

# 2024 Ontario Invasive Plant Council Conference

(As of January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024)

## FINDING a BALANCE

### Agenda

**Date** Thursday, January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024

**Time** 9:00am-5:00pm EST

**Location** *Virtually hosted on Remo.co (Registration required at <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/736337223457?aff=oddtcreator> )*

**Theme:** The theme for this year's conference is: **Finding a Balance**. We will examine the importance of finding a balanced approach to invasive species management by considering different perspectives, management approaches, and goals. The conference will encourage people to broaden their perspectives and cooperate to find a balance towards healthy ecosystems and biodiversity in a changing climate. There will be opportunities to explore strategies, programs, and partnerships. This can lead to an integrated and balanced approach towards the management of invasive species.

### Schedule

Time (EST)	Speaker	Notes
9:00am	<b>System Opens</b>	
9:00am	<b>Morning Mix and Mingle</b>	
9:30am	<b>Brandon Williamson</b> , President Ontario Invasive Plant Council <b>Vicki Simkovic</b> Ontario Invasive Plant Council	Welcome & Introduction
9:45am	<b>Mary Lou and Dan Smoke</b> Celebrated Indigenous Elders and knowledge holders	Opening Prayer
10:00am	<b>Emily Mitchell</b> Ontario Invasive Plant Council	Remo How-to
10:10am	<b>Brandon Williamson</b> , President Ontario Invasive Plant Council <b>Vicki Simkovic</b> Ontario Invasive Plant Council	Ontario Invasive Plant Council Program Updates

10:30am	Working Together to Act on Invasive Wild Pigs in Canada	Speaker: <i>Gabby Nichols, Canadian Council on Invasive Species</i>
10:45am	<b>Tom Hilditch</b> Founder and President, Colucent Environmental Inc.	Keynote Speaker – Finding Balance in a Changing World
11:45am	<b>LUNCH BREAK</b>	
<b>Finding a Balance –Comprehensive Invasive Species Management in Ontario</b>		
12:30pm	Youth Nature Keepers - Empowering Youth for Environmental Change	Speakers: <i>Fel Castañeda, National Supervisor, Canadian Council on Invasive Species</i>
1:10pm	Credit Valley Conservation’s Invasive Species Strategy	Speaker: <i>Lee Merrill, Credit Valley Conservation</i>
1:30pm	Indigenous-led Land Restoration in Toronto's High Park: Rebalancing Relations through Indigenous Leadership	Speakers: <i>Rebecca Beaulne-Stuebing and Jane Blake, 440 Parkside Collective</i>
1:50pm	Reviewing and Renewing the Ontario Invasive Species Strategic Plan (2012)	Speaker: <i>Bree Walpole, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry</i>
2:10pm	<b>BREAK</b>	
<b>Concurrent Sessions Finding a Balance – Targeted Invasive Species Management</b>		
2:20pm	<b>Emily Mitchell</b> Ontario Invasive Plant Council	How-to for concurrent sessions
	<b>Concurrent Session 1 – Targeted Invasive Plant Management</b>	<b>Concurrent Session 2 – Targeted Invasive Plant Management</b>
2:30pm	Mobilizing the Community Through a Coordinated Response to Invasive Himalayan Balsam <i>Derissa Vincentini, Invasive Species Centre</i>	Improving Oak Wilt Management Through Research on Beetle Vector Ecology <i>Violet Butterwort, Ontario Forest Research Institute, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry</i>
2:50pm	Woodland Angelica- Add This Plant to Your Watch List <i>Susan Ellis, Friends of Second Marsh</i>	Spot it? Snap it, Catch it, Report It! Prepare to Meet the Spotted Lanternfly <i>Hannah Fraser, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs</i>
3:10pm	Kudzu Control In Southern Ontario <i>Nancy Cain, Cain Vegetation Inc.</i>	Mysterysnails Management & Removal Program: The Past Three Years in Review – <i>Robert McGowan, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters</i>
3:30pm	<b>BREAK</b>	
<b>Finding a Balance – Ontario and Beyond!</b>		
3:40pm	Managing Invasive Species in a Construction Setting and Protection of Species at Risk (SAR) Habitat	Speakers: <i>Lindsay Bennett, Tyler Oglan, Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority and Bridging North America</i>
4:00pm	Finding Balance: Prioritizing New & Emerging Invasive Plants	Speaker: <i>Michelle Beloskur, Midwest Invasive Plant Network</i>
4:20pm	<b>Brandon Williamson</b> , President Ontario Invasive Plant Council <b>Emily Mitchell</b> Ontario Invasive Plant Council	Interactive discussion & closing remarks
4:35pm	Evening Mix and Mingle	
5:00pm	Event Closes	

## KEYNOTE SPEAKER



**Tom Hilditch, Founder and President, Colucent Environmental Inc.**

Tom's career is rooted in the study and understanding of botany and vegetated landscapes in Ontario. He has completed field surveys of thousands of hectares of natural areas in this province. During his 42-year consulting career, Tom has worked in the areas of impact assessment, mitigation planning and ecological planning and design. He has developed specialized expertise with Species at Risk legislation, policies, guidelines and permitting processes.

