



ra re

# ***REVIEW***

## **FALL-WINTER 2022-23**

Abram holds a leaf and butterfly cocoon  
at the June 3 PD Day ECO Camp.  
Photo by Michelle MacMillan



# Land Acknowledgement

The *rare* Charitable Research Reserve stewards over 1,200 acres of land, but we are not the first to do so. Most of the land currently in our care is located within the Haldimand Tract, which spans six miles on either side of the Grand River and is the territory of the Onkwehon:we Peoples of the Six Nations of the Grand River. It is also territory of the Anishinaabe Peoples Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. In addition, we steward land at the border of the Upper Canada Treaty No. 3 and Treaty 19 from 1818 which is also territory of the Anishinaabe Peoples Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We honour and respect the sovereignty of these First Nations and their ancestors. The lands we steward are home to many other First Nations, Métis and Inuit who have moved to the area from across Turtle Island.

As a settler-founded and -led organization, we make this land acknowledgement in admission of the cultural and historical harm inflicted by settlers on Indigenous peoples that has led to generational trauma and systemic injustices that persist to this day, including the dispossession of land. We acknowledge that the lands we live on, work on and derive benefit from were taken away from the original stewards, and it is our goal to restore that connection and to work towards building ethical, reciprocal relationships with the local First Nations of the lands where *rare* is situated.

We commit to learning about and acting on our responsibilities as settlers of these lands and unlearning our cultural and historical biases that contributed to making these systemic injustices possible in what we now call Canada. ■■

## 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 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. ■■

**Background Photo:** Old Growth Forest in Ancient Woods. Photo taken in 2003 by H. Wilson.



# 2022: Coming Back Live, in Person

By James Bow,  
Communications Officer at *rare*

In March 2020, *rare*, like other organizations across Canada, had to adapt its operations to the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic. The headquarters were closed to the public and staff worked from home. In-person events that had been planned, including plant sales, summer camps and invasive species pulls, were cancelled. It was a major period of adjustment for everyone.

Fortunately, it was also a period where many in the community and everyone at *rare* pulled together. A lot of work was put into making *rare* a resource that people could access online. Thanks to grants from the Lyle S. Hallman Foundation and the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Education Team was able to produce Nature Activity Videos providing activities teachers, parents and kids could engage in to connect them to nature in their back yard. Educational seminars became webinars, such as our Conversations for Conservation events. And when it became clear that outdoor spaces were spaces safe from COVID-19, our trails became a vital resource for people to walk, exercise and connect with nature while maintaining physical distancing.

Still, as we entered 2022, we were pleased to start relaunching in-person events at *rare* as pandemic measures eased. The first event was, appropriately, the Spring Plant Sale and EcoMarket, held on Saturday, May 14, 2022. Staff at Springbank Farm worked over the winter fostering thousands of seedlings of edible, herb and flowering plants, getting them ready for sale at the Slit Barn. This year, a new EcoMarket opened the Plant Sale to vendors and artisans from the surrounding community. Guests included SaveSoil.ca, Nancy's Creation and Seeds, and Melville Café, who provided coffee



and baked goods. Over five hundred people came to the event, drawn by the excellent weather and a chance to connect with other people who were as passionate about growing things as they are. It was like a spring awakening, with over 5,300 seedlings grown for the sale. The event raised over \$13,000 for programs at Springbank Farm.

Other in-person events followed, including our first in-person Conversation for Conservation, featuring Nicola Ross of the *Loops and Lattes* series of books highlighting hikes along local trails. Sarah Martin led June's Conversation for Conservation, explaining why her livestock were grazing in Preston Flats, and how regenerative farming helps foster healthy soil and fights climate change.

The in-person events culminated with the 2022 Trail Party, which evolved from our previous Walk & Run fundraisers for *rare*. Over 160 participants gathered at Cambridge's Riverbluffs Park to walk, run or stroll to the *rare* ECO Centre and Slit Barn. There, participants, including many children, enjoyed a barbecue lunch, ice cream, buskers, live music and family-friendly activities. Best of all, the event was one of our most successful yet, raising over \$55,000 to Turn the Map Green -- protecting *rare's* environmentally sensitive lands now and for the future and introducing many new folks to *rare*.



In addition to these events, *rare* staff and volunteers participated in a number of events organised by other groups. The *rare* table turned up at the ArtsEverywhere Festival in Guelph, twice at the Hespeler Village Farmers' Market, and at Cambridge's Inaugural Bee City Festival hosted by the Ancient Mariners Canoe Club in their Boathouse at Riverbluffs Park. There, staff and volunteers talked to many people from the community, some of whom weren't yet aware about *rare*, but were very interested in hearing about *rare's* trails and its ECO Camps.

