



Cardinal in snowfall. Photo by J. Dillon & J. Moser

FEATURE

Taryn WoodnoteSaberwing dishes on this year's organic veggie output for local food banks



Organic veggies donated to local food banks. Photo by T. WoodnoteSaberwing

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A boost in organic veggie output

By Taryn WoodnoteSaberwing, Property, Facility & Garden Coordinator

As the weather gets colder and we put the gardens at *rare* to bed for the winter, it is nice to look back on the growing season and reflect.

If you visited Springbank Community Gardens this summer you may have noticed that the Food Bank Garden underwent a significant transformation. In the spring, the garden site experienced a remodel and expansion. The purpose of this remodel was to make the gardens more user-friendly and organised for the many hard working volunteers who are the driving force behind the garden's success. We reclaimed a large area that had been fallow for two years, added a brand new garden section, and built all new garden beds. This initial labour intensive project was a team effort between garden staff and volunteer groups from Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada and Wilfrid Laurier University. But the hard work didn't end there, throughout the season the gardens hosted over 16 volunteer groups from local corporations and organisations and weekly support from a wide variety of other community volunteers.

This season, our Food Bank Garden developed an even closer relationship with the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank with their Co-op Program. Co-op participants joined us in the garden weekly from June until October to help with planting, weeding, watering and harvesting. Pat Singleton, Executive Director of the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank remarks, "probably one of the truly amazing things of this partnership has been the opportunity it has allowed a number of our participants, and in particular our seniors, to gather with others from the community to socialise, share skills and support each other while growing together."

Despite some gardening challenges this season, such as insect pests and drought-like conditions, the gardens flourished. We harvested and donated a total of **6,708 pounds** of fresh, organic produce to the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank and the Food Bank of Waterloo Region – almost triple the amount of our previous record! We would like to extend a sincere, heart-felt "Thank You!" to everyone who

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A boost in organic veggie output

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The team at Grosche International helped tend the Food Bank Garden at *rare*. Photo by T. WoodnoteSaberwing

contributed to the garden's success this year, including the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank and Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada.

As we look forward to the next growing season, we hope for more positive changes and continued growth. The Food Bank Garden is not just a wonderful place for plant growth, but also personal growth while helping those in need within our local community.

If you would like to volunteer in the Food Bank Garden at *rare* in 2017, please contact our Community Stewardship Coordinator Cheyanne Richardson at 519-650-9336 x. 126 or cheyanne.richardson@raresites.org.

Springbank Community Garden plot rentals coming soon – keep an eye out for online registration starting in February, or contact Garden Coordinator Taryn at 519-650-9336 x. 115 or taryn.woodnotesaberwing@raresites.org for more details.



Bobolink. Photo by J. Dillon & J. Moser

The return of Bobolinks

By Alissa Fraser, Conservation Ecology Intern

It is winter, but soon spring will be upon us and with it the Bobolink (*Dolichonyx oryzivorus*) will return to *rare*. In early May, male Bobolinks arrive in our open meadows, pastures and hayfields and begin their territorial song and dance. Wearing their black and white feathers like backwards tuxedos, they sing their long bubbly tune mixed with sharp metallic notes and fly in helicopter-like circles.

According to the Government of Canada, before the 1960s this was a common sight, but over the last 40 years there has been an estimated global population decline of 88 per cent due to threats such as farm machinery, habitat loss and fragmentation, exposure to pesticide, nest predation and bird control at wintering roosts. Bobolinks

have been deemed threatened by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) since 2010. Over 25 per cent of the global population breeds in Canada. Due to the loss of their natural habitat of grassland and prairie, Bobolinks have adapted to agricultural plots which provide open areas for their ground nests and the insects and seeds that make up their diet. Unfortunately, while providing suitable breeding habitat, typical hay harvesting practices can result in a 94 per cent mortality rate of eggs and nestlings.

In order to combat this problem, *rare* has taken steps to improve Bobolink habitat. In 2007, our 34.2 acre South Field West property was planted with a combination of hay and grassland species. This was part of a research project investigating the vegetative composition and hayfield management regime needed for the maintenance of grassland bird populations. Harvest times are delayed until mid-July, after fledging has occurred. Bobolink

breeding was first observed in 2013, with as many as 60 individuals using the habitat during breeding season in years since.

