



Fall 2013

Strengthening the "Chain of Learning" | By Jenna Quinn

The completion of the **rare ECO Centre** has allowed **rare** to add one more link in the *Chain of Learning*.

The slit barn provides an incredible space for conference-style events that are open to members of the community interested in learning about local research and environmental concerns.

This past spring, **rare** held its third annual Research Forum which saw over 40 guests attend to hear **rare** researchers discuss topics ranging from the ecological restoration of meadows to pollinators to small mammals and tallgrass prairies.

One month later, in association with Great Lakes United and the Grand River Environmental Network, **rare** welcomed members of REEP Green Solutions, the Region of Waterloo, the Grand River Conservation Authority and more to honour the United Nation's International Year of Water and dive into local water issues. Over 50 residents joined in to learn, discuss and debate local water conservation needs and practices.

These events allow **rare** to further extend the *Chain of Learning* to the community, offering opportunities for academic and professional researchers to share their results and experiences with the public, from the oldest citizen right down to the youngest learner.

The renovated Slit Barn and its companion farmhouse offer a unique venue for such events, but still need equipment such as a projector, screen, microphone, and podium, before they will be completed.

Watch for more great events to be held at the **rare ECO Centre**. Join in and become a link in the *Chain of Learning*!



Participants mingle outside the renovated Slit Barn during a break at **rare**'s Research Forum.



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Celebrating another environmental first in our region; *rare* opens North House, a one-of-a-kind institute

On June 6, 2013, *rare* Charitable Research Reserve, together with its partners and donors, officially opened North House – a solar-powered green housing prototype at its new permanent home at *rare*. The house will play a vital role in *rare*'s *Chain of Learning* concept and in the universities' ongoing research efforts.



University of Waterloo Team North members include (from L to R): Chloe Doesburg, Sonja Storey-Fleming, Natalie Jackson, Maun Demchenko, Lauren Barhydt, Chris Black, Andrew Marston and Professor David Lieberman.

North House was designed and built by students and faculty at the University of Waterloo and Ryerson University (Ontario) and Simon Fraser University (British Columbia). It won acclaim in 2009 when it placed fourth at an international solar decathlon organized by the United States Department of Energy.

Several former students of the University of Waterloo's Team North were present for the opening. Lauren Barhydt, Team North Project Coordinator, said, "I was asked to speak from the heart, and my heart is bursting with

excitement right now. It's incredible to revisit North House and we're so happy that it is at *rare*."



(Above) Dr. Savvas Chamberlain cuts the ribbon. (Below) Guests mingle and enjoy refreshments sponsored by Langdon Hall.

Transporting and assembling North House at *rare* has cost approximately \$400,000. The charity has a little left to raise so they can move on to program development.

Dr. Savvas Chamberlain and Linamar's Linda



Hasenfratz were among those on hand to help with the ribbon-cutting. Positive remarks from funders of the project like Chamberlain, and Ken Livy

representing Gateman Milloy, were a testament to the talents in our community and the good work of the *rare* organization. And yet still so few people in our Region know of this special place.

"I've lived in this community for 40 years and only in the last couple did I learn about this wonderful organization," Chamberlain told guests at the opening.

Erecting North House at *rare* ties in well with *rare*'s goal of preserving the 900+ acre reserve for future generations by focusing on research, education, conservation and ecological restoration. Tours are now available; check www.raresites.org for details.

Calling all new donors: It's A Natural Investment

The 2013 Federal Budget recently increased the federal tax credit for first-time donors on cash donations up to \$1,000 made after March 21, 2013. A donation of up to \$200 that once attracted a 15% tax credit has now increased to 40%. Similarly, donations greater than \$200 and up to the maximum of \$1,000 will be credited 54%, versus the current 29%.

To qualify as a first-time donor, you must be an individual or a trust who has not claimed the donation tax credit since 2007. First-time donor couples can share the increased tax credit.

To make a positive difference in the lives of our region's children, and receive a greater tax credit, please donate to *rare* today.



Children attending the March Break ECO Camp enjoy snowshoeing challenges during one of their outdoor excursions.

