



REVIEW

SPRING-SUMMER 2023

2021-22 Annual Report Inside!

A Great Blue Heron,
Taken in the sky above rare by Mike Weissmann

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: Crabapple Field, seen off the Grand Trunk Trail. Retired from agriculture in 2006. Site of *rare's* first research project on crabapple genetics which is still ongoing.. Photo taken in September 2022 by James Bow.

Message from the Board Chair

Every now and then I am drawn to re-read an article, written a decade ago by *Financial Times* writer, Tim Hartford, discussing the experience of managing things “in common.” Efforts to do so — to govern ourselves as communities without having a top-down structure that lays out the rules by which we are obliged to conduct ourselves or suffer consequences — seemed so fraught that a term coined by one environmental researcher in the 1960s became part of the daily lexicon. *The Tragedy of the Commons*, coined by Garrett Hardin, is now code and many who hear it believe it proves that we humans are incapable of working things out in common or by mutual agreement, that there are natural limits which point to “the remorseless working of things.”

However, to borrow from Mark Twain, news of its demise has been over-rated. It turns out that there are many examples of how “the commons” is alive and well. Lin Ostrom, working at the same time in the quite different field of political economy, was finding examples of individuals or local organisations who came up with their own rules and then lobbied their governments to enforce them. She didn’t accept Hardin’s conclusion that for lands to be sustainable they either had to come under government regulations or be divided



up and handed over to individual owners who would then have the economic incentive to manage them responsibly. Over time Ostrom and her colleagues began talking to specialists outside their own fields — and found more than 1,000 case studies, each isolated from the others and all “...with multiple, independent and overlapping sources of power and authority. By their very nature, they are messy to describe and hard to compare with each other.”

As Hartford summarizes it, “For Ostrom, this effort was central to her academic life because knowledge itself — when you thought about it — was a kind of common pool resource as well. It could be squandered or it could be harvested for the public good. Ostrom’s research project came to resemble one of the local, community-led institutions that she sought to explain.” In 2009 she won a Nobel memorial prize for economics.

Breaking down silos of knowledge and creating a place for ideas to soar has been a hallmark of *rare* since inception. While the 1200+ acres that *rare* stewards can’t exactly be called “a commons” — after all *rare* has to live within the rules imposed on all charitable organisations by Ontario’s Public Guardian and Trustee and by local municipalities, to name just two — just the same, *rare* has always and tirelessly explored connections, working across disciplines and with members of the public to find new new ways of doing things, often advocating for environmental standards based

on the research and diverse forms of learning that underpin all programs.

With changes in governments bringing varying degrees of environmental protection — witness the most recent attacks on the Greenbelt and the undermining of conservation authorities — *rare*’s independent ownership of lands and long-term view with a motto of Intact in Perpetuity means it has a high standard of accountability to you and to all who make its work possible.

And with more than 24 different habitat types, researchers from many fields find unique sites for long-term research. Educators are a key link in *rare*’s unique Chain of Learning and artists have been welcomed since the earliest days, helping to demonstrate the immense value of their work as a line of inquiry. Every link in the Chain of Learning connects with hundreds of members of the community who interact and share ideas with *rare* and with one another, whether on *rare*’s 12 km of trails, in the Region’s largest community gardens, through surveys and advisory groups or at many events throughout the year.

The rich cross-pollination allows *rare* to learn continuously how to go beyond what is traditionally thought of as a discipline, demonstrating how everything is connected — and helping to expanded our thinking on what constitutes good governance and accountability.

With kind regards,
Joy ■

Message from the Executive Director

As an international environmental institute and land trust we feel a responsibility to help our country score higher on global report cards which include the Sustainable Development Goals, the Calls for Justice and the Truth and Reconciliation Report with its 94 calls to action and the United Nations Declarations on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

As I write, another property has come under *rare* stewardship, and like our other properties, qualifies to be included in what is known as “other effective area-based conservation measures (OECMs)”. This means *rare* is managing the properties it stewards on your behalf in such a way that they meet



international standards and are eligible to be reported toward Canada’s international biodiversity targets on protected and conserved areas, and they will be listed in the Canadian Protected and Conserved Areas Database (CPCAD).

In addition, Environment and Climate Change Canada submits the information for all our properties to the World Database on Protected Areas maintained by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). What you make possible at *rare* not only contributes to a healthy community locally, but also toward national and international area-based conservation targets — your involvement literally puts *rare* “on the map” in a global context!

Perhaps no one knows more about the interconnectedness of things than the Indigenous

Peoples of these lands. Approaching the final year of a 5-year Strategy & Plans effort, *rare* has learned a lot and wants to continue to build relationships and engage Indigenous communities around land management. Directly linked to the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, this work is paving the way for other land trusts to adopt similar approaches and is of national and international relevance.

We look forward to building on all we’ve learned in *rare*’s first 20 years and all we’ve accomplished, thanks to the hard work and dedication of you and many others who share — and continue to help us refine — the vision at *rare*. With your support, we will orient our compass toward a greener, more just, future.

With gratitude,
Stephanie ■

2023: After Looking Back, We Look Forward

By James Bow
Communications Officer at *rare*

As the pandemic started to ease, 2022 became a year of firsts for *rare*. There was the first in-person Conversation for Conservation since the pandemic started. There was the first in-person Spring Plant Sale since 2019, accompanied by our first ever EcoMarket. We also had our first ever Trail Party in September 2022 as our Walk & Run returned to *rare*'s trails for the first time since 2019.

Our *rare* educators continue to build on the successes of the *Every Child Outdoors* program, maintaining the March Break and Summer ECO Camps that were so popular in 2022, and setting up the second Teen ECO Camp for the first week of August 2023. The education team also launched PD Day ECO Camps, after a successful trial in June 2022. These camps covered most of the PD Days offered by the Waterloo Region and Wellington County boards of education. These were further enhanced by the sponsorship of Equitable Life of Canada. The *rare* education team was also able to relaunch school field trips to *rare* and continues to reach out to area schools offering a number of environmental programs for students and teachers alike.

We were also pleased to welcome back more volunteers to *rare* in 2022, with many hands making light work of removing invasive Phragmites, garlic mustard, Himalayan balsam and yellow flag iris, to name a few, while

also helping to propagate native species at *rare*. We look forward to working with volunteers as we clean up shorelines, do work at the Springbank Farm organic food bank garden, pull more invasive species on our sites, and help put together community events.

Late 2022 saw the first trees planted in the Forest of Memories. This initiative, set up in partnership with Lisaard and Innisfree House allows people to donate \$150 or more in memory of a friend or loved one who has passed. The funds purchase a large-sized native species tree to be planted in a former agricultural field between Ancient Woods and Hogsback. These trees are not individual memorials; rather, the habitat that they build, connecting two old-growth forests, will be the living legacy of those remembered. Further planting and memorial events are planned in the months to come.

Staff at *rare* were delighted to meet with members of the community at a number of in-person events in 2022 and early 2023, including the Guelph Lecture at the Arts Everywhere Festival, the North Dumfries Mayor's Levee, and the Hespeler Farmers' Market. We're looking forward to doing more of these events, letting the community know about the programs and amenities *rare* offers. Copies



of our new trail maps have proven popular, and we're working on making these more widely available.

