



ANNUAL REPORT

2020–2021

Sandhill Cranes on Barrie's Lake. Photo by Mike Weissmann



Who We Are, What We Do, and Why We Do It

The *rare* Charitable Research Reserve is a community-based urban land trust and environmental research and education institute which stewards over 1,200 acres of land across seven properties in Waterloo Region and Wellington County.

By working with people throughout our community, including local Indigenous Peoples, *rare*'s staff, advisors and volunteers seek to protect environmentally sensitive lands and landscapes for the health and benefit of the local environment, wildlife and current and future generations. Using diverse ways of knowing, we seek to educate the community in the importance our natural areas have in building climate resilience and fostering the health of the environment, and all who live within it.

We believe in honouring place, in conserving diversity, in embracing Indigenous knowledge systems and in committing to relationships and Indigenous resurgence. We believe in strengthening science, in building diverse, equitable and inclusive communities and in training the next generation to steward these lands for the benefit of all. We seek to offer the community — including Indigenous Peoples, the international community and future generations — not only a diverse network of connected natural areas, but a model of conservation that demonstrates the link between ecological integrity and economic stability, which is critical for the enhancement and quality of life of the planet.

Deer in Alvar, Seen Through Window. Photo by Mike Weissmann

Message from the Board Chair

Learning is an ongoing theme at *rare*, and in addition to our regular discussions around the virtual board table, this past year we managed to host a retreat which most directors, as well as some staff and guests, attended in person. Despite masks and distancing, it was a special occasion.

As usual, we were assessing progress on the goals articulated in our *Strategy and Plans 2020-2024* report, including an evaluation of what we learned from our land acquisitions so far, and how this informs our approach to conservation in what we see as a complex and rapidly changing context.

The board applauded *rare* staff for further breaking down silos so that all areas plan and budget for progress toward all the goals, which call for growth and amplification as we collaborate to advance science, protect lands and build lasting relationships.

Conservation, restoration and stewardship of land is *rare's* core priority. We want to learn better how to invite, make space for, and engage with different forms of knowing and being from diverse communities. This includes supporting Indigenous leadership and resurgence while challenging settler assumptions and privileges.

We want our goal of keeping land “intact in perpetuity” to be more than just a catchphrase. We want it to be a promise kept. We steward this land on behalf of the community and the thousands of donors and volunteers who trust us to make decisions that improve lives locally while contributing to international conversations and initiatives. We hope we can move at the “pace of trust” to work towards re-imagining conservation, research and education in what is now called Canada, while we collectively confront its colonial history and the resulting systemic harm that continues to this day.

We hope you will continue to support our work and the decisions we make as we learn about our settler responsibilities in a context of re-imagining conservation on the lands of the Onkwehon:we Peoples of Six Nations of the Grand River, and the Anishinaabe Peoples of the Mississaugas of the Credit. We want to make space for and to acknowledge more intentionally their original and continuing roles as the stewards of this land.

To act generatively together, we must work towards “getting to zero” as described by Elwood Jimmy and Vanessa Andreotti in *Towards Braiding* (2019). Acknowledging the difficult truths of genocide and settlers’ complicity in exploiting the lands of Indigenous Peoples requires a long process of listening and learning. We continue to be in this for the long haul, even though a clear end-point — the ‘zero’ position — may not be in sight during our lifetimes.

Thank you for making the work at *rare* possible and for protecting sensitive lands for future generations.

With kind regards,
Joy



Message from the Executive Director

It is the end of March as I write this, and winter is still hanging in with big flakes of snow covering the ground. After being pent up inside not just for a long winter, but over two years of a pandemic, exhaustion is tangible: it has been too long, too much homeschooling with young children, too many missed connections, many relationships changed and once familiar places no longer in business. It is therefore not surprising, that many of us wish not just for Spring, but also renewal and reconnection.

As we reflect on the year past, I also invite you to join us in looking ahead to the many things we have planned as we move away from restrictions and mandates towards being able to gather again and enjoy each other’s company. And when I say “join us”, I mean quite literally — nothing serves a sense of reconnection better than being on the land, letting go of the exhaustion by hitting the trails and having sunshine warm your skin and the fragrance of Spring charming your nose.

So don’t hesitate to come out for a walk at your leisure, or join a guided hike or volunteer day helping with native plantings or growing veggies at the community gardens. After having been deprived of volunteers by COVID, we can’t wait to have you back! Keep your eyes out for announcements about indoor and outdoor events, such as our Conversation for Conservation presentations, and our popular Walk and Run for *rare* that will be back in person this September for its 12th year.

Of course we didn’t spend winter locked behind closed doors twiddling thumbs, but instead came up with a number of new ideas. First up will be our Spring Plant Sale and Eco-market — come join us at the Slit Barn on Saturday, May 14, for a day of picking up seedlings for your gardens, and enjoying local crafters, artisans and food trucks for a much needed day out and some family fun.

Our education team is excited to re-launch field trips for schools, and ECO camp will be running at full capacity this summer. They are also looking forward to sharing a report with the community that does a deep dive into the program, it’s history and future, and learnings that we had along the way as we are engaging kids of all ages in hands-on, land-based education in the out of doors.

We have applied to host another postdoctoral research fellow through the Mitacs program (after our first placement successfully concluded last year), and have received an ever growing number of applications for our graduate student research scholarships that will see new projects happening across our various sites.

I look forward to sharing this work with you and continuing my own journey of learning, taking note of the sense of wonder our youngest visitors bring to the property. It is their never-ending enthusiasm for all living things and the world around us, and their energy to make it a better place, that inspires us: to look critically at our past and present, and to think carefully about how we can create a future together — for a healthy planet and healthy communities.

With thanks,
Stephanie



rare's Commitment to Settler Responsibility in Conservation and Reconciliation

Most people are familiar with the twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, which have been referred to as the “climate and nature emergency” by governments, civil society, and advocates worldwide. This double emergency highlights the lack of protected lands and waters that are necessary to sustain a healthy planet now and for future generations. An element of this emergency that is less commonly discussed is how it cannot be separated from the historical and ongoing legacies of colonialism.

In light of last summer's uncovering of thousands of unmarked graves of Indigenous children at residential schools, truth and reconciliation moved to the forefront of public conversations. Many people who have grown up as Canadians after their families migrated here, or who have joined the country as immigrants more recently, have found themselves confronted with the difficult histories of how this country came to be.

As a land trust and environmental institute that is settler-founded and led, *rare* is part of a shifting landscape of conservation in Ontario where approaches need to be re-thought in the context of reconciliation with Indigenous peoples. Drawing from the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), *rare* recognizes that “respect for Indigenous knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment.”

As a not-for-profit charity focused on sustainability, *rare* recognizes that the Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action No. 92 directly applies to our work, as it calls on the corporate sector in Canada to adopt UNDRIP “...as a reconciliation framework and to apply its principles, norms, and standards to corporate policy and core operational activities involving Indigenous peoples and their lands and

resources.” We will continue to implement this call, providing training to staff and volunteers on the history of settler-Indigenous relations and ongoing realities of settler colonization.

“As a community-based organization, we have a responsibility to support learning that invites settlers to choose a path of engagement instead of withdrawing from the conversation or defaulting to the status quo.”

For many who have not been exposed to this context of how what is now called Canada came to be, this information can cause apprehension and other negative feelings and is often met with denial or a desire to disengage and walk away. As a community-based organization, we have a responsibility to address this apprehension, and support learning that invites settlers to choose a path of engagement instead of withdrawing from the conversation or defaulting to the status quo.