Nature Notes

By Bill Wilson (Full version available at www.raresites.org)

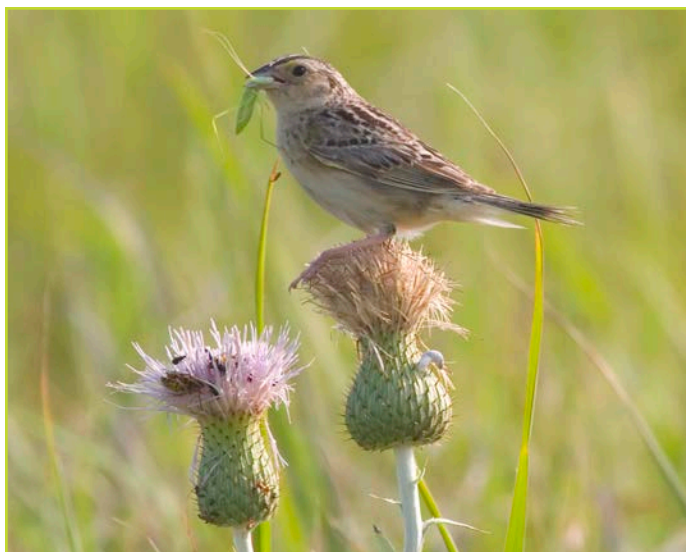


Initially a winter visitor in the 1990s and first decade of this century, the BALD EAGLE has established year-round feeding territory in and about **rare** at the confluence. Large trees along the river provide daytime roost sites and hunting perches that have been consistently used by eagles since first being observed here in the 1990s.

Fifteen species of waterfowl were observed during spring monitoring at the confluence. Highlights included: 38 RING-NECKED DUCKS on March 31; 13 BLUE-WINGED TEAL and 7 GREEN-WINGED TEAL on April 19; and both TUNDRA SWAN (small flocks) and TRUMPETER SWAN (3). COMMON MERGANSER is a regular winter visitor and spring migrant; 4 drakes remained on June 23.

For their April site visit, **rare** staff and bird monitors walked the Fountain Street Flats sector of the reserve from the shoreline of the Speed River to the property boundary at Moyers Blair Landing Park, City of Cambridge. Migrants sighted included GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLETS, FOX SPARROW, BLUE-WINGED TEAL, 3 PIED-BILLED GREBES and a pair of BALD EAGLES.

Spring 2013 will be remembered by bird banders and monitors at **rare** for its cool temperatures and clear blue skies during most banding/monitoring mornings. Atmospheric conditions over the lower Great Lakes did not produce significant fallout of birds, and as a result, **rare** banders Kevin Grundy and George Hentsch had more “unemployed” fingers to count than birds to remove from banding nets. Recaptured birds, however, did provide highlights: a male AMERICAN REDSTART banded at **rare** in 2008 was re-caught. Breeding at **rare**, this insectivorous warbler winters in Mexico south



A grasshopper sparrow, perched upon a thistle, holds a grasshopper in its beak. Photo by David Rintoul.

through Central America and West Indies to Ecuador and southern Venezuela. So far, this individual has made ten migration trips. On May 4, Kevin re-trapped 2 YELLOW WARBLERS, one first banded in 2008 and the second in 2011. This species, which is the most common warbler breeding at **rare**, also winters from Mexico south through Central America.



Two majestic bald eagles. Photo by Don Thomas.

Bird monitoring at **rare**'s wetland sites documented a number of Regionally Significant Species. Jason Bracey and Marco and Donna DeBruin observed as many as 11 WOOD DUCKS in the Red Maple Swamp sector of the Thompson Tract in mid-April. Larry Hubble spotted HOODED MERGANSER and PIED-BILLED GREBE in the Hogsback on May 5. During the first half of May, Jerry Guenther and Bill Wilson monitored Blair Flats Slough where they observed 2 SORA, 2 VIRGINIA RAIL, 2 WILSON'S SNIPE and SWAMP SPARROW.

In mid-May, Marilyn Armstrong observed 22 WHITE-TAILED DEER in the Osprey Meadow; Michael Collins reported a COYOTE with at least one pup in the Thompson Tract.

In June, while birding in the vicinity of the **rare ECO Centre**, Ruth Kroft found her first hummingbird nest. Such a nest is rarely located. During the 2001-2005 Ontario Breeding Bird Atlas, only 3 per cent of confirmed breeding records for RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD were nests; the majority of confirmations were of fledged young observed at feeders.

The status of grassland birds in Ontario has become a focus for conservation efforts. For example, in 2010, BOBOLINK and EASTERN MEADOWLARK were designated Species at Risk – Endangered - in the province. GRASSHOPPER SPARROW has declined during the last decade in the Carolinian Region of the province by 48 per cent (**rare** lies at the northern interface of the Carolinian/Lake Simcoe-Rideau Regions). This spring, monitors documented breeding evidence for six species of sparrow including a successful nesting by GRASSHOPPER SPARROW; both BOBOLINK and EASTERN MEADOWLARK were “on territory” and exhibiting breeding behavior. Monitoring continued throughout the early summer to determine the breeding status of these species at **rare**. Stay tuned for more details!