Volunteer bird monitors have also recorded successful nesting and fledging of another threatened songbird, the Eastern Meadowlark, since 2014. Due to the success of this project, *rare* decided to expand the habitat by converting the 27.7 acre South Field East (SFE) property into Bobolink habitat in the spring of 2016. A small portion of SFE will also be used to host an artificial nesting habitat for Bank Swallows – another threatened songbird. The Habitat Stewardship Program (HSP) for Species at Risk has provided three years of funding for habitat enhancement to support these programs.

With help from our volunteer bird monitors and donors, *rare* will continue to regularly monitor these threatened bird species and enhance critical habitat while investigating the role of *rare's* habitats in the broader landscape. ■■



rare volunteer Ross Dickson leads birding group at 2016 rare BioBlitz. Photo by D. Coulson

The power of community: 2016 BioBlitz at *rare*

By Jenna Quinn, Program Scientist – Research Priorities, Partnerships & Monitoring

We searched high, and we searched low. More than 150 people – scientists and other community members alike – stopped in at the *rare* ECO Centre on August 14 to learn about and look for plants, birds, butterflies, spiders, snakes, mushrooms, mammals and more. Together, we made 460 species observations including 45 new records to the property. What an achievement!

It was truly inspiring to see people come together and share their knowledge with *rare* and the public. Volunteers both within and beyond Waterloo Region came to lead search groups and teach naturalist skills – what habitats should you search to find snakes? What features do you focus on when identifying birds? How do you tell a mayfly from a stonefly? A day full of questions asked and answers found.

As *rare*'s Program Scientist, I spend a lot of time making observations at *rare*

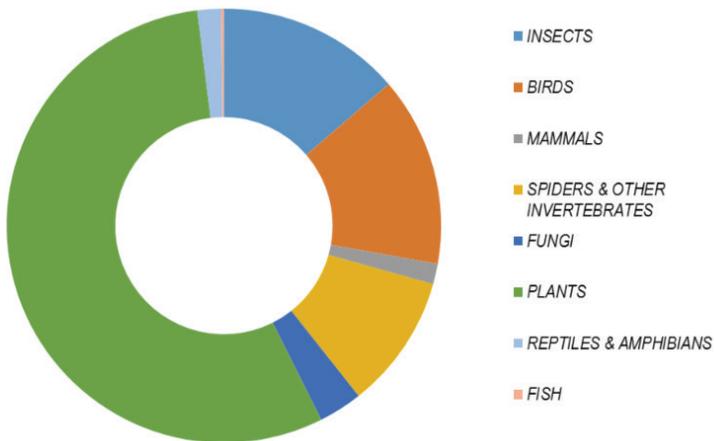
and working with others who do the same. What resonates most with me after an event like this one is how many new discoveries can be made, even in the most surprising places. A highlight of the day was a new butterfly observation to *rare*, the Leonard's Skipper, discovered by a young BioBlitz participant right on the *rare* ECO Centre front lawn. With an established 14 week butterfly monitoring program at *rare* that sees scientists routinely monitor these 900+ acres for butterflies, this new observation is a testament to the power of community and what can be accomplished when enough people, of all ages, come together for a common goal. Although there is much to learn from scientists and naturalists, there is also so much just waiting to be discovered by anyone with enough passion and curiosity to look for it.

intensive survey, guided surveys and public programs. In 2015, we began our *rare* BioBlitz journey with a scientific intensive survey bringing in taxonomists and professionals from 18 different countries around the world to survey the 900+ acres of *rare*. In 2016, we hosted a community effort with expert-led guided blitzes focused on different groups of plants and animals. Now, we look ahead to 2017 where we will combine our previous efforts with new public programs such as nature hikes and workshops to host a full 24 hour blitz with intensive, guided and other public components. We hope you will join us in celebration of biodiversity, knowledge-sharing and a collective passion to protect our green spaces and the species that call them home. ■■

Ontario BioBlitz has three main components of their blitz program: the



A taxonomic breakdown of the 2016 *rare* BioBlitz species observations



SAVE THE DATE

Celebrate Canada's 150th Birthday by participating in a Canadian BioBlitz!

Join us July 15-16, 2017 for 24 hours of discovery at the community *rare* BioBlitz – A Canada 150 Signature Project





CALLING ALL EXPLORERS

March Break ECO Camp registration is now open!

