

# ANNUAL REPORT

2019-2020



Red fox. Photo by Michelle Graham





# Land Acknowledgement

Founded on December 6, 2001, the *rare* Charitable Research Reserve is a community-driven urban land trust, nature reserve and environmental institute. The reserve's headquarters and first seven locations comprise over 1,200 acres of conservation lands. Most of these lands are located within the Haldimand Tract. Spanning six miles on either side of the Grand River from source to mouth, the Haldimand Tract is land granted to the Six Nations of the Grand River in 1784 to recognize their support for the British in the American Revolution. With the most recent expansion to Guelph/Wellington, *rare* also stewards lands that are at the border of the Upper Canada Treaty No. 3 from 1792 and Treaty 19 from 1818.

For all its properties, *rare* acknowledges and is grateful to the original stewards of the land. This land has been rich in diverse Indigenous presence since time immemorial. We would like to honour and respect the sovereignty of the First Nations in our area: the Onkwehon:we Peoples of Six Nations of the Grand River and the Anishinaabe Peoples of the Mississaugas of the Credit. Nia:wen and Miigwech (thank you) to these Nations who share their lands with us. We would also like to acknowledge the Neutral people and Indigenous Paleo-Hunters, for whom we have archeological evidence dating back 10,500 years. Today, these lands are also home to many other First Nations, Métis and Inuit people who have moved to the area from across Turtle Island.

## Our Mission, Vision and Values

### Our Mission

Through the combined efforts of the community, including local Indigenous Peoples, and *rare*'s team of staff, advisors and artists, we will co-create the most inclusive practices and answers to environmental issues, stewarding the reserve's diverse network of natural landscapes for ecological integrity and future generations.

### Our Vision

To offer the community, including local Indigenous Peoples, the international community and future generations, a diverse network of connected natural areas, protected intact in perpetuity. As an international leader in conservation, research, restoration and education, *rare* will serve as a model system that not only demonstrates the link between ecological integrity and economic sustainability but includes meaningful relationships with Indigenous Peoples, both of which are critical for the enhancement and quality of life of the planet.

### Our Values

- Honouring place
- Conserving biodiversity
- Embracing Indigenous knowledge systems
- Committing to relationships and Indigenous resurgence
- Strengthening science
- Building diverse, equitable and inclusive communities
- Training the next generation of land stewards



# Dear *rare* Supporters,

Looking back at 2020 is, in many ways, like looking at a collective global trauma that most are ready to leave behind. As with any trauma, this experience will always stay deep in our hearts and minds. I believe it is our collective responsibility to learn how to endure it better in the future. Voices are getting louder, not simply asking to go “back to normal,” but rather advocating that we use this experience as a reset that enables us to rebuild a foundation for a future that is more just and more sustainable than before.

In this report, you will read about the many ways *rare*’s programs needed to adjust in response to the restrictions and challenges that we faced and about the dedicated donors who helped us to do so. Although we mourned the reduction of *rare*’s important community work, the break from our usual routine did allow us the opportunity to re-focus internally, as an organization and as individuals. We put processes and ideas in place that continue to help us not only to meet our organizational goals and to address community needs but, despite the distance, to grow together as a team of staff and volunteers. Together, we are creating a workplace where meaningful change can happen.

Many practices that were already informally part of our workplace culture, such as working from home and enabling staff to work flexible hours were formalized and will continue to be an important piece of the work-life balance of the people who make up *rare*. The past year has reminded us how much family, friends, pets and so many other things we take for granted shape our lives and contribute to our happiness. We want to make time for — and to celebrate — the many things that matter to us while we do meaningful work for the benefit of the planet and our communities.

And although *rare* has always acknowledged that everything is connected, including the multitude of issues our world and communities are facing, we want to deepen our understanding of the implications. We are blessed to have a close relationship with our partner organization, Musagetes, and we have been working to amplify our shared goals to make the arts and the environment more central and meaningful in people’s lives. Together we are learning more about how to integrate this approach in our day-to-day conservation work as we continue to develop an approach to conservation that goes beyond data-driven science to being hands-on and action oriented.

The past year also saw *rare* implement an Anti-Racism and Equity Task Force, led by Tamanna Kohi and Istafa Sufi. Some of our staff, advisors and board belong to racialized or other communities facing oppression. They work and live within a culture that continues to be dominated by white, settler, cis-gendered, heteronormative, able-bodied individuals and their world views. It is apparent that systemic racism exists in the conservation community and in environmental organizations throughout Canada and beyond. Historic and present-day barriers disadvantage Black, Indigenous and other People of Colour (BIPOC) in all areas of their lives.

To support BIPOC graduate students making environmental contributions through science, art, and diverse inquiry, a new \$5,000 Ages Foundation Fellowship was created that is specifically designated for BIPOC students. We continue to encourage individuals from marginalized communities to apply for positions at *rare* and have implemented an application process that is geared towards removing selection bias.

These are only small steps taken and it will continue to be a work in progress for us. One thing we learned is that it is simply not good enough to be anti-racist. As a land-based organization we specifically need to continue our focus on building meaningful relationships and a process of decolonization which upholds and acknowledges Indigenous nationhood and the associated rights and responsibilities. This is difficult work, but we cannot hold back for fear of mistakes; we must learn from our mistakes to do the work better. In light of the heartbreaking news confirming a burial site of 215 children on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School — one of many such institutions where settler individuals over decades mistreated and murdered Indigenous children — we paused our virtual events and online activities on social media for a number of weeks in May and June to reflect on the different forms of violence perpetuated by the settler-colonial state.

As an organization embedded in colonial systems, we recognize that we, too, are implicated in reproducing harmful settler patterns that are systemic and enduring. We recognize the importance of committing to a pathway of learning and unlearning that will be long, challenging and uncomfortable. Our organization is taking the time to learn from past mistakes in order to take the steps towards more generative forms of solidarity and collaboration with local Indigenous nations. Critical feedback we have received from community members signals the need for us to do the difficult work that is necessary for our organization to engage and relate differently to the complexity of demands of our uncertain times. Our steps in this process will be made public.

Thank you for continuing to join us on our journey of conservation, research and education. We can’t wait to share with you what we accomplish together in the months to come!