Major events to look forward to in 2023 include our Spring Plant Sale and EcoMarket, taking place at *rare*'s ECO Centre and Slit Barn on Saturday, May 13, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m., rain or shine. Local artisans, vendors and community organizations have been invited to take part in the EcoMarket. The 2023 Trail Party, including the Walk & Run for *rare* will take place on Sunday, September 17. Both events promise to be grand days out, with food and friendly people from the community sharing a passion for nature and the outdoors. Also keep an eye on our bi-weekly *rare* eNews for additional opportunities to support *rare* including 50/50 raffles, online auctions and other special fundraisers and events.

The year 2021 was *rare*'s twentieth anniversary, so it was appropriate to look back and thank supporters for all they helped accomplish. As we move into 2023, *rare* looks forward, building on those accomplishments, protecting more land in Waterloo Region and Wellington County, engaging the community even more, and building an understanding of the importance of our natural areas for the health and wellbeing of ourselves and our environment. ■

Photos: (Above): Cordelia Swant waters seedlings at Springbank Farm's greenhouse. The seedlings are being grown for the Spring Plant Sale. Photo taken April 2023 by Stephanie Sobek-Swant; (Bottom Left): In partnership with Growing Hope Farm, a not-for-profit, volunteer-run farm, a herd of cows and goats along Preston Flats, between Fountain Road and the Grand River, were hard at work grazing on the fields in 2022. Munching and fertilizing as they go, they are remediating the soil and controlling invasive species, contributing to restoration in their own way! Photo by Jessica O'Connell.



Restoring the Wetlands of Blair Flats

By Tom Woodcock
Planning Ecologist at *rare*

The portion of the Grand River floodplain to the north of Blair Road on *rare* property has been a focus of restoration efforts since its retirement from agriculture in 2010. This area is a major piece of natural infrastructure stewarded by *rare* that manages flood water and protects human property downstream.

The wetland starts at the eastern end of this floodplain, where Bauman Creek crosses beneath Blair Road and flows east and north to the Grand River. Years ago, a disused farm lane and culvert blocked the stream and backed water up into the field, creating a shallow pond area and allowing the development of a wetland plant community. In 2016, this blockage was removed to allow the restoration of Bauman Creek, but while this restored stream flow and water to the Provincially Significant Wetlands to the east that had been drying out, the young wetland to the west lost its open water and became a marsh meadow.

In 2022, a project was initiated to restore some open water to the wetland, and enlarge the overall area of wetland habitat. The process began with a contractor hired to control

invasive Phragmites (Common Reed) at the site, and surrounding the work site with fencing to manage movement of sediment, especially keeping it out of Bauman Creek. Excavation at the northern edge of the marsh meadow created several depressions, conserving desirable trees and shrubs. Exposed soils were protected with biodegradable erosion control materials, and the site overseeded with a mix of native plant species.

Work will continue this summer, with additional seed sowing, monitoring and mechanical control of returning Phragmites, and placing of additional logs and stumps as habitat elements. The newly seeded vegetation will take several years to establish, and *rare* will continue to monitor invasive plants. Re-establishment of open water marshland habitat in Blair Flats will take time, but will be a win for wildlife.

This wetland restoration project was supported by the Ontario Land Trust Alliance and the Government of Ontario, but the views expressed in this article are the views of *rare* and do not necessarily reflect those of the Province. ■ □

Photos: (Below) Blair Flats restoration work; photos taken by K. Rundle on December 8, 2022.



Future of *rare*'s Forests Taking Root

By Rosalind Snider
Conservation Technician at *rare*.

Since the summer of 2022, *rare* has been pleased to welcome over 500 new trees onto the lands that it stewards. Thanks to generous donations and hard work from staff and volunteers, the forests in *rare* are growing, expanding natural habitats and connecting two old-growth forests across a retired agricultural field.

A key part of this planting was the “Forest of Memories” initiative. This partnership between *rare* and Lisaard and Innisfree House allows people to donate \$150 and arrange to have a tree planted in the Forest of Memories. The individual trees are selected based on their suitability to where they are planted, and are selected from among 16 native tree and shrub species, including sugar maple, black cherry, red and white oak, and bitternut hickory. It’s important to note that the individual trees are not the memorials, but rather the forest that they build by their presence. A sign acknowledging each name memorialized in the Forest of Memories will be erected beside a nearby trail at *rare*.

In addition to the Forest of Memories trees, an additional 96 trees were donated by a particularly generous supporter and her children in honour of her 80th birthday. These trees were planted during the annual TD Tree Event, with the help of many volunteers and generous donors. We would like to thank these volunteers for their time and support, particularly King Tree Service for their efforts in preparing the sites for planting.

Staff at *rare* will continue to monitor the tree planting sites in the years to come, treating the trees to protect them from hungry deer, manage for invasive species and report on changes in the planted saplings.

Thanks to the efforts of *rare* staff, volunteers and generous donors, a new corridor between two old growth forests will rise in the coming years, giving species more room to roam among the protected natural areas at *rare*. A lot of work remains, however, so consider making a donation to *rare* to plant more trees, in memory of someone past, or in honour of a birthday or an anniversary. The gift you give will be a legacy that will be honoured by future generations. ■ □

Expanding Our Understanding of the Environment

By James Bow
Communications Officer at *rare*

Earlier this year, *rare* bid farewell to our Program Scientist - Research & Education Priorities, Partnerships & Monitoring, Jenna Quinn, who departed *rare* for Ontario Nature. Jenna joined *rare* in 2012 and became a fixture in the field, organizing and coordinating research projects and mentoring young researchers. Her hard work, her positive and supportive attitude, and her help and experience will be missed.

In 2022, seven research projects wrapped up, but thirty-eight continue at *rare*. As a conservation organization dedicated to protecting natural spaces now and for the future, a critical part of meeting that mandate is educating the

community on the importance of protected natural spaces, and a critical part of education is research. For this reason, *rare* has been proud to host graduate students and scientists young and old conducting projects to expand our understanding of the environment.

This work has been recognized throughout the world, with the publication of projects in peer-reviewed journals. Since 2020, research conducted at *rare* has found its way onto over 70 papers published in peer-reviewed journals. A recent example is the paper *Nitrogen Leaching from*

Agricultural Soils Under Imposed Freeze-Thaw Cycles, published in July 2022 in *Frontiers in Environmental Science*. The paper's authors, Konrad Krogstad, Mehdi Gharasoo, Grant Jensen, Laura A. Hug, David Rudolph, Philippe Van Cappellen and Fereidoun Rezanezhad, collected samples from a retired agricultural field on *rare's* lands to compare to other samples examining how fertilizer can move into the surrounding environment over time, leading to the disruption of the nutrient cycle in nearby rivers and aquifers.

"I am grateful to *rare* for supporting my work. I grew up in Cambridge, beside the Grand River and it is especially meaningful to be returning to do my research in this place I love.