While 2022 has seen a welcome return to in-person events and activities, some of the adaptations will continue. Online webinars will engage people interested in learning more about nature and our environment while at home during the winter months. We will continue to build our social media presence to engage in a wider audience that we may not encounter as easily in person. Let's spread *rare's* message about the importance of our natural spaces have to the health and wellbeing of the environment, our communities and ourselves, everywhere! ■

**Photos:** Three images by James Bow taken during May's Spring Plant Sale and EcoMarket: *rare* staff pose to Save Soil; Seedlings ready; Checking the stock at Nancy's Creations and Seeds (Above); Trail Party guests queue up for ice cream! Photo by Alissa Fraser (Left).





## Derek Coleman: Finding rare ways to support *rare*

By James Bow  
Communications Officer at *rare*

Derek Coleman has never forgotten the support he received when he was first starting out on his 50-year career in environmental planning. His dissertation, *An Ecological Input to Regional Planning*, was supported by a major grant that allowed for travel and research. “I appreciated the benefits,” says Coleman. “After retiring, I was looking for ways to give back to the discipline that had supported me in so many ways. This was back in 2007. The Executive Director of the (then) Cambridge Community Foundation told me about *rare* and suggested I might be interested in helping them since I wanted to support environmental-type projects.”

“So, I had some conversations with the director of *rare* at the time,” Derek goes on. “I wanted to establish something that could continue over time, and supporting research at *rare* was an obvious fit. It benefits everybody, it happens every year, and I’d be supporting students at the start of their careers, just as I’d been supported at the start of mine.”

“Derek’s support was invaluable in reviving and expanding *rare*’s scholarship program, renamed the Ages Foundation Fellowship and Bursaries program.

But Derek wasn’t content to stop there. When planning to help charitable organizations like *rare* he identified a series of needs that are often outside the attention of donors and sponsors. “People want physical projects,” says Derek, “where they can go and see or feel that they’ve helped put something in the ground. Supporting less physical things, operational things like staff training and professional development, attending conferences where important connections are made, also helps an organization, but doesn’t often get fundraising support.

So, in addition to Derek’s research support, he has provided funds to send *rare* staff to conferences where they get the training and make the connections to build their careers and their organization. Most recently, *rare*’s Major Gifts Manager attended the Original Canadian Gift Planning Course in Banff, where she met with others within the philanthropy industry to learn more about the latest trends and techniques charitable organizations can use to support their fundraising goals. This session would not have been possible

without the contribution Derek made to cover travel, lodging and the conference fee.

Most of all, Derek stands ready to help *rare* where needed, when needed.

“I have such a good feeling about *rare*. They bring a substantial benefit to Cambridge and the Waterloo Region. not only at the site, but in people’s environmental knowledge and attitudes,” says Derek. “So, when they come to me with a couple of odd things that need particular funding, like covering the remaining costs of the prescribed burn... if they need to find something fairly quickly, I’m happy to help.” 🇩🇪



## Returning to the Trails to Party!

By James Bow  
Communications Officer at *rare*

September 2022 marked the first time in three years that *rare*’s annual Walk & Run fundraiser could be held in person. In recognition of this, and the importance our natural spaces had in bolstering our physical and mental health during the pandemic, *rare* transformed its fundraiser into a celebration of our outdoor spaces. Despite fears that rain would dampen spirits at the event, the community came out to celebrate.

The first annual Trail Party for *rare* (the 13th Walk & Run for *rare*) saw 212 people sign up to walk or run to raise funds to Turn the Map Green. Many more donated. On the day, over 160 people showed up, including many kids, to walk the trails from the Ancient Mariners’ Boathouse at Riverbluffs Park to the *rare* ECO Centre and Slit Barn, where they enjoyed a barbecue lunch, live music, ice cream, family friendly activities and busker entertainment.

Thanks to the hard work and support of participants, donors and sponsors, the 2022 Trail Party raised over \$55,000 towards *rare*’s Turn the Map Green initiative, enough to protect over 27,500 square metres of environmentally sensitive lands now and into the future.