With gratitude,



Dr. Stephanie Sobek-Swant  
Executive Director











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## REPORTING ON OUR GOALS

To learn more about our goals for the years ahead, read *A Place to Connect; Strategy & Plans: 2020-2024* online at [raresites.org](https://raresites.org). Our strategic plans are based on sessions held with community members, staff, advisors, artists, Indigenous knowledge keepers, researchers, educators, and others who contribute to our work.



# CONSERVATION

At *rare*, “conservation” is defined by our intention to be caretakers of the land and all the relationships within, including the biodiversity native to it. Conservation in this context is very different from “fortress conservation,” which is based on the belief that biodiversity protection is best achieved by creating protected areas where ecosystems can function in isolation from human interference. However, humans have the potential and ability to enhance the environment when it is cared for and treated in reciprocity — which is the goal of conservation at *rare* — and something we encourage everyone to see as an inherent responsibility.



Eramosa Corridor Property One. Photos by T. Woodcock



## CONSERVING MORE LAND, FOREVER

Acquiring Property One near Rockwood was our first step in realizing *rare*’s vision for the Eramosa River Conservation Corridor. This acquisition would have been impossible without the commitment of donors large and small. No fewer than 36 individuals, companies, and foundations gave what they could to protect this beautiful system of wetlands, forests, and floodplains surrounding the Eramosa River. This is the first of several properties in the Eramosa Corridor that *rare* will protect and steward for the future benefit of wildlife and the community.

### FEATURED DONOR

*“...my husband Guy and I have become sensitized to the need to protect our environment from callous exploitation or careless indifference. Guy was born on his family farm and spent his entire working life there. We read with appreciation and excitement *rare*’s magazine article about the bobolink, which had long since departed from his farm’s neighbourhood. Both of us had sadly noted their absence and missed the unique, cheery singing and flight of these beautiful birds. We were pleased to know that *rare* promotes the welfare of bobolinks and other songbirds through concerted efforts to obtain lands to be preserved as habitat for them as well as other wildlife. Thanks to *rare*, generations following ours will experience the pleasure of seeing and listening to these beautiful creatures sharing and enhancing our living space.”*

— Guy and Janice Orr, Rockwood, ON, Property One donors





Building the VermiDigester. Photo by T. Jarvis

## THE NEW VERMIDIGESTOR

In the 2020 growing season, the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank and the Compost Council of Canada invited *rare's* gardens team to participate in a new composting effort. This project is aimed at minimizing any fresh food waste created at the food bank.

The Compost Council of Canada installed an industrial compost tumbler to break down food scraps at the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank and set up a 'VermiDigester' system at *rare*. Once food scraps are broken down, they are delivered to the VermiDigester. This specially-designed compost bin houses thousands of worms that convert organic materials into a high-quality, humus-like material known as vermicompost. Vermicompost is extremely beneficial for soil health due to its retention of soil moisture

and contains more nutrients and nitrates for plant growth than regular compost. Introducing worm castings into the garden soil adds a thriving microbial community that aids soil health — and studies have shown that crops grown with vermicompost result in higher yields. Part of managing the Food Bank Gardens at *rare* means continually improving soil quality, so the opportunity to have a new vermicomposting station on-site was an exciting addition!

The finished compost will be used directly in the food bank garden this spring at *rare* to nourish the organic produce we grow and donate to the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank. The education team at *rare* will also be teaching children's programs about this beneficial community food-recycling system with lots of wiggly friends!

## WHAT'S AHEAD?

With the implementation of the *raresites* Land Securement Strategy, expanding *rare's* umbrella to protect more habitats, *rare* will be making multiple exciting announcements in the upcoming year. Since 2019, we have successfully added more than 190 protected acres, or five new properties in three target areas, to the 900+ acres of our original Blair Property land holdings. Even more land acquisitions are planned in 2021. Southern Ontario is one of the most biodiverse areas in Canada, yet has some of the highest development pressures and the lowest percentage of protected land in the country. It is critical to protect the local ecological services that enable our population to thrive. These local conservation efforts also contribute to meeting our global commitments to protect 30% of Canada's lands by 2030. Ontario's diverse wetlands, woodlands and open spaces must be properly stewarded, now and into the future.



Snapping turtle hatchling. Photo by L. Caputo

## THE TURTLE PROJECT

*"Watching turtles nest along the Eramosa River, so close to downtown Guelph, truly makes you realize that nature is closer to home than one might think. Volunteering with *rare* to support urban populations of turtles has been incredibly rewarding and I look forward to it every year. I am so glad there is a local organization to get involved with that is working to increase the survival rate of local native wildlife through programs like the Turtle Project."*

— Sofia Becerra, Turtle Project volunteer





The greenhouse at Springbank Farm. Photo by J. Quinn

# A fresh gardening season: Year two under Covid-19 restrictions

By Taryn Jarvis, *rare* Property, Facility & Garden Coordinator

In spring of 2020, while the world was shutting down due to the global pandemic, the Springbank Community Gardens at *rare* delayed opening to gardeners. Following an outcry from gardeners across the province and beyond, the **Government of Ontario deemed community gardens an essential source of fresh food for individuals and families, including those who face food insecurity.** As staff continued to prepare seedlings to grow for two local food banks, we were allowed to open the gardens to community garden members, who had to follow a new set of mandatory rules while on the site. The new rules focused on safety, incorporating recommendations and instructions laid out by local public health officers.

The new restrictions meant fewer seasonal staff to tend the food bank garden and no groups of volunteers to help with special garden projects. Pre-Covid, the gardens team would average over 1,000 volunteer hours per season. In 2020, our food bank garden plan

required modifications to accommodate the drastic change in personnel. The Campaign 19 fundraiser, launched in April 2020, raised over \$4,400 for the gardens in less than a month, **thanks to many generous individual donors and a \$2,500 pledge from Toyota Canada.** With a limited number of hard-working staff, a few individual volunteers, these generous donations and good weather, we were able to grow almost 4,000 pounds of produce for the Cambridge Self-Help Food Bank and the Food Bank of Waterloo Region.

The guidelines developed in 2020 will stay in place for the 2021 gardening season at *rare*. We typically see a turnover of garden plots with people moving away or deciding not to continue gardening. This year, however, most of our community gardeners are returning to garden at *rare* again. Many people started or returned to gardening during the pandemic, seeking an accessible, stress-relieving and family-friendly hobby. Gardening also can be a way to ease concerns over food security when lockdowns slow the harvesting and

distribution of fresh foods.

