Lakeshore Eco-Network

Make the planet great again!

A newsletter of Lakeshore Eco-Network

Welcome to our first newsletter! Please let us know what you think and send along any suggestions for future stories.



Ten questions with James Corcoran, co-chair Lakeshore Eco-Network, proprietor of Hoanaadia Nurseries, and Environment Planner with Ministry of Transportation of Ontario.

Where did you grow up and go to school? What were the early influences on your life?

I grew up in Barrie, which was a beautiful place to grow up. From our backyard we had access to old orchards, farms, and woodlands, and as kids we spent a lot of time exploring. We then moved to London, where in the 8th grade I remember my teacher talking about the greenhouse effect and the earth heating up from gasses being trapped in the atmosphere, which was pretty enlightened for a teacher in the late 1960s. I recall going on a field trip to Pond Mills, where the instructor talked about the demise of the passenger pigeon, once the most predominant bird in North America. At the time I kept homing pigeons as pets, and I remember feeling very sad and disturbed to hear how a related species that was so abundant could be wiped off the earth.

Why forestry?

I had an interest and knack for biology, and I discovered that you could get a university degree in biology and at the same time earn a professional licence in forestry. This seemed like a pragmatic thing to do, given we were in an economic crisis so I enrolled in the joint program at Lakehead University.

Where has your career path led you?

Jobs were very scarce when I graduated, but I eventually landed a forestry job with Dupont, a large petrochemical company (which I sometimes refer to as “going over to the dark side”). I also began a tree nursery on the side, which has grown into a life-long passion.

My next job was with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food in Guelph, first as a food extension safety advisor, looking at pesticide residues in agricultural crops, and then a provincial nursery crops specialist.

I then moved to London to take up a position as an environmental planner with the Ministry of Transportation. At that time Ontario was the gold standard for environmental assessments, but over time successive governments have riddled the Environmental Assessment Act with many loopholes.

I recently moved within the MTO to the position of vegetation management specialist, a role I've enjoyed very much. In Ontario the highway right-of-way is an important habitat for butterflies, insects, and birds. I've helped steer the ministry towards a policy of naturalizing rights-of-way along highways, instead of mowing and parkifying them.

Why did you start growing trees in Grand Bend?

I had to live where the trees are – that's why I came to Grand Bend. The Pinery is the largest continuous forest in South-Western Ontario, and I was attracted by the beautiful forest cover offered here. And I wanted to start propagating trees again.

Why do you grow from seeds?

The business model of the industrial nursery industry is to supply clones, rather than grow from seeds. I feel that it's really important to keep genetic diversity in the landscape, especially in Southern Ontario, where there is very little quality native forest.

Every seed is unique. Trees grown from seed live longer than cloned trees, grow larger, and support the maximum number of butterfies, birds, and mammals. The average life of a cloned tree is 15 years, which is shocking but true. Cloned trees don't produce seed themselves, so they're useless in terms of providing food to our wildlife.

What does the process involve?

Collecting seed is very exciting, like a treasure hunt, and very physically demanding. It can sometimes even be spiritual. You need to time it perfectly, when the seed is ripe and mature but hasn't been collected by wildlife (of course you want to leave some for them). Collecting seeds gets you out into the landscape, and into various communities.

Hemlock trees don't produce seed for their first 15 years, so ladders are often required to collect the cones that contain the seed. The cones are dried at room temperature to open them up, and the seeds are shaken out using screens. The wings are then separated from the seeds before planting. Only 30 percent of hemlock seeds germinate, so I put about six or eight seeds in each seedling plug to get two or three seedlings. If you plant just one seed, even if it germinates it will never be as big or as healthy as three or four seedlings in one plug. This, I believe, is because the roots are working together as a whole rather than as individuals. It's been proven in the field that hemlocks and other species share resources for the benefit of the whole, and I see that happening right in my nursery.



I also collect seeds from maples. If you buy a sugar maple from a nursery, it will be a clone rather than a tree grown from seed. You often see these clones planted in an urban environment – every tree will be the same shape, the same colour, the same form, and lose their leaves at the same time. As individuals, we deserve trees that are also individuals, that have character of their own.

***Why do you grow hemlocks and maples*?**

The hemlock is very graceful, with exquisite form, and has a lovely dark green colour. Another great thing about the hemlock is it can grow in shade. As well,

they can take very heavy pruning. Hemlocks don't grow quickly, but they can live for almost a thousand years. It's an amazing tree, and we're still learning about them.

