Lakeshore Eco-Network

MAKE THE PLANET GREAT AGAIN!

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"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference."

James Corcoran Leads Winter Hike March 7

Think hiking is only for warm days? Think again. Join LEN and Port Franks Garden Club on March 7 for a Winter Twig ID class and walk, from 2 to 4:30.

This course will be an introduction into how to identify trees and shrubs during the winter using only their twigs and will feature a quick discussion inside the community centre on what to look for followed by a walk through a portion of the Tulip Trail picking out individual trees and examples. We will wind up back inside the community centre with a chance to test your new skills identifying twig samples. Instruction will be led by Jim Corcoran, a practicing Forester with several decades of experience.

Discover the appreciation and delight that learning this unusual skill brings to your winter outings. Besides fostering a greater appreciation for the natural world during "stick season," knowing what deciduous trees and shrubs look like in winter has many practical benefits. You can use these identification skills in all seasons, and since many plants are dormant in the winter, it's a great time to gather cuttings and some seeds for propagating plants, as well as to salvage and transplant.

This event is brought to you by the Port Franks Garden Club and Lakeshore Eco-Network. Funding from the Carolinian Priority Place program from Environment and Climate Change Canada.





Climate Cafes start up again

Project Drawdown is a remarkable global organization focused on finding workable, high-impact solutions to the climate crisis. One of the resources it makes available is a series of short videos titled Climate Solutions 101. We'll be using these videos to kick off our Climate Cafes this year. The first Café is on March 13, 2025, at Grand Bend Place, 25 Main Street, Grand Bend. It features Project Drawdown CEO Jon Foley laying out the challenges and making an impassioned plea for action. The remaining videos delve into on-the-ground solutions. Check out the first video and then come prepared for some tough conversations in the coming months. P.S. The next Climate Café is March 13.

Tracking Disinformation:

CLIMATE COSMOS

Recently an environmentalist friend of mine recommended the website climatecosmos.com, noting the excellent videos available there. Sure enough, the site looked professional and attractive, and at first glance, seemed to be offering accurate information.

Then I looked a little further, and started seeing titles like, "Who Really Profits from Climate Fear – The Billionaires Behind the Green Agenda," and "The Great Reset and Climate Change – A Convenient Crisis for More Control." I checked out a story on Trump's climate policies which provided a "balanced" view ---some people think the policies are a good idea, others don't.

I couldn't find any reference to this site or its funders elsewhere on the internet. Two scientists provide most of the information – one holds an MSc, the other a BSc.
I began to realize that this was the new face of climate denialism, more subtle than what went before. Rather than insisting that it's not happening, the goal is to sow uncertainty and suggest that the cure might be worse than the disease.

The lesson: pay close attention to what you hear and read, and be skeptical.

What now? Climate action in the Trump era



“Drill, baby, drill.”

That’s what Trump promised in his inaugural address, and what he’s moving quickly to deliver on. Here are some of the measures already in place:

·Pulling out of the Paris Agreement, a landmark in global cooperation to fight climate change
·Declaring a “national energy emergency” urging oil and gas expansion, including on private land if the federal government deems it necessary
·Ensuring the Endangered Species Act cannot be used as an obstacle to energy development
·Opening up areas of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for drilling
·Promising to eliminate Biden-era incentives for new EV purchases
·Eliminating environmental justice provisions

Trump still claims that climate change is a hoax and a scam but has also moved to more subtle claims that the impacts are exaggerated and solutions expensive and unworkable.

So, what does that mean for climate and environmental action going forward? The year 2024 was the hottest since records have been kept, and January 2025 was also the warmest on record. Scientists tell us we have less than a decade to make the changes needed to avoid catastrophic climate change.

Should we simply despair and turn away?

Not according to many leading environmentalists. I had an opportunity to hear from two of them speak (via Zoom) in January.