We see this as a small step on a path toward meaningful reconciliation. This path is a lengthy and difficult one, as we ourselves have a lot of learning and unlearning to do. Much of this learning will centre around better understanding intergenerational trauma and our responsibilities as settlers on these lands, particularly our responsibilities to the Indigenous nations on whose territories *rare* is located: the Onkwehon:we Peoples of Six Nations of the Grand River and the Anishinaabe Peoples of the Mississaugas of the Credit.

We recognize that our initial approach to Indigenous engagement was not appropriate to address the multiple and changing complexities of settler-Indigenous relations. We have made space in the past year to reflect on our mistakes and how they have contributed to further systemic harm. This included challenging the celebratory narratives that we tell about our organization. We need to focus on building better relationships and being accountable to those relationships, not because it looks good, but because it's the right thing to do. We have realized that we need to involve local Indigenous Nations in this work, and that ethical relationship building in this direction can take decades and will require much unlearning on our part.

Our next step is to refocus our strategy from an *ad hoc* engagement with Indigenous issues to expanding our understanding of and commitment to our responsibilities as settlers. This means creating additional time, space and capacity for the organization to learn and unlearn from past experiences. We also seek to learn from the experiences of other organizations that are also working to re-imagine conservation and their approaches to Indigenous engagement. Ultimately, we are taking these steps so we can build more ethical, reciprocal relationships with the traditional and ancestral stewards of the lands where *rare* is located. Over the next two years, we will start on this road by addressing these three priorities:

1. Long-term stewardship:

In 2022, we want to acknowledge tipping points that we encountered in our work, which we hope will support others on their journey to re-imagine conservation. Reconciliation in a conservation context carries many complexities that are not easily untangled; it may be a process that will continue for generations, rather than having some clearly defined endpoint.

Our board has commissioned a report that will highlight different approaches to conservation in Canada, including Indigenous and settler-colonial approaches, and good practices for shared governance with Indigenous communities. These reflections will help us identify indicators and next steps that could lead us on a path toward building relationships with local Indigenous Nations grounded in respect, trust, consent, reciprocity and accountability. We understand that this process will demand changes in the organization that will at times be difficult and uncomfortable, and that these changes can only happen if we commit to this work over the long-haul.

2. Artistic and inter-generational learning:

We will continue to build on existing relationships with artists and knowledge-keepers to create opportunities for land-based artistic and intergenerational experiences that can help us better understand different approaches to land relations and conservation. This will include a curated program that is

closely tied to the land, led by Indigenous artists, in partnership with the Musagetes Foundation and will build on the existing Eastern Comma artist-in-residence program.

In addition, a multimedia space created at *rare* will be dedicated to education about our settler responsibilities, including the need to understand the systemic violence of colonialism, to learn about settler complicity in systemic harm, unlearn our inaccurate assumptions, and to confront the historical memory and difficult truths of settler-colonial relations. We hope to make this space available for members of other organizations so they can join us in these learnings.

3. Global responsibility:

From a landscape and ecosystem perspective, we are a planet that has become sick because of irresponsible choices. Recognizing our global interdependence and the fact that our actions in the Global North significantly affect the Global South, we will address our global responsibilities through collaborations related to global and local food security.

We will expand a partnership with Indigenous communities in Brazil through projects related to Indigenous approaches to conservation and community-based food sovereignty and security, as well as a larger educational project related to the protection of the Amazon. This work will include teachings about the Amazon rainforest, its place in global climate issues and its impact, even locally. These teachings are linked to the rights of Indigenous guardians of the forests in Brazil, and focus on transferable learnings, specifically for children and youth, linked to an educational project called “University of the Forest” that *rare* will support in partnership with the Musagetes Foundation. This international program, with links to our Every Child Outdoors (ECO) program, will focus on how climate and nature emergencies are connected to our global patterns of consumption. It will also emphasize that protecting Indigenous rights is central to any effort to protect the Amazon Forest and, because everything is connected, to our efforts to protect biodiversity. The Amazon is a key example demonstrating how the “twin crises” of climate change and biodiversity loss are global in scope, while also being shaped by our local actions.

Just the First Step

We hope that this first step towards an emphasis on settler responsibility will prepare us to offer a more generative and welcoming space that will help us build accountable relationships with Indigenous organizations as we continue to work towards the possibility of bringing together different knowledge systems in ethical ways to address the multiple local and global challenges of our times. We recognize that this is only a very small step in a much larger process of working towards reconciliation.

“Our next step is to refocus our strategy from an ad-hoc engagement with Indigenous issues to expanding our understanding of and commitment to our responsibilities as settlers.”

In addition to fellowships and advisory and summer student opportunities that already exist for Indigenous collaborators who are First Nations, Métis, Inuit or of mixed ancestry, over the next five years we hope to expand the number of opportunities available for meaningful collaboration. As our unlearning progresses, we will learn whether a senior Indigenous leadership position, filled by a member of the local Indigenous Nations of these lands, is appropriate to help us move forward on ethical pathways of deeper engagement and shared stewardship of the land.

And, to be accountable to our aspirations, we will continue to share these learning opportunities through updates, reports and events.

Photos: (Background) Southwest Tree Line at rare, Winter Vista, by Mike Weissmann; (bottom-right) Fall Sunset in the Trees, by Devon Crowell.

Land Acknowledgement

The *rare* Charitable Research Reserve’s headquarters and seven conservation lands comprise over 1,200 acres, mostly within the Haldimand Tract. Spanning six miles on either side of the Grand River, 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. In Guelph/Wellington, *rare* also stewards lands 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 both 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 who share their lands with us. Nia:wen and Miigwech (thank you). These lands today are also home to many other First Nations, Métis and Inuit who have moved to the area from across Turtle Island.



Join the Pollinator Highway

1,000 Gardens Project Continues in 2022

In 2021, over 650 people registered to join *rare*'s 1,000 Gardens Project to encourage people to plant gardens of native plants supporting native pollinators throughout southwestern Ontario. This initiative has also been referred to by friends and supporters as the "Pollinator Highway," as we build a network of waystations for native pollinator species between Waterloo Region and Toronto (as well as points outside this corridor).

Individuals or groups can join the 1,000 Gardens Project by including native pollinator plants in their garden. An excellent reference for anyone setting up a pollinator garden is Pollinator Partnership Canada (pollinatorpartnership.ca), which produces guides to native plants. The pollinator garden can range in size from a pot on the deck to a fully-landscaped back yard. Once done, people can register a garden at raresites.org/rares-1000-gardens by answering the questionnaire. Registered gardens are displayed on a map showing hundreds of other gardens in Toronto and southwestern Ontario who have joined the project. Gardeners can also purchase a Pollinator Garden sign from *rare* for \$20.

So, help us reach our 1,000 Gardens goal and go beyond, building the pollinator highway for the health of native plant species, native pollinators, and the environment!



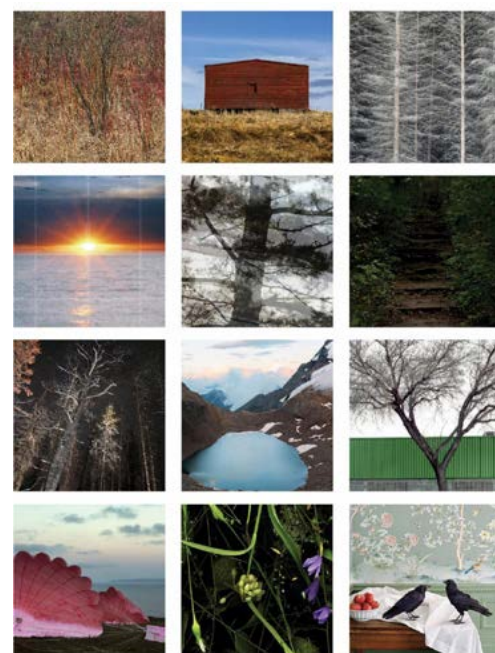
COVID 19 and Continuing Adaptations

by James Bow,
Communications Officer at *rare*

Since March 2020, *rare* has adapted its operations to the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic. The organization closed its headquarters, staff worked from home, and the in-person events that had been planned throughout the year, from summer camps to seminars, plant sales to weed pulls, were cancelled.