The lockdowns and travel restrictions also resulted in more time for people to visit their garden plots at *rare* last season. There was an overall improvement in garden tidiness and production. The original, magic spark of gardening had returned to some for whom it had dimmed a little and brought joy to gardeners enduring a dark time. **So here's to another safe and bountiful growing season at *rare*, or wherever you may sow your seeds.**

This year's One Seed, One Community program which *rare* runs in partnership with the Idea Exchange, Seeds of Diversity and Cambridge Self Help Food Bank is offering another year of free seeds to local communities; join us in growing last year's Provider beans or this year's Cascadia peas to share in the joys of gardening! To grow your own Provider beans or Cascadia peas, send an email to [Taryn.Jarvis@raresites.org](mailto:Taryn.Jarvis@raresites.org).

## Farewell, *rare*!

By Justin Gaudon, *rare* Mitacs Elevate / Westfall Postdoctoral Fellow

After over two years, my postdoctoral fellowship with *rare* and University of Waterloo came to an end in March 2021. Thank you very much for your generous support over the past two years. We now know more about the insect biodiversity on the *rare* nature

reserve. We can now apply these research results and new knowledge to future restoration and conservation actions at *rare*, conserving beneficial insect populations.

Although my postdoctoral research projects are not finished yet, we are already learning some neat things about insects on the reserve. I will continue to work on these projects until they are complete and share the results with all our *rare* readers once they are published.



# RESEARCH

While *rare*'s goal is to steward its sites and ecosystems intact in perpetuity, for the community to enjoy, forever, in a natural state, it also promotes the lands as a living laboratory for research — including in-house monitoring programs and partnerships with Indigenous Peoples, artists, academic institutions and community-based scientists. The research conducted informs restoration practices and education programs through a *Chain of Learning* that reaches even the youngest learners in a program called *Every Child Outdoors* (ECO), a model of active, hands-on, problem-based environmental learning, driven by inquiry in the out-of-doors.

We are a truly collaborative, multidisciplinary site where resources can be used most sustainably to tackle big questions as comprehensively as possible, and where ideas can soar in an environment that fosters cross-pollination involving different knowledge systems that come from diverse backgrounds including (but not limited to) the social sciences, humanities, archaeology, psychology and the arts, to name a few. We bring together internationally-renowned experts, aspiring early-career researchers, artists and the larger community.



Mourning Warbler. Photo by M. White

## BIRD MONITORING AT PROPERTY ONE

In 2020 we completed our first full year of bird migration monitoring at the Eramosa River Conservation Corridor Property One. Eleven volunteers carried out monitoring over 6 weeks in spring and 12 weeks in fall. Together, they tallied more than 180 hours and walked over 100 kilometres while recording birds observed by sight and sound. We plan to continue this monitoring effort at 10-year intervals and expand to additional properties as *rare* grows our land protection in the area.

This project added 46 species to our growing species list. In total, a combined 119 species were observed during spring and fall monitoring. Interesting highlights include Wood Thrush, Rusty Blackbird, Mourning Warbler and the White-eyed Vireo, only the third known observation of this species in Wellington County. In total, seven at-risk species of birds were observed during monitoring, a great indicator of the value of dedicated conservation land is this area.

If you are interested in volunteering with our bird monitoring efforts, please contact [Laura.Klein@raresites.org](mailto:Laura.Klein@raresites.org).

## REFLECTING ON THE BIRD MONITORING SEASON

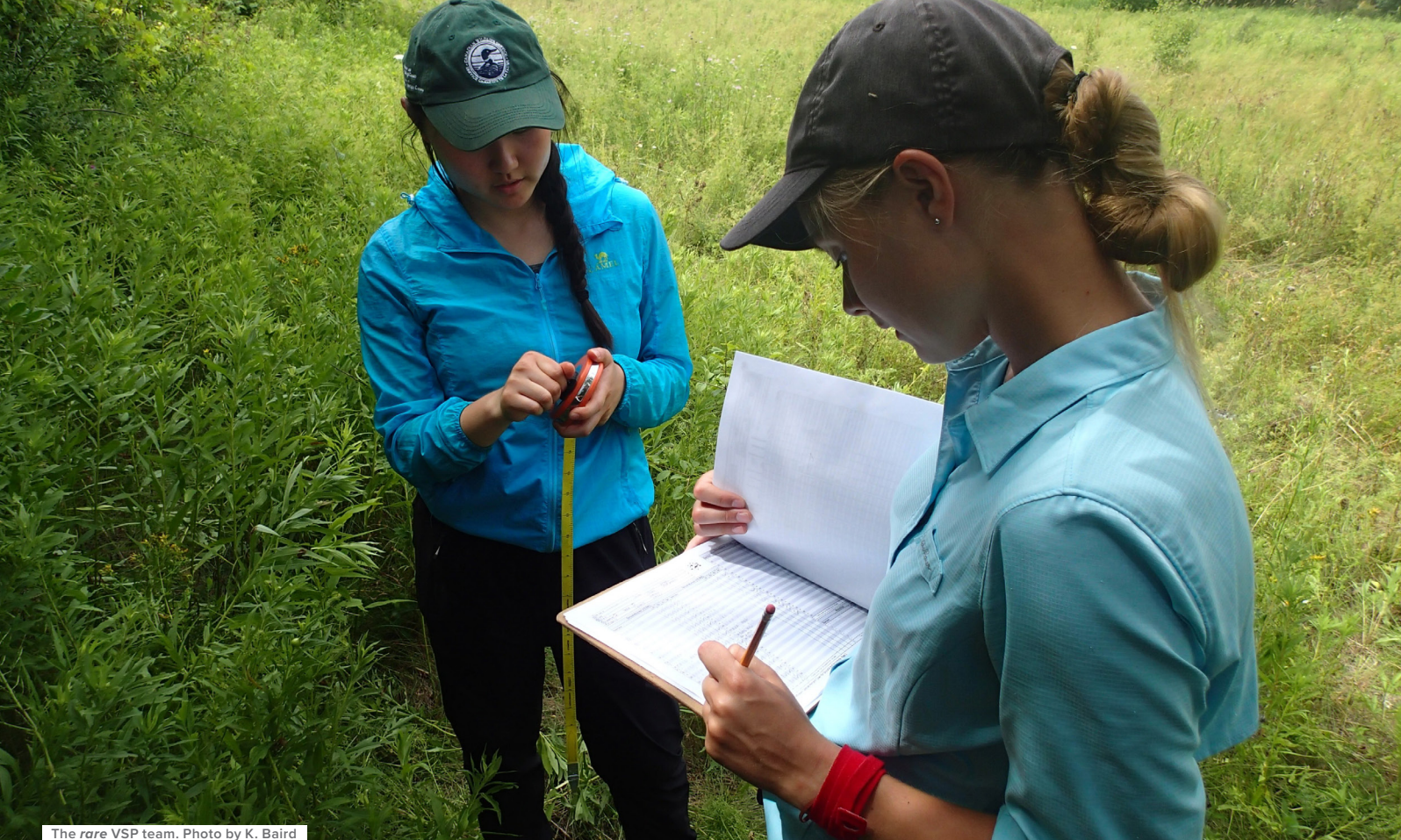
*"I've been privileged enough to watch birds at *rare*'s beautiful Eramosa River Conservation Corridor Property One since the fall of 2019. It's been wonderful to follow the change of seasons on that property through its birds, from summer residents to migrants to winter guests and back again and to get to know the species that call the site home — although each season seems to bring a few new birds and a few surprises, along with the usual*