For a meaningful outdoor March Break experience, give your child something *rare*! Explore unique habitats across a natural landscape, track seasonal animal species, visit North House, partake in environmentally based crafts and activities, and create a journal of your time at *rare*.



Photo by G. Kamminga

Visit www.raresites.org for more information, or contact Gerrit Kamminga, Lead Educator & Program Facilitator, at 519-650-9336 x. 123 or education@raresites.org

AGES FOUNDATION FELLOWSHIP NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

Money for graduate research tackling today's important environmental issues!

Visit www.raresites.org for more detail or contact Program Scientist Jenna Quinn at 519-650-9336 x. 111 or jenna.quinn@raresites.org.

Supported by:



Birding with citizen science

By Gerrit Kamminga, Lead Educator & Program Facilitator

"Is that bird the same size as a robin? Maybe closer to a sparrow..." pondered a grade five student while peering through some binoculars. "Definitely closer to a sparrow" was his conclusion as he diligently recorded his findings. In the vast world of birding, proper identification is an important yet daunting task, especially for new observers. For young learners at *rare*, an effective introduction to bird identification is to focus on size in comparison to common bird species. In the new *Birding with Citizen Science* school module, students in grades five to eight monitor the reserve for bird species and start by comparing their size to three common birds; the robin, crow and sparrow. By starting with these observational skills, young citizen scientists are able to commence their journey to mastering bird identification!

Many bird species that spend time at *rare* contain visual differences between males and females, juveniles and adults, in addition to seasonal differences. In *Birding with Citizen Science*, students are taught an introductory lesson in bird identification and participate in practices established by *rare* volunteer bird monitors on site,



St. Jacob's Public School students *Birding with Citizen Science*. Photo by G. Kamminga

using proper equipment such as binoculars and birding scopes. While it is a pleasant experience to simply observe birds, students are also informed about the role bird monitoring plays in detecting environmental change. Through the tireless efforts of our bird monitoring citizen scientist volunteers, we can keep track of what birds are passing through *rare* each year and which ones come back, painting a picture of ecosystem health.

In addition to the *Birding with Citizen Science* module, *rare* offers other opportunities for budding birders with our *Every Child Outdoors* (ECO) Camp programs and the new-to-us *Christmas Bird Count for Kids* on January 7! For more information, see our website or contact Lead Educator and Program Facilitator Gerrit Kamminga at education@raresites.org or 519-650-9336 x. 123. ■■

WELCOME GILL RATCLIFFE EDUCATOR EMILY

We were delighted to welcome a new addition to the *rare* family in 2016 – Gill Ratcliffe Educator Emily Leslie. As we continue to grow as an urban land trust and environmental institute, ensuring that we provide quality environmental programs to youth and our community is top priority as we work towards our mission and get *Every Child Outdoors*.

With generous support from Elinor Gill Ratcliffe C.M., O.N.L, LLD (hc) and the Gill Ratcliffe Foundation, Emily started her role in spring 2016. She is a qualified teacher with a background in environmental education and nature interpretation, and feels strongly about providing opportunities for students to build their own connections to the nature that surrounds us.



Gill Ratcliffe Educator Emily Leslie. Photo by J. Quinn

Half-Earth; how land conservation can save the world

By Tom Woodcock, Planning Ecologist

One of the world's greatest living biologists, Edward O. Wilson has re-made our view of the living world over his long career. He has shown a unique ability to research innovative questions in biology (he is most noted for his work on the ecology of social interactions, particularly in ants), and then bring the research to life for people. He has demonstrated why biodiversity matters to us, supporting our very existence with clean water, clean air, quality food and inspiration for the mind. Now, E. O. Wilson has issued a call to the entire world in his book *Half-Earth: Our Planet's Fight for Life*. He contends that if we are to save the Earth's living systems, including ourselves, a minimum of 50 per cent of the world, land and sea must be set aside for non-human life and habitats. All the other species in the world depend on the moral awakening of humanity to its responsibilities. Wilson compares the Half-Earth Project to the Apollo Program of the 1960s; requiring great sacrifice, effort and dedication, but one which can be successful if humanity develops the will to preserve land.