But *rare* adjusted. Thanks to the hard work of staff and volunteers, online tools such as Zoom and Teams, and a big helping of patience and understanding from *rare*'s colleagues and supporters, we moved forward. Seminars became webinars. In-person gatherings became online events. Our Education Team produced Nature Activity Videos for *rare*'s YouTube Channel (youtube.com/c/raresites) and Virtual Field Trips to give parents and schools online resources and ideas on how to get children outside to learn about nature. We showed how parents and kids could build shelters in the wild, create leaf art and ice sculptures and learn about air pollution around their homes. Much of this work was made possible through funding from the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation and the Ontario Trillium Foundation, and we thank them for their support.

In 2021, this work continued. The annual Walk and Run for *rare* again took a hybrid approach, encouraging people to complete their own five-kilometre walk in their own neighbourhood, or to attend one of four pop-up walks scheduled throughout the week across Waterloo Region and Wellington County. Our auction fundraiser was taken online and split in two, with the regular auction complemented by an online art auction featuring art by renowned photo artists such as Ed Burtynsky. The regular auction raised \$10,700 for our Every Child Outdoors (ECO) program, while the Art Auction raised over \$60,000 toward Turning the Map Green. In the summer of 2021, we celebrated the twentieth anniversary of *rare*'s founding with an online event featuring music by Julia McLellan, and an inspirational speech by the 2016 winner of the International Children's Peace Prize and newest



A *rare* FIND

rare International Ambassador, Kehkashan Basu. The pandemic could not dampen our spirits, or that of our supporters.

The pandemic also did not slow the work of our conservation and land acquisition teams, who continued to pull invasive species, patrol *rare*'s lands, plant over 600 native plants and trees, and add four new properties under *rare*'s umbrella of 1,200+ acres of protected land. Throughout the pandemic, *rare* remained a refuge for wildlife, and its 14+ kilometres of trails remained a vital place for people to go for healthy exercise and mental well-being.

While we must remain cautious about relaxing pandemic measures, keeping an eye on the science and public health guidelines, we are all eager to get back together again for in-person activities. We look forward to engaging with trail walkers, meeting people at our seminars and events, and sparking a sense of wonder in nature in the next generation of conservationists. But we remain grateful for the spaces that offered us refuge during this pandemic and how we were able to come together regardless.

Photos: (bottom-left) Pollinator Garden signs, taken at Lamb's Inn headquarters, by James Bow; (above) Promotional poster advertising the *rare* Online Art Auction; (top-right) Matt McGuire shows off bounty harvested from Springbank Farm, by Taryn Jarvis; (bottom right) North House, by James Bow

Planting Seeds for Food Security

By Taryn Jarvis,
Gill Ratcliffe Gardens and Facilities Coordinator

The future of *rare's* Food Bank Garden project during the pandemic was never doubted by our positively focused garden staff. Growing over 4000 lbs of quality organic produce for donation to the food banks per summer during the pandemic was no small feat as we dealt with strict limitations on volunteer support and participation. Starting this spring, we will be welcoming volunteer groups back into the Food Bank Garden at *rare* to pick up the momentum that we were able to sustain during these difficult times. As we look forward with hope into 2022, we are very excited to put out a call for volunteers. If you have an interest in contributing time to support strengthening our local food security, please join us in the garden after the May long weekend every Wednesday from 9am to noon and each Sunday afternoon from 1-4. We will have a volunteer leader onsite to guide the day's garden activities.

The past few years have seen an increase in demand for personal gardening space across the region. We are accommodating more gardeners than ever before in the Springbank Community Garden this season by reconfiguring some of the existing garden space to welcome new gardeners, most of whom have no space or resources where they live to grow their own food.

We gained flexibility over the past two years to continue to provide educational gardening resources via remote workshops and free seed distribution. Seedy Saturday 2020 was *rare's* final public event before all activities were shut down or repeatedly postponed. This popular, free, seed swap returned to an in-person event in 2022. With over 40 visitors attending to trade seeds and share gardening knowledge and encouragement, it was a very successful Seedy Saturday and many people were left feeling inspired for planting season! It was also the season opener of One Seed One Community, a free seed and knowledge sharing initiative in partnership with Idea Exchange Preston, Seeds of Diversity and The Cambridge Food Bank. You can pick up your free packet of Golden Queen Heirloom tomato seeds at *rare's* main office and the Idea Exchange's Preston branch.

Through a continually optimistic lens, the garden staff at *rare* are sewing the seeds for the 4th annual Spring Plant Sale Fundraiser. An exciting addition to the vegetable, herb, flower, and native plant sale this May 14th will be a



lively Eco-Market featuring fine local artists and makers, businesses and other non-profits who support the environment, inclusion, and diversity.

For more information about any of these projects, please contact *rare's* Garden Coordinator at taryn.jarvis@raredsites.org

North House Welcomes Artists, Looks to Future

North House, *rare's* solar-powered demonstration off-grid smart home, stands near the entrance of Springbank Farm, overlooking Blair Road. The residence, built in 2009 for the Energy Solar Decathlon in Washington DC, continues to be used as envisioned when it was relocated to *rare* as an artists' retreat and education centre showcasing the benefits of off-grid housing.

Guests at North House have included Eastern Comma Artists-in-Residence Rosina Kazi and Nicholas Murray, who stayed a while in October 2020. This residency is offered in partnership with the Musagetes Foundation to immerse artists

Space at *rare*; Venue Rentals Resume in 2022

By James Bow,
Communications Officer at *rare*.

With the COVID-19 pandemic limiting attendance at weddings and other get-togethers, *rare* suspended its venue rentals through 2020 and 2021. Now, as the pandemic eases, *rare* is planning to reopen spaces like the Slit Barn for events.

Event planners have been contacted and invited to submit proposals for arranging the use of *rare* spaces. The first in-person events have already taken place at *rare's* Slit Barn, and more are planned in May, including the Spring Plant Sale and Eco-Market and a memorial service.

In-person gatherings and Conversations for Conservation are also planned as the weather warms up. Everything is contingent on ensuring events are held safely under pandemic protocols, but groups looking to rent space at *rare* should stay tuned for further announcements on *rare's* website in the coming weeks.

For more information about renting venues at *rare*, contact Chris Ainsworth at chris.ainsworth@raredsites.org.

and writers in the natural landscape. North House has also hosted visiting researchers, as well as staff members who have had to stay overnight as part of their work.

Now that North House has stood on its site for over a decade, the technology of off-grid smart housing has moved on and it has become necessary for *rare* to look for ways to upgrade elements of North House's design and technology, as well as typical maintenance and repairs to any house and structure as it ages over time. This work could involve consulting with home automation experts or smart home companies volunteering their time and skills, with the possibility that North House's updates could be used as a demonstration of how to maintain and upgrade older smart homes as the technology progresses.



Making Nature More Inclusive for All

by Istafa Sufi, Educator at *rare* and James Bow, Communications Officer at *rare*.

As an organization, *rare* is committed to building greater diversity within itself, reflecting the community and increasing resilience, program relevance and potential. Since 2020, the *rare* Anti-Racism and Equity Task Force has worked to strengthen inclusivity at *rare* and hold space for more members of our diverse community. Through the work of this committee, we have started to critically review our work processes with an eye towards diversity.