Have some **rare** finds of your own?

Should you wish to share, contact **rare** Nature Notes by emailing rare@raresites.org with “Nature Notes” in the subject line.

Mirrored Research: A big part of learning | By Gerrit Kamminga

Is Mirrored Research the study of light's preserved reflection? Perhaps it occurs when an individual gazes deeply into the eyes peering back at him from a bathroom mirror. At **rare**, the phrase, Mirrored Research refers solely to the embodiment of **rare's** *Chain of Learning* philosophy in our school programs.

As a research facility, **rare** has been home to over 30 studies investigating various species, habitats, and phenomena occurring here. This, in addition to the ecological monitoring happening annually, provides knowledge about the health of the property and contributes to a vast pool of scientific research in a variety of disciplines. The Mirrored Research program aims to take these studies, research practices and knowledge and make them accessible and applicable to school groups and curricular objectives for each class or grade. We take a multi-disciplinary approach incorporating science, geography, physical education, and even math into many of our programs. Our *Chain of Learning* strives to make academic and real-world research comprehensive and applicable to all learners, closing the gap between students and professionals, and fostering a passion and responsibility for our environment and our ecological understanding.

Currently, our Mirrored Research program packages this philosophy into an opportunity for school groups to explore the various research methods and equipment currently being used to assess the health of **rare** lands via ecological monitoring. We offer opportunities to monitor butterflies while learning about diversity and evenness of communities, check salamander cover boards and experience hands-on research practices, and investigate the health of forest stands while learning tree identification and gaining practical experience with forestry equipment. Looking forward, our Mirrored Research program will continue to expand and link students to academic research occurring right here in Waterloo Region.



Pictured above are Ryan, Jesse and Ryan of Southwood Secondary School.

On the bright, dewy morning of May 30, 15 grade 11 students, accompanied by their teacher, Christopher Giesler, arrived from Southwood Secondary School to partake in **rare's** unique Mirrored Research program. With ever-widening eyes, the students were assigned 10-meter bubbles. It was their duty to spot, identify, and record all-encompassing butterflies using equipment and methods correlative to existing monitoring practices found at **rare**.

Thanks to generous funding provided by NSERC PromoScience, students were able to perform their tasks using field guides, butterfly nets, pop-up cages, and scientific calculators that would not look out of place among a researcher's inventory. Following a standard butterfly monitoring time of 15 minutes, students finished identifying their last elusive butterfly and observed wind speed, air temperature, and per cent cloud cover. Armed with their own datasets, our newly appointed butterfly monitors were then instructed on how to calculate and compare relative species abundance through statistical analysis.

Book your class trip for Fall 2013 today! Call **rare** Educator, Gerrit Kamminga at 519-650-9336 ext.123, and bring your class out for a memorable and interactive Mirrored Research experience.

www.raresites.org

Sunday, September 29, 2013

2013 WALK for rare



& ECO Centre GRAND OPENING

JOIN
US!

REGISTER
TODAY!

HELP US
CELEBRATE!

FUNDRAISE
WITH US!

rarebits

Students taking part in the Mirrored Research Butterfly Program observed the regionally rare Silver-bordered Fritillary while counting butterflies at **rare**. This butterfly was later observed during **rare** monitoring.



This spring, **rare** hosted corporate groups from Fiber-netics and Aeropostale. With their enthusiastic help, we made great headway clearing out historic debris from the Osprey Tower Trail. The corporate program is a model whereby an external organization pays its employees as if they are at their normal place of work. The host organization then gets enthusiastic, cost-free labour for the day. As an added benefit, new people are exposed to the wonders of **rare**, allowing us to add to the growing list of people that are invested in the protection of this magnificent property. We would like to thank both of these organizations for providing us with great groups. If you wish to discuss corporate work day opportunities for your place of employment, please contact Shawna Craig, Land Steward, at 519-650-9336 ext. 121 or shawna.craig@raresites.org. Pictured below is the Fiber-netics group.



Over 50 community members attended the "Water Symposium: Conserve and Protect" in early June, learning, sharing and sparking interests and passions about a basic element that none of us can live without.