*suspects. Some of my personal highlights include this fall's flock of Rusty Blackbirds, the Winter Wren that very vocally staked a claim on the floodplain swamp and the Wild Turkey in a tree that scared the life out of me when it decided I had gotten too close. But the true highlight for me has got to be the Wilson's Warbler which showed up in a brief flurry of fall migrants, giving me my lifer bird after years of searching and being shut*

*out. Monitoring at Property One has been filled with discovery, new friends and the lure felt by any naturalist faced with previously unexplored territory — I look forward to the opportunity to continue exploring in 2021!"*

— Julie Scott, Eramosa Corridor Property One Bird Monitor





The *rare* VSP team. Photo by K. Baird



Eastern Red-backed salamander beside a pencil. Photo by J. Wrobel

## FEATURED DONOR

Our first-ever Arts & Science Community Showcase took place in October 2020 over three days. The Showcase highlighted many of the talented individuals and intriguing projects occurring right here at *rare*. This event was made possible thanks to funding from the Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation. You can view the archived content at [raresites.org](https://raresites.org).



The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has challenged us to do things differently. We are immensely grateful to funders like the Cambridge North Dumfries Community Foundation, who adapted alongside us as we made the necessary switch from in-person to virtual events for our collective safety.

**Cambridge & North Dumfries  
Community Foundation**

- Terry Kratz Fund

## WHAT'S AHEAD?

We kicked off the field season with something hot, hot, hot! In partnership with the University of Guelph, *rare* planted approximately 40 acres of tallgrass prairie in Blair Flats in 2010. In April 2021 we conducted a prescribed burn in Blair Flats and we will be watching for regeneration to occur. Fire plays an important role in ongoing prairie management. These burns help to keep out woody invasive species and promote healthy growth of the more than 24 species of grasses and wildflowers that dominate this tallgrass prairie ecosystem. We will cool things down in the fall when conducting water monitoring on our cool- and cold-water creeks and wetlands at *rare*. This monitoring occurs every three years and provides valuable information on the health of our aquatic habitats at *rare*.



# Impacts of hybridization of domestic apples on native crabapples in southern Ontario

By Elaina Greaves\*, Paul Kron, Dr. Brian Husband

Apple production is a \$600 million industry in Ontario, but how much do we know about its impacts on native biological diversity?

Native crabapple (*Malus coronaria*) grows in eastern US and southern Canada, where it is uncommon but co-occurs with domestic apple — **the largest known crabapple tree population in Ontario is at rare**. Domestic apples (*Malus domestica*) are grown in private and commercial orchards. Many escape cultivation, become naturalized as feral trees and have the potential to hybridize with their native relative, sweet crabapple. My research examines the impacts of mating (hybridization) between these two species.

Hybridization can have multiple negative effects on native crabapple. Crabapple populations decline when hybrid seeds replace crabapple seeds. Hybridization can alter the genetic composition of crabapples through incorporation of domestic genes and inducing asexual seed production. For the last year, my research has aimed to determine: 1) how often crabapples are fertilized by domestic apples and whether feral apples are the primary source of hybrid pollen; 2) whether hybridization negatively affects the number of crabapple

seeds produced; and, 3) does the presence of domestic apple pollen cause an increase in asexually produced seeds in crabapple?

On the **rare** reserve in May 2020, I selected 26 crabapple trees. On each tree, I conducted four different controlled pollinations: open pollination; open pollination plus additional crabapple pollen; only crabapple pollen; only domestic apple pollen. I collected the fruit in August. In the lab, I dissected each seed and estimated the ploidy (number of chromosomes per cell) in both the embryo and the endosperm using flow cytometry. The ploidy of this tissue combination is used to determine whether the seeds are sexual or asexual, and hybrid or non-hybrid.

So far, I have found the fruit contains an average of four seeds, 47% of which are of asexual origin. This incomplete analysis shows a trend suggesting that the addition of domestic apple pollen may increase asexuality in crabapple species. My next task is to extract DNA from seeds that are both sexual and hybrid. A genetic fingerprint analysis on those DNA samples will determine whether domestic apple pollen is coming from feral trees or commercial varieties.



Photo courtesy of Elaina Greaves

My study represents a unique opportunity to research the effects of hybridization on a native species by a domestic species. It will investigate the potential for hybridization to reduce the quantity of native seed production and change the reproductive characteristics of seed. These effects can impact population dynamics and genetic structure of the native species. **This project supplies needed insights into the interactions between agricultural and native ecosystems.**



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



**Yes! I support conservation, research & education at rare!**

Enclosed is my gift of:

- ☐ \$100
- ☐ \$50
- ☐ \$25
- ☐ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ I'll help **rare** plan ahead by joining the **Bedrock Club** with a monthly donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to be automatically withdrawn on the 15<sup>th</sup> of every month (void cheque attached).

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address with City and Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ ☐ Yes, I would like to receive email updates from **rare**

## Payment Information

Please send cheques payable to: **rare Charitable Research Reserve**  
1679 Blair Road  
Cambridge, ON N3H 4R8

## OR

Please charge my credit card: ☐ VISA ☐ M/C ☐ A/E

Card No. \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

☐ You will receive your tax receipt by mail. Please check here if you would prefer to receive your tax receipt by email.