This has led to several actions and changes, including reviewing and changing our hiring practices to ensure a process where names and other identifying information are removed from resumes and cover letters until candidates are shortlisted, reducing implicit bias. We've reviewed our community garden plot rental application process and allocation of subsidized spaces at Springbank Farm to reserve spaces for communities that have been historically, persistently, or systematically marginalized, and have created an additional research scholarship award for racialized individuals to support communities that are systemically underrepresented in STEM and research. We are also working to increase the diversity of our guest speakers and panelists at all our webinars and events.

In addition to looking at how we address those around us, we are also looking into ourselves to see how we can improve. This has led to numerous changes, including the creation of

a Sexual Violence Policy, establishing the goal of consistently stating each position's wage expectations and rate of pay, and setting *rare* up as a certified Living Wage Employer.

The drive to improve our understanding of and sensitivity for marginalized communities means a lot of learning and unlearning. This includes engaging staff members in ongoing sensitivity and anti-oppression training, and the procurement of more culturally inclusive books that feature marginalized communities, including books authored by Indigenous authors for our *Every Child Outdoors* education program.

Finally, learning to do better means learning from our mistakes. For that, we are working on a regularly updated failure report to identify where and how we've fallen short, taking responsibility for those mistakes, and identifying and taking steps to ensure these mistakes aren't repeated.

Due to the nature of our work at *rare*, we hold a unique position where we can address a broad spectrum of community needs. We recognize that we still have much work to do and look forward to continuing our efforts to make *rare* an inclusive place for all members of our local, national and international communities. We welcome feedback from members of our community on how we may continue to grow and learn to make *rare* a safe and inclusive space for all.

Photos: (below) Tractor and gardener at Springbank Farm, by James Bow; (right) Kids at *rare*'s ECO Camp look at water wildlife samples, by Michelle MacMillan.



rare Staff and Volunteers Get Hands Dirty for Nature

By Alissa Fraser, Conservation Technician at *rare* and James Bow, Communications Officer at *rare*.

Over the years, *rare* has been fortunate to have the support of volunteers donating their time and energy to *rare*. In 2021, *rare* staff and volunteers again got hands on in preserving native species on *rare* lands. In May 2021, the Turtle Hotline re-opened, allowing people in the community to report turtle nests that were too close to roads and other human dangers. A total of 69 nests were collected and the eggs incubated. As a result of this, 1,893 hatchlings were successfully released back into the wild early in the summer.

Work also continued on research to monitor key species at *rare*. In 2021, staff and volunteers observed and catalogued 4,595 birds within 119 species, adding 50 species to the Eramosa Corridor species list. They also counted 4,389 butterflies within 47 species, 219 salamanders within three species. Five creeks and wetlands were also monitored, with over 10,000 benthic invertebrates counted within 21 groups. In total, 169 different species were observed.

In addition to 14 volunteer days spent pulling invasive species, time was spent planting new native plants. The Education team, led by Istafa Sufi, helped kids plant three species of willows and other plants, getting the next generation of conservationists actively involved in restoring natural ecosystems. Staff and volunteers at *rare* also helped plant an additional 13 species to enhance wildlife corridors as well as 25 bur oak trees and five additional species to rehabilitate the Blair Flats prairie lands.

At Springbank Farm, volunteers worked over 172 hours in 2021, compared to 93 hours in 2020. We were fortunate to have Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada and Ernst & Young come out on separate occasions to spend 80 volunteer hours helping the organic food garden grow.

We thank every volunteer who has donated their time and energy to *rare*, and we look forward to sharing more times together. Stay tuned to our website and our biweekly *rare* e-News to hear of the next opportunities to volunteer. To learn more about being a *rare* volunteer or organizing a group volunteer day at *rare*, please contact Jessica O'Connell at jessica.oconnell@raresites.org or (519) 650-9336 ext. 115. We look forward to seeing you!

Through conservation, research and education, *rare* seeks to preserve environmentally sensitive lands and to improve understanding of their significance. As well, *rare* works to communicate the importance of these lands to the health and well-being of surrounding communities.

New Properties Under *rare* Stewardship

By Tom Woodcock,
Planning Ecologist at *rare*

Southwestern Ontario is one of the most biodiverse areas of Canada and also has the highest human population. A quick look at any area south of the Ottawa Valley shows that most of the land has been cleared of forests, replaced with urban and suburban development, agriculture, and other altered uses of the land. Most woodlands and wetlands have been lost in the past 200 years and with it, the ability to support natural ecosystems and the human societies that depend on them. At *rare*, we seek to conserve, protect and restore what remains of this natural legacy by purchasing or receiving donations of environmentally sensitive property, and by working with communities to provide meaningful opportunities to interact with the natural world through education, research, and stewardship. Expanding and improving habitat that increases the area available for wildlife and their ability to move across the landscape also protects the ecological functions on which we all depend.

In 2020–2021, four new properties came under *rare*'s stewardship, three of which were generously donated by conservation-minded property owners through the federal Ecological Gifts Program. The fourth was supported through generous donations from the community. Together, these properties increased the total amount of lands protected by *rare* to 1,200+ acres.

Coolcullen

The 6.2 acre Coolcullen Property is the southeastern portion of the Gilholm Marsh, a wetland feature of rolling woodlands, open meadow, and small kettle ponds located in the southern portion of Cambridge. This feature has

become fragmented by development over the years, and *rare* is actively working to conserve the remaining habitat, with plans to secure additional acreage in the future. The Coolcullen property is dominated by a mature forest of towering white pine, sugar maple, black oak and black cherry trees. To the south, the forest slopes relatively steeply to the edge of a small wetland shared with the adjacent property. The woodland shows the impact of the invasive Emerald Ash Borer, which is typical of Waterloo Region where almost all ash trees are damaged or lost.

Reiner

The 44 acre Reiner Property is located within the Roseville Swamp, a low-lying area consisting mostly of forested swamp interspersed with drier upland ridges. This is an area of incredible biodiversity, largely unimpacted by human activity due to its difficult terrain. The Roseville Swamp has been described as “one of the most significant swamp forest complexes and breeding bird areas” in the Region of Waterloo. The Reiner Property is entirely covered with mature forest, with significant undergrowth and fallen deadwood, although most of the ash are dead due to the impact of the invasive Emerald Ash Borer. Most of the property is forested swamp with mucky soils that are intermittently covered by standing water, depending on the season. Stewardship requirements for this property are minimal, as there are no trails and very little impact of invasive plant species.

Property Two

This 58 acre property is located along the Eramosa River, immediately downstream of the Village of Eden Mills. Most of the property consists of the forested riparian wetland of the Eramosa River, with some areas of open floodplain, valley slopes and limestone outcrops. A mature mixed forest dominated by white cedar typical of the area covers the wet bottomland and lower valley slopes, continuous with similar riparian habitats upstream and downstream of the property. As the valley slope



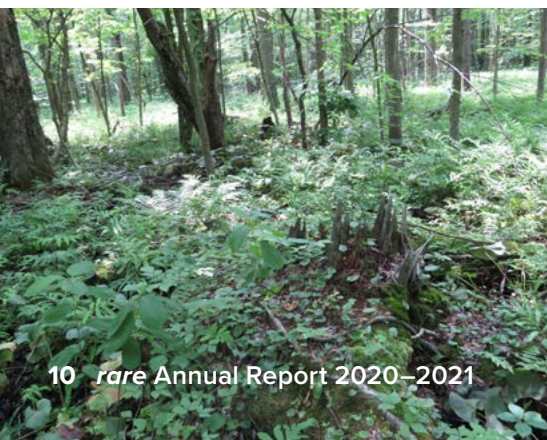
steepens, the soil becomes thin and rocky, with increasing frequency of limestone outcroppings, and trees becoming sparse in places.