“Change is happening-- don't let anybody tell you differently, it is happening, and it's going to continue to happen,” said former Vice-President Al Gore in a recent Zoom call with people trained in his Climate Reality organization. He pointed to the rapid installation of clean energy, the growing popularity of electric vehicles, improvements in energy efficiency, and other solutions. Ninety percent of new electricity generation installed worldwide last year was renewable. He concluded: “We know that much more must be done,” he said. “So instead of being discouraged by temporary political setbacks, we've got to redouble our efforts.”

Dr. Jon Foley, Executive Director of Project Drawdown, also addressed the impact of the new administration on climate action. Like Gore, he pointed to successes – the growth of solar energy, heat pumps, electric vehicles and efficient batteries, and the closing of coal plants in many countries– but says change is not happening fast enough. “Maybe it’s time to acknowledge that despite the heroic efforts by many, international diplomacy and national policy leadership in this age of extreme polarization and powerful special interests aren’t getting the job done.” He called for more climate action at the community level, and a more strategic, science-based approach to solutions.

“We still spend too much money and time on inadequate solutions and often miss critical opportunities for more effective action. Fortunately, science shows us ways to dramatically improve climate action.”

Foley, like Gore, says this is the time to step up action. “This moment demands that we all stand up and stand together. Together, we can change the world. And, together, we will.”

Invasive plant of the month- Focus on Norway Maple – Acer platanoides



By Renee Sandelowsky – Canadian Coalition for Invasive Plant Regulation

(This article is excerpted – to see the full article visit Bayfield Breeze)

The Norway Maple is a medium to large deciduous tree, introduced into North America in the 1700's. Often mistaken for the native Sugar Maple, Norway Maple leaves are typically larger and turn yellow in the fall, while Sugar Maples display orange or red hues. Adding to the confusion, Norway Maple cultivars, such as the dark-purple-leaved 'Royal Red,' are often mistaken for the native Red Maple —not because of their appearance, but due to the use of "red" in their names.

Norway Maples grow quickly and aggressively, outcompeting native trees for water, sunlight and nutrients. Their dense canopy blocks sunlight from reaching understory plants, and they produce a large number of winged seeds that have a nearly 100% germination rate. Norway Maples are shade-tolerant, allowing seedlings to establish in the shady understory of a forest.

Studies have shown significantly less species diversity underneath Norway Maples when compared to native maples. This is likely due to drier, shadier conditions, though some research suggests Norway Maples release allelopathic chemicals into the soil that inhibit the growth of other plants.

Following World War II, Norway Maples were widely planted as ornamental trees in Canadian cities. Despite the now known invasive impact, they are still sold in garden centers.

It is also worth noting the many different varieties that are available, such as the commonly sold Crimson King. This can all contribute to the invasion process as seedlings do not retain the features of the parent trees.

Managing Norway Maple is challenging but achievable with persistence and a multi-step approach:

- Manual Removal: Young trees can be removed by pulling or digging out their root systems. Getting rid of a mature tree becomes more challenging because of size. Cut it down – or hire a professional to do so.
- Smothering: Cut trees will resprout. Cover the stump with a black garbage bag or tarp to block sunlight.
- Herbicide Treatment: Alternately, larger trees can be cut to the ground, followed immediately by herbicide treatment to prevent regrowth. Use herbicides only as a last resort, following local regulations to minimize environmental harm.

After removal, replant the area with regionally appropriate native trees. This step is essential to prevent reinfestation and to restore ecosystem health. Native trees will also attract pollinators and wildlife, improving biodiversity in your yard.

A good choice would be Red Maple – Acer rubrum (https://onplants.ca/shop/acer-rubrum)

How to Talk about Climate



As our first Climate Café of 2025 approaches, it's worth thinking about how we talk about the climate crisis to those who are not members of "the choir." Canadian climate scientist Dr. Katharine Hayhoe, who lives and teaches in Texas, has made this a focus of her work, and her book, Saving Us, outlines some of her findings.

Hayhoe believes having conversations about climate is essential. "Climate solutions are complex and multifaceted," she writes. "But the first crucial step forward is simple- talk about it." She argues that facts are not enough: we must find common values and share human stories, connecting with the people around us. "It turns out the very best person to talk about climate change, the most trusted messenger when it comes to contentious and divisive issues, is you."

