

**Date & Time:** Saturday October 13 2012, 1:50 - 4:30 pm

**Weather:** Pr 4 mm; RH 57%; BP 102.7 kPa; ovcst; calm; T 10° C

**Activity:** Thames Talbot Work Day

Some walked in, some drove in, ten hardy souls in all, ready to brave the elements for the sake of a better environment. (See IMAGES below) Each of them deserves a medal. We divided into two crews.

The “Line Crew” carried 10 metal stakes and a (very heavy) stake driver over to the east property line to mark the boundary of the Preserve. Jane Bowles, Erin Carroll, Donald Craig, and Bruce Parker braved soaking vegetation and a tramp through the wilds of the Fleming Creek floodplain to drive in the lot markers. Meanwhile, the “trail Crew” (everyone else) headed for the Thames River Trail to refurbish the log liners that define the trail and make it easy to find in the winter months.

Pat stayed in the trailer headquarters, maintaining walkie-talkie communications with the Trail Crew, while setting up for a massive run on hot cider and various treats, from Hermit Cookies to Pinwheels.

The Trail Crew had to be trained in the selection of branches, how to break them (using two adjacent trees) and how to fit them to the trail contours. It rained off and on as we worked, slowly soaking us to the skin -- or close. Susan, our young friend from Kenya, had never seen a walnut before. “What’s this?” Douglas Craig showed her how to remove the hull and continued with a brief but fascinating lecture on walnuts; the English, the Carpathian and the North American Walnut.

All considered, the Trail Crew succeeded in lining approximately 200 metres of trail, much of it consisting of filling the gaps between existing liner logs. Dead branches near the trail are becoming increasingly scarce. We have been using them up faster than they are falling. We must have spent at least half our working time simply searching for suitable branches!

Somehow we got talking about early firearms. Douglas treated us to a lecture on smoothbore muskets, the first rifling of barrels, the straight rifle & the spiral, the Kentucky squirrel gun. Oh! Now I remember. It started with squirrels: Douglas remarked that 300 or so years ago, squirrels used to be so abundant that mass

migrations could be seen in the Appalachians, a “river” of squirrels crossing one’s trail and delaying one’s journey for several minutes. Early settlers could live on squirrels as their main meat source, as long as they had a gun that was accurate enough to pick them off, and so on.

We were on the river bluffs when Susan spotted a tree that was partially gnawed through. “What animal made that?” she wanted to know. It was a live poplar this time, not a dead one, as before. We explained about an animal named “Justin” who was equipped with powerful incisors. Just then Pat’s voice came crackling through the walkie-talkie. “The Line crew is back and the cider is ready!”

We wasted no more time, but beetled back to camp where we learned that the Line Crew had driven some nine or ten stakes along the property line and that Bruce would go in next week to affix the metal signs. The trailer was so crowded with volunteers that three of us had to stand outside to have our cider. Platters of cookies served to replace the expended calories.

The invasive species removal operation had to be canceled owing to the rain. The plant poison called Roundup must be applied to the stem of the Russian Olive (or any woody undesirable) immediately after cutting. Rain would wash the agent away, allowing the tree to resprout the following year.

### **Birds:** (12)

American Crow (LM); American Robin (HBF); Black-capped Chickadee (Tr); Blue Jay (UM); Canada Goose (TR); Common Grackle (BCF); Dark-eyed Junco (GF); European Starling (LM); Gold-crowned Kinglet (GF/E); Mourning Dove (GF); Song Sparrow (LM); White-throated Sparrow (Tr);

**Note on Warblers:** Many of us saw warblers and other birds flitting about the Lower Meadow, but nobody was willing (or able?) to ID them in the rain.

**Phenology:** first winter birds show up: juncos and white-throats

**Blue Ash Info:** Donald Craig explored the West Ravine some time ago and meant to tell us that he had found a dozen mature and semi-mature Blue Ash growing along the top of the west ravine at the west property line. They are not a particularly common tree.

### **IMAGES:**



Fall colours invade the Regeneration Zone as the volunteers line up for this image (from left to right): Susan Tepbcmoi (Env. Sci. student), Pat Dewdney (Co-chair Stewards Committee), Douglas Craig (Geographer), Ron Martin (Chemist), Erin Carroll (Biologist and Organizer), Quentin Lang (TTLT Board), Bruce Parker (LHSC Nurse), Donald Craig (Forester), Jane Bowles (Botanist & TTLT Property Mgr.) + Kee Dewdney on other side of camera.