We’d like to thank Trail Party sponsors, including presenting sponsor MacPherson Builders, as well as the sponsors of the Ice Cream Station and the WiFi and Charging Station, Fiix Software and KPMG. Thanks also go to Cachet Homes, Enbridge, Marcangelo Foods, Natural Resource Solutions Inc., TELUS Canada, WCO Professional Accountants, MacNeil and Dodd Pharmacy and Zeifmans.

We look forward to our next Trail Party celebration in September 2023! We thank everyone in the community for their support to Turn the Map Green. 🇩🇪

**Photos:** Derek Coleman (Above); Trail Party attendees enjoying lunch, by Alissa Fraser (Below Left); Banner thanking Trail Party Sponsors at the ECO Centre, by James Bow (Below Right).





# Ages Foundation and *rare* Support for Environmental Research Surpasses \$100,000

By Jenna Quinn

Program Scientist - Research & Education  
Priorities, Partnerships & Monitoring at *rare*

This year was the fourteenth time that the Ages Foundation Fellowship, in partnership with *rare*, awarded scholarships and bursaries to graduate school researchers to conduct research on *rare* property. With seven graduate students receiving awards ranging from \$1,000 to \$5,000, the total amount of support the Ages Foundation has granted since the program's launch in 2009 has surpassed \$100,000.

Alannah Grant, a University of Guelph Department of Integrative Biology PhD Candidate, received a \$5,000 fellowship for her research studying the influence of environmental stress on early neurogenesis rates in urban and rural eastern grey squirrels. Says Alannah, "Urban environments are the fastest growing habitat type on the planet, and they're encroaching upon existing ecosystems and habitats at a pace never seen before. The severity and implications of these alterations haven't really been explored." Alannah's research at *rare* will provide important data on how a rural setting affects this species, compared to louder, more disruptive environments in cities.

Julia Alpen, an MES candidate at York University's Department of Environment and Urban Change, received a \$1,000 bursary towards her project Embodiment of Kinship: Human Tree Relations. Her project features an arts-based research approach. "I will be investigating aesthetic practices that foster relationships with the more-than-human world, particularly trees. I'll explore how we can shift current human-centric notions so that people can see the world as something other than what they can take and use, giving them a better understanding of how they depend on the environment, and need to give back to it."

Other winners of the Ages Foundation Bursaries include Megan Schmidt, a PhD candidate at the University of Waterloo Department of Geography and Environmental Management, who is investigating the carbon dynamics of southern Ontario swamps. Claire Schon, an MSc candidate at the University of Waterloo's department of Biology, won a bursary for their project exploring biological control of introduced *Phragmites australis*. Sarah Marshall, an MES candidate for the University of Waterloo's School of Planning received support for their work on Landscape Connectivity Analysis for



Conservation Planning in Waterloo Region, and Lauren Witterick, PhD candidate for the University of Western Ontario's Department of Biology for a project exploring the effects of predator-induced fear on the brain and behaviour in wildlife.

Sumia Ali, an MA candidate at McMaster University's School of Earth, Environment and Society, received a bursary for her project, What are the Experiences of Black Women in Toronto in regards to Air Quality/Air Pollution. In her words, "I spent this past summer being a part of the lands team at *rare*, which gave me the opportunity to work on protected land, monitor butterflies, and survey invasive species. During this time, I got to witness *rare's* commitment to use research to further the development of communities across Ontario. I appreciate *rare's* support of my research. I seek to unpack issues of environmental injustice in urban spaces."

The Ages Foundation scholarships and bursaries pay for research projects that will take place the following year on *rare* lands. This is part of *rare's* research mandate to advance knowledge in environmental science. As *rare* believes that these lands must be protected, not just for the health of the community and the environment, but for the community's understanding. When everyone better understands the importance our natural spaces have in our lives, we will better understand the need to protect these spaces.

**Photos:** Ages Foundation Bursary recipient Sumia Ali (Above); Inornate Ringlet Butterfly, photo by Jade Anderson (Left).

## Monitoring Ecological Health

By Jenna Quinn

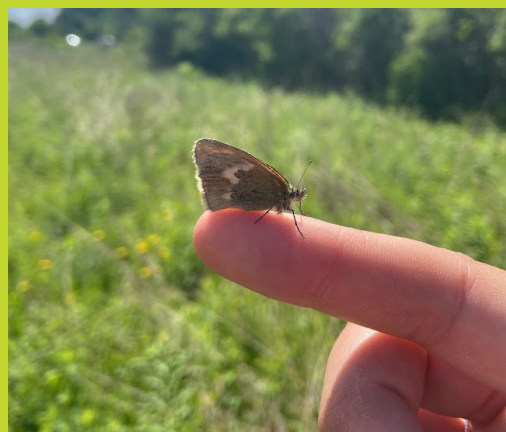
Program Scientist - Research & Education  
Priorities, Partnerships & Monitoring at *rare*

The most effective way to gauge the health of an ecosystem is to measure it. This year, *rare* staff and volunteers again took up the challenge of monitoring different terrestrial and freshwater indicator species, including butterflies, birds, salamanders, plants and more.