During the inconceivable age of the Earth, many millions of species have come and gone. Complex life has been on the planet for more than 600 million years, so even at a conservative rate of one per year we have already lost about a hundred times the number of species alive today. We have documented only a minority of

them, with thousands of species described every year it will still be many human generations before we can claim that we have the measure of life on this planet. It has faced five great extinction events, and is currently in the midst of the sixth, largely caused by human activities. That background extinction rate of a few species per year is now estimated at several species per day as habitats are polluted or irrevocably changed. Wilson estimates that preservation of 50 per cent of the biosphere will ensure the continued existence of 84 per cent of our remaining species.

After years of research and two bioblitz events, we know that *rare* is home to more than 3,300 species of animals, plants and fungi. Many more are expected when the full complement of species, including bacteria and other single-celled life forms, are recorded.

The vision of *rare* is to preserve its sites and ecosystems intact and in perpetuity for the community to enjoy in a natural state. At the same time, the lands act as a living laboratory for research that, in turn, informs restoration practices and education programs through a *Chain of Learning* that reaches even the youngest child in a program called *Every Child Outdoors* (ECO), a model of hands-on learning in the out-of-doors. Through these programs – conservation, research and education – *rare* develops best practices as a model for others and engages an entire community



Wood-nymph moth (*Eudryas*). Photo by T. Woodcock

in training the next generation of conservationists who will perpetuate these values. It has always taken the whole community to ensure that *rare's* motto – intact and in perpetuity – will also be a promise kept, especially as we grow as a land trust and environmental institute. We have big plans to fill a gap in Waterloo Region as its regional land trust and we need your help. If you are interested in the preservation of conservation lands and plants, animals and ecosystem services supported by these lands for the well-being of our areas, take the pledge to be a *raresites Ranger*! Visit us at raresites.org to learn more and take the pledge, and watch upcoming *rare reviews* for more information. You can also help ensure that these 900+ acres are protected for our well-being and the well-being of our future generations by *Turning the Map Green*. Symbolically adopt a square meter of environmentally significant land for as little as \$2 by filling out the donation form below or visiting turnthemapgreen.ca

If Half-Earth is to be achieved, every one of us must do what we can, and make preservation of the natural environment a priority in our lives. History shows that extinction must be the fate of all species, but perhaps we can delay our own. ■■

To send in a donation, fill in form and cut here.



Yes – I will protect environmentally significant lands!

Donor Name _____

Mailing Address with City and Postal Code _____

Telephone _____ email _____

Yes, I would like to receive email updates from *rare*.

I'll join *rare's* Bedrock Club! I would like *rare* to receive my pre-authorized monthly donation of \$ _____, to be automatically withdrawn on the 15th of every month through:

My chequing account ("Void" cheque enclosed)

Credit Card

I am enclosing a one-time gift of:

\$250 \$100 \$50 \$20 or \$ _____

Payment Information :

Please send cheques payable to

***rare* Charitable Research Reserve**

1679 Blair Road

Cambridge, ON N3H 4R8

OR

Please provide credit card information VISA M/C A/E

Name as it appears on the card _____

Card No. _____

Expires _____ Signature _____

You may also donate securely online through raresites.org/donate

Name to appear on Founding Donors list, to be displayed permanently at *rare* upon completion of the capital campaign:

Thank you for *Turning the Map Green*

NWSW17 TMG
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Giant Hogweed. Photo by M. Grguric



University of Guelph M.Sc. candidate Meghan Grguric. Photo by R. O'Flanagan, provided by M. Grguric

QUESTION

Why all the hate on hogweed?

ANSWER Giant Hogweed is not only a giant plant, but also a giant problem! A large plant that can tower over even the tallest person and cause bad burns to your skin when you touch it – can a simple plant really do this? The answer is yes, it can. Giant Hogweed is an invasive species that can grow between 1.5 and 5.5 meters tall when flowering, and contains chemicals in its sap called furanocoumarins. These chemicals, when on your skin, react to sunlight and will cause blisters and burns within 48 hours. This can be a serious problem, especially since the plant's presence is increasing along public trails and pathways. This is only one of the reasons why we want to remove it. Its large leaf area can easily shade out native species and populations can quickly get out of hand because of the amount of seeds it produces – between 10 and 20,000 per plant! Hundreds of these huge plants can easily take over an area. It only actually flowers once in its lifetime, between its second and fifth year. Once Giant Hogweed flowers, it will die after shedding its seed. Control of Giant Hogweed before this happens is essential for its management. Giant Hogweed seeds can remain viable in the soil for several years, so continuous control is needed year after year in order to prevent a population from continuing to grow. The easiest time for control is in the spring when hogweed seedlings are small. If the population is small, then manual control can be achieved. Carefully digging up more than 10 cm of the root will have positive results. It is also possible to cut down hogweed when it is flowering in order to prevent seed formation and dispersal. However, this takes persistence, as it will continuously grow back several times. If a protective suit (such as a Tyvek