Edgewood

This property was formerly known as Camp Edgewood, and was run as a youth church camp for many years by the Lutheran Church. After closure of the camp, the property was purchased by a local community group, with the intention of developing the site of the former camp buildings and conserving the ecologically valuable land through a donation to *rare*. This property consists primarily of forested valley land and wetlands surrounding Blue Springs Creek, a cold-water stream, upstream of its confluence with the Eramosa River. There is an artificial pond in the centre of the property. The forest is dominated by white cedar, intermixed with deciduous species such as yellow birch, white ash and maples. There are also some small pockets of thicket swamp and more open flood plain areas.

These four properties expand *rare*'s reach, turning the map green and protecting more wildlife and habitats for the benefit of all. We look forward to ensuring that these and other lands are protected intact in perpetuity, for the benefit of current and future generations.

Photos: (top) Coolcullen, (bottom left) Reiner, (bottom middle) Eramosa Property Two, (bottom right) Edgewood, all by Tom Woodcock. (Page 11) Map of rare's trails on the Blair Property.



Showing Invasive Species the Door

By James Bow, Communications Officer at *rare*, and Alissa Fraser, Conservation Technician at *rare*.

The year 2021 saw *rare* staff and volunteers engage in ecological restoration initiatives to rehabilitate the natural lands that *rare* stewards. This means working to conserve native biodiversity by removing invasive species. Fourteen Invasive Species Removal Days were held in 2021, and volunteers learned how to identify invasive plants as well as proper removal techniques.

The invasive plants *rare* worked to remove included Garlic Mustard. This plant was introduced from Europe as a potential food source, but escaped cultivation and, without native controls, quickly overran many forest understoreys. Fortunately, this species is relatively easy to pull from the ground.

Another aggressive plant is Himalayan Balsam, introduced because of its showy, pink flower, but with its explosive seed pods, these plants out-compete native vegetation if they're not brought under control.

Phragmites is another invasive species that needs removing. This Eurasian perennial grass spreads aggressively and

out-competes native plants in Ontario's beaches and wetlands. It can release toxins and lower water levels, increasing the risk of fire. These grasses have been a problem in Ontario for decades, and it's all hands on deck to remove them from *rare* lands.

Be on the lookout for more Invasive Species Pull Days as the weather warms up in 2022. We will be announcing calls for volunteers on our website, on our social media and in our biweekly *rare* eNews. Every helping hand is appreciated, both by us, and by the native species that are helped to grow with the invasive species gone.

14 Kilometres of Public Trails Maintained

By James Bow,
Communications Officer at *rare*

As part of *rare*'s commitment to engage the public in the importance of natural spaces in our communities, *rare* maintains over 14 kilometres of seasonal and year-round trails free for the public. Our Thompson Tract Grand Allée, Maple Lane and Deer Run trails offer 2.7 kilometres of easy hikes among meadows, old growth forest and a historic carriageway near the Langdon Hall lands. At Springbank Farm, the Butterfly Trail offers a nearly 1 km trek around native plants and bushes known to attract butterflies when they're in season. It's also the starting point of our Neuman Trail. On the other side of Blair Road, near *rare*'s ECO Centre, the 230 metre ECO Trail links to the Grand Trunk Trail.

As for our seasonal trails, the Cliffs and Alvars Trail System near the Grand River includes the Osprey Tower Trail, the River Trail, the Woodland Trail and the Alvar Trail, which branch off from the Grand Trunk and take hikers through many different landscapes, from 20 metre tall riverside cliffs, to a unique alvar ecosystem, and past perches where bald eagles, osprey and other birds of prey call home.

The seasonal trails shut down between November 15 and March 15 for safety reasons, as ice and snow build-up near the river can be hazardous to walkers. Shutting these trails is also beneficial to the eagles and other



wildlife that spend their time staying in place, conserving energy. Disturbing these creatures during winter can add a great deal of stress that can harm their health. Before the trails are reopened, *rare* staff and volunteers carefully investigate each trail, identifying areas where maintenance must be done, fallen trees removed, and other repairs conducted to ensure the trails can reopen safely.

The expansion of the trail network depends on properly balancing the impacts of trail use with the ecological needs of the surrounding habitat and the wildlife found therein. The trail network is designed to guide visitors through natural areas while steering them clear of sensitive zones that could be harmed by their presence. Occasionally, it is important to shut down

certain trails so that the surrounding landscape has a chance to heal and regenerate.

In the meantime, the trails that *rare* maintains offer an important refuge for people looking to immerse themselves in natural spaces. The benefits to mental and physical health are clear, and *rare* is proud to help make these resources available to the community. To ensure that these resources can continue to be available, it's important for trail users to be mindful of their impacts as they walk these trails. We ask that dogs be leashed for the safety of trail users and wildlife (and note that dogs are not allowed on the Butterfly, River, Woodland, Alvar and Osprey Trails), and that hikers take nothing but photographs and leave nothing but footprints.

rare's Program Scientist Brings a Long Memory and Support for Women in Science and Research

Profile by James Bow,
Communications Officer at *rare*.

From a young age, Jenna Quinn always loved nature, science, and learning. Though she considered becoming a science teacher after leaving Guelph to pursue her university education, at Laurentian University, she really discovered the joys of environmental research and applying that to education

"The Laurentian campus has 750 acres of trees, forests, lakes, beaches, rocks and wetland," says Quinn. "It provided an education immersed in nature. I fell in love! I enrolled in every and any class where I could learn more about animals and ecosystems and soon switched my focus from science education to scientific research. I worked with amazing student and teacher role models and completed an undergraduate thesis project. My curiosity was in overdrive, and I wanted answers to the never-ending

questions I had about animals, ecosystems, and conservation."

Jenna Quinn graduated with an Honours Bachelor of Science specializing in Zoology. She then went to New Brunswick to earn a Master of Biology at Mount Allison University. After graduating, she returned to Guelph to live with her parents and start her search for her next job. Today, Jenna is *rare*'s Program Scientist — Research & Education Priorities, Partnerships & Monitoring, overseeing the research and education programs. She joined *rare* on May 7, 2012, meaning that this year is her tenth anniversary at *rare*, making her the longest-standing partner at the organization.

"I spent that summer chasing butterflies as *rare*'s Ecological Monitoring Intern," Quinn recalls. "Similar to the summer I spent working at the Cambridge Butterfly Conservatory — my first job 'in the field'. In the fall, I returned to school part-time and pursued my Master of Education from Western University while continuing with *rare* through a leadership transition."

"This was a full-circle moment for me," Quinn goes on, "returning to the field of education that had originally drawn me in way back in high school. Only this time, instead of learning how to be at the front of the classroom, I was learning how the whole education system works, how different people and students learn, the barriers that exist within the systems in place, and how to design curriculum programs, with a particular emphasis on outdoor education. I spent my days at *rare* and my evenings and weekends studying. Fast forward one-and-a-half years, and I was graduating again, renewed in my focus to bring together science, education and nature, and already with a job to do just that, because in the meantime, a full-time, permanent Research Coordinator position at *rare* had become available."

For Quinn, *rare* was a place that fed her passions. "Before, I'd stocked shelves at Chapters for eight months. I was sent the job ad by a friend. She thought *rare*'s Ecological Monitoring intern position was perfect for me. The job description highlighted monitoring butterflies, salamanders and benthic invertebrates — all creatures I'd had experience with. Even better, it was right in my community where I could be close to family and friends. How had I never heard of this place? For me, starting at *rare* was like a homecoming, returning to Waterloo Region — the place I've always considered home — after years away."

Advancing through roles at *rare* with increased levels of responsibility has given Jenna Quinn a diverse experience. "No two days are the same,"

says Quinn. "My job duties are quite varied and can change depending on the season. Each week, I spend at least a couple of days on the property meeting with researchers or artists for site visits or project meetings. I conduct fieldwork or monitor projects. I train staff and volunteers. I also participate in or lead nature-based activities for community members or youth — all in the outdoors!"

