalition of organizations and individuals who are working to improve the health of their watershed. This river is identified as an “Area of Concern in the Great Lakes”, partly due to the lack of habitat that would naturally clean the water. DRCC increases natural cover, ‘softens’ shorelines and creates spawning sites to address major losses of fish and wildlife habitat. In 2003, DRCC with the **City of Windsor, Essex Region Conservation Authority** and other partners undertook a unique soft engineering project at McKee Park, in the Sandwich area downstream from the Ambassador Bridge. Large rock ‘islands’ were constructed to protect the embayment from high energy river flows and sturgeon spawning areas were created. Lake Sturgeon, an ancient fish, were once common in the Detroit River, but their numbers have been drastically reduced as a result of habitat alteration and over-fishing.

Another important aquatic habitat area is Ojibway Shores. It is the one of the last remaining natural shorelines along the Detroit River, and an important wildlife corridor.



McKee Park project

© Melanie Coulter



Lake Sturgeon

Transforming a Backyard into a Natural Oasis

Christine and Peter Childs purchased a new home along the Chrysler Greenway in Kingsville in 2006. The yard, which backed onto the Greenway, was simply mowed lawn. Christine was very interested in native plants, and saw this as a great opportunity to transform the backyard into something that extended the natural connection of the Greenway. She joined **The Natural Habitat Network** and took their Naturalized Landscape Course to gain additional knowledge in the growing of native plants. A few months later she and Peter began to transform their suburban lot. After several months of hard work, their garden now boasts dozens of native plants clustered into various mini-habitats, including a woodland area, a butterfly garden, and an area for growing new seedlings. Tulip trees and Sassafras are among the many trees that they planted to start their woodland. They knew that these would do well on their sandy soil, because there were stands of them only a little way along the Greenway. Under the trees they put in Trilliums, Jacks in the Pulpit, and Mayapple. In the butterfly garden, they planted species such as Pasture Rose and Black-eyed Susan. The Child’s garden has been endorsed through **The Naturalized Habitat Network certification** program.



Monarch in Childs’ garden

© C. Childs



© C. Childs



© C. Childs



Get updates on events and programs in your area through the Carolinian Canada News Network - it’s free to join.

Why Should I Care? *Natural habitat benefits farms, homes and communities with important landscape functions.*

Clean Air
Natural habitat filters air, provides oxygen & mitigates Climate Change effects

Productive Land
Natural habitat builds soil quality & prevents erosion

Diversity of Life
Wild places provide beautiful landscapes, natural pest control & wildlife to watch

Energy Savings & Safety
Trees protect buildings & livestock from extreme heat, cold, wind & noise

Healthy Communities
Studies show that people are happier & property values increase around natural areas

Clean Water
Wetlands & buffers filter water & guard against floods & droughts

What Can I Do? *Not sure where to start? Contact a conservation partner listed in this factsheet to discuss habitat options on your land or in your community.*

Manage for Sustainable Income

If you depend on your land for a livelihood, your forest can provide you with a good long-term income if harvested properly and will also provide wildlife habitat. For example, leave mature seed trees scattered through your woods to sustain its genetic richness.

Natural Homes

Wildlife shelter includes leaf litter, gnarled branches, old logs, brush piles, wet meadows, tall grass, marshes, swamps and more. Resist the desire to 'clean up' a habitat. You may find a Southern Flying Squirrel in a standing dead tree or a salamander under a log.

Protect Your Water

Protect your lake or stream shoreline with native vegetation. Natural buffers filter sediments and pollution. Roots of plants stabilize the soil to prevent erosion and reduce flood impacts. The wider the buffer the greater the benefits.

Let it Get Old

Make a decision to protect at least one area from disturbance. This may be a swamp, forest interior or old field. You will be rewarded with increasing diversity of plants and animals that need 'quiet' habitat.

Nesting Time

Avoid active management during spring, an important time for wildlife, especially birds. For example, if you confine timber harvesting to winter and leave a few rotting trees in a swamp, you may provide a home for the endangered Prothonotary Warbler.

Help bring Balance to the Landscape

Non-native plant and animal species are wreaking havoc with our natural ecosystems. Vigilant actions by landowners, gardeners and naturalists go far to battle widespread damage by these alien invaders. As well, alterations to the landscape have enabled some native species such as White-tailed Deer and Raccoons to become over-abundant. Controlled hunting can help this problem.

