

SWWA Information Day and Bus Tour - Part 2

After lunch, the bus travelled on to the Warner Wildlife and Nature Preserve near Grand Bend. This is a 55 acre property which includes mature Pine-Oak Forest, a Forest Restoration Planting (Spring 2022), and Arboretum (Spring 2023). Owner Peter Warner is in the process of donating this property, which he and his late wife developed and managed, to the Huron Tract Land Trust Conservancy, with the purpose of providing a facility for outdoor education. Ian Jean described their recent restoration plantings, as participants walked the area. Species planted to match with soil types and drainage include White Pine, Red Cedar, Red Oak, White Oak, Black Cherry, Bitternut Hickory, Sugar Maple, Tulip, White Cedar, Walnut, Bur Oak, Sycamore, White Birch, Shagbark Hickory, Shellbark Hickory, and Tamarack. The Arboretum area includes some of these species, plus Pawpaw, River Birch, Blue Beech, Northern Pecan, Catalpa, Hackberry, Redbud, Yellowwood, Pagoda Dogwood, Flowering Dogwood, Kentucky Coffee, Butternut, Ironwood, White Spruce, Swamp White Oak, Ashworth Bur Oak, Eastern White Cedar, and Basswood.



Nannyberries at the Warner Wildlife and Nature Preserve, spotted as we walked to the plantation sites.

Owner, Peter Warner (foreground) looks on as Ian Jean talks about the plantations.





Before leaving the Warner site, James Corcoran, (pictured) owner of Hoanaadia Native Plant Nursery, spoke to us about his business, specifically his experience propagating Hemlocks, and showed us examples of various sized specimens.

Two points of interest were noted on the next leg of our journey: First, the Mahon Tract, a 100 acre property on Corbett Line between CREDITON and Kirkton Rds. Red and White pine were planted in 1961, and have been thinned three times -1999, 2010, 2020. Secondly, Ian Jean described the Integrated Water and Climate Monitoring Station near Parkhill, measuring surface and groundwater quality and quantity, meteorological conditions, and soil conditions.



Olyvia Foster, Communications Coordinator for the Ontario Woodlot Association (OWA) and Sionaid Eggert, Field Operations Coordinator for the OWA, participated in the tour, and spoke to riders about membership in the OWA



Donald Craig, SWWA Bus Trip coordinator (left) with Phil Austin and Ian Jean. This wheeled vehicle was devised by the Austins to move Cedar logs from the tightly spaced plantation. Phil demonstrated their diameter measuring device, shown in his hand.

Lastly, we were welcomed to the farm of Phil and Gary Austin, and shown their 60 year old cedar and white pine plantations. The brothers have been harvesting cedar logs for several years, notably supplying Ska-Nah-Doht Village and Museum on Longwoods Road, for their palisade and longhouse. Walnuts planted (mostly) by squirrels in their pine plantations are being managed for veneer logs.

It is said that a walk in the woods has several benefits for mind and body, among them the lowering of the stress hormone cortisol. This theory was tested during our last stop of the day when a softer than expected laneway into the Austin farm bogged down our bus. And, then it started raining! Perseverance and patience on the part of our driver and his load of passengers prevailed. Phil and Gary hooked up their little Ford tractor, dwarfed by the big bus, but surprisingly up for the job; several riders chipped in, pushing from the back or carrying shovels of gravel for traction, and we were finally on our way back to our starting location at Warwick Conservation Area.



Please see below: “*Tree Planting Over 117 Years*”, by forester Donald Craig, SWWA board member and organizer of the tour. This article summarizes the changes over time in forest restoration theory, as shown throughout the course of our most interesting day.