—Julia Aplin,
MES Candidate
York University

Another example is the work by Heather Cray, Justin Gaudon and Stephen Murphy entitled *Introduced Earthworms in restored and remnant tallgrass prairies of southern Ontario*, published in the *Canadian Field-Naturalist*. The study noted that non-native earthworm species introduced to North America could complicate the restoration of tallgrass prairie ecosystems by disturbing the native seeds, affecting biodiversity. They recommend more study of these creatures and their impact on the environment.

The thirty-eight research projects continuing at *rare* range from examining the impact of environmental stress on queen bumble bees to examining our assumptions about conservation itself. One study is looking at including Indigenous perspectives in land conservation and securement, while another recently published thesis examines *the Complexities of Confronting Colonialism in Conservation*.

As projects wrap up, new projects launch, and *rare* continues to work with the Ages Foundation to support graduate students by providing space for their research at *rare*, and scholarships and bursaries totalling up to \$15,000 each year. The deadline for the 2023-24 research year is fast approaching as we write this, with interested students encouraged to submit their applications by April 30. We look forward to engaging with researchers in all fields and in all ways of knowing, to expand our understanding of our environment and improving its health, for the benefit of all. ■

Introducing Kids to Research and Monitoring

By Michelle MacMillan
Educator at *rare*

At the Christmas Bird Count for Kids in January, over two-dozen parents and children came to *rare's* ECO Centre and Slit Barn to watch birds and conduct scientific monitoring. Volunteer birding experts, *rare* staff and teen volunteers from Waterloo Region Nature (WRN) all led families onto *rare's* trails to see what they could find. Over the course of the day a total of 438 birds were observed from 19 species.

WRN Teens volunteer Brynn Roderick wrote the following description of the day's events:

"It was a sunny day and snow still dusted the branches of many trees—perfect weather for a winter hike. Each family was partnered with an adult and a teen volunteer and were guided on a short hike on several trails. The teen volunteers recorded the birds observed on a bird tally sheet provided by Birds Canada

(my hands were really cold!) while the adults showed the kids around the property, making sure to point out each and every bird either seen or heard. Our group observed Black-Capped Chickadees, White-Breasted Nuthatches, American Goldfinches, American Crows, Eastern Bluebirds, and by the Grand River, Buffleheads, Common Goldeneyes, and Common Mergansers.

"Everyone eventually regrouped inside the barn and warmed up with some hot chocolate. The kids enjoyed looking at a taxidermied Great Horned Owl and Snowy Owl, both of which were on display. Volunteering to help at the bird count was a great experience."

Every year, researchers at *rare* work to expand our understanding of the environment. Taking these lessons to the next generation of conservationists ensures that the community better understands the need to protect our natural lands both now and into the future. ■



Photos: (Left) Parents and kids head off onto *rare's* trails as part of the Christmas Bird Count for Kids. Photo by Michelle MacMillan.

Checking the Pulse of the Plants at *rare*

By Jade Anderson, Sara DeWeerd, and Nash Patton, Ecological Monitoring Interns at *rare*

Since 2006, *rare* staff and volunteers have spent thousands of hours counting specimens of particular species, logging new species found at *rare*, and checking the health of native vegetation species against the presence of invasive invaders. This monitoring measures the health of *rare*'s lands, as well as identifying trends that may signal hopeful improvements (such as increases in butterfly populations or uncommon visitors to *rare*) or areas of concern.

Since 2018, *rare* staff and volunteers have been conducting vegetation monitoring at *rare*'s Blair Site using the Vegetation Sampling Protocol (VSP). Last September, VSP monitoring began at our Eramosa Corridor properties, with twenty-nine plots established at Edgewood and thirty-three plots at Eramosa Property Two. An additional forty-one plots are planned for Eramosa Property One.

VSP uses randomly selected 400 square metre circular plots set up in an area of interest. Staff and volunteers identify plant species within each plot, measure the diameter and height of trees and assess each tree's health. They also assess ground cover, hydrological features and disturbance by local animals and human visitors. This information provides a high-quality picture of the health of the vegetation on the lands *rare* stewards, informing future land management and land use decisions, particularly when it comes to managing invasive species. Several invasive species were found at these plots, including European and glossy buckthorn, garlic mustard and Tatarian honeysuckle, particularly around paths and in pockets of light let in through openings in the forest canopy.

Having few controls to their growth outside of their original habitat, invasive species can outgrow and choke out native species, reducing biodiversity and disturbing the ecological balance. On October 22, volunteers from the community answered our call to remove invasive Buckthorn from Eramosa Property Two, giving native vegetation a better chance to thrive. More volunteer days are planned in 2023 to push back against invasive species, so if you want to help improve the health of our natural areas, stay tuned for announcements of these dates in our *rare* eNews and on our website.

We are grateful to our volunteers and our intern staff for their help in monitoring the health of the lands that *rare* stewards. Thanks to everyone's vigilance and hard work, we can identify and push back against invasive threats and improve the health of our natural lands. ■■



A Harris's Sparrow Visits *rare*

By Michelle MacMillan, Educator at *rare*

This Fall we had an exciting new visitor to *rare*: a Harris's Sparrow! The Harris's Sparrow is the largest sparrow species in North America. It has a streaked brown back, a white belly, and a pink beak. These sparrows can be distinguished from other species by their facial markings: adults have a black crown, face, and throat, while juveniles have a patchy black crown and a white throat outlined by two black 'moustache' lines. The Harris's Sparrow is the only songbird species that breeds exclusively in Canada, nesting on the ground under the shelter of shrubs on the edge of the Arctic Tundra.

Harris's Sparrows are medium-distance migrants and typically travel to the Great Plains in the central and southern United States to spend the winter months. While their southward migration can take them as far as Texas, they generally remain in the centre of the continent. They are not typically found this

far east, which is what made this visit by the Harris's Sparrow such a surprise.

The juvenile Harris's Sparrow was spotted by Tim Kuntz on *rare*'s Grand Allée trail this past November. The only other time a Harris's Sparrow has been recorded in the Waterloo Region was in 1989. When news of this discovery became known, bird-watchers from around the region came flocking to *rare* to see this special bird. The young sparrow stayed to forage at *rare* for a couple of weeks before moving on to warmer pastures.

With the addition of the Harris's Sparrow, there have now been 241 species of birds observed at *rare* since monitoring began in 1971. Keep a lookout the next time you visit our trails, you never know what you might find! ■■

Photo: (Above) A deer spotted at Eramosa Property Two during monitoring. Photo taken August 2022 by Sara DeWeerd. (Below) A Harris's Sparrow, photographed by Nathan Hood.



The return of the *rare* Field Trip and other School Outreach

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

Starting in 2022 and continuing into 2023, *rare* Educators have reached out to local schools and provided a *rare* education to our next generation of conservationists by visiting classrooms and hosting field trips at *rare*'s ECO Centre and Slit Barn. These events

were suspended starting in Fall 2019 due to a teachers' strike and stayed offline due to the pandemic. Now that restrictions around the pandemic are easing, teachers and students are making up for lost time.

For comparison, in Spring 2019, *rare* hosted 24 ECO programs serving 1,081 students. In Fall 2022, 10 ECO programs were run for

local schools, serving 215 students. So far for Spring 2023, 38 ECO Programs have been booked, serving approximately 1,630 students! In addition, we have 6 community programs booked, serving at least 150 participants! We expect that these numbers will only grow as we promote the education programs available at *rare* among area schools.