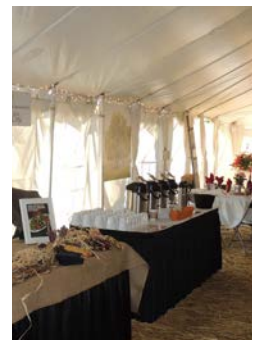


Through the dedicated work of Anne McLagan and Bill Reed, **rare**'s eastern bluebird box program has been resurrected in 2013. Final numbers of fledged birds include 91 tree swallows, and 21 eastern bluebirds. While the program's overarching goal is to provide exclusive nesting habitat for eastern bluebirds, other cavity nesters such as tree swallows and house wrens often compete with the bluebirds. The information gathered through this program will help inform **rare**'s exploration of passive techniques that will hopefully result in an even higher representation of bluebirds in 2014. Photo courtesy of Anne McLagan.



Have you joined us yet on Facebook, Twitter or YouTube? On Facebook every Wednesday, we present our followers with a word of the day to increase their understanding of the natural world around us. On Thursdays, we look through the binoculars - extreme close-up - and ask you to guess what we have posted. Keep up-to-date with our current events and thoughts on Twitter. Our YouTube channel hosts a number of videos, the most recent of which explains our Every Child Outdoors initiative and stars long-time rare volunteers, Bill Wilson and Jason Bracey (pictured here, respectively). For all social media, find us using our tag: **raresites**.

Blue Jays tickets hit a home run! After supporting **rare** through a bid at our Boots and Bolo Barn Dance auction, two generous supporters helped **rare** - in cooperation with Kinbridge Community Association - give a very special young person a day she won't soon forget. By donating back the tickets and limo ride, a child who loves baseball - and wouldn't otherwise have the means - experienced the thrill of seeing a live game. THANK YOU to all who came to the Barn Dance as participants, volunteers, sponsors or donors!



Volunteers assist in restoration projects | By Shawna Craig

Spring was a busy time for restoration projects at **rare** with well over 100 volunteers participating in a variety of projects. These projects included: tree, shrub, and flower planting at the **rare ECO Centre** and the landscape surrounding North House; the planting of mature caliper trees in a native tree arboretum; mulching trails; and the building and placement of boardwalks.

While all participants were eager to participate in the planting, they also gained knowledge about the specific and unique challenges facing each project site. For example, since North House derives its energy from the sun, a perceptive grade six class from St. Aloysius correctly deduced that **rare** needed to consider the mature height of all selected plants to avoid blocking the path of the sun to the house. They also accurately noted that attracting native pollinators would have been another consideration.

At the **rare ECO Centre** site, Jason Bracey's grade 12 class diligently planted groupings of 10-12 native grass plugs, learning that this clumping of like-species helps in the re-establishment of the plants year after year. Given the presence of some non-native plants around the **rare ECO Centre**, the class understood that the buffer of more mature grasses and flowers that they planted are vital in preventing invasive plants from moving into spaces where there had been bare soil.

And now, we wait and monitor. Restoration, like many things in the natural world, requires time and patience before we can really see how effective it has been in repairing the landscape.

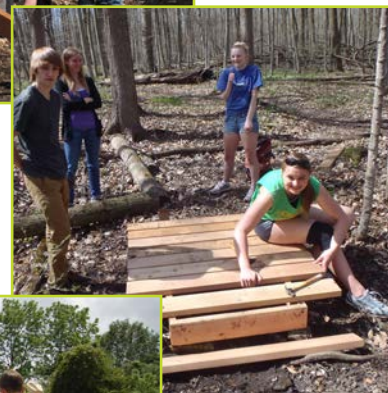
With the help of 23 students from Rockway Mennonite Collegiate participating in their Environmental Serve-a-thon, approximately 70 feet of trail was mulched and 24 feet of new boardwalk was strategically placed in seasonal wet zones. When trails cannot easily be re-routed without creating additional environmental impacts, boardwalks ensure that hikers do not go off or 'braid' the trail in attempts to keep their feet dry.

Finally, passing through the CAFKA archway leading to the Grand Trunk Trail, you may notice some new saplings. A total of 14 native trees were planted, flanking the trail on both sides, by five new **rare** volunteers. Although our poor Black Maple has already been devoured by white-tailed deer, the other trees seem to be enjoying their new location. Watch for future signs indicating the different species represented in the loop.

The **rare Charitable Research Reserve** gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Community Environment Fund administered by the Regional Municipality of Waterloo for supporting the restoration projects at North House and the **rare ECO Centre**.



Pictured above and right: Students from Rockway Mennonite Collegiate put their muscles to good use building a boardwalk for one of the **rare** trails.



