



review

Fall 2010

Internationally *rare*: by Tarah Walsh

This spring, *rare* was fortunate enough to be visited by a group of guests from PEN International -- an international organization dedicated to fighting for freedom of speech, and representing exiled and imprisoned authors around the world who have been silenced for the publishing or "penning" of their works.



PEN visitors pose next to an old-growth tree bordering Indian Woods.

Photo by: Peter Kelly

We were honoured to have with us Canadian Author and International President of PEN, John Ralston Saul, Author and Japanese PEN President, Takashi Atoda, Japanese Author Takeaki Hori and past President of International PEN and Editorial Page Editor Emeritus at The Toronto Star, Haroon Siddiqui.

The trip showcased the intricate relationship of ecology existing within an urban context, and highlighted some

traditional Canadian landscapes. As authors, a visit like this may directly or indirectly, help shape or inspire future work(s).

Leading the group on a walk next to Indian Woods, Education Manager Matt Lawson pointed out many native plants and discussed how they would have been used traditionally by Canadians, both as food and medicine. Matt also explained how this property can serve to remind us of our cultural histories and how Native peoples and early Europeans once existed on this exact piece of property.



Education Manager, Matt Lawson shows the group a native plant and explains its traditional uses.

Photo by: Peter Kelly

It's visits like this that remind us of how valuable and important *rare* really is. Not only is this property a natural oasis for Waterloo Region citizens and migrant Bald Eagles, but it is a destination for people from around the world. Experiences here are breathtaking, culturally impacting and revealing. From Japan to Cambridge, this place is *rare*.

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Masthead Photo and Inside This Issue Photo by: Peter Kelly



rare

Ken Dance Profile: *by Joy Roberts*



If you come across a report from an Environmental Impact Study anywhere in Southern Ontario, chances are the author is Ken Dance, one of the first people to volunteer, even before **rare's** lands were officially held in trust for the public. In fact, Ken has worked in every province East of Saskatchewan, in the U.S. and in Trinidad and Tobago, often

being called upon as an expert witness for boards and tribunals because of his extensive experience in many aspects of environmental impact assessment.

As a biologist and aquatic ecologist he understands aquatic and terrestrial systems; fortunately for **rare**, as a citizen he also understands social systems and the need for volunteers to participate in their communities. Trained as a biologist, with a Master of Science degree from the University of Waterloo, Ken has been a field naturalist for over 45 years and has worked as an Environmental Consultant for over 33 of those years.

In January 2001, Ken, became a member of the environmental advisory team at **rare** and assisted with the original, one-year bio-inventory of the property and the production of the first Environmental Management Plan (February 2002). With his colleagues, Bill Wilson, Larry Lamb and Doug Larson, Ken helped to provide the information that underpins **rare's** vision and its decisions on how best to manage the lands. Ken often gives talks and leads hikes as well as being on call for expert advice on many issues the charity faces.

Most recently, Ken and his wife Janet have been volunteering for **rare's** peer-to-peer program, raising awareness and funds for the Chain of Learning program

-- **rare's** method of providing outdoor education that extends from the most senior scientists to the youngest members of our community. Ken and Janet have made it their goal to raise money for busing, to ensure that youth are not kept away for lack of transportation to the Reserve. Recently Ken was asked to name the three most important aspects of **rare**. Turning to a map of the property, Ken pointed to the extensive wild habitat bordering the Grand River and to the cold water creeks and seeps that feed it. "The Grand River Valley is critical," he said. "The flows of cool and cold water that pass across the **rare** lands improve water quality in the river." He pointed out that **rare's** protection of such a long piece of shoreline on both sides of the river, may be a contributing factor in the increasing numbers of overwintering Bald Eagles, in this area.

Along with the water resources at **rare**, Ken also named the people as important. The work **rare** does to educate the community and to provide the research that informs the global scientific community is critical to our ability to provide answers and frame the next set of questions.

The third aspect Ken highlighted was the pivotal role that the **rare** lands play in linking the Grand River corridor with the extensive Dumfries Carolinian Environmentally Sensitive Landscape, located to the south of **rare**. Such connections are essential for the maintenance and expansion of populations of both common species and species at risk.

Ken and Janet own and manage 50 acres of Carolinian forest, and grassland for conservation near Drumbo, where Ken operates Dance Environmental, providing environmental & ecological consulting services. Ken's sons, Mathew and Kevin, have also donated time and energy to conservation causes, such as tree planting at **rare**.



Photo by: Joy Roberts

Ken and Janet Dance pause with Severn Cullis-Suzuki during a community snow-shoe trek to the potential new lands.