Over 1,619 birds (84 different species) were observed in the Eramosa Conservation Corridor. The count uncovered uncommon visitors to *rare*, such as the Chimney Swift, Blue-grey Gnatcatcher and the Northern Rough-winged Swallow. For butterflies, 5,739 individuals (46 species) were observed. These numbers represented an increase compared to previous years, and featured uncommon visitors such as the Baltimore Checkerspot and the Spicebush Swallowtail, although the number of Skippers, Angelwings and Admirals decreased.

This fall, *rare* staff and volunteers also monitored salamanders, vegetation and soil. The increased number of individuals and the return of species that haven't been seen at *rare* in years offers encouragement that the protection of these lands is having a positive effect.

All monitoring information is gathered and published every five years to record the health of the local ecosystems. The 2020 report can be found on *rare's* website, and the next report is scheduled for 2025. ■■





# Securing an Easement to Ease Development Concerns

By Tom Woodcock  
Planning Ecologist at *rare*.

This past September, *rare* finalized an agreement to purchase property from the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario (MTO). The purchase completely eliminates the possibility of a road ever being built across *rare* lands through an old right-of-way.

In the 1960s, the Ontario Government embarked on a program of highway construction in the region, rebuilding Highway 8 from a King's Highway using local streets into today's limited access freeway running from New Hamburg to the 401 via the Conestoga Parkway. During the 1970s, the MTO began planning to extend this highway into a bypass around the City of Cambridge, from its current interchange with the 401, crossing the Grand River and paralleling Blair Road and Myers Road to reconnect with the current Highway 8 route near Branchton. Some maps from the era show this proposed bypass running through what is now *rare* lands.

Fortunately, the provincial government decided not to move ahead with these plans and, by the early 1990s, had shelved the project. However, the MTO still owned a 100-metre-wide stretch of land from Blair Road to the southern edge of *rare's* Thompson Tract, within the City of Cambridge and the Township of North Dumfries.

The property to the east and west of the MTO lands was acquired by *rare* in 2010 to protect the headwaters of Bauman Creek. While the road proposal remained on the shelf, the MTO was content to allow *rare* to manage the local ecosystem and extend one of its trails along its route. Many residents were unaware that the trail that they hiked on was actually owned by the Province although the question of roads through *rare* would re-emerge whenever a new development was proposed nearby, and more traffic planned. As the provincial government could have decided to use this land at any time, *rare* was always eager to remove the threat.

Finally, in early 2019, the MTO put the property up for sale, but *rare* still had to wait before it could make its move. Under an agreement with the Ontario Nonprofit Network (ONN), government lands that are being sold off are offered to ONN members before going onto the open market. Other governments, including municipalities, are given the right of first refusal for acquiring the land but, fortunately for *rare*, no



other government agency expressed a desire to purchase the property and *rare* was able to make the purchase before it was put on the open market. Given that this land was considered crown land, *rare* ensured that the province had consulted with local First Nations prior to the sale and verified directly with representatives from Six Nations that the information we

received about such consultations were appropriate and correct.

Provincial requirements meant that the agreement transferred the ownership of the whole property to *rare*, including stretches on the Cambridge end that over time had seen use by neighbouring property owners. As a result, *rare* is working with those property owners to sell and transfer ownership of these segments to them. Normally, dividing such a property in this manner is not permitted, but *rare* secured permission by ensuring that the properties be transferred at cost, without profit and specifying that the transferred land remain undeveloped as a condition of sale.

While the Ontario Ministry of Transportation had no plans to build a road through *rare* lands for the past thirty years, this purchase removes all possibility of such a project, ensuring the protection of these natural spaces now and into the future.

We are thankful to a generous anonymous donor who fully funded the project to ensure we could complete the purchase within the limited timeframe available. ■

**Photos:** Aerial photo showing MTO right-of-way and surrounding properties (Above); Goat eating Phragmites grasses, by Jenna Quinn (Below).