From 2016 to 2020, Tom served as the Environmental Stewardship Commissioner on behalf of Henvey Inlet, Magnetawan and Shawanaga First Nations in Ontario, during the construction of a 300 MW renewable wind energy facility. He worked closely with First Nations Chiefs, Councils, and community members as he oversaw the significant energy project, understanding and bridging perspectives amongst the federal government, private sector proponents and First Nations.

Tom currently serves as the Chair of the Ontario Biodiversity Council. He also chairs Ontario's Committee on the Status of Species at Risk in Ontario (COSSARO). Tom serves on the Board of Directors of the Anishinabek/Ontario Fisheries Resources (A/OFR). He is a well-regarded environmental expert, a speaker and a published author.

## Finding Balance in a Changing World

We continue to face unusual and trying times. Within a landscape that seems to be pushed beyond sustainability, invasive species are a persistent and disturbing threat. We face that threat together, as funds and resources seem perpetually inadequate to address the task at hand. In this world of geopolitical disruption, viral threats, social unrest and an abundance of anger, balance seems more elusive than ever.

With unprecedented challenges come new opportunities, that will depend upon our ability to work with trust and deep respect with all sectors and peoples in Ontario. Our ability to think beyond traditional approaches and our ability to attract more resources from unexpected places, will hasten our collective success.

Tom will share how we can listen more closely to our post glacial landscapes and be open to the lessons that nature teaches us. He will reflect on his 43 years of professional botanical and ecological experiences and share ideas about how to move forward differently and constructively. His presentation will also highlight Ontario's renewed Biodiversity Strategy, issued in May 2023. That Strategy helps us take actions that will benefit biodiversity and will help us make optimal decisions about managing and controlling invasive plant species.

## SPEAKERS



### Gabby Nichols, Canadian Council on Invasive Species

Gabby is the Project Coordinator at the Canadian Council on Invasive Species (CCIS) and works to build partnerships and collaborate with organizations across Canada to develop messaging and resources to support the implementation of six national behaviour change campaigns. Gabby joined the CCIS in the spring of 2020, bringing her multi-sector experience of environmental stewardship and education from previous roles in the provincial government, municipal government, and non-profit sector. Gabby holds a Masters of Environment and Sustainability from the University of Western Ontario, and a Bachelor's of Bio-Resource Management from the University of Guelph. Gabby lives in Guelph, the ancestral homelands of the Anishinaabek Peoples, specifically the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, where she enjoys spending time walking trails with her partner and dog.

## Working Together to Act on Invasive Wild Pigs in Canada

The Canadian Council on Invasive Species has been working with partners in Canada and across North America to support efforts to stop the spread of a particularly cumbersome and threatening invasive species – wild pigs. Wild pigs are considered a “One Health” issue due to their diverse impacts to Canada including destruction of habitat and cropland and their ability to transmit disease to livestock, wildlife, and humans among other threats. Due to the diverse impacts to multiple sectors, communities, and ecosystems across Canada, collaboration is essential to stopping the spread of this species. This presentation will provide a brief overview of the many collaborative initiatives being undertaken by CCIS and partners to tackle this issue.

## FINDING A BALANCE– COMPREHENSIVE INVASIVE PLANT MANAGEMENT

Speakers: Fel Castañeda, National Supervisor, Canadian Council on Invasive Species



## Youth Nature Keepers - Empowering Youth for Environmental Change





### Lee Merrill, Credit Valley Conservation

Lee Merrill is the Coordinator, Terrestrial Restoration at Credit Valley Conservation and is responsible for coordinating the Invasive Species Management and Habitat Structure Programs at CVC. His team manages control of terrestrial and wetland invasive species and the construction and installation of habitat structures such as bird and bat boxes. He received his Graduate Certificate in Ecosystem Restoration at Niagara College following his B.A. in Biology from Wilfrid Laurier University. His career has included extensive boots on the ground experience pertaining to invasive species management and habitat restoration using a wide variety of control strategies. He plays a crucial role in planning and overseeing actions of CVC's Invasive Species Management Program, following the guidance of CVC's Invasive Species Strategy.