"There's also paperwork," she adds. "I spend time corresponding with community partners and our team, working on collaborative projects, reviewing applications or resumes, depending on the time of year. I often get involved in grant writing, presentations, program development, event planning and organization, permit applications, fieldwork scheduling and prep, and more. I enjoy having a wide variety of tasks that engage different skills and abilities."

Jenna Quinn's position has evolved over her ten years at *rare*, as she's used the experience gained to become more involved with *rare*'s Education Team as well as working with researchers spending time at *rare*. She has also watched *rare* evolve over the same period.

"What immediately stands out is how much we have grown in the last decade," says Quinn. "We are stewarding and protecting more land now, with the start of the Eramosa River Conservation Corridor and the hard work of the *raresites* team to identify more lands for conservation in consultation with community partners. Our staff size has about doubled, with a greater capacity to run programs, an expanded Community Garden including the 16,000 square foot Food Bank Garden, and more support on the administration, communication and fundraising side of things which enables staff to focus on the programs and to collaborate and be present in the community."

"We've grown in our values and direction," she adds, "opening up beyond our science focus to be more inclusive of diverse disciplines and forms of inquiry. We've made a commitment to recognizing and removing barriers for underrepresented groups to have equitable access to jobs, programs and services. We became a living wage employer. We formed the Anti-Racism and Equity Taskforce. Staff have been supported on a learning and un-learning journey toward reconciliation with Indigenous People. There has been a strong commitment to both organizational and personal growth in these areas."

"And we've grown in recognition. There has been a dramatic shift over time as people have come to know and respect *rare* as an





environmental leader in the community. The days of explaining “what is *rare*?” to everyone seem to be behind us, as more of our growing reputation precedes us.”

Jenna Quinn’s work led to her being awarded Cambridge YWCA’s Women of Distinction Award in 2016 in the field of Science, Technology, Research and Environment. “That was truly an honour and quite a surprise,” says Quinn. “I had been a STEM mentor with the YWCA Cambridge Girls Centre, a girl-led after-school program with a focus on STEM and STEAM-related activities and experiments. I’ve been inspired and educated by amazing women role models throughout my life — Dr. Jackie Litzgus at Laurentian, who sparked my love of fieldwork, wetlands, and all things herpetology; Dr. Diana Hamilton at Mount Alison who taught me how to run a lab and conduct research, be a balanced leader not to mention understand statistics and stable isotopes. And, of course, my mom, sister, aunts, cousins, grandmas, friends, and coworkers who just leave me in awe on a regular basis with their hard work, creativity and passions. It was my pleasure to pay that forward as a mentor in this program.” Jenna’s volunteer work has been inspiring to others, and to foster more such engagement, *rare* implemented a new benefit that enables staff to take three paid days off per year to volunteer in the community.

Working in science and research, Jenna is aware of the work needed to encourage and support more women in their pursuit of research and scientific careers. “Most are probably familiar with the leaky pipeline metaphor that describes how women become more and more underrepresented in science over time, from education through careers. Support and encouragement needs to take place all along that pipeline, and I think workplaces in every field should be looking not just at how to support women within their current

environments, but also take accountability for repairing that pipeline throughout the entire experience. They need to be intentional in creating accountable spaces. Ask not ‘how to hire more women’ but rather ‘how do we change to become a more welcoming and safe place for women, BIPOC and all underrepresented people’, and then commit to those changes.

For women aspiring to be researchers, scientists and conservationists, Jenna Quinn has this advice: “Take advantage of the opportunities you earn and always do the best job you can. Be a life-long learner, centre your values, and try not to be too hard on yourself. For many of us working in conservation, the work is closely tied to our values and passions. It can be a real gift to both enjoy your job and feel like you are making an important contribution to an area important to you, but this can also lead to blurred lines between work and personal time, and ultimately burnout. For me, it’s been

important to stay engaged in environmentalism outside of my job, such as by volunteering with Waterloo Region Nature.”

Having worked for *rare* for ten years, Jenna is committed to staying on, and helping the organization grow and develop. “I look forward to seeing *rare* continue to grow and become a more inclusive space. I’m excited to expand our monitoring and research efforts to new priorities and spaces. I like to think about 100 years from now who may be using the data we collected here to compare and understand how the land and habitats have changed. I like to think about what the land will look like then, how the forests and corridors have grown and, hopefully, how it will still be a place for learning, exploration, recreation and conservation.”

Photos: (bottom-left) Jenna Quinn working in the field; (top) Jenna Quinn in portrait; (below) Drs. Hamberg (left) and McTavish (right) testing a sound level meter.

Sharing Knowledge at *rare*

rare Researchers Collaborate on Noise

by James Bow,
Communications Officer at *rare*.

Dr. Justin Gaudon, *rare*’s first post-doc fellowship researcher, recently worked with other researchers at *rare* on a study about how different vegetation and landscapes affect noise. “Noise has increased worldwide because of human population growth and what comes with that,” says Gaudon. “Excessive noise can have negative effects on people and wildlife.”

Dr. Gaudon is an adjunct professor at the University of Waterloo and the University of Toronto. He received a PhD in Forestry from the University of Toronto in 2019. It was while he was serving on a post-doctoral fellowship with the University of Waterloo and *rare* between 2019 and 2021 that he was asked to research the relationship between noise and the environment. The different landscapes of *rare* proved an ideal testing ground.

“Vegetation has often been used in urban planning to mitigate noise impacts,” says Gaudon. “However, we do not know a lot about what influences noise attenuation, especially outside of the lab. We hope the results of our work will help others think about how we use vegetated land cover in our urban areas to mitigate noise.”

Dr. Gaudon worked with a team comprising of Dr. Michael McTavish (University of Toronto), Dr. Jonas Hamberg (University



of Toronto & University of Waterloo), Dr. Heather Cray (University of Waterloo & Dalhousie University) and Dr. Stephen Murphy (University of Waterloo). Together, they worked on *rare* land, exploring the differences of noise levels within mixed forest, tallgrass prairie and agricultural landscapes, as well as how these sites changed their noise attenuation through the seasons.

“The *rare* Charitable Research Reserve supported the project in many ways, including financially, and by giving us access to many sites,” says Gaudon.

The work was published as a paper in the January 2022 edition of *Urban Ecosystems*, but Dr. Gaudon’s research continues. “Right now, I’m working on a few projects exploring how vegetation composition and structure and habitat influences insect biodiversity, including field work that was completed on *rare* lands during my time there as a post-doc.”

Peer-Reviewed Papers by Researchers at *rare*

In 2020, the hard work of *rare* researchers past and present were recognized as five peer-reviewed papers based on research conducted at *rare* were published in respected journals through the year. Below is a sample of those papers.

Spatio-temporal and population-level variation in avian immune-genes and parasite communities

by: Leanne Grieves, Ph.D. Candidate.
Supervisor: Dr. Beth MacDougall-Shackleton
University of Western, Department of Biology

This study looked at song sparrow populations in Ontario, including sparrows at the *rare* Charitable Research Reserve, and how they responded to blood-borne parasites. These parasites currently infect nearly 70% of bird species worldwide, and given their ability to infect multiple species, and the expected expansion of their range due to climate change, it's important to understand how hosts and parasites interact. The major histocompatibility complex (MHC) is a diverse gene family that plays a crucial role in the immune response to parasites.

This study used next-generation sequencing, microscopy and song analysis software to explore whether MHC genotypes are correlated with parasites, whether different breeding populations respond differently to parasite load and diversity, how things change through the breeding system, and whether increased parasite load decreases song performance. This research will help inform decisions on how to protect songbird species.

