

Elgin-Middlesex Chapter
Newsletter
March 2023



Fellow OWA members:

One of the real joys of membership in the Ontario Woodlot Association is reading and learning from the articles published in its signature quarterly magazine, **The Ontario Woodlander**. Aply subtitled **Practical Advice for Woodland Life**, it runs to typically 72-or-so full-colour pages, each theme-based issue filled with top-notch articles written by chapter members and forest professionals from across our beautiful Province. The theme of the last issue (*December 2022 issue #109*) was “Perspectives and Memories of our Youth” and focused on members’ adventures and other memories as youngsters exploring woodlands, stressing the importance of getting modern youth away from power outlets and into the Great Outdoors and woodland cabins to learn about Nature and all its glory. By the time you read this newsletter, you should have received the latest issue of **The Ontario Woodlander** (*March 2023 issue #110*) and are no doubt enjoying the articles written on the practical theme “Tools, Technology and Techniques for the Woodlot”. OWA’s communications team has done a remarkable job in raising the reputation of our provincial organization both nationally and internationally and can take much of the credit for the growth in OWA membership. OWA continued to grow throughout the pandemic years, its enthusiastic members producing educational woodland videos (available online) and its many committees conducting meetings by video conferencing. OWA is now at the peak of its game. We are fortunate to have such a vibrant parent organization.

The 2023 Ontario Woodlot Association AGM and conference is scheduled for Tuesday April 25 and Wednesday 26 in Niagara-on-the-Lake. This will be its 30th such event, and it promises to be interesting, informative, and fun, as typical of all OWA events. Full details of the AGM conference have yet to be released, but it will be based at the Niagara College campus near St Catharines. The daytime on Tuesday will be filled with trips to local woodlands. The AGM and dinner on Tuesday evening will take place at the Queenston Heights restaurant adjoining the Brock Memorial. The AGM will likely be live-streamed on Zoom.

News from your Chapter’s Board of Directors: The current Board will undergo some changes in the 2023-2024 year. Stan Caveney will be stepping down as President after four years service and has offered to act as Past-President. Our current Past-President, Ron Casier, has agreed to stand for re-election to the Board as a general member. All other current members of the Board have agreed to stand for re-election for the 2023-2024 year. Our names and contact details are listed overleaf. At present Stan Caveney, Ron Drabick and Gary Austin represent the Middlesex region, and Ron Casier, Greg Greer and Ken Laing represent the Elgin region of our chapter’s coverage. Although the Board composition is geographically well-balanced, there is a strong need for extra members to volunteer to join the Board. If you are interested and have questions please contact Stan at stanleycaveney@gmail.com or Ron at ronjcasier@gmail.com. We will be more than happy to discuss these executive positions with you.

Membership: While our membership remains steady at about 50 individual and family memberships, the age-composition of our membership continues to drift to the right, and we need some younger individuals (aka “new blood”) to join in the chapter. Please continue to urge like-minded woodland enthusiasts like yourselves to join the Elgin-Middlesex Chapter of OWA.

News from our woodland conservation partners:

South West Woodlot Association AGM on March 25, 2023: Our brother chapter in Lambton County has organized its 2023 AGM to take place at the Brooke-Alvinston Inwood Community Centre Complex at 3310 Walnut St in Alvinston, ON for Saturday March 25 1pm – 4pm. Admission is free. More details were given in an announcement emailed to you on March 3. South West routinely has expert speakers on a variety of woodland-related topics and a super selection of door prizes.

Thames Talbot Land Trust: Three naturally wooded properties were donated to the TTLT in 2022, namely Boview Farm in London Township, Wachner Nature Reserve in the Dorchester Swamp, and the Auzins Nature Sanctuary on the Dingman Creek in London (www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca/nature_reserves). The TTLT is currently closing on two forested natural areas, Deer Haven near the Thames River in West Elgin and Ridgeview Wetlands in the Five Points Forest in Southwest Oxford (www.thamestalbotlandtrust.ca/newest_projects). The TTLT now stewards about 2000 acres of natural woodland and wetlands in its area of interest in Middlesex and Elgin counties.