The in-person events are complemented by the many Nature Activity Videos we put together online for parents and teachers during the pandemic, but which remain useful today. A visit to *rare*'s Youtube Channel (youtube.com/raresites) offers fun ways our children can explore nature from their backyards and neighbourhood parks or even indoors during rainy days.

Education doesn't stop when our children grow up, either. Our Conversations for Conservation series returned for the first half of 2023, featuring a presentation by Wild Ontario with special guests Einstein the Great Horned Owl and Moose the Broad-winged Hawk. Dr. Mhairi McFarlane returned to talk about monitoring birds in the wilderness of Northern Ontario. These presentations and more have been recorded and are available for free on *rare*'s YouTube Channel.

In addition to all this, *rare*'s March Break, Summer and PD Day ECO Camps continue, giving hundreds of kids an outdoor adventure, exploring the different ecosystems at *rare*, meeting special guests, visiting Springbank Farm, learning nature survival skills, sampling benthic invertebrates in the Grand River, and more.

We are grateful to Equitable Life of Canada and Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada for their support of these programs. We are also grateful for the many individual donors at *rare*, including those who bid at our Online Auction held this past March, raising over \$8,750 in support of Every Child Outdoors, sparking a sense of wonder in nature in our next generation of conservationists. We look forward to seeing your kids at ECO Camp or on a school field trip this year! ■

Alternative Education at *rare*

By Michelle MacMillan
Educator at *rare*

Participating in hands-on outdoor learning is a valuable experience for any student. And for students who do not thrive in a typical classroom setting it can be especially meaningful. This year we partnered with several Alternative Education programs in Waterloo Region to bring students to *rare* to participate in outdoor education programs.

Over the course of this year high school students from U-Turn, Z by the Y, and Anchors alternative education programs have participated in hands-on environmental education activities at *rare* including harvesting veggies at Springbank Gardens, snowshoeing on the Ancient Woods trails, measuring water quality at the Grand River, and tree planting. Through these education programs we aim to help students make connections between what they learn in the classroom and the research and conservation activities happening in their community. It is our goal to foster connections

between youth and the natural world, as well as teach them about potential career opportunities in the environmental sector.

Following one education program at *rare*, a teacher shared the following: *"I wanted to take the time and let you know how much the snowshoeing trek meant to our students. That day (just like tree planting) our students were informed exactly what the day would entail and students that were struggling with their attendance came to take part. The students are so grateful for the opportunity to learn in nature and they always talk about our trips for a few days after. Your programs really make a difference for our youth who are struggling with their mental health."*

We are extremely thankful to KPMG, Life Co-op, and OTIP who provided funding for program materials and subsidized bus costs to bring these students to *rare*. We look forward to our continued partnership with Alternative Education in Waterloo Region. ■



Photos: (Bottom Left) U-Turn students tend to the plants at Springbank Farm's Education Garden. Photo taken October 2022 by Michelle MacMillan; (Next Page) Springbank Farm volunteers show off their harvest. Photo taken August 2021 by I. Dent.

Creating Secure Food Futures

By Taryn Jarvis,
Gill Ratcliffe Gardens and Facilities Coordinator

Everyone deserves fresh quality food on their tables, yet many people in our community are going without. Food insecurity is known to be especially high for recent immigrants to Canada, racialized communities, sole support mothers, and Indigenous persons.

This is why *rare's* Springbank Community Garden is improving its garden allocation process by prioritizing people with no access to land and asking for more demographic information during the application process. One of the goals of Springbank Farm at *rare* is to provide a space where food can be grown in a sufficient, safe, nutritious, affordable, and culturally appropriate manner.

How does this look in action at Springbank Community Garden? By sufficient quantity we

mean empowering community garden members to practice growing more food in small plots, and encouraging applicants with space at home to consider the “gardens not lawns” movement. By safe and nutritious we mean using strictly organic gardening practices and knowing exactly what is put into the food. No chemicals. No GMO seeds.

Affordability comes into play with *rare's* reasonable garden rental fees and offering subsidies if the fee is a barrier to participation. The annual Seedy Saturday free seed swap and the Spring Plant Sale hosted by *rare* are two of the ways we encourage the dissemination of culturally appropriate, native, *rare* and heirloom seeds and seedlings.

The Spring Plant Sale and EcoMarket is one of *rare's* fundraising efforts to maintain the Springbank Farm and the many food security projects growing there. Your support of this event directly benefits our community. There will be thousands of vegetable, herb, fruit, flower and native plant seedlings for sale, alongside local seed growers dedicated to preserving the integrity of native seeds and individuals and organizations that honour connection to the land and promote health and wellness in our community. Please come visit us on Saturday May 13th, 8:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. at *rare's* ECO Centre 768 Blair Rd, Cambridge. For more information about Springbank Farm and the Spring Plant Sale and EcoMarket, please contact *rare's* Gardens Coordinator at taryn.jarvis@raresites.org. ■

Help Our Gardens Grow!

Springbank Farm is grateful for the volunteers who come out to help grow the vegetables in the foodbank garden, and harvest and haul our produce to local food banks. Again this year, we invite volunteers to help at the farm. Starting Wednesday, May 24 and running Wednesdays from 9 a.m. to noon and Sundays from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., weather permitting, everybody interested in fostering food security and learning about the practices of organic and regenerative farming is invited to come to 681 Blair Road in Cambridge. Staff and volunteers will be on hand to provide tools, tasks and instructions. Corporate teams wishing to take part in volunteer days at the Farm should contact Christine Thompson at christine.thompson@raresites.org to make arrangements. ■



Saving Soil's Vitality

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

Soil is a living entity. We need to foster it and help it grow. Too often, we take it for granted that soil will always support us.

As a society, we rely heavily on peat to grow our food. Peat extraction in Canada is roughly a 90-year-old industry and currently provides 90% of the peat used in North American agricultural practices. The extractive peat industry scrapes the surface of ecologically sensitive, biodiverse, carbon-capturing peatlands, such as bogs. Our food supply needs require a growing medium which is healthy for all.

Further, In their 2021 *Assessment of agricultural plastics and their sustainability: A call for action*, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations warns there may be more plastics in our soil than in the Ocean. Silage films, bottles from liquid fertilizers, row cover, plant protectors and seeds coated in plastic are ever-present in modern farm practices. Plastics break and cannot be recycled or reused; they blow around and lay in soil, and our waters. This contamination changes the composition of the land. What happens when the nourishing attributes of soil are threatened by our demands and addiction to plastics?

These are issues for us at Springbank Farm. Plants are grown and sheltered in Springbank's

greenhouse early in the season so fresh food can be donated to the Cambridge Food Bank as early as possible. We need peat and potting soil to start the seedlings growing, and each bag is wrapped in plastic, which we later send to the landfill. Our contributions to food security are unfortunately not plastic-free, yet. In fact, many gardeners face these same challenges, and are collaborating around this issue to help nurture a circular economy where communities care for our most precious aspects. Some of this is done through the production and use of compost.