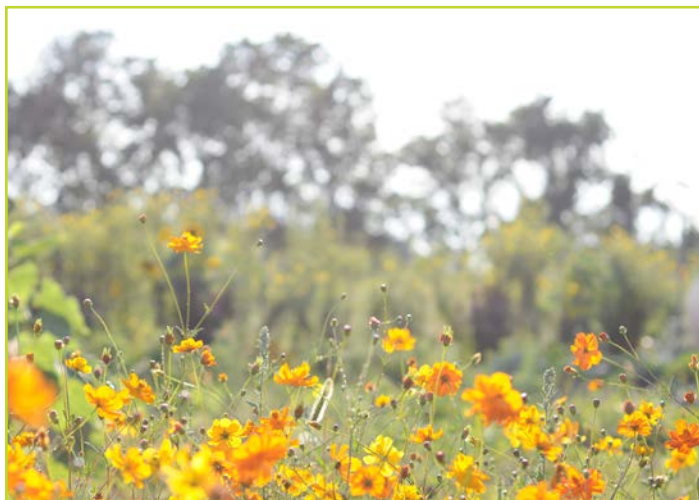
Pictured left and below: Students from St. Aloysius School were not afraid to get their hands dirty with a day of planting tree seedlings.



Calling all Teachers! Get away from ordinary & into the extraordinary... Register for an unforgettable, hands-on **FALL EDUCATION PROGRAM**

Call our Educators at 519-650-9336 ext. 114 or 123 for more information

What do your decisions for the future say about your values today?



Planned giving. Legacy giving. Bequests. All are terms used to describe an individual's choice to support a favourite charity *today* by making a gift that the organization will receive in the *future*. A bequest is a gift in your will specifying that a certain percentage of your estate, a particular asset, or a specific dollar amount is to be directed to a named beneficiary. Planned giving can also include gifts of life insurance.

These types of donations often seem complicated and it can be overwhelming to think about dealing with matters that could take place many years down the road. But, choosing to make a planned gift or leaving a bequest doesn't have to be worrisome. The most important thing is to know that you can make a meaningful, lasting impact for a charity you believe in. And by being prepared with your ideas, you can get sound, professional advice and help enacting your decision.

You receive **rare** updates and mailings and we hope you enjoy keeping abreast of what is happening on the reserve

and in our organization. Your association with the project suggests there is some aspect of what the organization is doing that you value and find important. Thank you for your interest and support.

Do you want to ensure that there will continue to be rural landscapes here in Ontario in the future? Perhaps you believe in the importance of preserving trees and clean water as a source of health. Maybe you want to help scientists make important environmental discoveries through their study of ecological matters on the reserve. Probably you agree that children deserve every opportunity to live, learn and play in a healthy environment and that what we help teach them today prepares them for tomorrow. It could simply be that you like having nature trails to walk on, or a place to go birding.

Whatever aspect of **rare** most aligns with your values, please consider what support you can provide. In Southern Ontario, where rapid urbanization and population growth put increasing demands on our natural resources, the case for preserving this land has never been so compelling.

Please talk to your professional advisor about a donation to **rare** as part of your estate planning. If you feel you need more information, we are happy to send you sample wording that others have used. You are also welcome to attend our next information session about Planned Giving with partner professionals from our community.

If you would like to be invited to this session, please call or email Patti at 519-650-9336 ext. 118 or patti.leather@raresites.org. There is no obligation to give by attending – we simply encourage you to learn more about leaving a legacy, how easy it can be and what an impact it can have.

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



Yes – I want to support **rare**

Name _____ Telephone _____

Mailing Address with City and Postal Code _____

Giving Options

☐ I'll help **rare** now and every month. I would like **rare** to receive my pre-authorized monthly donation of \$_____ to be automatically withdrawn on the 15th of every month using:

☐ Payment from my chequing account **OR** ☐ Credit Card ("VOID" cheque enclosed)

OR

☐ I am enclosing my one-time gift of:
\$20 \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 or \$_____

☐ I have enclosed my cheque payable to:

rare Charitable Research Reserve

1679 Blair Road
Cambridge, ON N3H 4R8

Tel. (519) 650.9336

Email: patti.leather@raresites.org
www.raresites.org

☐ Please charge my gift to:

☐ VISA ☐ M/C ☐ A/E

Card No. _____

Expires _____ Signature _____

☐ Please send me information about planned giving.

☐ Please add my email address to receive e-news from **rare**:

☐ Please add my name to your list of Founders, to be displayed permanently at **rare** upon completion of the capital campaign. I'd like my name displayed as: _____

Tent ring discovered | By John MacDonald

A circle or oval of stones that once held down the edges of a skin-covered tent is known as a tent ring and is a staple of the Arctic cultural landscape north of the treeline. In many areas of the Arctic, the ground can be more rock than soil, so rocks are used to fasten the tent against strong winds instead of attempting to pound in tent pegs.