Photo by: Joy Roberts

John Lounds, President & CEO of the Nature Conservancy of Canada, and James Duncan, Associate Vice President, Conservation, Ontario Region, share a light moment with Ken at the Tall Grass Prairie research project site.

Nature Note *Highlights:* by Bill Wilson



George Hentsch reported a YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO at the western end of the River Trail on May 23. A Carolinian species, Yellow-billed Cuckoo is one of two cuckoo species nesting at **rare**. Do you know the name of the other? Check its bill.

During the 2010 breeding season in Ontario, birders were asked to report nest sites of CHIMNEY SWIFTS, one of the aerial foragers that is in decline in this province. There has been a 46% decline in the probability of observations in Ontario in the last 20+ years. Friends of **rare** reported swifts circling the Stone Slit Barn in May and June. Given that swifts spend 50% of their time foraging within 0.5 km of the nest site raises the question whether there are Chimney Swifts nesting at **rare**; however, no reports were received.



Chimney Swift,
Photo Courtesy of: ms.audubon.org

On June 30, Bill Read, Ontario Bluebird Society, erected a bluebird box adjacent (10m) to an existing nest box on the Sparrow Field located southeast of Indian Woods. Why two boxes so close? Observations by breeding bird monitor, Jerry Guenther, indicated that a pair of TREE SWALLOWS appeared to be "loitering with purpose" about the existing bluebird box that was occupied by a pair of nesting bluebirds. What's going on? Bill Read explained that Tree Swallows will remain near an active bluebird box and when the bluebird young fledge, will move in and set up their own nest thereby usurping the nest site and preventing a second bluebird nesting. By erecting a second box nearby, an immediate nest site is available to the swallows.

Charlotte Moore and Julia Marko Dunn were greeted by a hen WILD TURKEY with seven fledglings while crossing the meadow south of Indian Woods.



Baltimore Oriole

Photo by: Terry Sohl

"Where are the BALTIMORE ORIOLES?" is a question asked by some long-time residents of South Preston across the river from **rare**. One answer to this question is that there has been a 20% decline in Ontario since the early 1980s.

Another answer? It depends where along the river one is looking. During bird monitoring, May 8-9, **rare** monitors observed 26 Baltimore Orioles on three trails including Grand Trunk Trail and River Trail on the reserve and Linear Trail, Cambridge (across river in South

Preston). Each of these trails has second-growth to mature maples, elms and poplars often with outermost branches hanging over the trails – nesting habitat selected by these orioles. A third answer to the "where are the Baltimore Orioles?" question is best introduced with this question: when are you looking for them? Arriving at the Confluence and vicinity in early May, Baltimore Orioles are highly vocal both in song and calls and highly visible since leaf eruption of most deciduous trees has yet to begin. Once birds have paired and begun nesting by late May and June, song frequency has declined substantially. Recognizing its single or double whistled call note or raspy rattle alarm note from a leafy canopy is necessary to confirm their presence.

Add VIRGINIA RAIL to the **rare** bird list. Friends of **rare** are familiar with the wetland along Blair Road, a result of backwater from Bauman Creek. For many years, a pond or slough-like feature has formed each spring, often in the fall and drying up each summer. With the removal of sections of Blair Flats from agricultural production over the last few years (since fall 2009 entirely in regeneration) the slough has become permanent. Blair Flats Slough is now a stop-over for waterfowl, waders and marsh birds. In late May, Bill Wilson heard a VIRGINIA RAIL respond to a tape recording of this species. Although no evidence of breeding on subsequent visits, at least one Virginia Rail was present through late May and early June. A WOOD DUCK hen with six young was observed on the slough, May 23.

SPOTTED SANDPIPER breeds in a wide variety of habitats throughout North America with the exception of the extreme north (Arctic tundra) and extreme south coast



Spotted Sandpiper
Photo Courtesy of:
wildandscenicphotos.com

and deserts of the US. It is arguable the best-known and most widely distributed New World Sandpiper. Breeding in both natural habitats – river banks (as at **rare**), herbaceous lakeshores, woodland edges, dunes and beaches – and habitats associated with human disturbances – fields (as at **rare**),

roadsides, ditches, gravel pits – these birds are often heard first then spotted bobbing and walking on the ground or fluttering over water surfaces. The Blair Flats and Preston Flats at **rare** have provided feeding and nesting habitat from May to July, particularly early to mid-season. When the croplands were in soybean production, Spotted Sandpipers would be observed between rows as well as fluttering and calling low over the crop. The mature corn rows, which the field boasted this summer, appeared to exclude activity. With all of Blair Flats and portions of Preston Flats now in regeneration, what will this effect would this have on Spotted Sandpiper?