Making compost is a big part of taking care of the land. Community gardeners and volunteers add to Springbank's compost piles, check their moisture levels, turn them and cover them, protecting them from the sun's ultraviolet rays. After the Cambridge Food Bank preserves and prepares everything they can from fresh produce donations, they return anything they can't use as well as any scraps to Springbank Farm where they can be composted to contribute to future soil sustainability. What goes around comes around — our food comes from the soil and will later be turned into soil again.

Planning to save our soil requires thoughtfulness, dedication, patience, and the humility to ask, what are we doing to our soil? And then, what can we give back to it to sustain it and keep it and our food healthy? ■

Taking the 1,000 Gardens Project to the Next Level

By James Bow
Communications Officer at *rare*

There are many benefits to turning your yard into a pollinator garden. Pollinator gardens are good for pollinating birds and insects, and ultimately for ourselves. Without pollinators, we would have no crops, no trees, no fruits, no plants, so it's distressing to learn that many pollinator species are in decline.

A big factor in this decline is loss of habitat, and not just the paving we've laid down with our roads and buildings. The well-manicured lawns favoured by many homeowners and businesses are deserts for pollinator species, giving them little to eat. Our practise of removing brush and fallen leaves from our yards robs some pollinator insects of shelter during cold spring mornings or autumn evenings.

At *rare*, we've encouraged people to make their gardens friendlier to pollinating bird, butterfly and bee species through our 1,000 Gardens Project. Planting native pollinating plant species in place of grass not only provides food and shelter for birds, bees, butterflies and other pollinators, it makes our soil healthier, reducing soil erosion and making our gardens better able to absorb storm water. This reduces pressure on our sewer systems. Pollinator plants even help pull carbon dioxide out of the air and into the ground, reducing the impact of climate change.

People new to gardening and used to manicured lawns may find planting a pollinator garden daunting, but these gardens are often easier to maintain and require less fertilizer and carbon-fuming lawn-maintenance equipment than plain grass. Further, there is a lot of helpful information on the Internet. The City of Guelph has a web page on pollinator gardens (see guelph.ca/living/house-and-home/lawn-and-garden/sample-garden-designs/creating-a-pollinator-garden/). Also, at the end of April, we invited Dr. Victoria MacPhail, coordinator at the Centre for Bee Ecology, Evolution and Conservation at York University to host a Conversation for Conservation on *How to Grow a Pollinator Garden*. We recorded this conversation and will be posting it to our YouTube channel (youtube.com/raresites/).

For the past couple of years, we've encouraged pollinator gardeners to register their gardens with *rare's* 1,000 Gardens Project, to create a corridor of pollinator gardens from Toronto to Waterloo Region. So far, over 670 gardeners have signed up, pledging to make their gardens

friendlier to pollinators by planting native plants, providing bird feeders, water trays, carpenter bee-friendly boxes, and more. This year, we intend to clear the 1,000 garden goal by providing helpful information, profiling pollinator gardens and their gardeners, and working with other environmental groups dedicated to protecting pollinators.

Once we pass 1,000 gardens, we intend to take this initiative national. We see no reason why we can't log 10,000 gardens across Canada offering waystations for birds, bees, butterflies and more. So, stay tuned for further announcements and consider joining in. Investigate how to make your front and back yards, or even your balcony, friendlier to our pollinator friends. Help protect our environment, reduce our carbon footprint, and build our food security, and be sure to sign your gardens up at rarsites.org/rare-1000-gardens.



Photos: (Above) A bumble bee pollinating a Nasturtium flower. Photo taken August 2019 by Jenna Quinn; (Bottom right) Karikachi Edamame seeds. Image courtesy One Seed One Community.

The Edamame: the Community Seed for 2023

By James Bow
Communication Officer at *rare*.

On Saturday, March 4, over fifty gardeners and seed enthusiasts braved the snows of a major winter storm to gather at *rare's* Slit Barn for Seedy Saturday. The event, held in association with the Idea Exchange, the Cambridge Food Bank and Seeds of Diversity, was a chance for seed enthusiasts to share some of the seeds they'd prepared through the year, and the stories that went with them.

This was also the event where the Karikachi Edamame was announced as the community seed for the One Seed One Community initiative of 2023. This delicious and highly nutritious bean is excellent to eat when steamed and is chock full of protein as well as vitamins A, B, iron and calcium.

The Edamame is an easy plant to grow; simply plant in average fertile soil, keep moist and in good light. If planted in the garden, you should wait until late spring to avoid any frosts, and where the soil has warmed to at least 13°C. You should dig up the bed two-to-four weeks before

planting and lay down a couple of inches of compost to ensure the seeds have sufficient nutrients. Avoid planting edamame where beans or peas were grown in previous seasons.

Harvest the seeds when they are two-to-three inches long, plump and bright green. This typically takes 85 days.

One Seed, One Community is an initiative of the Cambridge Food Bank, Seeds of Diversity, the Idea Exchange, and *rare* to offer free seeds to the community, building connections through the experience of growing and sharing food. Everyone in the community is welcome to participate and can pick up free seed packets at any Idea Exchange location throughout early spring, from the *rare* table at any community events we attend, and at *rare's* Lamb's Inn headquarters at 1679 Blair Road in Cambridge. ■■





ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022

Planting a Tree at Blair Flats
Photo taken June 9, 2021 by Jenna Quinn

700+
dedicated
donors

\$2.9M
in funds raised

140%
increase in
monthly
donors

910
hours
of volunteer work done
at the gardens of
Springbank Farm

Certified
Living Wage
Employer since 2021



34
volunteers
helped plant
343 Trees
in one season!

47
trees added to
the Forest of
Memories

14+ km
trails
maintained

15
invasive species
targeted over **198**
volunteer
hours

1,400+
baby turtles
rescued &
released!

5,000+
different
species
observed

7
research projects
wrapped up
in 2022.

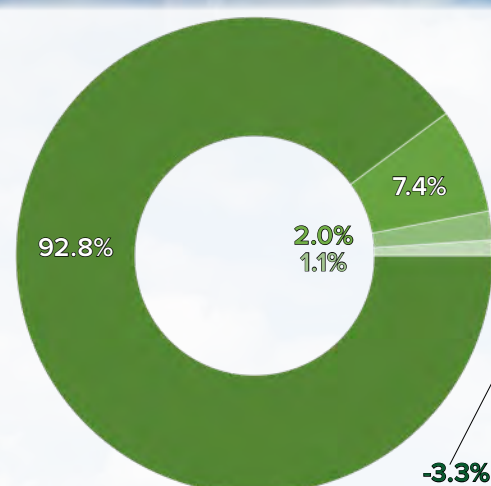
38
ECO programs
registered with
1,630+
students so far in
2023!