Community assessment of invasive earthworms in restored Southern Ontario tallgrass prairie

by Heather Cray, Ph.D. Candidate.
Supervisor: Dr. Stephen Murphy
University of Waterloo, School of Environment, Resources, and Sustainability

Dedicated citizens are working to restore tallgrass prairie habitat in southern Ontario, but these may be affected by invasive earthworm species eating and burying prairie plant seeds. More information about these worms is needed, but lacking. This project assessed the earthworm populations on restored tallgrass prairie at *rare* to help inform future prairie restoration, deepening our understanding of the complex food web of established habitats and factors related to earthworm invasion.

Effect of the neonicotinoid pesticide clothianidin on monarch butterfly development and behaviour

by Alana Wilcox, PhD Candidate.
Supervisor: Drs. Ryan Norris & Amy Newman
University of Guelph, Department of Integrative Biology

This study assessed the impact of the neonicotinoid pesticide clothianidin on the reproductive output, development and migration capacity of monarch butterflies. Neonicotinoid pesticides are known to affect the mobility, reproductive output and survival of insects, but most studies until now have focused on bees. Alana Wilcox's work changed that.

Monarch butterflies lay eggs on milkweed during the spring and early summer. The third generation of monarchs, seen in early fall,



have a unique migratory physiology, including long, thin wings, helping them migrate nearly 4,000 km from southern Canada to the Oyamel fir forests in Mexico. To complete this study, Wilcox reared monarchs on milkweed grown in soil treated with pesticide. These monarchs were monitored, and adult monarchs were mated and their reproductive output assessed. The monarchs that were reared in fall were also tested using a flight simulator to gauge whether they followed their expected migration path.

Upcoming Research

Field Testing a Revolutionary New Sampling Technique

Professor Elizabeth Clare is a Molecular Ecologist who recently joined the faculty at York University, after working almost 11 years in the UK. "I study ecology using DNA," Dr. Clare explains. "I have worked all over the world and students in my lab have been part of long-term work in Malaysia, Brazil and Central America."

Professor Clare is starting a research study at *rare* to see if environmental DNA can be collected around the nests and nesting areas of birds to identify the occupants without disturbing them. "Environmental DNA is an exceptionally useful tool to identify species and study their diet," says Clare. "We've used the eDNA in the gut of leeches and dung beetles to track mammals in Southeast Asia. More recently, we became the first in the world to demonstrate that animal DNA is carried in the air, and we might be able to use this as a non-invasive tool to study biodiversity."

The study at *rare* will test the collection process and help show how effective and accurate it is. Tests will also help show how long eDNA lasts in the environment. For Clare and her colleagues, *rare* was an ideal testing ground, providing excellent candidate species and habitats not far from the home and office. "I can ride my bike to the field sites from my home in Preston," says Clare. "We need to make frequent visits to collect air samples for what we want to



do, so proximity is key. The fact that *rare* monitors their nest boxes and knows which ones were used and when is key to helping us identify bird DNA in the air. We can use *rare* records to find out if it's a bird that used that box, or just random DNA from the environment. We'll end up spending many hours sitting in *rare*'s fields while our devices collect air samples."

The use of waterborne eDNA is already common in monitoring marine populations and a vital tool for commercial and regulatory research around the world. Sampling airborne eDNA is a breakthrough that could provide similar benefits. "Governments around the world are using waterborne eDNA to study aquatic life without the need for more invasive testing methods like electro-fishing or netting," says Clare. "We hope this study at *rare* can help us establish air-sampled eDNA as a viable way to monitor mammals and birds on land, allowing us to monitor the environment in a way that's less invasive for the animals that we study."

Continuing the *Chain of Learning* at *rare*

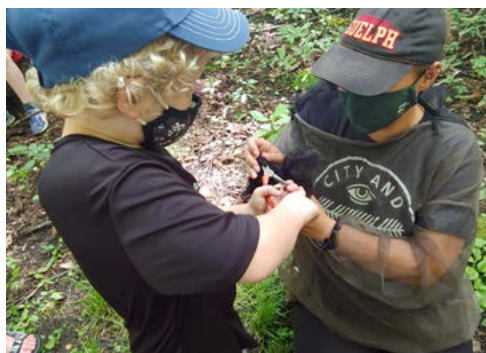
By Michelle MacMillan,
Education Assistant at *rare*

At *rare* we are very lucky to have many amazing research partners that visit our ECO (*Every Child Outdoors*) education programs and teach us about the fascinating research they do. Presentations by our research partners help us create a Chain of Learning by providing meaningful, hands-on experiences to even the youngest of learners to train the next generation of land stewards.

During our Summer 2021 ECO Camp and our fall term of Nature School, we were joined by Alannah Grant, a PhD student at the University of Guelph's Newman Lab, who is currently studying eastern grey squirrels here at *rare* to see how urbanization affects their stress levels.

During her visits, Alannah showed our ECO participants how she safely catches and handles squirrels, measures them, and takes fur samples. Our students were thrilled to get an up-close look at wildlife as Alannah processed a squirrel. After watching the squirrel run back to its tree after being released, the children were all able to try out being squirrel scientists themselves! Using stuffed animals as their research subjects, students weighed their animals, tagged them, and took a small sample of their fur. They recorded all their scientific findings before 'releasing' their animals. Nature School students also helped Alannah prepare traps to catch her next research subjects and learned about how to find and identify squirrel scat.

We are grateful for all the researchers that take the time to teach the next generation how to be responsible stewards. To give your



child *rare* opportunities like these, register for our Nature School or ECO Camp programs today!

Finally, we would like to thank the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation for their generous contributions which enabled *rare* to pivot its education programs during the pandemic.

Page 14 photos: (top) Monarch butterfly, by Jenna Quinn; (middle-right) Professor Clare monitoring, courtesy Professor Clare;

Page 15 photos: (top right) Top Hat in her terrarium; (top-middle, middle and bottom) Learning to be Squirrel scientists with Alannah Grant, by Istafa Sufi.



Introducing Top Hat!



Have you met *rare*'s animal partner, Top Hat? Top Hat is a painted turtle, found in a FedEx shipping yard back in July 2017. After being kept in a tank with various exotic species by the person who found her, she was sent to the Hobbitstee Wildlife Refuge. After determining that Top Hat couldn't be released into the wild, due to her exposure to exotic captive turtles, she was adopted from the refuge by Julie Reid, who cared for her before she was re-homed at *rare* on May 3, 2021. Top Hat currently resides in *rare*'s main office, and our staff and interns are on hand to ensure she gets the proper care and feeding every day.

Julie and her friend Sue gave Top Hat her name after a long day rescuing turtles crossing Roseville Road. When asked to give an interview at the Record about their work, they were also asked to bring along a turtle to show. The then-unnamed Top Hat was the only turtle readily available. Julie suggested that they use the painted turtle and Sue, tired, and a little giddy from a long day's work, replied, "Yes, and then we can put a suit on her and a top hat!" Thus the name stuck.

Top Hat will be assisting *rare*'s education team, teaching turtle anatomy and behaviour to children and youth attending *rare*'s Nature School and Day Camps once the pandemic allows more indoor gatherings. She will act as a visual aid to the public regarding our Turtle Nursery Project. Turtles like Top Hat can have a long life and we at *rare*, believing in protecting our natural spaces and species intact in perpetuity, plan on giving Top Hat a long and happy life in turn.

850+
Dedicated
Donors

4,517 lbs
Organic Produce
Donated to Local Food
Banks Directly from
Springbank Farm

Learn more about *rare's* goals in the years ahead by consulting *A Place to Connect: Strategy & Plans: 2020–2024*, available online at raresites.org.

These goals are based on sessions held with community members, staff, advisors, artists, Indigenous knowledge keepers, researchers, educators and others who contribute to our work.