# EDUCATION

More than 18,700 students have gone through our school-based and youth environmental education program, called *Every Child Outdoors* or ECO, which delivers curriculum-based education programs for K-12 including specialized Mirrored Research programs — programs that allow students to “mirror” the research and monitoring activities conducted on the reserve.



ECO program on the reserve. Photo by I. Sufi

## INTRODUCING: VIRTUAL FIELD TRIPS

Social gathering restrictions posed a major challenge for the education department at *rare* this year. Our efforts usually revolve around connecting local learners with the land. The education team had to adapt to the challenge of being unable to bring large groups of students together on the reserve.

Our new Virtual Field Trips programs provide one solution for continuing students' meaningful environmental education. The education team created and posted these interactive productions to the *rare* website, sharing our resources with our network of

teachers and parents. Each 'Field Trip' was designed to meet the needs of a different age group and curriculum expectation, giving students the opportunity to explore interactive maps of *rare*, informational slides and embedded videos. Worksheets give students engaging activities to complete the learning module, encouraging learners to go outside and interact with the local environment. These activity sheets offer a much-needed alternative to daily 'screen time,' a common problem in distance learning.

There is no perfect online alternative to physically engaging with the land at *rare*. The Virtual Field Trips nonetheless allowed us to continue to reach students during the pandemic and has helped us address educational needs identified by parents and teachers in our network. These resources, including entertaining YouTube videos, are available on the Activities for Kids page on *rare's* website. Find the field trips and other learning activities on the at: [raresites.org/community\\_programming/activities-for-kids](https://raresites.org/community_programming/activities-for-kids).





Nature School in progress at Springbank Farm. Photo by I. Sufi

## ON EXPLORING THE RESERVE

*"Addison loves it here, this was without a question her favourite day of the week. She was always counting down to how many days were left before she would be coming back!"*

*Thank you for providing her with so much joy!"*

— Katrina Zoltak, *rare* Nature School parent



Addison looking for benthic invertebrates. Photo by I. Sufi

## FEATURED DONOR

Donor support has always made possible our goal of building knowledge and a sense of wonder in everyone who participates in the *Every Child Outdoors* (ECO) environmental outdoor education program. While this last year was like no other, donor support remained critical to run our programs. Generous support from the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation's

Support the Pivot Grant allowed us to purchase much needed supplies to shift our education program to a virtual setting. The supplies assisted the creation and production of several virtual field trip modules, activities and videos. Thank you, Lyle S. Hallman Foundation, for supporting land-based environmental education during these uncertain times!

## WHAT'S AHEAD?

This past fiscal year, the education team focused on how we can further improve our education program — including how best to facilitate environmental education using technology. If you follow *rare's* social media, you have seen new content in the form of videos, activities and virtual field trips. We will continue to create more of this virtual content so that individuals and families can connect to nature while social distancing. We will also continue to offer a Nature School, *rare's* new pilot program, as an option for parents and students wishing to learn outdoors. Each session of Nature School will have a small cohort of students and will run for eight weeks, creating a recurring weekday opportunity for immersive environmental education. Moving forward, we are continuing to unlearn and relearn different ways of knowing and being with the land to provide more diverse voices in our education program.





ECO program on the reserve. Photo by I. Sufi

# Nature School Pilot: Spring Update

By Matthew McGuire, *rare* Gill Ratcliffe Educator

Over the course of eight weeks in autumn 2020, our education team ran a pilot project for the *rare* Nature School. A group of eight students, aged six to 12, visited the *rare* reserve once a week to participate in a full-day outdoor classroom experience and learn together on the land. While adhering to physical distancing guidelines implemented by the Ministry of Health, we offered a meaningful opportunity to connect students with the local environment during the pandemic. Making these connections helps to foster tomorrow's land stewards.

In the eight weeks we spent together, the group of students became a tight-knit learning community. They explored the 900+ acres of *rare's* reserve in Blair in an inquiry- and play-based approach to environmental

education. Certain health restrictions made some of our usual activities impossible or impractical, but the students and staff worked together to create a flexible program that still allowed for numerous nature awareness games, organic art and exciting, hands-on, outdoor learning!

Whether it was shelter building, collecting native plant seeds, or learning to make fires, the students were able to practice and learn an important outdoor skill each week. However, the real learning was not in the activities, but in what the kids left on the land. The students learned to make 'seed sculptures' of clay, using the seeds they collected earlier, that could be placed around the community to increase biodiversity. Despite there being only eight students, the

group worked together tirelessly to plant over 100 trees on the property! **These learning experiences will create a positive impact on the land and in the local community for years to come.**

As we continue to adapt and pivot to the challenges of the pandemic, we are not yet decided what the summer season will look like in the education department. We do hope to offer *rare* Nature School to more students in the near future.

If you are interested in learning more about *rare* Nature School and would like to be added to a waitlist for the potential eight-week fall program, please email [education@raresites.org](mailto:education@raresites.org).

## Supporter Spotlight: Emily Finstead

By Laura Klein *rare* Gosling Engagement Coordinator

When Emily Finstead, an environmentalist with a strong love for nature, started to plan celebrations for her 30<sup>th</sup> birthday, she decided to use the occasion to have a positive impact. *"When a friend organized a fundraiser birthday earlier this year, I was inspired to do something similar and support a cause close to*

*my heart,"* said Emily.

In February, Emily chose to raise funds for *rare* because she wanted her birthday to support an organization that protects natural land for the community. *"Growing up, I had so many lovely memories in nature, from walking in the woods to watching meteor showers. I knew I wanted to support rare for this milestone birthday."* It was simple for Emily set up her own CanadaHelps fundraiser page and promote the initiative to friends and family. With her birthday fundraiser, Emily raised over \$500 which is now ensuring the protection of over 250 square metres of land at *rare* forever.

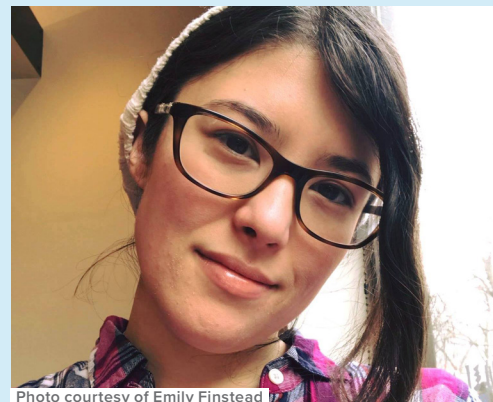


Photo courtesy of Emily Finstead

Way to go, Emily! If you would like to set up a fundraiser, we would love to hear from you to help! Send an email to [Laura.Klein@raresites.org](mailto:Laura.Klein@raresites.org).