### Credit Valley Conservation's Invasive Species Strategy

Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) has been a regional leader in invasive species management since the creation of their Invasive Species Management Program over 15 years ago. In 2009, CVC created the first iteration of their Invasive Species Strategy. It provided goals, objectives, and a framework for invasive species management within the watershed. In 2020, CVC released an updated Invasive Species Strategy to guide CVC's continued invasive species management activities over the next 10 years in alignment with current organizational goals. In this presentation, Lee Merrill will summarize CVC's current Invasive Species Strategy focusing on its guiding principals, objectives, and actions. Additionally, he will provide insight into how the strategy is being implemented three years in to its adoption.



### Bree Walpole, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry

Bree Walpole is a Senior Policy Advisor with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. She has a background in conservation biology and has worked across various program areas including Ontario Parks, Species at Risk and most recently Biodiversity and Invasive Species. She is currently leading work to update the Ontario Invasive Species Strategic Plan.

### Reviewing and Renewing the Ontario Invasive Species Strategic Plan (2012)

In 2012, the [Ontario Invasive Species Strategic Plan](#) was developed to provide provincial direction and commitments on addressing the risk of invasive species. The 2012 plan is guided by overarching goals to prevent, detect, respond, manage and adapt to invasive species. Recently, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry undertook and published a review of progress on the plan - [The Ontario Invasive Species Strategic Plan: Review of Progress \(2012-2022\)](#). The review found that many milestones and significant achievements both within government and by partners have been achieved over the last ten years. It also revealed that despite these successes, invasive species still present significant risks and continued action is needed to address ongoing gaps and challenges. In response to this review, we are initiating a renewal of the 2012 plan. The renewed plan will build on the experiences of the previous ten years by providing updated provincial direction and commitments. This presentation will provide an overview of the review of progress and will introduce the plan renewal.



## FINDING A BALANCE – TARGETED INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT

### CONCURRENT SESSION 1 – FINDING A BALANCE – TARGETED INVASIVE PLANT MANAGEMENT



**Derissa Vincentini, Invasive Species Centre**

Derissa Vincentini is the Community Science Coordinator and GIS Lead with the ISC where she coordinates invasive species education and outreach initiatives, promoting community action to mitigate the introduction and spread of invasive species in Canada. She also plays a supporting role in many other projects using her GIS skills to collect geospatial data for understanding the extent of priority invasive species on the landscape. Derissa has a background as a Forest Research Technician and an undergraduate degree in Biology as well as a certificate in Geomatics from Algoma University.

### Mobilizing the Community Through a Coordinated Response to Invasive Himalayan Balsam

The Invasive Species Centre teamed up with local organizations to tackle the growing Himalayan balsam population in Sault Ste. Marie by educating the public on identification, prevention, reporting and management. The goal of this city-wide Himalayan Balsam Community Project was to inspire and encourage the community to get involved in protecting their local environment against invasive species. With funding and support from the City of Sault Ste Marie, the team consisting of Non-Governmental Organizations and post-secondary institutions planned a summer of public pulls, outreach activities, contests and coordinated outreach. A multifaceted approach to marketing and advertising was used to achieve increased exposure and recruit volunteers for the project. By working together, this project achieved more than the sum of individual organization efforts would have achieved working separately. This resulted in successfully hosting seven public pull events with additional individual efforts, increased community member reports and increased awareness of not only Himalayan balsam but many other invasive species within the area. This presentation will discuss the successes and lessons learned from the first year of the pilot project and how similar projects could be implemented in other areas.



**Susan Ellis, Friends of Second Marsh**

Susan Ellis is a retired Project Engineer and Innovation Specialist. She is also a longtime volunteer with Friends of Second Marsh and for the last four years, a member of their Board of Directors. In 2023, Susan became the Lead Steward for the Friends of Second Marsh Plant Stewardship Subcommittee.

## Woodland Angelica- Add This Plant to Your Watch List

Populations of Woodland Angelica in Nova Scotia are overwhelming natural landscapes. This dominant introduced plant is present in Quebec and Ontario. Under management at isolated areas in Mclaughlin Bay Wildlife Reserve by Friends of Second Marsh (FSM), we are beginning to see positive signs of plant management actions. After planned management in 2024, FSM will be ready to draft a guideline for small scale manual management procedures for 1st and 2nd year plants. These techniques might also be effective on other similar plant species like Wild Parsnip. We expect better proof of efficacy by 2025. It is never too soon to look for and manage emerging colonies. We look forward to share what we have learned.



