



MISSISSIPPI MADAWASKA LAND TRUST CONSERVANCY

Official Newsletter

December 2013

NATURE'S BOUNTY AT HIGH LONESOME NATURE RESERVE

by Ken Spicer



First, this photo illustrating “abundance” calls for an explanation. One Thanksgiving Day at High Lonesome I was preparing to return home to enjoy turkey dinner when Charlie Chipmunk approached for his customary treat of corn. Compared to what awaited me at home, a handful of corn for my pal was rather embarrassing so an appropriate feast for Charlie was offered and readily accepted.

For other furred and feathered citizens of High Lonesome, 2013 has been a year of plenty with adequate rainfall and warm weather conducive to healthy growth of a variety of vegetation which will be of focus here.

The crop of acorns produced by impressive red oaks scattered about the property has been outstanding: deer, bears, racoons, squirrels, turkeys, blue jays, grouse, wood ducks and our chipmunk friends all benefit. Ironwood and hop-hornbeam seed production has never been greater in the past several years which will please the grouse and various songbirds.

According to records in the local taxation office, the first apple tree was planted here in the early 1880's and the veteran proudly standing in the back lawn may be the original planting. At present more than three dozen trees are yielding a considerable variety of apples – large, small, ruby red, green, sweet and not-so-sweet.

Hopefully the bears will be satisfied with lower fruit and resist pulling down the higher branched resulting in some damage as in past. As you pass near a tree you may notice deer have also passed this way and left behind partially eaten apples, a popular treat for them and turkeys as well. Even the enterprising evening grosbeaks have been known to chip away the flesh of apples to expose the seed which they prize.

It has been written that bitternut hickory kernels are only eaten by squirrels as a last resort but local red squirrels have apparently not been so advised. Along the North Wind trail and out at the gate our always busy red friends have been particularly active, even with other food sources available. Of course we prefer this wood to smoke hams and bacon because it imparts a distinctive flavour, or so the market advertises. And who could miss the long clusters of ash seed everywhere, persisting long after the leaves have fallen? Turkeys, grouse and songbirds such as grosbeaks and finches feed on ash seed so there should be many fat tummies this year.

Conifers, sumac and basswood, wild grape, raspberry, thimbleberry, wintergreen, holly winterberry and many other trees, shrubs, sedges and vines have contributed buds, fruit and seed sufficient to satisfy all creatures and in addition, the beaver pond attracted not only the principle resident plus otters, ducks and geese but also an occasional deer or porcupine seeking variety to their menu. Water lilies are not just a pretty flower and along with a wide variety of aquatic plants, provide a valuable source of food for many animals and birds.

While we focused on the abundance of plant food sources, the predators like the weasel who ate the snake who gobbled up the frog who dined on the damselfly who devoured the mosquito, continue to play an important role in the balance of nature but all creatures benefit from the explosive growing season as observed at High Lonesome Nature Reserve in 2013.

OTF Grant, Year 1 Achievements

MMLTC has just completed its first year of a two-year \$74,800 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation. In Year 1, we have achieved some key goals:

- Fundraising: established the Sustainers Circle of 11 key donors so far to provide stability to our operations.
- Memberships: almost doubled our memberships.
- Communications: improved our public profile through an expanded website, a Facebook page and frequent news articles. Stay tuned for our new website in early 2014!
- Volunteer Engagement: established a Volunteer Program, defined job descriptions and started a training program.
- Partnership Development: established a Public Access Policy to open our properties to organized groups; worked together in mutual support with a growing circle of community organizations.

Spirit of Christmas

by Howard Clifford

How often have we said, "I just don't know what to get them." Searching for that "just right" gift for a special occasion can be challenging. A gift that captures something of their spirit and essence. When we think of many of our friends don't we often associate them with their love of the outdoors and their passion for nature? What could be a more appropriate gift than a donation in their name to MMLTC? A gift that protects that which they hold most dear.

The spirit of giving is never higher than during the Christmas season. It is a wonderful time! On behalf of the MMLTC Board of Directors, I wish you the peace, joy and soul-satisfying experiences commensurate with the highest ideals of this season.



LANARK WILD FOOD CLUB (LWFC)

by Howard Clifford

It is hard to believe a club that has become so popular has only been in operation for two years. Its first outing led by Chad Clifford at cliffLAND took place on February 26, 2012, followed by a second trip led by Howard Clifford in March and then foraging walks by Peter Fischl, Erik Kafriksen, Bill Barrett, Sebastian Degand, Martha Weber, and Ted Mosquin. The year climaxed with a marvelous wild food dinner in which just over \$4000 was raised on behalf of MMLTC.

I am told the idea was born in the kitchen of Barb Gibson in conversation with Glen Drover, joined in later by Peter Fischl. A number of interested people were then invited to a sampling of wild food at Barb's home. Jean and I were among this initial group who gave it a decided thumbs up. Peter called a follow-up meeting to see if there was interest in forming a foraging club. Peter, Glen, Chris Delage and myself met and it became the founding meeting. MMLTC was chosen as the charity the club would support.

This was a perfect marriage. MMLTC, more so than most land trusts, embraced the concept that humans are part of Nature and have an inbred need for Nature experiences. Chris continues to this day to be an engaged supporter but didn't wish to be a director. Barb Gibson and Erik Kafriksen agreed to join Glen and myself as directors.

2013 was another year of wonderful foraging outings. However we did experience growing pains and faced a number of challenges which could have defeated the less resolute. In fact it was touch and go as to whether we would be able to pull off another successful wild food dinner. I am so proud of how Barb, Glen, Peter and a number of talented dedicated supporters rallied together.

And pull it off they did! A sold out dinner! Our chef, Matt Brearley, with the able help of other talented people presented us with an amazing presentation of wild food. Everyone I spoke to said how much they enjoyed the evening.

Wow! Under pressure and trying conditions a huge donation of another \$4000 donated to MMLTC. Unless you are directly involved, it is hard to realize the impact a gift of \$4000 has on a small Nature-based organization like ours and how grateful we are. It means so much to us to have the ongoing support of the LWFC. I can tell you that a donation like this can literally mean the difference in whether or not we can acquire a new wilderness property. I think all who contributed can be very proud that their support makes the preserving of wonderful wilderness areas possible. What a legacy we leave our children.

*Howard Clifford
receives \$4000
donation from
LWFC President
Peter Fischl*