38
ongoing
research
projects

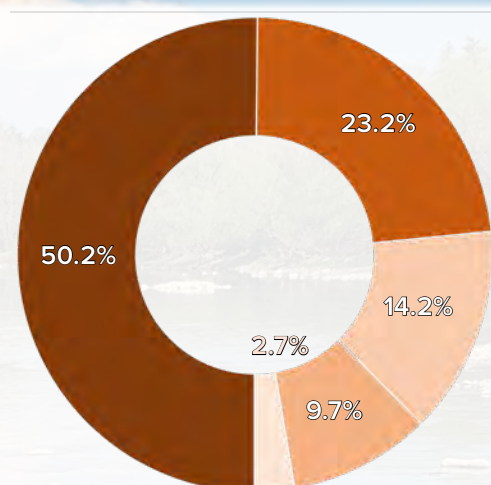
20+
peer-reviewed
papers
published since
2020

The Grand River, looking south from Fountain Street
Photo taken by J. Bow, May 16, 2020

For the year ending August 31, 2022



Statement of Revenue ¹	2021-22	2020-21	Difference
Donations and Grants	\$2,759,274	\$3,249,641	\$490,367↓
Government Programs/ Covid Assistance	\$219,938	\$345,365	\$125,427↓
Program Income	\$59,923	\$34,821	\$25,102↑
Rental Income	\$32,378	\$33,994	\$1,616↓
Other Income ²	\$(97,159)	\$377,180	\$474,339↓
TOTAL	\$2,974,354	\$4,041,001	\$1,066,647↓



Statement of Expenses	2021-22	2020-21	Difference
Conservation, Research & Education Programs	\$810,354	\$904,929	\$94,575↓
Fundraising & Community Relations	\$374,280	\$369,132	\$5,148↑
Amortization	\$156,384	\$167,739	\$11,355↓
Administration	\$229,439	\$154,257	\$75,182↑
Professional Fees	\$43,623	\$27,443	\$16,180↑
TOTAL	\$1,614,080	\$1,623,500	\$9,420↓
SURPLUS³	\$1,360,274	\$2,417,501	\$1,057,227↓

Financial Position at End of Fiscal Year	2021-22	2020-21	Difference
Current Assets	\$3,326,835	\$2,433,587	\$893,248↑
Capital Assets			
Land	\$8,229,232	\$8,029,442	\$199,790↑
Buildings & Equipment	\$3,006,994	\$3,144,829	\$137,835↓
Current Liabilities (Payables)	\$(534,975)	\$(625,046)	\$90,071↓
Mortgage Payable & Term Loan	\$(2,875,600)	\$(3,190,600)	\$285,000↓
Total Net Assets	\$11,152,486	\$9,792,212	\$1,330,274↑

Notes:

1. Total revenue reported includes **rare's** three funds: Operating, Capital and Endowment.
2. Negative amount due to investment losses from market changes
3. Majority of excess of 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.

Thank you, *rare* sponsors!

Equitable Life Forges Partnership for Sustainability and Education

By James Bow
Communications Officer at *rare*.

In October 2022, the Equitable Life Insurance Company of Canada announced a partnership with *rare*, supporting *rare*'s Every Child Outdoors program by sponsoring *rare*'s PD Day ECO Camps. Equitable Life has been serving Canadians since 1920 and has been a longstanding supporter of charitable causes.

"At Equitable Life, we believe in giving back to the communities where we live and work," says Patti McKague, Director of Corporate Communications and Philanthropy at Equitable Life of Canada. "We're a Canadian financial services company that's been operating for more than 100 years. Throughout our history, we've taken great pride in supporting charitable organizations, events and programs that help strengthen our communities. Our commitment to making a difference has been longstanding, and it's one that is held by our organization and by our employees."

Equitable Life has supported arts and culture initiatives, social services and disaster relief. The partnership with *rare* is in line with its focus on education and sustainability. This is what drew them to supporting *rare*'s ECO Camps.

"The ECO Camps provide a unique opportunity for children to learn about the environment and develop a deeper appreciation for the natural world," says McKague. "We value this type of education and believe it's important to invest in programs that nurture the next generation of environmental stewards."

"We know that *rare*'s PD Day ECO Camps will have a positive impact on the children who

attend," McKague adds.

"We also know that their interest can impact their friends and families too. By providing access to environmental education and hands-on experiences, *rare* is inspiring the next generation to take action and become advocates for sustainability."

Equitable Life's sponsorship ensures more spaces are available for area kids to take part in *rare*'s ECO Camps, in addition to educational resources to spark a sense of wonder in nature in the next generation of conservationists. As part of the sponsorship, Equitable Life supplied new branded t-shirts for PD Day ECO Campers to wear at the start of each new camp.

"As a mutual company, we believe in working together to protect today and prepare tomorrow," says McKague. "We believe that's an important part of what *rare* is also doing through its PD Day ECO Camps. We're happy to support *rare* in that, and to play a positive role in our community."



At *rare*, we look forward to working with Equitable Life and other companies dedicated to fostering sustainability, care for the environment, education, and the protection of our natural spaces. If you, too are interested in ways to sponsor *rare*'s programs or events, contact Christine Thompson at christine.thompson@rarsites.org. ■

Photos: (Right) ECO Campers proudly show off their T-shirts. Photo by Michelle MacMillan.

Thanks to our Corporations for Conservation:

We are grateful to these partners for their ongoing support:

Battlefield Equipment Rentals	Langdon Hall Country House
Cachet Developments	Resort & Spa
Enbridge Gas Inc.	MacPherson Builders
Fiix	Marcangelo Foods
Guardian Partners Inc.	Neighbourhood Group of Companies
Huron Creek Developments	WalterFedy
King Tree Service	

Thank you for your help in protecting our natural spaces, now and for the future! ■

Helping Companies Meet Their Triple Bottom Line

By Christine Thompson
Major Gifts Manager at *rare*

As we face Climate Change, forward-looking businesses are putting more of a focus on their triple bottom line—putting people and the planet at the same level or better as profit. The United Nations identified 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that we all should adopt to ensure peace, health and prosperity for all the people of this planet, now and into the future.

In addition to encouraging people and businesses to adopt the UN's SDGs into their operations, *rare* strives for these goals in its own operations. The eight that relate directly to our operations are shown in the infographic below, including the obvious ones of Climate Action (SDG 13) and Life on Land (SDG 15), but also Decent Work & Economic Growth (SDG 8) which is one reason why *rare* chose to become a certified Living Wage Employer.

We are grateful for our current sponsors and our Corporations for Conservation for their support in protecting environmentally sensitive lands in Waterloo Region and Wellington County and look forward to working with them to help turn these sustainable development goals into reality.

To discuss how *rare* can help your business towards meeting your own identified sustainability and employee engagement goals, from hosting employee volunteer days at Springbank Farm or *rare*'s protected sites, to offering our land management expertise, and more, contact Christine Thompson at christine.thompson@rarsites.org. ■



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, 2021, to August 31, 2022). We want to ensure our recognition reflects everyone appropriately. If there is an error in how your name appears, please contact us at rare@raresites.org. Note: entries marked with * denotes deceased.