Meghan and Giant Hogweed. Photo by K. Grumbell

suit) cannot be purchased, I recommend wearing loose clothing to cover exposed skin as well as rubber gloves and boots. It is also a good idea to wear some sort of face protection, like a shield or goggles. If you are exposed to Giant Hogweed sap, quickly get out of the sun and wash sap away with soap and water. When dealing with large populations, it's best to seek professional help such as an exterminator with knowledge of Giant Hogweed and who can likely remove it with or without chemicals. Check out resources from Ontario Invasive Plant Council (www.ontarioinvasiveplants.ca) to find Giant Hogweed management professionals.

Be vigilant and be informed. When out on trails, be on the lookout for potentially harmful species such as Giant Hogweed. Go online (www.invadingspecies.com) and learn to spot the lookalikes – Giant Hogweed has a few – and if you don't know, please don't touch. ■■

By Meghan Grguric, M.Sc. Candidate at the University of Guelph

ASK A RESEARCHER

You've asked, and we've answered!

Meghan Grguric is a M.Sc. candidate in the Department of Plant Agriculture at the University of Guelph. Meghan began conducting research on the invasive Giant Hogweed at *rare* and several other locations in 2016, seeking answers on effective management options for this noxious weed. A species of great concern for many property owners and avid outdoor lovers, we asked Meghan to break down the facts about Giant Hogweed.

If you ever see something on the property that leaves you wondering, don't hesitate to get in touch with us. We welcome your calls and emails to 519-650-9336 or rare@raresites.org.

Passionate about the environment: *rare* to me, Gillian Preston

By Allie Abram, Ecological Monitoring Intern

There is something truly inspiring about meeting people who love nature as much as Gillian Preston, one of *rare*'s most dedicated volunteers. From a young age, Gillian was inspired to get out into nature and experience the beautiful Canadian wilderness. She continued to explore her interests, completing a Bachelor of Science degree in Zoology from the University of Guelph. Now that Gillian lives in Waterloo Region, she has made sure to include nature in her life, and has found a home for herself at *rare*.

With a passion for environmental protection, Gillian was drawn to *rare*'s dedication to conservation.

“Environmental protection has always been a priority for me,” she explains,

“no species can survive without its habitat, and we are no exception. People today tend to underestimate the importance of a healthy natural environment, and we also tend to overlook the needs of other species in the face of our wants.

Conservation is a *rare* priority, and that makes me want to be a part of it, to do something good for the region.”

Gillian has been volunteering with *rare* for three years, primarily with the ecological monitoring program. No matter the project or conditions, Gillian is always willing to help out. Although she enjoys any role that allows her to get outside and experience the property, she has a special fondness for butterfly monitoring. “Not only do you get to watch and identify these beautiful invertebrates, but most of the walks take you through a variety of *rare*'s habitats in one day” she describes.

Gillian keeps coming back each year to experience the “diversity of (ecological) communities and landscapes” at *rare*. “It is always a pleasure to walk around the grounds. Even walking the same trails every week, you never know what you're going to see” states Gillian. She plans to continue volunteering and hopes to expand her role as a volunteer into other areas such



Gillian Preston. Photo by A. Abram

as restoration and conservation projects. I think she would be here all the time if, as she says, “there were enough hours in the day to do it all.”

As the Ecological Monitoring Intern this year, I have experienced first-hand how valuable dedicated volunteers like Gillian are to *rare*. Not only did Gillian provide much needed assistance in the field, she also has a contagious positive attitude and love for nature, and has certainly enhanced my experience working here.

Thanks for helping out, Gillian! ■■

If you are interested in volunteering there are many opportunities to get involved, and we would love to have you! Contact Community Stewardship Coordinator Cheyanne at cheyanne.richardson@raresites.org or 519-650-9336 x. 126 for volunteer and other support opportunities.