Make Connections

Restore habitat along roads, watercourses, drains, shorelines, fences, hedgerows and on marginal land or marshy ground. Work with neighbours to connect green corridors.

Think Big

A major problem in Carolinian Canada is fragmented habitat that is prone to losing rare species. If you want to create new habitat, consider adding to existing natural areas to multiply their benefits.

Plan it Right for Love and Money

Consult an ecologist or forester to develop a plan for your property that will help reach your goals. With a plan, you may be eligible for a variety of conservation grants and incentives.

Enjoy & Relax

As you get to know your land in all seasons, you will know best what it needs to stay healthy. You may decide to leave it alone to make a significant contribution to the future of your land, your heritage and your community. You can get involved in programs such as the Canadian Wildlife Service's Backyard Frog Count to contribute to science and learn more about your land.

TAKE PRIDE IN ESSEX HERITAGE

Many landowners in Essex are saving habitat, helping Species at Risk and protecting Essex heritage at the same time. Whether you are a rural or urban dweller, you can enjoy a wide diversity of wild (and beneficial) neighbours once you give them a little space. Species at Risk are plants or animals in danger of disappearing from the wild here. In Essex, over 130 are officially listed 'at risk' in Canada and 330 as rare in Ontario, among the highest levels in the nation. Several, like the Eastern Fox Snake, are globally rare. They are often hard to find, unless you know where to look, such as the endangered Wild Hyacinth that only grows on the Lake Erie islands or Pugnose Shiner and Golden Redhorse, rare fish in our creeks and rivers.

Your actions today can make a difference for tomorrow's landscape. Some habitat-saving ideas:

- **Agriculture & rare species can co-exist:** Practice sustainable agriculture.
- **Make a B&B for rare wildlife:** Provide special needs for food & shelter.
- **Tweak your management plan:** For example, Hooded Warblers are increasing with help from landowners that harvest timber, without affecting their income.
- **Get to know your wild neighbours** through information & people in this factsheet.
- **Get involved!** In local programs, incentives & workshops for habitat.

Let Ontario Help You: The Ontario government is putting "stewardship first" for Species at Risk. Our new Endangered Species Act (June 30, 2008) brings with it funding for Species at Risk habitat projects on public and private land.

Bringing back the Prothonotary

The endangered Prothonotary Warbler nests in tree cavities in swamp-forests with large pools of standing water. Knowing this, the **Essex Region Conservation Authority** and volunteers flooded a little-used road that ran through a quiet woodland at Holiday Beach in south Essex and built nest boxes. Within a few months, the first Prothonotary pair moved in and started raising a family!

Prothonotary Warbler



© Alf Rieder

Landowners are invited to take advantage of Carolinian Canada's new *Caring For Nature Workshops*. Call 519-433-7077 to reserve a space.



You can help! If you see these species contact:

wildlife@carolinian.org or follow the links from www.carolinian.org

EASTERN FOX SNAKE

Elaphe gloydi

Look for:

- Ontario's 2nd biggest snake (adults over 1 meter)
- Yellow-brown with large dark blotches
- Belly with yellow & black checks

Did You Know?

This snake is **not** venomous

- Lives in marshes, beaches, woods, farms & hay lofts
- Is at risk from habitat loss & human persecution

HELP! Enhance wetlands • Appreciate snakes

REWARD: Control rodent populations

IF YOU SEE THIS ANIMAL CONTACT: *Eastern Fox Snake Recovery Team*, Allen Woodliffe @ 519-354-4108 or Ron Gould @ 519-773-4745



BARN OWL

Tyto alba

Look for:

- Golden back & white breast with dark spots
- Dark eyes & no ear tufts

Did You Know?