## Volunteers Against Invasive Species

By Alissa Fraser  
Conservation Technician at *rare*

Protecting environmentally sensitive spaces requires a hands-on approach. Even when a plot of land is protected for conservation, it faces many pressures, including litter, polluted water and the encroachment of invasive species.

Introduced species like Phragmites, Buckthorn and Garlic Mustard have few natural controls in the local ecosystem and can outcompete native species, pushing them out of natural areas if action isn't taken. This alters the local ecosystem



in many ways, such as by lowering water levels or reducing populations of local pollinators.

Fortunately, *rare* could count on many volunteers to help with Invasive Species removal days. Armed with enthusiasm, wearing appropriate clothing for trekking in the brush, community members spent over 126 hours helping to pull out and push back invasive species from many sites at *rare*. At certain sites, we relied on unusual allies: goats were brought to bear, as they can chew Phragmites down to the roots, depleting their energy stores, making it harder for the plants to grow back.

We were also fortunate to have great support from staff and volunteers for shoreline cleanup days on Preston Flats and Blair Flats along the Grand River, removing truckloads of garbage as part of our annual Spring Cleanup.

We are thankful for the help we've received from community members taking the time and working hard to keep our natural areas healthy. ■



# Restoring the Pawpaw to our Natural Spaces

By Jessica O'Connell, TMMC Food Bank Gardens, Seed & Land Steward at *rare*

This year, *rare*'s Springbank Food Bank Gardens are partnering with Carolinian Canada to raise awareness about a little-known, edible fruit-bearing native plant to restore it in forests and gardens across south-western Ontario. The pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) is a hardy relative of tropical "custard apples" such as the cherimoya and the guanabana. This shrub-like tree's earliest caretakers were First Nations people who cared for thickets of pawpaw and likely carried the species seeds north along their established trade routes.

The pawpaw plant produces opulent maroon bell-shaped flowers in the Spring which are pollinated by beetles and flies before leaves emerge. The pawpaw fruit (pictured top right) offers a combination of rich and creamy tropical flavours and is a source of protein, Vitamin E and potassium. It has been said that its seeds were once used to play a traditional game amongst the people who grew them.

Wild pawpaw groves disappeared as European settlers developed and logged Southern Ontario, planting and harvesting fruit orchards with European varieties. Carolinian Canada hopes to restore the pawpaw's prominence in our food system by partnering with *rare* to give away saplings and seeds for people to plant.

October lends itself as Pawpaw Month as this is the time of year when the fruit is ready to be harvested. This is also why Carolinian Canada launched the Pawpaw Parade and invited *rare* to be one of the hosts. As part of the parade, individuals applied to Carolinian Canada to adopt pawpaw saplings or receive native plant seeds and could pick up their kits at host sites like *rare*.

If you find your hands wrapped around a pawpaw, consider saving these seeds. Remove all pulp from the dark, oblong seeds. Then, either plant them into a pot and leave out for the winter or store them in your fridge using a moist paper towel. Pawpaw growth begins as a long taproot, so don't be discouraged if you don't see leaves form until June.

Springbank Farm staff look forward to the day when more of our neighbours can build local

food security while enjoying the fruits of endemic species like the pawpaw. By increasing the number of local plants offering edible fruits, more options become available for people to feed themselves, increasing the resiliency of our food supply. We thank all community members who are planting pawpaw this season! ■■

**Photos:** The Pawpaw fruit, looking very like a mango; image courtesy the USDA. (Right); Eastern Comma Artist-in-Residence Alexandra Gelis engages ECO Campers in the art of making paper from local grasses (Below).



## Connecting People to Nature Through Art

By James Bow  
Communications Officer at *rare*

Located at the entrance to Springbank Farm, the solar-powered North House continues to welcome guests, from visiting researchers, to artists, poets and writers from the Eastern Comma Artist-in-Residence and Question Mark Butterfly Residence programs run in partnership with the Musagetes Foundation.

One such visitor and the first participant in the newly created Question Mark Butterfly Residency was Alexandra Gelis, a Toronto-based Columbian-Venezuelan-Canadian artist, curator and researcher. Gelis is known for her multimedia art installations combining film photography, drawing and new media with interactive electronics and sound. Her work includes research to investigate the ecologies of various landscapes, examining the traces left by social and political interventions.

"In my life of constant movement, I was 'called' by the plants," Gelis explains in an earlier biography. "Plants that 'supposedly' don't move are the ones that taught me most about the politics behind migration. I started exploring how native, non-native, invasive and 'migrated'

non-forced migration of people and colonization of territories."