# Pivoting Funds

By Christine Thompson, *rare* Major Gifts Manager

2020 was an exceptional year. We saw a shift in the number of potential funding opportunities for our activities, with many funders changing their focus to support first responders to the crisis. Other major funders changed their funding models to give us the flexibility to modify programs at *rare*, and we also responded to new funding opportunities that helped ease the pinch of the pandemic. These changes were crucial to maintain a flow of operating funds. Some supporters who face uncertainly themselves have been donating with the hopes of contributing to a sense of normalcy and the general health and wellness of the community.

We have also received our first-ever pledge of a gift of life insurance, in addition to learning of more bequest intentions — granting *rare* the privilege of perpetuating our supporters' values long into the future.

If you would like information on how you can make these sorts of commitments and join the *Natural Legacy Society*, contact Christine Thompson for a confidential conversation at [Christine.Thompson@rarsites.org](mailto:Christine.Thompson@rarsites.org) or 519-650-9336 x118.



Photo courtesy of Christine Thompson

## *rare's Corporations for Conservation*

By Chris Ainsworth, *rare* Sponsorship & Events Manager

The *Corporations for Conservation* family was pleased to welcome King Tree Service in 2020!



Based in Cambridge and serving Southern Ontario, King Tree Service aims to provide education and encourage the stewardship of trees in natural and urban areas. They strive to make tree canopy and wildlife conservation and encouragement a core mandate of their business.

Over the years, King Tree Service have worked to help *rare's* Land Management team keep the trails safe from hazard trees, such as trees that have fallen or broken in a storm. They handle trees too large, complicated or dangerous for staff to remove

from our trails. King Tree Service's team volunteered to help plant trees last fall. You may also have noticed them on Grand Allée this winter, removing one of the giant Carolina poplars.

We thank King Tree Service for their support and for adding their name to the list of *Corporations for Conservation*.

*"We look forward to working with rare and assisting them in achieving their like-minded goals for years to come. We consider rare to be a jewel in Waterloo Region and we feel honoured to work together now and in the future."*

The *Corporations for Conservation* (C4C) initiative recognizes corporate partners for their environmental leadership and support

of *rare*. With annual contributions of \$5,000 or more, for a minimum of five years, this designation demonstrates these companies' commitment to conservation, education and research. As C4Cs, these companies set an example and encourage others to take steps toward environmental sustainability. The C4C initiative indicates that economic excellence and environmental sustainability can go together to create unprecedented opportunities for our children and our grandchildren — a strong value of *rare* since inception.

To learn more about *Corporations for Conservation*, contact Chris Ainsworth at [Chris.Ainsworth@rarsites.org](mailto:Chris.Ainsworth@rarsites.org) or 226-989-8838.

The *rare Charitable Research Reserve* acknowledges and appreciates all its *Corporations for Conservation*:

**Battlefield Equipment Rentals**  
(Cambridge)

**BNY Mellon**  
(Toronto)

**Cachet Homes**  
(Concord)

**Concord Premium Meats**  
(Concord)

**Enbridge (formerly Union Gas)**  
(Waterloo)

**Fiix**  
(Toronto)

**Huron Creek Developments**  
(Cambridge)

**King Tree Services**  
(Cambridge)

**KPMG**  
(Waterloo)

**Langdon Hall**  
(Cambridge)

**Linamar Corporation**  
(Guelph)

**Logical Landscaping**  
(Cambridge)

**MacPherson Builders**  
(Toronto)

**Neighbourhood Group of Companies**  
(Guelph)

**NRSI — Natural Resource Solutions Inc.**  
(Waterloo)

**Pearle Hospitality/Cambridge Mill**  
(Cambridge)

**WalterFedy**  
(Kitchener & Hamilton)



# Volunteer Appreciation



OLTA volunteers Hedgerow Planting in Blair Flats. Photo by J. Quinn

The fiscal year started in September 2019 with volunteers assisting a busy and successful Walk & Run event, monitoring salamander cover boards and harvesting the last hearty vegetables before preparing the garden beds for winter. Unfortunately, we had to halt most volunteer activities just as we were getting ready to welcome back spring field season volunteers. Volunteering in 2020 was, of course, limited as a precaution for community safety during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Normally, we rely on volunteers to help with the bustling ECO program, tending to seedlings in the greenhouse and working alongside the land management team. We had no garden volunteers to help with weeding and watering, no office volunteers coming by to work on administrative tasks and limited invasive species removal opportunities. We have missed our many volunteers so much!

Thank you to all our *rare* volunteers who worked independently while wearing masks to assist *rare* whenever possible and stay safe. We are looking forward to the days ahead when we can have full volunteer capacity again!

If you are interested in being a *rare* volunteer or organizing a group volunteer day once it is safe to do so, contact Laura Klein at [Laura.Klein@raresites.org](mailto:Laura.Klein@raresites.org) or 519-650-9336 x126 for more information!



Walk & Run for *rare*. Photo by D. Klein

**THANK YOU** for celebrating the special 10-year anniversary of the Walk & Run for *rare* with us!

Together, participants, donors and sponsors raised \$48,990 to support the *Turn the Map Green* campaign in 2019. *Turn the Map Green* is *rare*'s grassroots effort to ensure the protection of highly sensitive community greenspace. This fantastic fundraising result protects almost 25,000 square metres of land for future generations. This was the most successful Walk & Run for *rare* since the first event 10 years ago. Thank you!

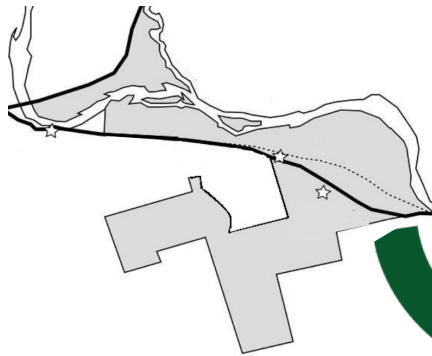
The 2021 date for our 12<sup>th</sup> annual Walk & Run for *rare* is set for September 19. Mark your calendars!

This year's event will be primarily virtual, with optional 5KM routes and opportunity for small in-person routes led by *rare* staff. We look forward to walking and running with you again to protect environmentally sensitive land, intact in perpetuity!