**For a complete listing of this issues' Nature Notes and to learn more about our Sightings Records Station, please visit our website at www.raresites.org and go to the "NEWS" section.*

Growing Green Citizens: *by Matt Lawson*

In a recent policy document by the Ontario Ministry of Education, *Environmental Education* is defined as:

"Education about the environment, for the environment, and in the environment that promotes an understanding of, rich and active experience in, and an appreciation for the dynamic interactions of:

- *The Earth's physical and biological systems*
 - *The dependency of our social and economic systems on these natural systems*
 - *The scientific and human dimensions of environmental issues*
 - *The positive and negative consequences, both intended and unintended, of the interactions between human-created and natural systems.*¹
- By the end of Grade 12, students will acquire knowledge, skills, and perspectives that foster understanding of their fundamental connections to each other, to the world around them, and to all living things."*²



Matt Lawson, **rare's** Education Assistant teaches a group of students.
Photo by: Peter Kelly

At **rare**, our Every Child Outdoors (ECO) program provides the opportunity for students, community organizations, and families to engage in environmental learning experiences out of the home or classroom and into the local environment. Although environmental education is an important part of any child's development, we feel that environmental learning must be experiential to truly

create an atmosphere of appreciation, curiosity and stewardship.

In the Spring and Summer of 2010 **rare** hosted 1100+ students and over 150 parent and teacher volunteers from several elementary and secondary schools, and community organizations from all over the Waterloo Region. At **rare** children are able to truly witness a variety of unspoiled habitats and ecosystems; examples of biodiversity. Highlights from these experiences include the following places and programs:

Springbank Community Gardens – Students investigated local food systems, 100 mile diet alternatives, and gardens as ecosystems. Various schools planted bio-intensive gardens and were encouraged to visit



An example of a bio-intensive garden, planted by participating school groups.
Photo by: Brad Booker

throughout the year. Produce grown during the summer then goes back to the participating schools in September.

Indian Woods – Here students experienced the wonder of an Old-Growth deciduous forest, spring wildflowers, biodiversity and the inter-relationships therein. Students were able to discover several landscapes and the transition from agricultural lands to restored lands to mature forests. Students were also greeted here by our butterfly expert, Charlotte Moore to discover the fine art of catching butterflies and the importance of pollinators.

Cliffs and Alvars – Here students unearthed the wonder of geology at **rare**; cliffs and river systems, and several interesting forest habitats along the river trail. Osprey nests were observed as well as wild turkeys, great horned owls, countless songbirds and waterfowl, white-tailed deer, and various edible wilds.

Habitat Gardens and Living Pond – Several classes participated in the excellent and engaging program on life cycles. Here students experienced first-hand the life cycles of frogs, dragonflies, and butterflies in our living pond and habitat gardens at the **rare** Administration Centre.

Although the focus of **rare's** education program is to involve schools within the Waterloo Region District School Board, we do our very best to include students and children of all levels of social and physical diversity. A few of our highlights from the recent past have been the Kitchener-Waterloo Foster Home Support Program, Lang's Farm Youth Programs, and Kitchener-Waterloo Home School Association. Most notably, however, we had a visit from the W. Ross School for the Blind to close out our summer programming where students of all levels of visual ability came to **rare** and explored the sights (for some), smells, feel, and tastes of what **rare**



Brad Booker, **rare's** first
Education Assistant.
Photo by: Matt Lawson

has to offer as a sensory experience!

A welcomed addition to our education department this summer was Brad Booker, **rare's** first Education Assistant. Here for a four month term, Brad focused his attentions on delivering summer programming as well as growing new curriculum, to be implemented this Fall. Through funding from the Lyle S. Hallman foundation, **rare**

was fortunate to have such an energetic, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable employee contributing to the outdoor education programs at **rare**. Additionally, Brad successfully led hikes and workshops on composting, edible wilds, and how First Nations utilize plants and trees (all of which can be found on **rare** property.) Brad proved to be a vital asset to the education department this Spring/Summer. On behalf of the students he worked with and all **rare** staff, we thank him and wish him well as he moves on to attend the Outdoor and Experiential Education program at Queen's University in the Fall of 2010.