While at North House, Gelis captured images and sounds unique to the areas nearby. She examined invasive Phragmites and gathered drone footage of *rare* lands. In addition, Gelis welcomed *rare* ECO Campers, telling them about her work and engaging them in activities like using local grasses to make paper.

Poet Liz Howard was this year's Eastern Comma Artist-in-Residence guest at North House. The Griffin Poetry Prize winner used her time at North House to work on a project blending poetry, prose and memoir. "I'm examining how place informs our sense of self and conscious experience and how the idea of a self is slippery, constructive and changeable," says Howard.

Just as *rare* stewards natural lands as a space for scientists to expand our understanding of the environment, it exists as a space for artists to highlight the links between people and nature, showing through artistic inquiry that we are a part of nature. It's a different meaningful way of connecting the community to the environment and making the intangible visible. ■■





# Welcome Returning Students!

Michelle MacMillan and Istafa Sufi  
Educators at *rare*.

After a long hiatus over the past couple of years, our educators were thrilled to welcome back school groups to *rare* this spring. Over 400 students from local schools visited to learn about animal life cycles, habitats and biodiversity, energy conservation, sustainability and more. As the new school year gets underway, we look forward to hosting more classes for educational programs.

## A summer of ECO Camp

This summer our education team, including Education Assistants Helmi Hess and Rachel Hanson, were busy running our Every Child Outdoors (ECO) Camps. Each week, campers participated in hands-on activities including butterfly catching, birdwatching, looking at benthic invertebrates in the Grand River and gardening at Springbank Farm. Campers were also able to learn from many special guests including researchers such as Alannah Grant, Amanda Liczner, and Lauren Witterick, artists Krista Koger and Alexandra Gelis and Haudenosaunee knowledge keeper Bill Woodworth.

This year we also piloted our first-ever Teens ECO camp for youth aged 12-16. Highlights included salamander monitoring, shelter building and fire lighting. This camp was a huge success, and we look forward to hosting Teens Camp again next year.

## First of Many PD Day Camps

This June we ran our first-ever PD Day camp at *rare*. Campers participated in games, hands-on arts and crafts and hikes on the *rare* trails. This school year we will be running PD Day camps on Oct. 24, Nov. 18 & 25, Jan. 20 & 27, Mar. 3 & 31, Apr. 21 and June 2. Parents can register their children at [rare.org/pd-day-camp](https://rare.org/pd-day-camp)

## Virtual Education

Our educators were also hard at work this winter preparing virtual education content. We released four new virtual field trips including Animals in Motion, All about Microplastics, Winter Animal Adaptations, and Tremendous Trees. They are available online for teachers to use with their classes. Additionally, we created nine new nature activity videos including winter wildlife tracking, carrot seed tape, making nature paintbrushes, which are available to view on our YouTube



channel at [youtube.com/raresites](https://youtube.com/raresites). Keep an eye out for more virtual content this fall!

## Career Connections

This year we are producing a series of new interview videos focusing on different environmental careers in the sustainability sector. These videos will help high school students

learn more about careers in the environmental field and connect them to working professionals that can help answer any further questions they may have. You can find our career connections page on our website at [rare.org/education/career-connections](https://rare.org/education/career-connections)

**Photos:** Istafa and ECO Campers (Above); Volunteer Kieran engages a Summer ECO Camper (Below)

# Return to ECO Camp: camper to volunteer

By Kieran de Peuter  
ECO Camp Volunteer at *rare*

The *rare* ECO Camps have always been a special place for me. From when I was a 6-year-old to a volunteer, these camps have been something that I look forward to each year. I had lots of fun and learned a ton of new things that carry over into school, and other situations where it is useful to have general knowledge of the outdoors. Sometimes people would ask where I learned something nature related, and the answer was always: at *rare*! I would go to ECO Camp every summer and sometimes during March Breaks, and I looked up to the volunteers and counselors as role models.

I was disappointed when I had to delay my week of volunteering a year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but I made up for it by volunteering for two weeks in the summer of 2022.

Volunteering with *rare* gave me a chance to look back on all the fun I had there while continuing my experience, and it was nice to know that I may have sparked an interest in nature for a kid who maybe didn't like it much before. For example, when we were catching butterflies, and one camper hadn't caught any, I gave them mine. They were amazed at the butterfly and went back to show the counselors. It was clear that even



a small thing like that inspired them to explore nature and keep trying to catch one on their own.