140 acres
Added to *rare's*
Stewardship

4
Properties
Acquired

10
Invasive
Species
Targeted

14+ km
Trails
Maintained

606
Native Plants
& Trees
Planted

4
Hours of Conversation
for Conservation
Webinars Recorded

21
New &
Ongoing
Research
Projects

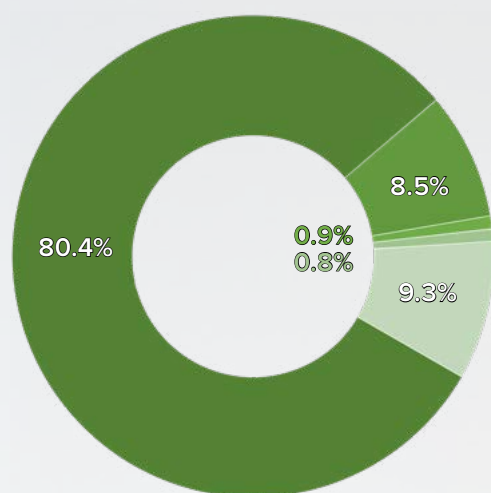
21
Nature Activity
Videos for Kids
(Over **1.25 hours**
of content)

169
Different
Species
Observed

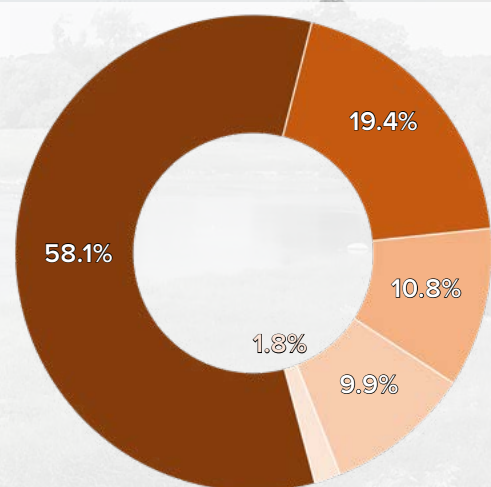
5
Peer-Reviewed
Papers
Published

The Confluence of the Grand and the Speed. Seen from the Linear Trail.
Photo by C. Pope

For the year ending August 31, 2020



Statement of Revenue ¹	2020-21	2019-20	Difference
Donations and Grants	\$3,249,641	\$1,492,012	\$1,757,629↑
Government Programs/ Covid Assistance	\$345,365	\$309,287	\$36,078↑
Program Income	\$34,820	\$8,288	\$26,532↑
Rental Income	\$33,994	\$15,052	\$18,942↑
Other Income	\$377,180	\$29,460	\$347,720↑
TOTAL	\$4,041,000	\$1,854,099	\$2,186,901↑



Statement of Expenses	2020-21	2019-20	Difference
Conservation, Research & Education Programs	\$904,929	\$753,167	\$151,762↑
Fundraising & Community Relations	\$369,132	\$358,379	\$10,753↑
Amortization	\$167,739	\$180,448	\$12,709↓
Administration	\$154,257	\$233,963	\$79,706↓
Professional Fees	\$27,443	\$27,733	\$290↓
TOTAL	\$1,623,500	\$1,553,690	\$69,810↑
SURPLUS²	\$2,417,500	\$300,409	\$2,117,091↑

Financial Position at End of Fiscal Year	2020-21	2019-20	Difference
Current Assets	\$2,433,587	\$1,459,725	\$973,862↑
Capital Assets			
Land	\$8,029,442	\$6,821,263	\$1,208,179↑
Buildings & Equipment	\$3,144,829	\$3,260,701	\$115,872↓
Current Liabilities (Payables)	(\$625,046)	(\$476,377)	\$148,669↑
Mortgage Payable & Term Loan	(\$3,190,600)	(\$3,690,600)	\$500,000↓
Total Net Assets	\$9,792,212	\$7,374,712	\$2,417,500↑

Notes:

1. Total revenue reported includes **rare's** three Funds: Operating, Capital and Endowment.
2. Majority of surplus revenue over expenses came from large endowment donations, EcoGift donations of land recorded at fair market value and funds designated for payments against the outstanding mortgage on the original **rare** lands.

We Thank Our Corporations for Conservation

The *rare* Charitable Research Reserve has been fortunate to have the support of a number of corporations in Waterloo Region, Wellington County and beyond. Corporations joining this initiative commit to an annual contribution of \$5,000 or more for a minimum of five years, demonstrating their commitment to conservation, environmental education and research. These companies set an example and encourage others to take steps towards environmental sustainability, creating opportunities for the next generation.



Thanks Also to Our EcoGift Donors

At *rare*, we are grateful to individuals, companies and organizations that donate gifts of land and/or conservation easements to *rare*. These donations are recognized by the Government of Canada as EcoGifts.

An EcoGift is when the private owner of an environmentally sensitive private land decides to make a certified gift of that land to a designated charitable organization. This donation not only opens the possibility of protecting that land and the wildlife within for future generations, it can realize significant tax savings.

Donors wishing to donate such lands must have their properties certified by the Federal Minister of the Environment to be ecologically sensitive land. Degraded lands may qualify for donation if the donation is accompanied by a firm commitment to restore that land to health. The appraised fair market value of the land must be reviewed and certified by the ministry, as must the registered charities that receive such gifts.

This year, *rare* was privileged to receive three donations under the EcoGift program, and we wish to thank the contributions from:

2636644 Ontario Ltd.



SOUTHGATE
HOMES
A GREEN BRICK PARTNER

Richard & Janice Reiner

Individuals or corporations considering a gift of ecologically sensitive land are invited to reach out to us to leave a legacy ensuring these lands are preserved intact in perpetuity. For more information about the steps required to make an EcoGift Donation, please contact Tom Woodcock at tom.woodcock@raredsites.org.



The Mill Pond at Eden Mills. Photo by Tom Woodcock.

We are grateful to the following individuals, foundations, government agencies, organizations and businesses that have helped *rare* work towards its vision of a sustainable region this past fiscal year (September 1, 2020, to August 31, 2021). 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 everyone appropriately.

\$250,000+

Stonefields International Inc.; The Stonefields Foundation

\$50,000-\$249,999

Buttercup Foundation
The Savvas Chamberlain Family Foundation
Government of Canada
Lyle S. Hallman Foundation
Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation — Lyle S. Hallman Foundation
Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation
Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation — Musagetes Fund
Linda & Ed Newton
Region of Waterloo
Hennie & Mike Stork
TD Bank Group,
TD Friends of the Environment Foundation

\$20,000-\$49,999

Keith & Sheila Ainsworth
Derek & Kathleen Coleman,
Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation — Ages Fund
ECHO Foundation
Ken & Rachel* Flood
Bruce Gordon
Robert and Judith Pavlis

\$5,000-\$19,999

Michael Adams & Thuy Nguyen
Gordon & Celia Chaplin
The Cloverleaf Foundation
Michael & Louise Dawe
Granite Homes
Ruth Harris & Colin Baxter
Jackie Hatherly-Martin & Keith Martin
James Nigel (Biff) Hamilton* & Thiam Lim
Norah Menzies & Ed Langevin
Government of Ontario
John & Leslie Pearson
John & Joyce Pollock
Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation — John A. Pollock Family
United Way Waterloo Region Communities
United Way Waterloo Region Communities — Moms in Biz Giving Circle
University of Waterloo
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by *Christine Thompson,*
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Annual Report 2020–2021



Join us at our Spring Plant Sale,
Saturday, May 14, 8am-4pm
at the **rare** ECO Centre & Slit Barn
(768 Blair Road, Cambridge)
We look forward to seeing you!