New programs for fall 2010 have been created to provide a greater diversity of curriculum-based programs. Since programming over the last year has been so successful, it has allowed **rare** to grow its programming, offering new food-related programs that are focused on furthering students' understanding of local and organic food production, a prominent topic in

current environmental efforts today. The assemblage of these new programs, allow course-specific links to curriculum for grades 2 through to 12. The newly designed programs are already filling up quickly. At present, at least 25 schools have registered for September and October programs.

Although our programs are in full swing for 2010 we are looking to new horizons for education in 2011. As you may know, we are working very hard to raise the funds necessary to renovate our 1840's Slit Barn and accompanying Resource House into a full scale education/interpretive centre. In 2010 we have been able to utilize the new parking lot for buses, events, and interested hikers and the new washroom facilities (equipped with geothermal heating and cooling and tertiary sewage system) were more than accommodating to school groups while serving as an educational tool in alternative energy and waste disposal.

The completion of the Slit Barn and Resource House will signal a new era in environmental and experiential education at **rare**. Trailhead, classroom, research station, community gathering place, theatre, stage, rain venue, and learning centre are only some of the many uses that will undoubtedly affect our ability to offer more successful programs in the future.

¹ Ontario Ministry of Education. (2007) *Shaping Our Schools, Shaping Our Future; Environmental Education in Ontario Schools*, p. 06, Queen's Printer for Ontario

² Ontario Ministry of Education. (2009) *Acting Today, Shaping Tomorrow; A Policy Framework for Environmental Education In Ontario Schools*, p. 11, Queen's Printer for Ontario

Pollination Feeding Education



One of several new research projects at **rare** in 2010 is being led by Dr. Tom Woodcock of the Canadian Pollinator Initiative at the University of Guelph. Tom is interested in pollinators, i.e. those insects that transfer pollen from male flowers to female ovules in flowers to allow fertilization to take place. Pollinators are essential to the functioning of all terrestrial ecosystems and many of our food crops are dependent on viable and diverse populations of these insects. Key pollinators include various species of bees, wasps, flies, moths and butterflies.

In particular Tom is trying to quantify the services that pollinators provide to our ecosystems by establishing 'connectance webs'. These webs will be established from a large data set collected this summer in three former agricultural fields on **rare** property. This data set will help us understand pollination ecology by assessing the pollinating insects visiting specific plant species, examining the pollen-carrying behaviour of these same insects to assess their potential as pollinators, and establishing relationships between pollinators and the reproductive success of specific plants.

Pollinator connectance webs are relatively new in ecology but have already been identified as playing key roles in identifying the response of plant communities to invasive species, the response of plant communities to pollinator declines and in the successful restoration of degraded lands. This kind of research will not only provide key information for future restoration efforts but is critical for our education programs where all too often students don't often understand the critical role that 'icky bugs' or stinging insects play in our ecosystems and food systems. This will allow students to develop a more holistic approach to natural world around us.

Deadline approaching; Development Encroaching:

by Julia Marko-Dunn

As you've probably read in past issues of the **rare** review, December 1st of this year **rare** is scheduled to purchase an additional 93 acres of land, expanding the **rare** boundary. This new property abuts **rare** on its western boundary and ownership of it would not only expand the natural lands that we currently steward, but would also provide an important natural buffer to Indian Woods, a remnant old-growth deciduous forest - touted as the crowning jewel of the Reserve - a now rare habitat in southern Ontario. The new parcel also includes the headwaters of a coldwater stream, open meadows, deciduous forest, cedar swamp and plantations. Zoned as residential and set to be sold, this opportunity is clearly a once-in-a-lifetime chance for the charity but moreover for the public to protect this ecologically and historically important property.



Bauman Creek. Photo by: Peter Kelly

The forested portions of the new parcel, the old-growth forest, and other wooded areas beyond, form a large interconnected 60 ha of mature and maturing woodlands, important for species that depend on interior forest conditions. Large natural areas like this mitigate edge effects which include wind and light penetration into a forest and colonization by invasive species.

Protecting the forests on the new 93 acres will allow this area to continue to act as a buffer to Indian Woods, and restoring forest where necessary will improve the ecological functioning of the contiguous forest lands as a whole.

Preliminary biological surveys of the new parcel have uncovered exciting rare species. For example, Ebony Spleenwort - a regionally rare fern - was found on the property in the spring of last year. This parcel also



An example of perfect butterfly habitat. Photo by: Peter Kelly

contains superb butterfly habitat, with meadows dominated by common milkweed, the larval food plant of the Monarch butterfly. (See the butterfly text box below for more info.)