I remember when I was younger a counselor found a garter snake and let us touch it. This year, that person catching snakes was me. Seeing other campers reacting to the wildlife, building a passion for it, was great to see.

All in all, *rare* has taught me a lot about nature, and it has shown me important life lessons. As a volunteer, I learned about how *rare's* ECO Camps work behind the scenes and how to handle situations where campers needed help. The *rare* Charitable Research Reserve has played a big role in my life, and I hope that in the future it can for others too!



# Teens ECO Camp Visits Crawford Lake

By Michelle MacMillan and Istafa Sufi  
Educators at *rare*

This past summer, the *rare* Every Child Outdoors (ECO) program was expanded to include its first-ever Teens ECO camp. As with all our education programs, we strive to include Indigenous-led education wherever possible, especially working directly with Indigenous Knowledge Keepers. We were fortunate to be joined by Bill Woodworth, a Mohawk Knowledge Keeper, professional architect, and professor at the University of Waterloo. We were able to visit the Crawford Lake Conservation Area to learn from Bill all about longhouses and Haudenosaunee culture.

We began our visit by taking a walk around the meromictic Crawford Lake, a lake that holds historical and spiritual significance for First Nations cultures from the area. Meromictic means that the lake has layers of water which do not intermix, as opposed to holomictic lakes, which mix at least once a year.

This lack of mixing means that very little oxygen reaches the bottom of the lake, and materials that sink to the bottom are very well preserved. One example of this is corn pollen that was found by researchers at the bottom of Crawford Lake, which led to the discovery of eleven longhouses that were once located on the property.

We then took a tour of the longhouse village containing three reconstructed longhouses with Bill. Bill spoke about how Haudenosaunee Peoples historically constructed these longhouses and how these recent reconstructions differ. Sitting inside one of the longhouses, Bill shared with us other aspects of Haudenosaunee culture such as hunting and gathering, what different plants and animals were used for, the matriarchal nature of Haudenosaunee society, and the various clans and their roles in Haudenosaunee culture. He described the design of the longhouse and how different families lived in different units, where things were stored, and the usage of fire for cooking, sanitizing, and ceremonial purposes.

Campers also got to explore the longhouse and observe various plants, furs, traditionally made canoes and baskets, and other artefacts up close. We ended our visit by exploring the newest longhouse, the Deer Clan longhouse, which exhibited contemporary Indigenous art by Catherine Tammaro.



We are very grateful to Bill Woodworth for sharing his knowledge and time with our educators and campers this summer. We look forward to learning more from him in the future! ■■

**Photos:** Indigenous Knowledge Keeper Bill Woodworth and ECO Campers inside Crawford Lake longhouse (Above); Images of newly hatched turtles, taken this year by Sandy Nicholls (Bottom Left and Right) and Jessica Tan (Bottom Middle).

## Engaging the Community to Protect Turtles

By Alissa Fraser  
Conservation Technician at *rare*

This year, *rare's* Turtle Team once again set out to protect the local turtle population as snapping turtles and painted turtles entered their nesting season. Staff opened the Turtle Hotline and took dozens of calls from the general public about endangered nests. Over 65 nests were collected and incubated, while nest protectors were added to another 43.

Efforts were helped by increased public awareness thanks to news articles in the local media and *rare's* website about the challenges local turtle populations face. The increase of roads built through turtle habitats and added traffic has unfortunately resulted in many dead turtles. Too many nests are now located near public areas where they could be disturbed by people or their pets.

Fortunately, community support for the turtles is strong. Staff heard this through the many calls people made to the Turtle Hotline to report vulnerable nests. If you spot a vulnerable turtle nest, please call *rare's* Turtle Hotline at 226-962-6885. You can learn more about *rare's* efforts to protect the turtle and how you can help by visiting [rarsites.org/protect-the-turtles](https://rarsites.org/protect-the-turtles)

In 2022, the Turtle Team rescued 66 vulnerable nests and released 1,405 hatchlings. Since the turtle rescue program started, over 8,500 turtle hatchlings have been gathered and released, and the 2022 season is not over. The Turtle Team is still incubating eggs and getting calls. Some eggs may overwinter and hatch in the spring, so it's important to leave any nest protectors you find in the wild alone. The next generation of turtles may thank you for it. The Turtle Team certainly will. ■■





# rare to Me

By Liz Howard

Eastern Comma Artist-in-Residence

When I was informed of my selection as an Eastern Comma Artist-in-Residence by Elwood Jimmy of the Musagetes Foundation I was in a state of disbelief. To be given the time and space to work solely on one's writing is a profound gift, and especially for that space to be located within the gorgeous landscape of *rare*. Having spent a month living and writing at North House I am filled with a sense of deep gratitude and a greater appreciation for the lush biome of Southwestern Ontario.