\$250,000+

Stonefields International Inc.; The Stonefields Foundation
David Westfall and KWCF Westfall & Hill Fund

\$50,000-\$249,000

Anonymous
Estates of Scott Beemer & Sue Beemer
ECHO Foundation
Gill Ratcliffe Foundation
Government of Canada
Lyle S. Hallman Foundation
Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation (KWCF)
John & Dolores Moffat
Guelph Community Foundation - Moffat Family Fund
Musagetes Fund at KWCF

\$20,000-\$49,999

Ken & Rachel* Flood
Derek & Kathleen Coleman
Laurel Ridge Investments Limited
MacPherson Builders

\$5,000-\$19,999

Keith & Sheila Ainsworth
Monica & Bob* Atkinson
Battlefield Equipment Rentals
Cachet Developments
Marcangelo Foods
Enbridge Gas Inc.
Roger* & Cathy Farwell
Fiix
Guardian Partners Inc.
Ruth Harris & Colin Baxter
Huron Creek Developments
King Tree Service
Knarr Jewellery
Thiam Lim
Langdon Hall Country House Resort & Spa
Logical Landscaping
Natural Resource Solutions Inc.
Neighbourhood Group of Companies
Government of Ontario
John & Joyce Pollock
John A. Pollock Family Fund at KWCF
Project Learning Tree Canada
John & Leslie Pearson
Jamey Rosen
Ruth Songhurst
TD Friends of the Environment Foundation
Bernice & Bob Uebele
WalterFedy
Maggie Williamson

\$1,000-\$4,999

Gerald & Carol Ann Achtymichuk
Michael Adams & Thuy Nguyen
Agelic
Ljubodrag Andric, Geneviève Caron & Cecilia Andric
Anonymous
Don Balanoff & Connie Mayor
Michael Barnstijn & Louise MacCallum
Annita* & Peter Bergen
Doug Brock & Valerie Gibaut - Douglas Brock Fund for Conservation & Music at KWCF
C3 Environmental Limited
Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation Community Fund
Brad Carr & Susan Wagler
Rob & Sue Connell
Ken & Janet Dance
Easy Pour Wine Bar
Robert & Janet Eberhardt
Gluskin Sheff Foundation of Philanthropy
Gore Mutual Insurance Company
Chris & Shirley Gosselin
Grand River Agricultural Society
Jackie Hatherly-Martin & Keith Martin
John S. Hepburn
Larry Hubble
Andrew Irvine
Moez & Marissa Kassam Foundation
Knights of Columbus - Preston Knights Inc. Investments
Kreutner Investments
Bruce MacVicar & Caroline Kim
Jeff Matyas & Tim Tanz
Don McMurtry
McMurtry Family Fund at KWCF
Sorin & Irene Mitrana
Mitrana Foundation - Jewish Foundation of Greater Toronto
David & Pip Mitten
Alan & Anne Morgan
Nature Guelph
Gordon Nicholls Family
Hank & Beverley Nykamp
Maureen O'Connor

Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan (OTIP)
Ontario Wildlife Foundation
Joy Roberts & Douglas McMullen
Malcolm & Jane Roberts
Paul & Rita Ross
Rotary Cambridge Sunrise
Vera Saltzman
Linda & Herminio Schmidt
Jonathan Shantz & Amy Arbuckle
Hennie & Mike Stork
Sylvia Takacs
Roger* and Edith Davis Foundation, The
Tri-County Training - in kind
Weiler & Company
Chartered Accountants
Whole Kids Foundation
Zeifmans LLP
Walter & Brenda* Zimmerman

Hauser Company Stores
Jamie & Sandy Hill
Quentin Johnson & Susan Strachan Johnson
Grace & Jake Jutzi
Paul & Marilyn Koch
Heather Kovacic
Tammy Lowe
Graham Macdonald & Margaret Lewis
Andrew McLeod
MacNeil & Dodd Pharmacy
Mike & Melissa Malleck
Tracy Mann
Brian McGee
Sebastien Moreau
Josh & Heather Neufeld
Kevin & Sue Perry
Perry and Perry Sales Management Inc.
Aaron Phinney
Kristen Porritt

\$250-\$499

Mary Abthorpe & John Morscher
Anonymous
David Beaton
Dorothee Bienzle
James & Erin Bow
Stephanie Braid
John* & Sondra Callander
Jennifer Clary-Lemon
Marco & Donna De Bruin
Shah & Donnita Deen
Isaac Deroche
Chris Dilly
Carolyn & David Dirks
Carmen Evans
Grace & Mark Evans
Jerry & Marg Finnen
Renate Fischer
Jeanie Flanagan & Danielle Gelinas
Bruce & Cindy Foell and Janet Foell
Harold & Heidi Freure
Annette Gingrich
Judith Gingrich
Sarah Gingrich
Fred & Janet Greidanus
Valerie Hall & Dan Brennan
Susan & Helen Hollidge
John & G. Elinor Hueton
Douglas & Alison Jackson
Fred Johnson & Mary Stevens
Jacqueline Johnson
Martin Kuhn
Fred Kuntz
Richard Lay
Macmillan Family
Tom McCann
Mary McGrath Vyas & Satyen Vyas
Hulene Montgomery & Michael Graham
Terry Morin
Laurina Morrissey
Dawn Parker
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Performance Initiatives Inc.
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Ian & Verlyn Rowett
Malcolm & Anne Shantz
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Meg Slater
Stephanie Sobek-Swant
Josh and Nicole Stevens

Jean Stolworthy
TerraView Homes
Stephen Thomson & Elaine Zink
Angela Tsementzis & Aaron Letki
Carol & Patrick van Heeswyck
The Verheuls
Maryanne Weiler
Susan Whelan
Jeffrey & Claire Wiersma

\$249 and Under

Christian Aagaard
Susan Abson-Thorpe
Robin Aggus
George Aitkin
Rohail Akbar
Darren Alderman & Sarah Cheli
Ann Alexander
Audrey Glebe
O.Brian Allen & Diane McCrimmon
Beth & Thomas Amorim
Madhur Anand
Jade Anderson
William Anderson
Irene Andrews
Anonymous
Anonymous
Brian E App
Articus Productions / TriCity Centre for Circus Arts
Janet Ashton
Rodney Atta-Konadu
Crispin Bailey
Leslie Bald
Sharlene Ball
Damian Baranowski
Christi, Des & Gwen Bardecki
Mike & Nancy Bardecki
Irene Bardecki & David Klein
Lynne Barker
Jim Barlow
Thelma Barnes
Paule Barsalou & Ken Gee
Cassie & Devon Bate
Hildegard & Pasquale Battista
Ron Bauman
Marilyn Baxter
Sarah Baxter
Dora & William Bean
Rachel E. Beattie
Catherine Bescsky
Bee Cause Project Inc., The
Martha Bellamy
Jane & Tim Bernier
Ellen Berry
Keith Betteridge & Lois Etherington-Betteridge*
Christine Birch
Peter & Colleen Bisset

“ECO Camp was everything we expected and more! My daughter actively seeks out insects and is curious, not afraid. She overcame so many fears while at your camp. My children now actively seek out the vegetation that they learned about at camp. Walks take longer, but that is just fine. Thank you for an amazing summer. I’m so jealous. I want to go to *rare* camp!”
— Mary Jo Robson

\$500-\$999

Jim Aikenhead & Sandra Davey
Chris & Sarah Ainsworth
Pat & Paul Bigelow
Valerie & Scott Braid
Bob & Brenda* Burchell
Nelson Cecilia
Veronica Chapman
Dirt Cheap Inc.
Paul & Kim Duxbury
Eden Mills Eramosa River Conservation Association - Eden Mills Millpond
Irene Fedun
David and Joan* Fennell
Caleb Gingrich Regehr
Ellen Goward

Andrew & Madelaine Poynter
Cambridge & North Dumfries Community Foundation - Poynter
Dennis E. Souder & Deborah Bannerman
Patricia Huynh & Gabriel Tan-Chen
Christine Thompson
Anne Tinker & Jim Kirchin
John & Lynda Van de Kamer
Mary Ann Vanden Elzen & Robert Bezeau
The Waterloo Networking Company
Michael & Kathy Weissmann
Susan Youngson

Committing to Nature through Monthly Donations

By Christine Thompson,
Major Gifts Manager at *rare*

We are grateful for every donation that is made to *rare*. Just \$2 is enough to preserve a square metre of environmentally sensitive lands at *rare* now and for the future. In planning for the future, we are especially grateful for those who sign up to make regular donations every month.