To learn more about Hayhoe's advice on difficult climate conversations, look for her book in your local library. (Lambton County Library has several copies.)

Woolwich Tree Planting Inspires LEN

"Bring Back the Maples" is an ambitious project to plant 22,000 trees along 335 kilometers of township and regional roads in Woolwich Township (near Guelph, Ontario) over the next three years. The project will cost approximately $110,000 per year, with funding provided by the township, the Region of Waterloo and several corporate donors. Volunteers are helping with the planting.

Forester James Corcoran says the last time rural roadside trees were planted on a large scale in Ontario was in the 1880s. "The residents were tired of the dust and sun in the summer, and the snow and wind in the winter - the answer was to plant trees," he says. "Today, we've got an even more compelling reason – fighting climate change."

Inspired by this bold vision, LEN is exploring a similar project in Lambton Shores. After a positive meeting with municipal staff in late January, the organization is developing a plan and an application to the Vibrancy Fund. Stay tuned!

Learn more: Western's free Connecting for Climate Change Action Course

We all know that climate change is happening, but do you know how we know that? How it impacts communities? The possible solutions? The Indigenous perspective? Connecting for Climate Change Action is a course that uses a storytelling approach to bring Western and Indigenous Sciences together to educate, encourage discussions, and motivate action on climate change.

The course requires time and commitment and yes, there are quizzes and assignments. But the rewards are great, and amazingly, it's free! Visit here to sign up.

Save bike lanes, sign the petition

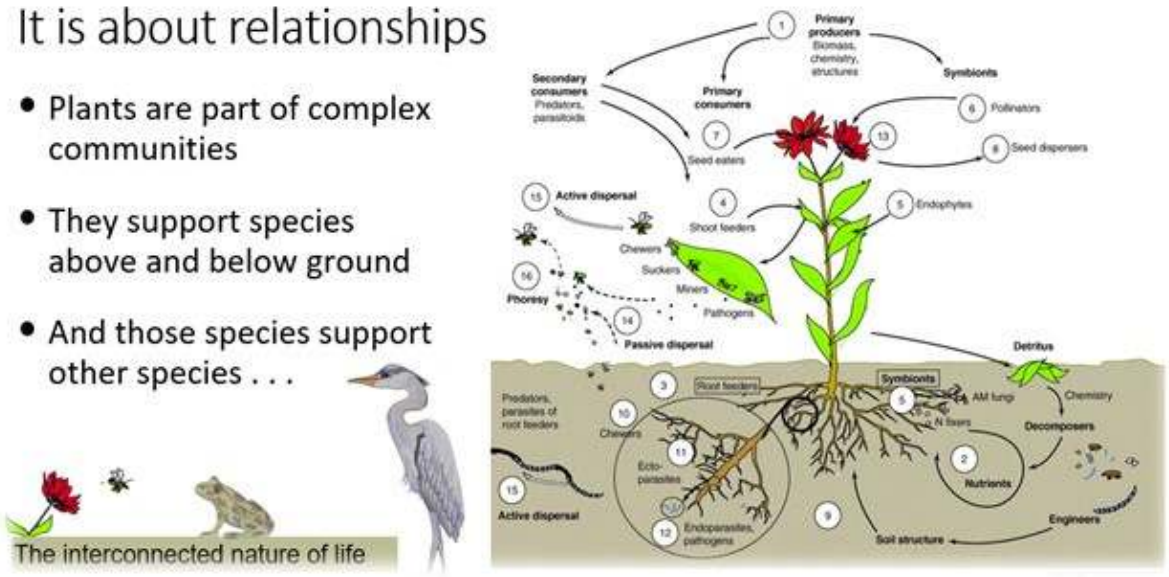
The Active Transportation Committee asks members to consider signing this petition to protest Bill 212, Ontario's anti-bike lane legislation.