# THE YEAR AT A GLANCE



over  
**5,000**  
species officially  
recorded living on the  
original *rare*  
reserve



**680+**

dedicated donors

## OUR PROGRAMS UNDER COVID RESTRICTIONS



Corporations for  
Conservation

### RESEARCH



**10**  
PEER-  
REVIEWED  
PAPERS  
PUBLISHED

**80+** hours  
documented of  
bird monitoring at  
the Eramosa River  
Conservation Corridor  
Property One



**13**  
NEW OR ONGOING  
RESEARCH PROJECTS



### CONSERVATION

**1,700+**  
baby painted &  
snapping turtles  
released within 100m  
of their nest locations



**3,800+ lbs**  
of organic produce  
donated to two local  
food banks with the  
help of Campaign 19

**96** NATIVE  
PLANTS  
PLANTED



### EDUCATION



**10+**

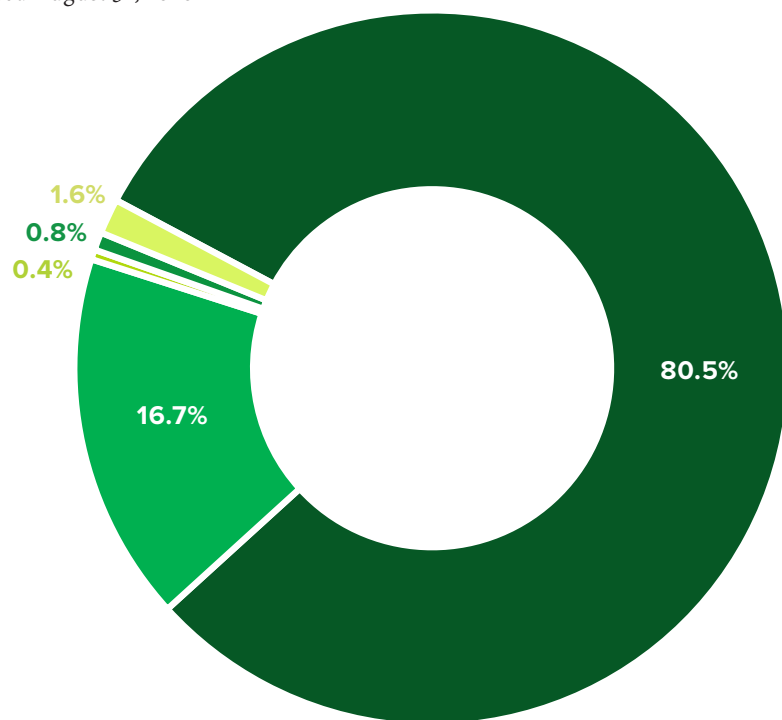
NATURE ACTIVITY  
VIDEOS & NEW  
CONTENT FOR KIDS AT  
HOME





# Financial Highlights

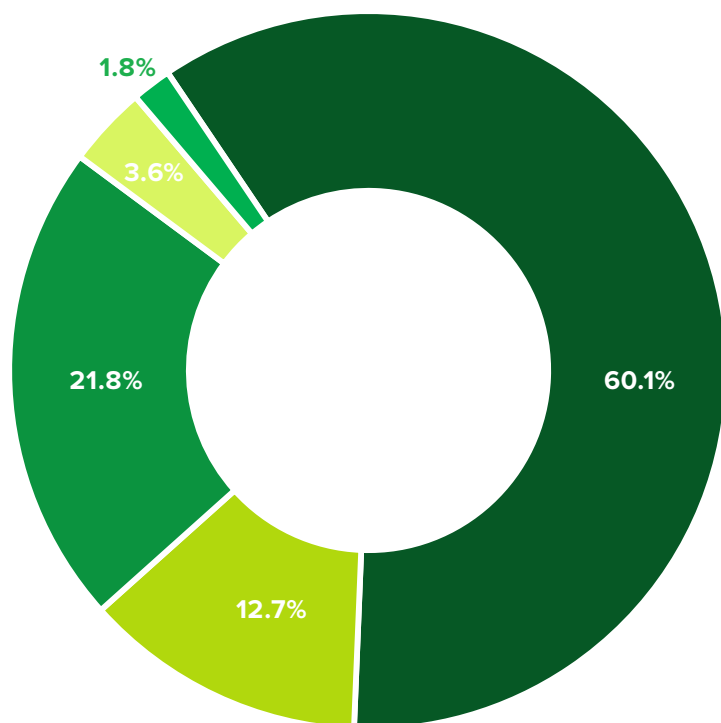
Year ended August 31, 2020



## STATEMENT OF REVENUE<sup>1</sup>

Donations and Grants	\$1,492,012
Government Programs/ Covid Assistance	\$309,287
Programs	\$8,288
Rental Income	\$15,052
Other Income	\$29,460
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,854,099</b>

■ Donations and Grants (80.5%)
■ Government Programs/ Covid Assistance (16.7%)
■ Programs (0.4%)
■ Rental Income (0.8%)
■ Other Income (1.6%)



## STATEMENT OF EXPENSES

Conservation, Research & Education Programs <sup>2</sup>	\$933,615
Administration	\$197,782
Fundraising & Community Relations	\$338,287
Communications	\$56,273
Professional Fees	\$27,733
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,553,690</b>

Excess of revenue over expenses  
\$300,409<sup>3</sup>

■ Conservation, Research & Education Programs <sup>2</sup> (60.1%)
■ Administration (12.7%)
■ Fundraising & Community Relations (21.8%)
■ Communications (3.6%)
■ Professional Fees (1.8%)

## FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT AUGUST 31

	2020
Current Assets (Cash and Receivables)	\$1,459,725
Capital Assets: Land	\$6,821,263
Capital Assets: Buildings & Equipment	\$3,260,701
Current Liabilities (Payables)	(\$476,377)
Mortgage Payable & Term Loan	(\$3,690,600)
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$7,374,712</b>

### Notes

1. Inclusive of Operating and Capital Revenues

2. Includes cost of amortization (\$180,448)

3. Majority of excess of revenue over expenses was designated for payments against the outstanding mortgage on the original *rare* lands, or for the Endowment Fund and capital projects.



# Thank you, 2019-2020 supporters!

The following individuals, foundations, government agencies, organizations and businesses helped *rare* make an impact and work toward its vision in the last fiscal year (September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2020). For a full list of all donors — considered Founders — to A Natural Investment, please contact us. We welcome corrections so that the permanent donor wall reflects you appropriately.