A monthly donation is an excellent way for donors to make their giving more affordable. Spreading donations throughout a year makes them easier to plan for in your household budget. Monthly donations are also convenient, as once you've decided how much you want to give, *rare* will debit your bank account or credit card monthly, and the donation will show up on your statement. You don't need to send in cheques or fill out forms every month, and *rare* will send you a charitable tax receipt for your total contribution at the end of each calendar year. Monthly donors also receive an invitation to our annual reception at Langdon Hall, and receive a special annual impact report.

Monthly donations help *rare* in a similar way, allowing us to lay the groundwork for future projects based on pledges committed into the future. Pre-authorized payments — especially electronic funds transfers from your bank account — save the time, money and paper required to send out donation reminders.

Monthly donors truly are a bedrock of support, which is why all such donors to *rare* are part of our Bedrock Club.

For more information about various levels of giving, please contact Christine Thompson at christine.thompson@reresites.org or at (519)650-9336 x118.

Photo: (Below) Yellow spotted salamander being counted. Photo taken October 2020 by Jordan Wrobel



\$249 and Under Con't

Michael Black
Rob Black
David Blakely
Leah Blechschmidt
Sharon Blom & Brian Skerrett
Robert & Judith Blowes
Chris Bohme
Amber Bonnell
Paul Born & Marlene Epp
Sue Boulwood
Eric Bow
Grisha Boyko-Vekin
Jason Brace
Ian Braid & Jonny Budgell
Caireen Brain & Len De Vlamin
Michele Braniff
Michael Brennan
Paul Brennan
R. J. Brennan
Erin Ramsammy
Rosemarie Brenner
Rosemary Brockett-Bowman
Elizabeth Brown
Fraser Brown
Michael & Tracy Brown
Darrell & Susan Bryant
Sandra Bryant
Wayne & Lynda Buck
Maaikie Buma
Marilyn Burch
Burlington Foundation - The M.E. Devitt Term Fund
Jim Burrell & Carol Gregory
Bob & Sheila Burt
David Bushell & MaryLou Legault
Melissa Campbell
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Theresa Carnegie
Joyce & David Carse
Ron Casier, Pauline Intven-Casier & Julian Casier
N. Cathcart
Jeanette and Gordon Chapman
Munmun Chatterjee
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City of Kitchener
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Catherine Cosentino
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Pauline Coxson
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Janusz Czuj
Angelina Dagg
Dorothy Harvey* & Ronald C. Dahmer
Fredric Dahms
John F. Dale
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John De Boer
Andrew* & Nancy de la Mothe

Heather Eckhardt
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Laura Eckhardt
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Jennifer Elmes
Susan Elmes
Miriam Elsworth
John English & Irene Sage
Daniel Entz
Esta Chocolates
Esther Etchells
Dave Etherton
Sabrina Shin-Evans & Shelby Evans
Fred & Jeanne Faber
Sandy Falkiner
Andrew Fallas
Don Fanstone
Kimberly Farrar
Susan Fogo
Cora Cox
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Robert & Sue Fox
Robert Fraser
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Anne Fullerton
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Amaris
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Fraser & Nancy Gibson
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Miriam Greenbaum
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"I liked the idea of 'adopting a species' and shared it (the Gift of Nature) with my daughter. I would always buy her toy turtles and thought this was an awesome gift, and she doesn't even need to dust it!"

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 to preserve our natural
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Photo: (Below) Top Hat in her tank. Photo taken April 2023 by James Bow.



Picking strawberries on the farm

By Jacqueline L. Scott

Strawberry juice pinked the lips, fingers and clothes of the people bending over to stuff the fruits into their bellies and baskets at the pick-your-own farm. Visiting the farm is to bring home summer. It is reconnecting to the source or our food.

How do you decolonize a farm? That thought popped into my head as I picked another basket of strawberries, last summer. The leftover strawberries were tuned into jam. I added slivers of ginger and chili peppers to add some zest to the sweetness.

Today, my breakfast is a bowl filled with strawberries and blueberries, nuts and apples, and smothered in yoghurt. I like the full-fat creamy variety best. Yoghurt comes from milk, which comes from cows, which came from across the ocean with the white settlers.

The farm is a taken for granted part of life in Canada. So much so, that it seems like a natural and neutral part of the rural landscape. And yet the typical farm animals are not native to Canada. The cows, sheep, pigs and horses all came with the settlers. It seems

mad or heretical to question their existence. A race and nature lens encourages me to do just that. And to wonder how these alien species changed the landscape and the ecology of the land.

Rare to me is a conversation in the environmental sector on how it intersects with race.

The strawberry is so associated with Europe in my mind that I was surprised to learn that the plant is also native to the Americas¹.

Yet, the very existence of the garden strawberry, the variety in my breakfast bowl, *Fragaria x ananassa*, is tied to legacies of empire and colonialism².

I pass tons of farms on my bicycle rides around rural Ontario. I am no longer surprised at meeting scores of Black men in the middle of the countryside.

They are the seasonal agricultural workers from the Caribbean, hired at the beginning of the season and sent home at its end. Repeat each year. Another legacy of empire and colonialism. The men plant, weed and harvest the crops, including strawberries.

One bike ride was to the former strawberry capital of Canada. I visited the former home and farm of James Wesley Hill³, whose innovations made him a strawberry king of Oakville⁴ in the 1850s. The ex-slave was also known as Conductor Jim or Canada Jim, as he led hundreds of fugitive slaves to freedom via the Underground Railroad⁵. He was so successful that he had a price tag on his head.

June will come soon. It is also known as the month of the strawberry moon in some Indigenous cultures, as it is when the red, heart-shaped berries, with the hint of golden seeds on the outside, are ripe for picking.



I know I will be back at the pick-your-own strawberry farm. Strawberry fields are forever and a ritual of my summer. ■■

Jacqueline L. Scott is a scholar, writer and activist on race and nature. She is a PhD candidate at the University of Toronto.

Footnotes:

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Photos: (Above) Jacqueline L. Scott; (Left) Strawberry at Springbank Gardens. Photo taken June 2013 by Devon Crowell; (Background, this page) Flowers blooming in the Thompson Tract. Photo taken May 2013 by Devon Crowell; (Back cover) Forest panorama in the Thompson Tract. Photo taken August 20, 2013 by Devon Crowell.

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