While mapping certain features of the Cliffs and Alvars area of **rare**, advisor John MacDonald and Director of Research and Education, Katherine McLeod, came upon an unexpected discovery: a moss-covered stone tent ring.



Tent ring discovered in Cliffs and Alvars area at **rare**, March 2013.

The tent ring is 10 feet (three metres) in diameter, made of flat-to-blockish limestone rocks stacked two or three high, and contiguous around the ring.

An archaeologist, MacDonald has recorded hundreds of tent rings in the Canadian Arctic, but has seen this particular style at only one location on Baffin Island. Although the moss thickness suggests the tent ring is not recent, it does not tell us how old it is. The ring could be 50 years or 5,000 plus years old. The tent ring remains undisturbed, awaiting a formal investigation of the interior space for associated artefacts that may help determine its age.



Tent ring from Baffin Island. Photographs courtesy of J. MacDonald.

Understanding the magic of the world | By Jenna Quinn

Even as a young child, Eric was looking for answers to explain the magic of the world around him. Through his schooling, he was exposed to the scientific method which provided him the tool he needed to start exploring. Eric shares, "The world was still magical, but now there was an objective, powerful and self-evolving framework to understand it."

Now pursuing his Ph.D. at the University of Guelph, Eric's passion for ecology remains unwavering. His research focuses on tallgrass prairie, a habitat that is disappearing in southern Ontario, and investigates how species may return to these habitats if rebuilt. These results will help inform restoration work both at **rare** and beyond and will add to our knowledge of the detrimental effects of habitat fragmentation - a serious concern in one of the fastest growing regions in Canada.

Eric is an enthusiastic supporter of **rare** and is quick to share his experiences with colleagues and the community. "It is a very rare opportunity in science to have access to such an amazing location, close to our campus, and with an amazingly supportive staff. Of all

the Ph.D. opportunities I had in front of me, none of them could match the possibility offered by **rare**." In conjunction with Dr. Andrew MacDougall (University of Guelph), Eric runs one of the largest grassland habitat fragmentation experiments in Canada and **rare** is thrilled to be involved. Upon being presented with the scholarship, Eric replied, "I am really happy to be a small, humble part of **rare** now, and I thank the organization for the funding support. It is essential to me and my research!" For more information about Eric's research and publications, visit <http://ericharvey.weebly.com/index.html>.



Eric Harvey looks forward to conducting research at **rare**.

The **rare** Scholarship in Graduate Research was started in 2008 with support from the Cloverleaf Foundation. A scholarship benefactor is being sought to ensure that **rare** can continue to offer this deserved opportunity to young, bright minds. Scholarship naming opportunities exist. Please call Patti at 519-650-9336 x 118 if you wish to help.

Lamb's Inn boasts colourful past

By Bob Burt

Lamb's Inn, administrative home to **rare** Charitable Research Reserve, has a rich history reaching back to the early days of settlement in what was then known as New Carlisle - now Blair.

Built in 1837, it was one of the first stagecoach stops in Upper Canada and has since served as a hotel, tavern, several restaurants, a café and a lawn ornament business.

John Lamb built the inn on land he bought from Benjamin B. Bowman. In the beginning, it served as an inn and a stop on the London-to-Hamilton stagecoach line. In the early days, the stagecoach also carried mail.

The building has had several owners. Lamb sold to George Clemens in 1856, who in turn, sold in 1870. Owners included George Miller in 1887, Jacob Hertel in 1895 and later, Issaac (Ike) Hertel and Martin Jang and Charles Quirmback who operated the hotel in the early 1900s.

Even with a number of owners, the hotel survived and seemed to prosper until prohibition (1918-20).

Under Hertel's stewardship, the place was known as the Blair Hotel. In 1927, Ada and William Nicholson of Niagara Falls, New York, bought the franchise. It was then that the name changed to Nicholson's Inn and became a well-regarded dining establishment.

With the death of William Nicholson in 1939, the inn gradually became a local drinking place. Lax liquor laws and a new clientele that included a younger, less restrained crowd left the tavern with a reputation as a loud, rowdy place.

Jan Ligget and Les Kadar took over the property in 1993 and used it to operate their garden ornament business.

After renting space in the building for a couple years, **rare** bought the building in 2005 and is the sole occupant today. The headquarters is conveniently located close to the 900+ acre reserve that it is committed to preserving the



Lamb's Inn, early 20th century. Photo courtesy of Kitchener Public Library.

culturally and ecologically significant land intact and in perpetuity.

Lamb was one of many people who operated inns on a stagecoach route that linked Blair with Berlin (Kitchener).