The Canadian Chestnut Council: The CCC has partnered with the OWA "Living Lab" Agroforestry proposal to provide Chestnut trees for carbon sequestering studies, as well for use in silva-pasture and permaculture trials. We are hoping for the successful approval of the OWA's initiative and development of some Elgin-Middlesex participants in the program. A total of 7856 selected nuts from the Blight Resistance Breeding Program were harvested last autumn and stratified over the winter. Currently over 6500 chestnuts recently planted out in the greenhouses are germinating at the Simcoe Research Station. These seedlings will be distributed and planted out on approved sites this autumn through the local conservation authorities as well as for the CCC's Breaking Isolation and Gene Conservation Nut Colony programs. The third generation (F3) back crosses for native blight resistance are progressing well and the first fourth generation (F4) crosses should be made in about 5 years. The F4s are anticipated to be highly resistant to blight and may be released at that time. The DNA analysis program is open to anyone wishing to determine the pedigree of their chestnuts through a submission of a leaf sample. DNA analysis has shown that our Ontario population of native American Chestnut are genetically unique from the chestnut populations in the Appalachian and coastal states. The nearest living relatives to our now identified 'Northwest population' is in the extreme southeast population in Georgia indicating that our population has a different evolutionary and migratory path. The CCC in its efforts to protect and enhance our native Chestnuts under its Stewardship Agreement with the MECP has allied with the Canadian Biotechnology Alliance Network and other American groups to oppose the release of the genetically modified Chestnut known as Darling 58 in the United States and Canada. In 2024, the CCC is planning its regular ten year survey on all known American Chestnuts in the wild or planted to measure a variety of parameters of the tree and its habitat. Analysis from these surveys provides vital data in preserving and restoring the species. Reporting of newly located Chestnuts is an important service to the preservation of the species in Ontario

Forest Day at Orchard Farm, Saturday 6 May 2023: In 2020, the Ontario Woodlot Association launched a program called **Ontario Woodland Appreciation Week** to encourage residents of Ontario to get out and enjoy the beauty of our Spring woodlands. This year our chapter has planned an action-packed outdoor event to celebrate the arrival of Spring. EMWA director Ken Laing has kindly agreed to host a woodland educational event at his family's farm at 45415 Fruit Ridge Line in Central Elgin. The event will run from 10:00 am to 2:30 pm. Demonstrations include the use of (i) draft horses in the woods, (ii) a solar kiln to dry lumber (both by Ken Laing), (iii) comparison of the use of gas vs. electric chain saws (Gary Austin), and (iv) a talk on woodland management, marking and marketing (Greg Greer). Guests will also have the opportunity to walk round the lovely wooded farm. The chapter will cover the lunch costs for members and their families who attend. Catering will be done by Ellen Laing of Killdeer Foods. Catering arrangements require that participants register in advance. Further details will be sent to members in April.

Death announcement: Doug Dennis, founder member of the Elgin-Middlesex Woodlot Owners in 2002 died on 11 September 2022 at age 80. He served as a chapter director for many years and will be sorely missed by many. Doug founded and stewarded over 600 acres of family-owned forest in the Otter Creek valley near Staffordville in Bayham (www.otterriverfarms.ca). Doug was both doyen and mentor to many individuals who are passionate about saving our native Carolinian woodland. In 2010 Doug received a Carolinian Canada Conservation Award for his contribution towards the protection of natural diversity and natural habitat in our area, more specifically for the "good management of the forests on his property". In Doug Dennis's memory, your Board voted unanimously to donate \$500 towards the Ontario Woodlot Association's Champion Donor program. Doug's name will appear in an elite list of Sugar Maple-level donors on OWA's Wall of Champions. (<https://www.ontariowoodlot.com/get-involved/donate>)

See you in the woods,
Stan Caveney,
EMWA president

Please feel free to contact anyone on the executive committee for more information.

Stan Caveney, President, stanleycaveney@gmail.com, 519 472 6103; Ron Casier, Past President, 519 318 5279, roncasier@gmail.com , Ron Drabick, Treasurer, ron.drabick@hotmail.com , 519 671 3649 ; Director Greg Greer (Elgin) gwg.resourcesservices@gmail.com , 519 644 0791; Director Gary Austin (Middlesex) austintundra80@gmail.com , 519 773 5224; Director Ken Laing kmlaing@orchardhillfarm.ca (Elgin).