I watched the harvest moon rise over a giant black walnut tree in the company of maples. I had to hike out to the tree to properly identify it and marvelled over the diameter of its trunk. This tree had seen ages and I came to see it as a marker of generational time. I was reminded of the Haudenosaunee principle of Seven Generations thinking in which any



action should only be undertaken after consideration of how it will affect the next several generations to come. Our bodies are also the repositories of generational time and just as each season affects the growth rings of a tree, so too does our environment leave its marks within the functioning of our biology. This gift of time at North House has also allowed for this reflection on the deeper resonances

of time and the borderless interconnections between human life and what we often refer to as nature.

My current work is a poetry/prose hybrid exploration of how the development of consciousness and even identity is shaped by the land and its history, and how the history of land is also a history of family. Walking the exquisite trails at *rare* under the eyes of ospreys or the deciduous canopy has provided a generative counterpoint to my meditations on the ravens and jack pine swamps of my boreal childhood. This place has certainly made its mark in me and my work. Chi-miigwetch, great thanks.

*Born in Northern Ontario and of Anishinaabe descent, Liz Howard has held writer and Indigenous arts residences at McGill University, the University of Calgary and UBC Okanagan, to name a few. Her debut poetry collection, Infinite Citizen of the Shaking Tent, was shortlisted for the Governor General's Award for English-language poetry and won the 2016 Griffin Poetry Prize. Author photograph by Ralph Kolewe. ■*

## Speaking With Thanks

By Stephanie Sobek-Swant

Executive Director at *rare*

I'm writing with much gratitude this fall. For the first time since the beginning of the pandemic, our team is back at the office three times a week, with much renewed energy and enthusiasm after a long time spent in isolation and behind screens. Particularly those of us who are parents are feeling a sense of relief, having worked through many lockdowns and home-schooling attempts, and there is a sense of hope that this year, fall and winter will be more reminiscent of pre-pandemic times with year end celebrations that can be spent with family and friends. Much renewal has happened while we stayed at home – we returned to a freshly renovated and newly organised space thanks to the Lyle S. Hallmann and Ontario Trillium Foundation.

It's enjoyable to reconnect with supporters and volunteers and to welcome so many new and old visitors to the *rare* properties and facilities. Major tried and true events such as the Walk and Run for *rare*, now in its 13th year, have made a comeback with a splash as our first ever Trail Party, exceeding our goals and expectations with over \$55,000 raised to protect these



environmentally sensitive lands. While some of our collective memory is a bit rusty after a two-year hiatus, it also means there is space for new ideas and room to try doing things differently – which perfectly meets the spirit of *rare* as a place where experimentation is not only welcomed, but expected.

The school program is in full swing with buses of students of all ages visiting the *rare* lands, and understanding the strain the pandemic has caused on parents, we are now offering an extensive PD Day program that sees kids play and learn outside. Despite a historically dry summer, harvest at the Springbank Farm community gardens has seen thousands of pounds go to the Cambridge Foodbank. With prices

rising everywhere and basic staples such as healthy food increasingly becoming unaffordable to many in our community, the need for *rare's* programs that link conservation to sustainability and food security is now bigger than ever. I'm thankful to our skilled and dedicated staff who have walked many extra miles the last few years to make sure our programs remain relevant to the community and provide as much benefit as they can, while making conservation a priority.

Putting my researcher hat on, I'm not only grateful, but also proud and excited about the many cross-disciplinary relationships *rare* has been invited to, with many academic and non-academic partners such as The Guelph Institute for Environmental Research (GIER) at the University of Guelph, Conestoga College, the Ontario Land Trust Alliance, and of course, Musagetes. The result is a blend of various forms of inquiry, bringing together science, art and the community. With two artist residencies this fall, we are looking forward to see what the next year will bring – there is lots of room to grow together.

I'm thankful for all that is *rare*. ■

**Photos:** Fallen leaves on the Grand Trunk Trail on October 17, 2014. Photo by R. Moore (Background); ECO Campers returning from butterfly monitoring to *rare's* ECO Centre and Slit Barn. Photo by Istafa Sufi (Back Cover).



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