The coaches played an important role, but apparently made no claim to comfort. One account of a traveler in 1853 described a night journey with the "wretched stagecoach" from Preston to Berlin, in which "one had to hold tight onto oneself and one's luggage in order not to fall out."

For that, passengers would pay two shillings.

The building has a storied past.

Rumour has it that Lamb was killed by an angry patron when he refused to sell the patron more drink.

Isaac Hertel, one of the owners, is said to have been a strong man who stood six feet in height and had hands twice the size of other men. Legend has it that if a patron had too much to drink, Isaac would dunk his head in a trough at the back of the hotel and send the customer home.

Hertel's strength and size would, no doubt, serve him well in his other vocation as county constable.

Grade five students from Hepseler Public School wrote, as part of a thank you to our educators, some haikus based upon their experience at **rare** during one of their school visits. We are pleased to share a selection of this beautiful poetry:

We went to a place
conserving lands was its wish
hi, welcome to **rare**
~Marko

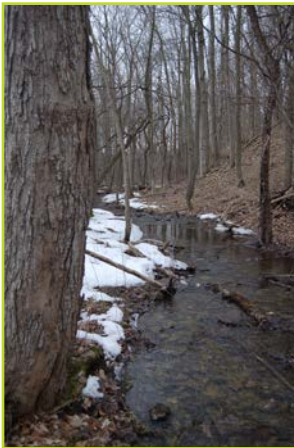
Trees, growing new leaves
whistling in the summer wind
rare was so much fun
~Bryn

A tall grassy field
a very small solar house
never to forget!
~Unknown

In the morning light
flowers grow by the barn
petals are glowing
~Daniela

Tracing the trail of Cruickston Creek

By John MacDonald and Katherine Mcleod



Cold water creeks flow through **rare**, creating important habitat for cold water species and contributing to the water quality of the Grand River. The Environmental Management Plan for **rare** identified the need to clarify the route of Cruickston Creek north of Blair Road.

In August 2001, Heather and Bill Wilson traced Cruickston Creek north from Blair Road, where they described the creek channel

as becoming "...braided and difficult to follow in places... and disappears underground within a wet meadow." The topographic map of the area shows Cruickston Creek flowing from the wetland area north of Blair Road northwestward to join the Grand River in the western section of the River Trail, but this route had not been verified on the ground.

Observations reported by John MacDonald indicated that most, if not all, creeks in the Cliffs and Alvars region of **rare** are dry by mid-summer with water flowing only after heavy rains. In an effort to complete the mapping of Cruickston Creek, we set out, over several days in late winter/early spring when water flow was near its maximum, to follow the course of Cruickston Creek north of Blair Road.

The character of Cruickston Creek on either side of Blair Road is strikingly different. From the Hogsback to Blair Road, the creek is strewn with cobbles and boulders and the channel is clear. From Blair Road north, the creek initially winds its way in the direction of the wetlands, the channel is lined with sand and pebbles, and is approximately 30 centimetres wide. Although our surrounding ground was still snow-covered during our treks, the swift, flowing creek was open until it reached the wetland area, where it had a thin (less than two centimetre) coat of ice and small openings. The creek channel was then deduced by following the path of actively flowing water through this wetland area dominated by staid waters.

At the north edge of the wetland is the Grand Trunk Trail at which point two distinct channels were observed: the western channel flows northeast under the trail through a culvert, and the eastern channel paralleled the trail for approximately 110 metres eastward, then flowed northeast through a second culvert.

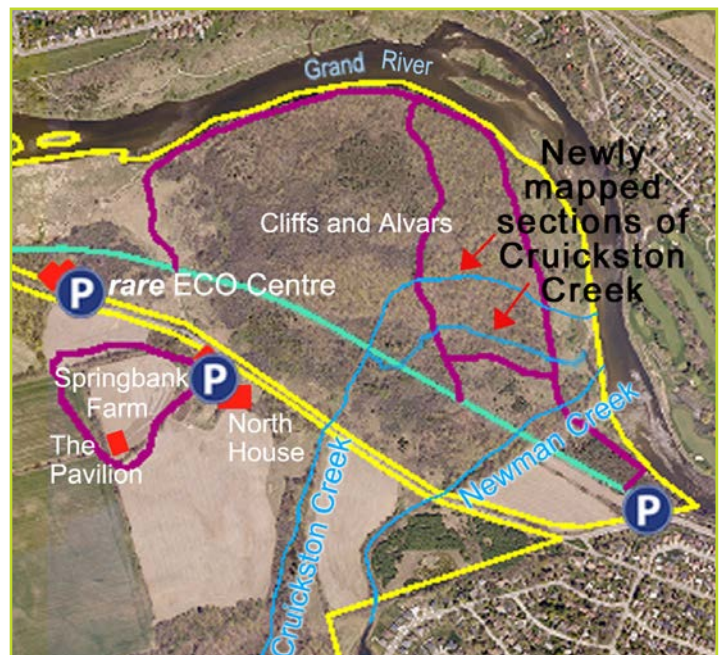
The western channel remains narrow and distinct as it flows through an extensive wetland area, and then abruptly widens and deepens into a boulder-strewn gully within a

