

# Northumberland Land Trust

Ontario, Canada

Preserving Northumberland County - one acre at a time

The Preserver, February 2014

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

With the onset of the unusual early winter cold and ice storms that Northumberland County has experienced, I am sure that we all are looking forward to spring even though it means that for some of us it is back to cutting grass and outdoor maintenance. For those of us who are actively involved on community boards it is a time to reflect, and plan for Annual Meetings, budgets and work plans; the old saying rings true: "If we fail to plan, we plan to fail."

The Northumberland Land Trust Stewardship Team under the leadership of John Geale is leading the way with ambitious plans for 2014. Arrangements have already been made for a prescribed burn at the McEwen Reserve - more on this on page 3 of this newsletter. Plans also include the continuation of invasive species removal and native species planting. There is always a need for maintenance of existing trails and hopefully helpers will come forward to assist with the cutting of new trails. You can join us as a volunteer by contacting us at [stewardship@northumberlandlandtrust.ca](mailto:stewardship@northumberlandlandtrust.ca) or 905-342-3851.

George Gordon has been very helpful updating the NLT account with CanadaHelps.org so that donations and memberships may now be made online using credit cards, debit cards and PayPal. Many NLT supporters like you made donations 2013. The first monthly donor has just committed to NLT for every month in 2014. You can view the website and even make your own 2014 donation at <https://www.canadahelps.org/dn/10666>. It is really encouraging that the community-at-large shares the same concerns as NLT supporters in that we all have a responsibility to preserve and care for the natural environment so that future generations will be able to enjoy these special spaces in our County.

Thanks for your support. Spread the word to your friends and neighbours to let them know that Northumberland County has its own Land Trust, affiliated with both the Ontario and the Canadian Land Trust Alliances as well other regional agencies who share similar objectives.

Joan Chalovich

## YOUR STEWARDSHIP TEAM: JULIE MUNRO, LECKEY PROPERTY STEWARD



Julie (photo, left) has been an active Land Trust supporter since 2009, and she joined the Stewardship Team the following year. She has enthusiastically taken charge of the Leckey property Stewardship, organizing work parties, coordinating hikes for the Pine Ridge Hiking Club and Willow Beach Field Naturalists, and keeping us in contact with the original property owner (Molly Leckey) and now with the new owners, Martin Poitras and Alison Jacobs.

Julie lives in Brighton, in the eastern part of our County, and has a career in water quality and aquatic ecology. She notes that she wanted to expand her experience to include managing terrestrial environmental issues like invasive species management. With Scots pine, dog-strangling vine, European buckthorn, and possibly garlic mustard to contend with, she will certainly have opportunities of this kind.

"Seeing positive results from the efforts put forth by the team of volunteers", says Julie, is what she enjoys most about her stewardship work. "As the result of our hard work implementing management strategies, we are starting to see fewer invasives on our properties from year to year, the healthy establishment of tree seedlings, and the return of native plants." She also likes meeting people who are passionate about the beauty and intrinsic value that each property offers and that reconnect her to nature. Getting outside for a hike to enjoy what nature has on display is always a pleasure for her.



Bill Newell (left), Julie Munro and Tim Lawley ready for some Scots pine removal at the Leckey property

Julie's vision for the Leckey property, a conservation easement, is that the trails continue to be maintained as hiking trails, that members of the public and special interest groups continue to have opportunities to enjoy the trails, that invasive species be removed permanently, and that native plant species continue to establish themselves. We are all grateful to Alison and Martin for their willingness to share these goals.



View looking west over the Leckey property

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**SAVE THE DATE!** On **Tuesday, February 11**, Ewa Bednarczuk, Ecologist and Stewardship Specialist for the Lower Trent Conservation Authority, will present our final lecture for the season. She will speak on the "Seven Natural Wonders of the Lower Trent Watershed." These areas are ecologically unique and include Peter's Woods. The lecture will be at the Northumberland County building, 600 William Street, Cobourg. Doors open at 7:00 p.m. for light refreshments; Ewa will start at 7:30. There is no charge for the evening.

## PRESCRIBED BURN AT THE McEWEN PROPERTY

Those who have visited our McEwen property northwest of Garden Hill will know that it offers a wonderful variety of habitats. These include significant areas of various sub-types of forest, some wetlands (including a clear, cold-water pond), and some fairly extensive grasslands. The Land Trust would like to preserve this diversity of habitats, and one of the challenges is to prevent exotic invasives (particularly Scots pine and dog-strangling vine) and native trees from encroaching on the grasslands and eventually dominating the whole property.



McEwen property, prescribed burn site

Prescribed burns are a tool often used by conservationists in this context, because most trees do not survive a burn and yet native grasses and wildflowers recover quickly and do very well. In fact, many native grassland species are especially adapted to fire and often depend on fire for their survival: dead plant material is removed and the ashes fertilize the soil; far more sunlight reaches the ground, which encourages new growth; and roots and seeds are not killed by fire.

Many species of plants and animals require grasslands for their survival. At the McEwen property, there are many native plants that will not grow in forest conditions, some of which are regionally significant. For example, Prairie Buttercup, Arrow-leaved Violet, Round-headed Bush-clover, Hairy Beard-tongue, Upright Bindweed, and Rough Pennyroyal have all been recorded here. Associated with these grasslands or the edges of the fields are birds like Grasshopper Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Eastern Kingbird, Brown Thrasher, Indigo Bunting and Whip-poor-will. Other species that nest nearby, like Red-tailed Hawk, Barn Swallow and Tree Swallow use the grasslands for foraging. Many of these species have undergone huge population declines in recent years, so we feel it will be particularly beneficial to them to maintain our grassland areas.

We are therefore preparing for a prescribed burn this spring, probably in mid-April, although the exact timing is highly dependent on weather conditions. The firebreak (a 2-meter strip of essentially bare soil, in the photo to the left) has already been established, a detailed Burn Plan has been prepared by Lands and Forests Consulting, and we are in the process of having the Plan approved by the Fire Chief, obtaining a permit, and notifying neighbours and other interested parties. Although the number