THANKS

Photo by J. Dillon & J. Moser



Thank you. Because of you, just over \$37,000 was raised to *Turn the Map Green* – protecting 18,500 square metres of environmentally significant land and the more than 3,300 species that call *rare* home. Whether it was *For the Birds*, as a *Friend of the Woodlands*, dancing to *Meadow Melodies*, a part of the *Butterfly Bunch*, or you were *Wild for Wetlands* your participation and sponsorships helped spread awareness which is vital as we work towards our long-term goal and *Turn the Map Green* – along Blair Road and across the Region.

CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY TO NATURE

With the increasing popularity of *rare* programs, we undertook a vital capital need this summer. With the help of community support and in-kind services, a gravel parking area and trail were added to the property.

Located on the south side of Blair Road, across from the *rare* ECO Centre, this addition increases access to the Springbank Community Gardens hub where *rare* offers environmental education programs for schools and children, a community garden, the living lab and solar home North House, and expansive acres for trails.

The project also included some upgrades to the *rare* ECO Centre. The parking lot was expanded to allow for more cars, accessible features were added to the ECO Centre Trail, and outdoor lighting and building features were improved for accessibility.



Parking lot and trail community partners. Photo by E. Kastner

This project would not have been possible without the generous support of many in the community, the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Federal Government's Enabling Accessibility Fund. Massive THANK YOUs are in order for all those that partnered with us, especially the students and professors at the School of Trades & Apprenticeship at Conestoga College and the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association (OSSGA).

Oakville dentist Turns the Map Green for future generations

By Joy Roberts, Community Volunteer

Many businesses reward loyalty or create incentives for people to return. However, it's rare to find a practice that takes a really long-term view and creates a model with the potential to affect generations to come.

But that's what dentist Dr. Vineet Bhandari is doing. When he heard about *rare's* Turn the Map Green program, an effort to conserve some of the most environmentally significant land in Canada, he signed up to symbolically adopt square meters to honour each of the children in his practice.

"At *rare* they are working to make a difference to our province — and our country — and it's also helping to address

problems we've created but future generations are going to have to deal with more urgently. My mother always taught me not to waste anything," says Dr. Bhandari, "that even the smallest saving would add up to make a difference. So, for me, my family and my practice, conserving is second nature and everyone is encouraged to suggest how we could do more."

All the children in Dr. Bhandari's practice will receive certificates showing a picture of the species that live on those lands — along with an invitation to hike on more than eight km of trails when they are in the area. But even without visiting the property, they will learn about the importance of getting outdoors and protecting lands that are always on duty, always contributing to health and well-being.

Thanks Dr. Bhandari for helping *rare* Turn the Map Green for your patients' well-being. As *rare* continues to expand as a land trust and environmental institute, creating communities of concern beyond the Region of Waterloo is a necessary step, and we're excited to have more friends in Oakville. ■■

You can Turn the Map Green too! Learn more at www.turnthemapgreen.ca.

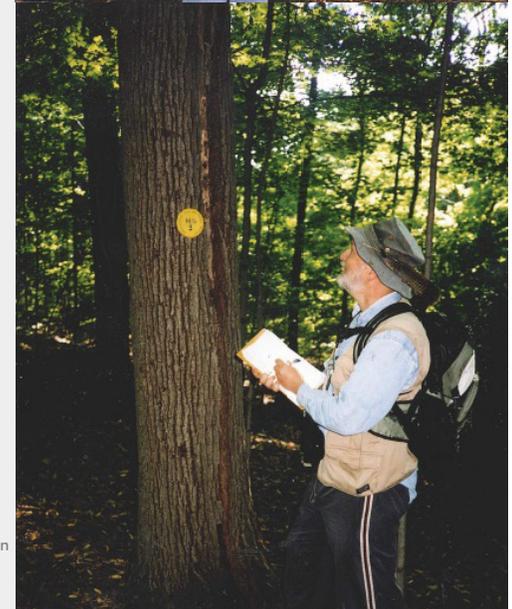
THANK YOU BILL & HEATHER

Bill and Heather are passing the *Nature notes* torch on to long-time *rare* volunteer Ross Dickson.