Maples have always been one of my favourite trees. The maple is Canada's arbour emblem, it looks beautiful in the landscape, and is made of beautiful wood. It also gives you maple syrup and sugar, which are fabulous foods.

What are the advantages of native trees

Native trees have ecologically co-evolved with everything from soil organisms right up to the wildlife we love to see. They've co-evolved in a cooperative way, so a native tree grown from seed is going to support butterflies, birds, insects, and mammals. An oak, for example, supports hundreds of species of native butterflies, whereas a non-native tree such as the Ginkgo supports one or zero species of insects. We're facing an insect and bird Armageddon, with 75 percent of their population lost. We can do something about that by maintaining native trees in our landscape. And native trees just look and feel right in the landscape because they belong here.

What environmental issues worry you the most?

Every day we hear about children dying from malnutrition from droughts and famine all over the world, such as Ethiopia or Somalia, and it's clear that this is linked to climate change. When you look at the big picture, everything is connected. So what we do here, such as burning fossil fuels and reducing the percentage of tree cover, is connected to what is happening around the world.

What gives you hope for the future?

We're learning to focus our environmental efforts on local levels of government in our communities. This I believe is where change is going to come from. It gives me hope that people are starting to appreciate this, neighbour by neighbour, and group by group. It takes effort everywhere - and we certainly need better leadership at the highest levels - but the local level is something that we can affect directly and in a shorter time frame.



Proposed Housing Bill Threatens Environment

Just as COP 27 started in Egypt with dire warnings from many speakers, the Ontario government introduced a bill to significantly reduce environmental protections.

Disingenuously titled "More Houses Built Faster," the bill has been referred to as a "Trojan Horse for environmentally catastrophic rural sprawl."

Among its worrying provisions:

· Removes the power of Conservation Authorities (CAs) to prevent developers from destroying wetlands, woodlands, and river or stream valleys

· Prohibits CAs from reviewing or commenting on most planning proposals and applications

· Opens the door to sale and development of CA lands

· Removes the power of regional governments to plan sustainable development in their regions

· Enables Minister to unilaterally impose sprawl on municipal governments

Phil Pothen of Environmental Defence points out that Ontario currently has plenty of land designated for development without this legislation. “The Act includes only tepid measures to enable more badly needed home construction in existing cities, while diving deep into dangerous attacks on wetland habitat, woodlands, and other conservation lands, and encouraging even more of the expensive rural sprawl that caused Ontario’s housing crisis.”

Adding insult to injury, on November 4, Premier Doug Ford announced his intention to open Greenbelt land to development, while adding roughly 2,000 acres of protected land elsewhere. “It is clear that this attack would end the critical role the Greenbelt plays to stop sprawl and protect farmland, forests, and the source of our drinking water, as well address climate change,” said Pothen. “The government should be ashamed, and the people of Ontario should be outraged.”

Please let your MPP know how you feel about these attacks on our precious ecosystems.



Capturing the Spirit of the Forest

Some 200 people attended the Festival and shopped at the LEN tree and plant sale on October 1 at the Lambton Heritage Museum. Among the highlights: an Indigenous welcome by Mike Henry of Kettle and Stoney Point, a visit from a friendly groundhog from Heaven’s Wildlife, and forest bathing. More than 60 people made seed bombs with Rosalind Chang of Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation (and Rosalind made the

front page of the local newspaper!). There were lots of questions and interaction at the other displays and activities.

We heard many positive comments from participants and exhibitors. In addition, the Festival gave LEN an opportunity to build or expand our partnerships with other organizations, including Friends of Pinery Park, Ausable Bayfield Conservation Foundation, Lambton Shores Nature Trails, Heaven's Wildlife Rescue, and Lambton County Library and Public Health. These partnerships will provide a basis for future collaborations.

LEN is grateful to Sunset Community Foundation for supporting this successful event, part of our ongoing efforts to reconnect people with nature, fostering tree planting, conservation, and local climate action. Says Co-Chair Max Morden, "Thanks to the grant from the Foundation, we were able to reach out to the community after the pandemic, sharing the news that LEN is still active and committed to conservation and climate action."

LEN Supports Newly Formed Canadian Coalition for Invasive Plant Regulation (CCIPR)

LEN member Renee Sandelowsky recently introduced us to CCIPR, an organization committed to preventing the introduction of invasive species in Canada. LEN is now a partner organization.

"Gardeners are often shocked when they discover that plants they bought at a nursery are invasive," says Master Gardener Catherine Kavassalis, a well- respected environmentalist and plant expert who helped to launch CCIPR. "Invasive plants represent a small percentage of all plants sold, but they do enormous ecological damage. They really need to be regulated or restricted to limit their spread and impact."