## \$250,000+

Michael Barnstijn &  
Louise MacCallum

## \$50,000 - \$249,999

The Savvas Chamberlain  
Family Foundation  
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Foundation  
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Dumfries Community  
Foundation  
- Lyle S. Hallman  
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Camp)  
Kitchener and Waterloo  
Community  
Foundation  
Kitchener and Waterloo  
Community  
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TD Friends of the  
Environment  
Foundation  
United Nations  
Association In Canada  
United Way Centraide  
University of Waterloo  
Waterloo Region Nature  
Maggie Williamson

## \$20,000 - \$49,999

The Cloverleaf  
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Gateman Milloy  
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Government of Canada  
MacPherson Builders  
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Ontario Trillium  
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**Notes**  
Please take the time to review your name on the list. Although every effort has been made to record it properly, sometimes mistakes happen and we want to get it right. If you see an error please let us know by contacting [rare@rarsites.org](mailto:rare@rarsites.org).

**Colour denotes Bedrock Club Monthly Donors**

**\* Deceased**



# Leadership

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Severn Cullis-Suzuki, Environmental Activist; Speaker  
Ron Dembo, Founder, Zerofootprint  
Louise MacCallum, retired Software Engineer; Philanthropist; Founder, Musagetes Foundation  
R. Murray Schafer, Composer; Educator; Environmentalist  
Gerry Remers, Former President and COO, Christie Digital Canada & former co-chair Communitech  
Jane Urquhart, OC; Author  
Frances Westley, Chair of Social Innovation Generation  
Morden Yolles, Multi-award-winning Structural Engineer; Restaurateur; Photographer

## ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (EAC)

Chris Dalton, Avocational Archaeologist, Licensed by the Province of Ontario  
Stephen Murphy, Professor and Associate Chair, Undergraduate Studies, Environment & Resource Studies, University of Waterloo  
Mark Pomeroy, Fisheries Biologist, Stantec Ltd.  
Don Russell, Qalipu Mi'kmaq/Acadian French Artist  
Bill Wilson, retired Teacher; Naturalist; Bird Monitoring Coordinator, *rare*  
Brett Woodman, Terrestrial & Wetland Biologist, Natural Resource Solutions Inc.  
Tony Zammit, Aquatic & Terrestrial Ecologist, Grand River Conservation Authority

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Colinda Clyne, Curriculum Leader for First Nations, Métis & Inuit Education, Upper Grand District School Board  
Christine Lefebvre (Karonhyakatste), Haudenosaunee Knowledge Guardian  
Lynda McCarthy, Professor, Ryerson University  
Nicole Robinson, Equity & Inclusion Officer – Aboriginal Focus, Waterloo Region District School Board  
Dan Schneider, Outdoor Educator & Naturalist, GRCA, retired  
Matthew Suhadolc, U-Turn Diversion Teacher, Waterloo Region District School Board

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David Lieberman, Associate Professor, John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape & Design, University of Toronto

John Straube, Associate Professor, Civil & Environmental Engineering, University of Waterloo

## EASTERN COMMA COMMITTEE

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Karen Houle, Poet & Philosopher, University of Guelph  
Elwood Jimmy, Musagetes Program Coordinator

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Sheila Ainsworth, past Chair, Lisaard House  
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Rob Connell, Partner, KPMG  
John English, O.C., Distinguished Professor Emeritus, University of Waterloo  
Bruce Gordon, Chairman, Manulife Assurance Canada; Sr. Exec. V.P., General Manager, Canada  
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Adrian Hammoud, Owner, Salon Butterfly  
Jackie Hatherly-Martin, FCPA FCA, SHAD Canada  
Thiam Lim, former *rare* Board Member  
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Leslie Pearson, Community Volunteer, Oakville  
Dean Peroff, LLP, Partner, Peroff Professional Group  
Simon Poladian, Owner, Eagle Towing Equipment  
Joy Roberts, (see previous)  
Paul Ross, Retired Partner, KPMG  
Irene Schmidt-Adeney, Writer, Ayr News  
Hugh Thompson, CEO, Thompson Centre for Art & Design

## VOLUNTEER AND CONSULTING ADVISORS

John Baljkas, Graphic design consultant, MFA, RGD Affiliate Member, Professor, Conestoga College  
David Beatty, (see previous)  
Ken Dance, President, Dance Environmental Inc.  
Valerie Hall (see previous)  
Joy Roberts (see previous)

## RARESITES LAND SECUREMENT TEAM

Graham Buck, Ministry of Natural Resources & Forestry  
Kathryn Enders, Ontario Farmland Trust  
Chris Gosselin, retired Manager of Environmental Planning, Region of Waterloo  
Kate Hagerman, Manager of Environmental Planning & Sustainability, Region of Waterloo  
Peter Krause, (see previous)  
Dr. Greg C. Michalenko, Grand River Environmental Network  
Dave Montgomery, Premier Environmental Services  
Bill Mungall, retired  
John Prescott, Nature Guelph  
Josh Shea, Waterloo Stewardship Council  
Roger Suffling, Waterloo Region Nature  
Tony Zammit (see previous)

## EMERITUS

Paul Koch, Marketing & Management Consultant; Civic entrepreneur, Ottawa  
Doug Larson, Professor Emeritus, College of Biological Sciences, University of Guelph  
Colleen Mercer Clarke, Coastal Ecologist, Landscape Architect, University of Waterloo  
Alan Morgan, Professor Emeritus, Earth & Environmental Sciences, University of Waterloo  
Angela Tsementzis, Architect; B.E.S. B.Arch, OAA, LEED AP

## STAFF

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### Alissa Fraser

Conservation Technician

### Taryn Jarvis

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### Laura Klein

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### Tamanna Kohi

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### Matthew McGuire

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### Jenna Quinn

Program Scientist — Research & Education Priorities, Partnerships & Monitoring

### Mackenzie Ramsay / Smiling Water

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### Kim Robichaud

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### Christine Thompson

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### Tom Woodcock

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The *rare* Charitable Research Reserve is grateful to feature photos courtesy of Michelle Graham and Focus Sport Fotos in the 2019-2020 Annual Report. To view more of Michelle Graham's photos of Waterloo Region, visit [fsfotos.ca](http://fsfotos.ca).







Photo by D. Crowell



## **Annual Report 2019-2020**