We want to sincerely thank Bill and Heather Wilson for their unwavering commitment to *rare* as long-time volunteers and supporters. Thank you for being an important part of *rare's* family and helping drive the organisation's progress. Thank you for being a part of the bigger picture.

And a special thank you to Ross for taking on *Nature notes* — we always look forward to reading all that was spotted at *rare*!

Don't forget to send in your sightings to rare@raresites.org with "Nature notes" in the subject line.



Heather (top) and Bill (bottom). Photos by B. Wilson & H. Wilson



Autumn Meadowhawk is a new species of dragonfly for *rare*, added on September 26. Photo by M. Weissman

Nature notes

By Bill Wilson & Ross Dickson, Community Volunteers

Two new species of butterfly were observed this summer first at the Annual Butterfly Count and BioBlitz (consecutively), and then by Julie Reid: APHRODITE FRITILLARY and LEONARD'S SKIPPER.

New *rare* staffer, Alissa Fraser, with a keen eye for caterpillars, found and photographed caterpillars of several moth species and MONARCH and BLACK SWALLOWTAIL butterflies this summer.

On June 6 Kayla Martin watched a WHITE-TAILED DEER doe and fawn on the Woodland trail (<http://raresites.org/trails/>).

SNAPPING TURTLES are active in June. On the 15th Jenna Quinn spotted a large female along the foot-path in the Osprey Meadow; earlier in the day she helped one cross Blair Road.

On July 3 and 9, COMMON TERN joined the familiar CASPIAN TERN in aerial plunge-diving up-stream of the confluence to feed on small fish and/or crustaceans and insects.

Twelve volunteers monitored *rare*'s hayfields for BOBOLINK in June and July. Observations supported the decision to mow the crop after July 15; by that date, nestlings had fledged. BOBOLINK is a Species at Risk.

While setting up bird banding nets in August, Ross Dickson regularly observed a flight of CHIMNEY SWIFTS (100+/-) five to ten minutes before sunrise. Based upon Dickson's description and direction of this dawn flight, Bill and Heather Wilson located a roost site in Preston. Members of Waterloo Region Nature and friends of *rare* monitored the site over a two-week period.

Heard flying overhead or foraging in fields, SANDHILL CRANES were reported June to October by a number of observers including Taryn WoodnoteSaberwing,

rare's Property, Facility and Garden Coordinator.

rare educators, Gerrit Kamminga and Emily Leslie, observed three snake species on October 3 along the Grand Trunk Trail through *rare*: GARTER, RED-BELLIED (2) and SMOOTH GREEN.

Single day sightings by birders at *rare*:

Ross Dickson: 117+ CHIMNEY SWIFTS, August 30 – see above.

Brett Fried: 12 RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRDS, August 28; 85 BOBOLINK – most at roost, September 4; 6 BLACK-BELLIED PLOVERS, September 11; 11 ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLERS and 255 migrating BLUE JAYS, September 25.

David Gascoigne, Miriam Bauman, Jade Bassler: 15 WHITE-BREADED NUTHATCHES, October 23, along *rare* trails.

Jerry Guenther, Bill Wilson: 14 EASTERN BLUEBIRDS in regenerating habitat, October 14; 350+ TREE SWALLOWS roosting on COMMON MULLEIN stalks, August 23.

Bill Wilson: 66 DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANTS, August 4; 115+ BARN SWALLOWS, August 23; 17 GREEN-WINGED TEAL, October 27 – all observed at the Confluence.

Noteworthy bird sightings in summer and early autumn, 2016, by *rare* monitors include: RUFFED GROUSE (David Gascoigne), BONAPARTE'S GULL (Bill Wilson), NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD (Jerry Guenther and others), PRAIRIE WARBLER (banded by Ross Dickson; third record for *rare*).

Breeding in every province and territory, the RUSTY BLACKBIRD is a Species of Special Concern. Seventy per cent of its population breeds in this country. During the migration seasons, spring and fall, this species visits *rare* where it can be observed along river shorelines and hedgerows. Learn more about this species on-line at <http://bit.ly/RustyBlackbird> ■■

NATURE SIGHTINGS:

#rareMoment

“On October 13, 2013, while monitoring Blair Flats wetlands, a unique feature on the *rare* property, I experienced a memorable moment. Rain overnight offered the possibility of a mid-October migrant ‘dump’ – birds put down during their southward flight by inclement weather. Of 26 species tallied by Jerry Guenther and me that morning, one stood out: Nelson’s Sparrow, a secretive, highly localized sparrow that in Ontario breeds along the James Bay and southern Hudson Bay coastlines. We re-found the bird on October 16, made further notes and took a photo.”