### Nancy Cain, Cain Vegetation Inc.

Nancy Cain is a landscape horticulturist, ISA certified arborist and a vegetation management and pest control specialist. Extensive experience in landscape establishment and management of native plant communities including environmental impacts on plants. She carries out pesticide efficacy and crop tolerance research trials as well as consulting in control of invasive weeds and IPM approaches for pest control.

## Kudzu Control in Southern Ontario

A lakeside bank in southern Ontario was planted with a thick cover of Kudzu. This was the only stand of this weed in Canada. Kudzu is a serious, invasive weed and has invaded about 3,000,000 ha of land in the United States. The plant has perennial stolons that root at the nodes and viny stems with leaves that resemble large soybean leaves. These perennial stems can grow to Each crown puts down deep roots and a narrow tuber that can grow to 180 km and diameters of 18 cm. The viny stems (both new stems and leafy stems wrap around any woody growth and the plants cover trees of any size, shading the leaves and pulling trees and shrubs down. A program of control was developed for control of kudzu on this site. Over a 9 year period which will culminate in 2024 the site has been cleared of kudzu and replanted to prairie plants and shrubs including staghorn sumac and red osier dogwood. This presentation will discuss the biology and threat of this plant and the progress of control on a challenging sloped site over the last decade.

## CONCURRENT SESSION 2 – FINDING A BALANCE – TARGETED INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT



**Dr. Violet Butterworth, Ontario Forest Research Institute, Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry**

Dr. Violet Butterworth is a Forest Health Researcher with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry. Her work includes studies on the detection, invasion potential, and ecology of insects/fungi. In her current role she performs forest pathology diagnostics for Ontario and conducts research on tree diseases like oak wilt.

### Improving Oak Wilt Management Through Research on Beetle Vector Ecology

In 2023, oak wilt was detected for the first time in Canada. The disease can spread when spores of an invasive fungal pathogen, *Bretziella fagacearum*, are moved by Nitidulidae beetles from recently killed trees to newly wounded oaks. There are more than a hundred Nitidulidae species in Canada. Information about vector competency and behavior are needed to adopt management and detection strategies. Beetle flight activity was recorded in Canada from 2018 to 2023 using artificial tree wounds and flight traps. Twenty-one species of Nitidulidae visited oak wounds but only three species made 80% of visits to new wounds, which are critical for infection to occur. The three species were *Carpophilus sayi*, *Colopterus truncatus*, and *Epuraea avara*. Flight of *C. truncatus* and *C. sayi* mostly occurred from April to July 31st whereas flight activity of *E. avara* continued into late summer. Preliminary evidence suggests that the risk of oak wilt infection is low prior to bud break because beetles aren't visiting wounds. The highest risk occurs between bud break and July 31st when all three suspect vectors are actively flying and visiting wounds, and host tree susceptibility to infection is greatest due to early wood development. Risk decreases after July as flight activity decreases for two of the three suspect vectors. These research findings have provided essential information to aid in oak wilt detection and management.



**Hannah Fraser, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs**

Hannah Fraser is the Entomologist - Horticulture with the Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs. One of her key roles involves preparing for and responding to emerging pest issues in horticulture crops, including invasive insect species in Ontario. Hannah is a member of the National Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) Technical Advisory Committee and its associated Working Groups. She is involved in OMAFRA early detection efforts for SLF, including targeted surveillance and outreach.

### Spot it? Snap it, Catch it, Report It! Prepare to Meet the Spotted Lanternfly

Spotted lanternfly is an invasive sap-feeding planthopper native to China with the potential to harm agriculture and forestry in Ontario. First identified in Pennsylvania in 2014, this pest has undergone rapid range expansion throughout much of the mid-Atlantic and surrounding states, including those bordering the province of Ontario. Spotted lanternfly attacks various agricultural crops, landscape ornamentals and hardwood trees. The grape and wine sector in Ontario



are at high risk due to direct injury to grapevines, as these are one of the insects' preferred agricultural hosts. Learn about spotted lanternfly, including its biology, identification, and what can be done to support early detection and rapid response.



### Robert McGowan, Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters

Robert's passion for the outdoors has led him to a career in the environmental field. For the past ten years, Robert has worked as the Aquatic Project Specialist at the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters where he is working with the Water Soldier Working Group to monitor and control invasive water soldier populations on the Trent-Severn Waterway, Red Horse Lake, Black River, and private ponds across Ontario.

Previous to that, Robert gained valuable experience while employed with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, Credit Valley Conservation, Trent University, and Fleming College.