mature deciduous forest. Heading eastward and passing under the Woodland Trail, the channel narrows with a silt-dominated bed as it enters a mixed forest. The channel flows through another gully sided by limestone and eventually enters a wide, flat valley bordered by limestone cliffs. Here there was no water flow, even though a distinct channel was present. The western channel of Cruickston Creek passes under a small boardwalk on the River Trail and continues on to meet the Grand River.

The second eastern channel flows through a poorly drained area of thick scrub in a near-straight path from the Grand Trunk Trail to the Woodland Trail. From there, it flows through a deep, narrow valley, lined in some places with limestone cliffs and in other places with moss-covered limestone rubble. From the Woodland Trail to the River Trail, this western channel descends approximately 10 metres in elevation. The channel reaches the River Trail at the 'stone steps,' flows under a boardwalk, and abruptly turns north to meet the Grand River.

There was no visible evidence that this creek channel ever turned south to join Newman Creek to enter the Grand River at the mouth of a long inlet, as depicted by the 1971 soils map of Waterloo County. In fact, we found that Newman Creek channel does not reach the Grand River, but rather dissipates into a swale at the bottom of the cliffs, more than 50 metres from the river.

This information on the flow of Cruickston Creek north of Blair Road, with two channels meeting the Grand River near the eastern section of the River Trail, will be added to the trail map being developed for the Cliffs and Alvars area.



Food bank program takes root at *rare* | By Bob Burtt

A new program has sprung roots at Springbank Gardens this year and, if all goes well, will result in an abundance of fresh, locally-grown food for members of the Cambridge Self Help Food Bank.

The program, devised by volunteer gardener Allister Thorne, along with *rare* staff, is funded in part by the Government of Canada's New Horizons for Seniors program.

The grant will allow for a new utility vehicle capable of carrying six seniors with their supplies or harvest between the parking lot and the gardens. The funding will also pay for ergonomic tools designed for use by seniors; a shed to store tools and personal items; and a social area where the volunteers can rest, visit and share a drink or a bite to eat.

Springbank Gardens Coordinator, Daniel Radoslav, said the program is a good fit for *rare*. "With the adaptive, ergonomic tools, along with the wealth of knowledge of our more experienced volunteers, everyone can feel comfortable getting up to the garden to help out.

"The benefits also stretch to personal health because people of all ages get the chance to be outside, enjoying healthy activity while becoming a part of a great group of people that makes up Springbank Gardens," he said.

"A project such as this contributes to the Cambridge area's food security in two ways: it increases the fresh food

grown locally while also teaching the public how to grow their own food, giving the area a greater growing potential.

"We believe everyone deserves the right to healthy, fresh food but a project of this scale would not be possible without support from the Government of Canada. Volunteers are also integral players and show the generous nature of the people in Cambridge."

Allister is in his third year as a community gardener at *rare* and has an interest in self-sufficiency and personal and community resilience.

The idea, he says, is to have 20 or more seniors or near-seniors and 50 volunteers of any age spending time each week in the gardens. But the project, known as the Community Roots/Seniors Project, is about more than growing food or supporting food bank users.

"We'd like to have not only a shed to store tools, but a place to foster social interaction among volunteers. We plan to have barbecues and social events."

So far this year, tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, herbs, broccoli, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, potatoes, beans, beats, zucchini, cucumbers and three varieties of squash have been planted.



Above: Gardener, Dave Smith mows the lawn.

Below: (L to R) Volunteer gardeners Robin Tsandelis, Julie Ha, Allister Thorne and Laura Fernandez tend the land.

Food being offered from the gardens at *rare* will be a welcome addition and help meet the dietary needs of food bank clients.

"There's lots that can be done," Thorne says, noting the possibility of canning and preserving tomatoes. In the future, it might be possible to sell excess food at the Farmers' Market and use the proceeds to support the ongoing program.

Last year, *rare* hosted a Food Bank garden run by volunteers and Food Bank clients. Even though it was a hard year for gardening, having been hot and dry, a total of about 1,200 pounds of food found its way to homes throughout the city.



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