– Bill Wilson, *rare* Environmental Advisory Committee, October 2013

Do you have a memorable nature sighting you wish to share? Tweet or Instagram using the hashtag #rareMoment or submit to rare@raresites.org with the subject line: *rare* Moment



An apparently hungry Mink late September. Photo by M. Weissman

HAVE SOME *rare* FINDS OF YOUR OWN?

Contact *rare Nature notes* by emailing rare@raresites.org with “Nature notes” in the subject line.



Bald eagle statue Eleanor on ECO Centre Trail. Photo by J. Quinn

A rare writer-in-residence experience

By Sherri Dmyterko, Community Volunteer

Amazing, beautiful and peaceful are just some of the words artist Marlene Creates and poet Don McKay are using to describe their two-month stay at North House as the 2016 Eastern Comma Writers-in-Residence.

Marlene has used her time at *rare* to further explore a unique photography project involving trees, particularly dead trees or snags. Don has been gathering inspiration from how dead trees are giving back and contributing to the local ecosystem, and plans to give this aspect of the ecology the attention that is rarely received; creating a series of poems to inspire others to become more mindful of the natural world.

“Both of us, Don and I, are interested in the connection between the arts and the sciences because they have been separated for so long, and it has caused a lot of problems in the way we treat the environment,” says Marlene Creates, “so it’s been wonderful to be able to talk to these people who are actually studying this place.”

During their two-month stay, Don and Marlene’s days were filled with hikes through the forests with *rare* staff to learn about the local ecosystem which has been both surprising and very revealing.

For Marlene, her project is a black and white photography series where she is making contact with individual snags.

“It’s not just about standing back and photographing a tree,” says Marlene, “I’m making contact with the tree, I’m establishing a presence, by just showing my hand on the tree. I’m just trying to integrate the human presence with the environment.”

Following their *rare* experience, Don and Marlene envision a joint art project of photography and poetry that inspires people to pay closer attention to their local environment.

“I hope it encourages them to approach the natural world with a level of attention that is both intelligent, and also careful and emotional” says Don.

For Marlene, this experience will stay with her forever.

“I’ve been really enjoying just stepping out the back door and taking in the whole sky at all times of the day and night. I love that. It’s basically 360 degrees from that deck. The people that I’ve met here... I’m going to miss them. The people working here at *rare* are very special people.” ■■

ELEANOR’S NEW NESTING PLACE

Eleanor, our bald eagle statue, has found a new nesting place at the ECO Centre Trail head. Relocated by some of her fans from the Lamb’s Inn backyard (*rare*’s administrative hub), Eleanor has become a popular attraction for visitors to the property.

Donated by local artist John De Boer in 2004, Eleanor sat in the heritage gardens behind Lamb’s Inn watching over the flurry of activity at the pond until late last summer. An anonymous donor, and Eleanor fan, unexpectedly helped get her set up by the ECO Centre Trail head at the *rare* Every Child Outdoors (ECO) Centre on Blair Road.

Bald eagles have been known to roost on the north side of *rare*’s property, along the Grand River, in the winter months. For this reason, the Cliffs & Alvars trail system, which connects to the Grand Trunk Trail and ECO Centre Trail, are closed annually from mid-November to mid-March.

The ECO Centre Trail is now barrier-free, increasing connectivity to the Grand Trunk Trail so more people can enjoy more *rare* landscape. Be sure to check out Eleanor on your next visit, showcased in the spotlight she deserves!

2016 Eastern Comma Writer-in-Residence Marlene Creates’ artwork



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Artefacts found on the property go back more than 10,500 years and the *rare* Charitable Research Reserve acknowledges the Chonnon-ton people ("people of the deer") on whose traditional territory we live and work, and we offer respect to our Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Métis neighbours as we strengthen our relationships with them.



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Photo by J. Dillon & J. Moser



FEATURE

Taryn WoodnoteSaberwing dishes on this year's organic veggie output for local food banks

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