### Mysterysnails Management & Removal Program: The Past Three Years in Review

In 2021, the Invading Species Awareness Program (ISAP) partnered with the Coalition of Haliburton Property Owners' Associations to create the Mysterysnail Management and Removal Program. The program has focused on managing two species of invasive mysterysnails: banded (*Viviparus georgianus*) and Chinese (*Cipangopaludina chinensis*). The goals of the program have primarily focused on increasing education about these two species of invasive snails and providing shoreline owners with the agency to instill change via action.

### FINDING A BALANCE – ONTARIO AND BEYOND!



### Lindsay Bennett, Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority and Bridging North America

Lindsay Bennett is the Manager, Environmental for the Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority, a not-for-profit Canadian Crown Corporation responsible for the delivery of the Gordie Howe International Bridge project. Before joining WDBA in 2017, Lindsay contributed to the Ecological Assessment of Long Point Bay, invasive Phragmites control pilot research in Rondeau Bay and private land stewardship across southwestern Ontario. Lindsay uses her background in conservation to mitigate construction impacts on the environment.



### **Tyler Oglan, Bridging North America**

Tyler Oglan is an environmental specialist with 10 years of experience in both the construction and automotive industries. He has led environmental monitoring programs on several large-value infrastructure projects, and is currently the Environmental Monitoring Manager for the Gordie Howe International Bridge project. Tyler has a strong knowledge of the Species at Risk Act, the Endangered Species Act, the Migratory Bird Convention Act, the Provincial Policy Statement, and municipal guidance documents as they apply to the natural environment in both rural and urban settings. He has experience using a combination of background research, geographic information services, and site investigations to identify habitat and constraints.

### **Managing Invasive Species in a Construction Setting and Protection of Species at Risk (SAR) Habitat**

Windsor-Detroit Bridge Authority (WDBA) is a not-for-profit Canadian Crown corporation responsible for delivery of the Gordie Howe International Bridge project through a public-private partnership (P3). We are responsible for overseeing our P3 partner, Bridging North America (BNA), through construction and operation of the new crossing. The Gordie Howe International Bridge project is North America's largest bi-national infrastructure project valued at \$5.7 billion (CDN). It includes the delivery of four major components – the longest cable-stayed bridge and largest US and Canadian ports of entry (POE) along the Canada-US border as well as a connection into the Michigan Interstate system. Canadian components of the project fall under the Bridge to Strengthen Trade Act (BSTA). The Act required plans to be developed and updated for each phase of the project with specific deliverables, including species at risk management and invasive species control. The plans outline mitigation and protection measures that have been established across project sites to address sensitive habitat and minimize impacts while constructing and operating a large and busy international border crossing. WDBA and BNA are committed to protecting the environment both on and adjacent to the project site. Black Oak Heritage Park, located south of the project, is a natural area of land with one of the largest stands of Black Oak Savanna in Ontario – one of the most endangered habitats in Canada. Invasive species management, specifically invasive Phragmites, has proven to be challenging on such a complex infrastructure project. In response, a diverse management approach and control program have been implemented to limit the spread of invasive species and protect/enhance the ecological integrity of adjacent natural habitat.



### **Michelle Beloskur, Midwest Invasive Plant Network**

Michelle joined the Midwest Invasive Plant Network in 2022 as the full time Coordinator, responsible for facilitating invasive species information sharing and collaboration across the Midwest. Michelle is also a co-Director of the Public Gardens as Sentinels against Invasive Plants initiative and the Administrator for the Upper Midwest Invasive Species Conference. Prior to joining MIPN, Michelle was the Executive Director of the Ingham Conservation District in Michigan and spearheaded and supervised the Mid-Michigan Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA). Her background also includes experience in environmental research and regulation. Michelle holds a B.S in Biology from the University of Michigan and an M.S. in Environmental Geoscience from Michigan State University.

## Finding Balance: Prioritizing New & Emerging Invasive Plants

Invasive species prioritization changes as new species arrive on the scene and/or begin to spread rapidly in a region. Organizations that conduct outreach and management of invasive species are faced with the challenge of how to adjust their messaging and focus with each new introduction. This presentation will share MIPN approach to identifying and communicating about new and emerging invasive plants as well as resources that are available to aid early detection.

### OUR SPONSORS



A banner for the "Finding a Balance 2024" event. The left side has a light green background with a pattern of leaves and the text "FINDING a BALANCE" in large, green, serif font, with "2024" below it. To the right of "2024" is "OIPC &amp; OPWG CONFERENCES". Below this are logos for the "ONTARIO INVASIVE PLANT COUNCIL" and the "ONTARIO PHRAGMITES WORKING GROUP". The right side of the banner has a dark green background with the text "THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!" in large, light green, sans-serif font.