Supporting Connected Habitats

by Janet Kurasz, Environmental Horticulturist and Chair, Connecting to Nature Committee

More and more, animal and plant species are becoming isolated on “islands” of habitat. For mammals, birds, and insects, including pollinators, traveling between patches of habit becomes challenging. “Parks Canada works with partners across North America to make it easier for wildlife to move between habitats.”1 The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) defines ecological connectivity as “the unimpeded movements of wildlife and flow of natural processes that sustain life on Earth.”

An ecological corridor is a tool used in conservation to connect different natural habitats. Most Canadians are familiar with wildlife overpasses, underpasses and eco-passages that help keep wildlife and people safe. With the loss of natural eco-systems, decline in biodiversity and proliferation of invasive alien plant species, it is important to restore connectivity between natural habitats. Conservation efforts are reintroducing native plants, removing alien species and, in particular, protecting meadows that support Monarch Butterflies and other important pollinators. Native plants are part of complex communities. They support species above and below the ground, and those species support other species.



https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0169534705002673

Terrestrial insect abundance is declining by 9% per decade and 90% of all insects that eat plants require native plants to complete their development - 70% of those are specialists, such as the Monarch Butterfly. We live in a beautiful part of Canada, known as Eco-region 7E which is an area of Significant Wildlife Habitat.2 Eco-region 7E occupies less than .25% of Canada’s landmass, yet it provides over 40% of Canada’s plant species. There are about 2,200 species of herbaceous plants; 620 are at risk. There are over 150 native trees and shrubs, and over 350 bees in the mixed wood plains and over 30% are unique to Canada. Alien (non-native) plants disrupt natural habitats and landscapes are losing their ability to support bird populations. “2.9 Billion birds are gone since 1970. That’s 60,000,000 per year. There has been devastating losses of birds in every biome.3

The restoration of ecological connectivity is becoming increasingly clear to support diversity, nature and landscape conservation. The origin of the concept of ecological connectivity was identified by Gray Merriam. In 1984, he defined that ecological connectivity describes the ability of organisms to avoid isolation and the extent to which the landscape allows organisms to move between suitable habitats. The ability to reach different plants at different times of the year is vital for many pollinators. “It has now been shown that the connection of semi-natural habitats in urban and agricultural areas through hedges and flower strips influence the direction of movement of bumblebees and thus enable them to bridge through separate, fragmented habitats.”4

There are methods to increase connectivity. Hedge rows, flower borders, wildlife bridges and tunnels have the function of connecting fragmented habitat islands. Zones of manmade habitats, known as refugia, can be created where species can survive in smaller habitat islands. It is important that they are similar to the original natural habitat.

How can we as individuals help build connected habitats? We can create suitable refugia to support native species so greater biodiversity can be achieved. We can plant important pollinator trees such as Serviceberry, Black Cherry, Red Maple, Basswood, Tulip tree, Eastern Redbud. Grass lawns are seen as a desert to many pollinators. We can create mini-habitats in our own yards by planting native gardens. Lawns are a modern invention which began with nobility in Europe in the 18th century. They provide no ecological benefit. There are many resources online to help you create your native garden. We can encourage our municipalities to use public spaces and right-of-ways as habitat networks. As naturalized yards, gardens, green spaces and parks become more commonplace in our communities; these become life-sustaining connected ecosystems.

Resources:
· Native gardening 101 > > https://www.natureconservancy.ca/en/what-we-do/resource-centre/conservation-101/native-gardening-101.html
· Native Trees, Shrubs and other plants > > https://thamesriver.on.ca/watershed-health/native-species/recommended-trees-and-shrubs/
· Plant a rain garden > > https://www.abca.ca/community/raingardens
· Invasive non-native plants > > https://thamesriver.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/Invasive-plants.pdf
· Invasive plants > > https://canadainvasives.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/CCIS-Unwanted-Plant-List_Updated-May-2022.pdf

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3. www.birds.cornell.edu/home/bring-birds-back/
4. blog.3bee.com/en/what-is-ecological-connectivity/