This owl emits a hair-raising screech

- Roosts in barns, silos, abandoned buildings & trees & snags
- Is at risk from habitat loss, raccoons, cats & cold, snowy winters

HELP! Enhance grassland habitat • Put up nest boxes

REWARD: Control mice & rats around farms

IF YOU SEE THIS ANIMAL CONTACT: *Bernie Solymár, Ontario Barn Owl Recovery Team* @ 519-426-7124 or Ron Gould @ 519-773-4745



Find a Conservation Partner

A Helping Hand for Landowners

A Good Place to Start for Property Assistance

Essex County Stewardship Network ontariostewardship.org/essex
Brett Groves 519-354-4437 Habitat conservation & restoration

Essex Region Conservation Authority erca.org
519-776-5209 Habitat conservation & restoration
New Clean Water~Green Spaces Grant Program

Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority
lowerThames-conservation.on.ca
Valerie Townsley 519-354-7310 Habitat protection & tree planting

Specialized Project Assistance or Funding

Ducks Unlimited Canada ducksunlimited.org
Darrell Randell 1-888-402-4444 Wetland protection & creation

Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association Ontariosoilcrop.org
Ernie Konrad 519-825-4588 Environmental Farm Plan

Nature Conservancy of Canada natureconservancy.ca
James Duncan 1-866-281-5331 Land protection, conservation easements

Canada South Land Trust canadasouthlandtrust.org
Betty Learmouth 519-944-0825 Land protection, conservation easements

Ontario Forestry Association oforest.on.ca
1-800-387-0790 Ontario Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program

TD Friends of the Environment Foundation td.com/fef/
Funding for community environmental projects

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources mnr.gov.on.ca/mnr/speciesatrisk/
519-354-4108 Species at Risk Stewardship Fund

Meet Your Neighbours – Learn, Volunteer, Network

Detroit River Canadian Cleanup detroitriver.ca
Melanie Coulter 519-776-5209 ext. 356 Detroit River cleanup & enhancement

Essex County Field Naturalists ojibway.ca/ECFN
Monthly educational meetings & field trips

Friends of Ojibway Prairie ojibway.ca/foop.htm 519-966-5852

Friends of Point Pelee friendsofpointpelee.com
Interpretive programs & special events

Little River Enhancement Group detroitriver.ca/littleriver
Tree planting & river cleanup

The Naturalized Habitat Network naturalizedhabitat.org
519-259-2407 Educational resources for home naturalization

Good Sources of Information

Association for Canadian Educational Resources
905-275-7685 Volunteer habitat monitoring aceracre.org

Canadian Wildlife Federation wildaboutgardening.org

Environment Canada 1-800-668-6767
Species at Risk sararegistry.gc.ca
Ecological Gifts Program on.ec.gc.ca/wildlife/ecogifts

Essex County Federation of Agriculture ecfa@wincom.net 519-776-5159

Evergreen 1-888-426-3138 evergreen.ca Native Plant Database

Land Owner Resource Centre 1-888-571-4636 lrconline.com
Management Options for Abandoned Farm Fields
Extension Notes: forestry, tree planting, agroforestry, wildlife & more

Ojibway Nature Centre ojibway.ca 519-966-5852

Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters invadingspecies.com
1-800-563-7711 Invasive species hotline, Habitat enhancement

Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs omafra.gov.on.ca
Best Management Practices: Buffer Strips, Fish & Wildlife

Ontario Nature 1-800-440-2366 ontarionature.org
Birds on the Farm: A Stewardship Guide

Ontario Society for Ecological Restoration serontario.org
Native Plant Resource Guide

Ontario Stewardship ontariostewardship.org

Ontario Woodlot Association 1-888-791-1103 ont-woodlot-assoc.org

Pelee Island Heritage Centre pimuseum@mnsi.net
The Wilds of Pelee Island/Human & Natural History

Point Pelee National Park 519-322-2315 pc.gc.ca

Royal Ontario Museum rom.on.ca
Online factsheets on Species at Risk

Tallgrass Ontario 519-674-1543 tallgrassontario.org
Tallgrass & savanna conservation

CAROLINIAN CANADA COALITION *Collaborating for a Healthy Ecoregion*

www.carolinian.org 519-433-7077 info@carolinian.org

New REGISTER NOW: CARING FOR NATURE LANDOWNER WORKSHOP
Call for information about events in your area.

PUBLICATIONS:

- New** The Natural Treasures of Carolinian Canada
- Species at Risk in Carolinian Canada & How to Help
- Big Picture Map
- Carolinian Canada Signature Sites Guide

The Carolinian Canada Coalition is dedicated to stewarding a healthy ecoregion in collaboration with a wide range of public and private stakeholders. CCC programs focus on research, awareness and effective action by connecting people who care for nature since 1984.

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