Among the goals of CCIPR:

- Bans on the sale and movement of high-risk invasive plant species
- Labelling to identify and educate the public about lower-risk invasive plants
- Public education including alternatives to invasive plants
- Encouragement for the horticultural trades to minimize the introduction and spread of invasive plants.

To learn more about the impact of invasive species and how you can help, visit www.ccipr.ca

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Saving our Greenspace

St. John's-by-the-Lake is the little white church located at the north end of Grand Bend, on Highway 21 in the municipality of South Huron. St. John's was built on donated land for parishioners from London who spent their summers in Grand Bend. The "four horseman of St. John's-by-the-lake": Fredrick Walker, Colin C. Scatcherd, William C. Dance, and Stuart L. Gunn, petitioned the Bishop of Huron to form a church in Grand Bend in 1949. Colin C. Scatcherd donated the land and the group successfully canvassed the community to fund the project. In 1957, the Parish Hall was dedicated in memory of C.C. Scatcherd.

St. John's sits on a large parcel of land 371' wide by 362' deep. The church is situated in the south-west corner, leaving a large portion of green space at the back and to the north. Over the years, Church Council has debated what to do with this valuable parcel of land. There have been lots of ideas, as you may well imagine. Recently a property committee was struck and the committee revisited the many suggestions in the context of the *Five Marks of Mission*, the guiding principles of the Huron Anglican Diocese.

Concerns about loss of green space and climate change have been raised. The Fifth Mark of Mission speaks to the need to sustain and renew the life of the earth. The committee, guided by this principle, has put forward a proposal to build a labyrinth for contemplation and reflection and commemorative woods on the land around the church. These features will be accessible, inviting local residents and visitors to enjoy this outdoor sanctuary. Committee members met with officials from ABCA to learn about

Commemorative Woods and the importance of native trees. I spoke with James Corcoran about young saplings, grown from seed, and incorporating these plants into the design of the commemorative woods. The Committee is recommending to Church Council, for every large memorial native tree donated, an additional seed grown sapling will be planted. This is an opportunity to partner with Lakeshore Eco-network on their tree planting program. These seed grown native trees will improve biodiversity and sustainability.

~ submitted by Janet Kurasz



Heard at COP 27

"A growing number of governments and non-state actors are pledging to be carbon free. And, obviously, that's good news. The problem is that the criterion benchmarks for these net-zero commitments have varying levels of rigor and loopholes wide enough to drive a diesel truck through**."~** *António Guterres, the U.N. secretary-general*

“Putin’s abhorrent war in Ukraine, and rising energy prices across the world, are not a reason to go slow on climate change. They are a reason to act faster*.” ~UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak*

“Europeans are paying. We are the only ones paying. Pressure must be put on rich non-European countries, telling them, ‘You have to pay your fair share.’” *~ French President Emanuel Macron*

*“*The COP must make progress on minimizing and averting loss and damage from climate change. It is high time put this on the agenda.” *Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission*

*"*Let's be clear, we are in favour of reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. But we Africans cannot accept that our vital interests be ignored*." ~ Macky Sall, President of Senegal*

"There can be no effective climate policy without the peace*." ~Volodymyr Zelenskiy, President of Ukraine*

"No matter how much the external environment changes, and no matter how many challenges we face, China has firm determination to achieve this vision of carbon neutrality*." ~Xie Zhenhua, China Climate Envoy*

"We must see the so-called 'dash for gas' for what it really is: a dash down a bridge to nowhere, leaving the countries of the world facing climate chaos and billions in stranded assets, especially here in Africa. We have to move beyond the era of fossil fuel colonialism."*~Al Gore, former US Vice-President*

*"*With her vast land, Africa has the greatest potential to help decarbonise the world by absorbing carbon dioxide through regenerative agriculture that requires less fertiliser and reforestation with strong biodiversity content. My government is proud to announce that Ghana will launch projects in these areas, which will tackle at the same time climate change on global and domestic levels and social issues by providing people with dignified and sustainable jobs." *~ Nana Akufo-Addo, President of Ghana*

*"*Loss and damage needs to be part of the core agenda of COP27 to meet the pressing humanitarian needs of those that are trapped in a crisis of public financing fuelled by debt and yet have to fund climate disasters on their own. This is simply unjust and unfair to say the least.*" ~Shebaz Sharif, Prime Minister of Pakistan*





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