This biodiversity could provide a wealth of new research opportunities especially with the headwaters of Bauman Creek, a

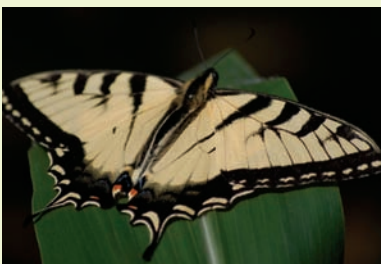
coldwater stream that is part of a Provincially Significant Wetland. Fish surveys in fall, 2009 revealed a healthy population of Brook Trout in these waters. The large milkweed meadow rich in Monarchs could provide a valuable field site for studying their ecology and reproductive biology.

The addition of these new lands will allow **rare** the opportunity, through protection, restoration, and plantation management, to preserve and enhance the ecological integrity of the entire property and to provide even more research, education, and passive leisure opportunities. We'd love to take you on a walk along the historical carriage-way which is now fondly known as the Grand Allée and show you some of the special features of the property.

The purchase price is \$780,000 and so far we've managed to raise more than \$300,000 including gifts of \$50,000 each from both the EJLB Foundation and the Region of Waterloo Environmental Stewardship Fund. But, we still have more to raise. Please consider your support; it's a gift that will last a lifetime!

To join us for a tour of the new lands or to make a donation preserving them in perpetuity, please contact Patti Leather, Director, Community Relations 519-650-9336 x 118.

More land, more butterflies



Eastern Swallowtail. Photo by: Charlotte Moore

Butterfly monitoring has taken place at **rare** in 2006, 2009 and 2010. As of 2010, there are now four transects that are each walked once a week and observed, recording butterfly populations and species on the property from May-August. Last year an additional transect was added on the new 93-acre property (that **rare** plans to purchase December 1st, 2010), which has proven to be one of the best areas for butterfly diversity because of the regenerating meadow habitat found here.

The total number of individual butterflies observed during monitoring from May 17 - August 19 was 4046, which includes over 40 different species of butterflies. In addition to this, the 4th annual butterfly count was held at **rare** on July 10, where 683 individuals of 39 species were observed.

A special highlight for this season was the re-occurrence of the Giant Swallowtail butterfly, which was noted on August 18, 2010. The Giant Swallowtail is the largest butterfly native to North America, and while it is not designated as **rare**, it is restricted to southern Carolinian habitat. The northern border of this zone includes **rare** property, which allows southern species such as the Giant Swallowtail to flourish here. In addition, the provincially rare Tawny Emperor was also spotted this year on the new 93 acre parcel we hope to acquire.

Volunteer and Donor Appreciation BBQ

On Tuesday June 29th, 2010 **rare** hosted its annual volunteer and donor appreciation BBQ in the gardens just behind our administration office at 1678 Blair Rd. The event was blessed with warm sunshine, soaring ospreys overhead, ribbiting frogs in the back-yard pond, great food and relaxing music. Additionally, to show our gracious appreciation, **rare** took the BBQ as an opportunity to honour Dr. Wynne Watson, a long-time friend and supporter of the charity's. On behalf of **rare**, Bill Wilson (a **rare** Environmental Advisory Committee Member) presented Dr. Watson with an award, recognizing his life-time dedication to Wildlife Sciences and Biology.

We would like to thank all donors and volunteers who have made a difference, contributing to the growing success of this organization. For all those who were able to attend this festive day, and also to those who had other engagements – a very deep thank you from all of us at **rare**.



Bill Wilson and Dr. Wayne Watson.

Photo by: Peter Kelly



Board Chair, Keith Ainsworth with musicians Diane Archer and Jay Field.

Photo by: Peter Kelly



Heather Wilson and Tarah Walsh.
Photo by: Patti Leather



Ken Seiling.
Photo by: Peter Kelly



Photo by: Peter Kelly



Photo by: Wayne Taylor

A Special Thankyou

Volunteers at **rare** contribute greatly towards much of its success. In the Winter, 2010 edition of the **rare** Newsletter, we published a 'Wish List' of items that included Eastern Bluebird nest boxes. Cambridge resident Wayne Taylor immediately responded to this need.

Wayne set out to design and construct 18 bluebird nest boxes in his backyard work shop. Wayne built these boxes with care. The attention to detail is obvious. The boxes are built to last; with Wayne choosing western red cedar over other cheaper woods because of its durability. The boxes are airtight (which is critical to the survival of the young), and easy to clean and put up. Plus, they are beautiful to look at. Quite simply, they are the Buckingham Palaces of nest boxes. Thanks Wayne on behalf of **rare** and the bluebirds!

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