



Chair's Message

The year is coming to a close and what a year it's been! Our Executive Director Sara Warren-Roberts and I, are completing our first year and have begun to find our stride. With strong additions to our Board and support from our seasoned mentor Peter Hannah, RWLT is in a strong position!

RWLT was happy to share its community properties with thousands of visitors this fall and the colours were stunning! We completed a successful fall season at Rock Dunder working closely with the Townships of Rideau Lakes and Leeds and Thousand Islands to have digital signs installed along Highway 15 to enhance safety. Free passes in the libraries made it accessible to all! We analysed a variety of properties and have been able to secure three small islands on Newboro and Big Rideau lakes, one of which is a long-known loon nesting spot. We have a couple more properties that we have our eye on, so stay tuned in the New Year as we hope to have even more good news.



John Grass, Chair of the Board

On the global front this has been quite a tumultuous year. The wildfire smoke many of us experienced for the first time really brought the effects of global warming close to home. The mission of RWLT to conserve properties of ecological and biological significance in the Rideau corridor has never been more important and we are actively looking for land to preserve and partners to make it possible. With tax season approaching I ask that you consider RWLT in your donation giving. If you are currently working on estate planning, please contact us to see how your donation of funds, securities or property could be structured. Thank you for your support.

John Grass, Chair

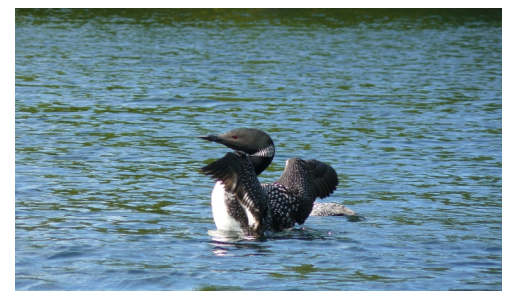


Mosquito Lake Island NR, taken by board member Scott Parker during a fall property monitoring visit

RWLT SECURES THREE SMALL ISLANDS ON BIG RIDEAU AND NEWBORO LAKES

The common loon flies at over 110 kph and swims under water at over 30 kph but on land they can only waddle a few feet, slowly. With feet located far back on their bodies, flight and diving are very efficient but on land it is a liability. That's why loons prefer safe isolated sites close to the water for nesting. A dry spot a few feet above the water helps to avoid nest damage from wave action, especially boat wakes. Small islands are less likely to have predators lurking.

The Township of Rideau Lakes recently conducted an inventory of its property holdings and identified three small islands that were surplus to its needs. Although of little monetary value, they had the potential to provide a niche habitat for loon nesting. RWLT confirmed with some third generation lake residents that Indian Island had often accommodated loon nests. The Township agreed to donate all three to RWLT provided the Trust paid the legal and transfer fees. One RWLT supporter immediately offered to pay part of the cost and we could use your help to cover the rest.



We thank the Township of Rideau Lakes for working with RWLT to complete this small conservation initiative and Barker Wilson Law for helping us affordably expedite the transaction. The loons will be happy.
(Peter Hannah, Past Chair)

Looking for Land to Protect!

On the international stage, Canada has promised to conserve 30 percent of its land and freshwater by 2030. A 2022 study by Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) suggests this lofty goal is a worthy one and achievable if governments move quickly and new opportunities are pursued. Currently, the Ontario government has partnered with the Ontario Land Trust Alliance (of which RWLT is a member) to provide millions of dollars in funding for conservation property acquisitions, stewardship and outreach through the Greenlands Conservation Partnership Program (GCPP). In addition, the Federal Government has provided funding for land securement through the Land Trusts Conservation Fund which is administered by Wildlife Habitat Canada.

Over the years, RWLT has had to purchase outright only three of the 24 properties that it protects. Typically we rely on property donations from individuals and those donations still require funds for closing costs. These new grant programs help us to work with conservation-minded landowners who may not have the financial resources to consider an outright donation. Our most recent acquisition, the Warren property, was achieved through a large GCPP grant that was matched by generous private donations.

We are always looking for new conservation properties that would be eligible for these funding sources. Properties must have ecological value such as woodland, grassland or shoreline habitat and provide connectivity for wildlife to other natural areas in the region. Properties with species at risk habitat (such as Bobolink and Gray Ratsnake) are also eligible.

RWLT would be happy to begin confidential discussions with owners of potential conservation properties to determine whether there is an opportunity to achieve the next conservation success. RWLT, with support from the Frontenac Arch Biosphere, recently had 13 of its properties approved for addition to Canada's growing tally of protected land. What a legacy to have your property count towards the nation's total land conservation goal and the international target to reduce climate change!

(Amber Blewett and Peter Hannah)



Photo taken by Peter Hannah on a small island property visit



David Bearman 1950-2023

Leaving a Legacy

David was a long time supporter of RWLT. Over a decade ago he identified an opportunity for the Trust to acquire half of Grindstone Island in Big Rideau Lake. The result was the Lady Kingsmill Nature Reserve, a sensitive natural area now preserved in perpetuity under the stewardship of the Rideau Waterway Land Trust. David continued to help with monitoring, always a gracious host to RWLT's biologist and volunteers conducting annual visits to the property. David supported many local environmental organizations but RWLT is honoured to have been selected by him to receive donations in his memory. To make a donation in honour of David, go to

<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/pages/in-memory-of-david-bearman/>

RWLT is a charity that has been conserving important natural lands and habitat in the Cataraqui and Rideau watersheds since 1996 to support our community into the future.

Because of YOU.....

The forests and wetlands protected by the RWLT offer many benefits to our community. Walking our community-use trails contributes to our physical health. The Canadian Mental Health Association notes research demonstrating significant mental health benefits from being in natural settings. Our natural areas provide important carbon sinks that help mitigate climate change. They help clean our air and water, and provide essential habitat for the flora and fauna within them.

Last spring a campaign was launched to raise \$70,000 that would help leverage \$23,200 in grant funding for a targeted 90 acre land acquisition which we are continuing to work on and to support the stewardship of our 21 properties. This campaign raised just over \$57,000! We rely heavily on volunteers and the generosity of our community to help us acquire additional lands and to manage our ongoing operational responsibilities.

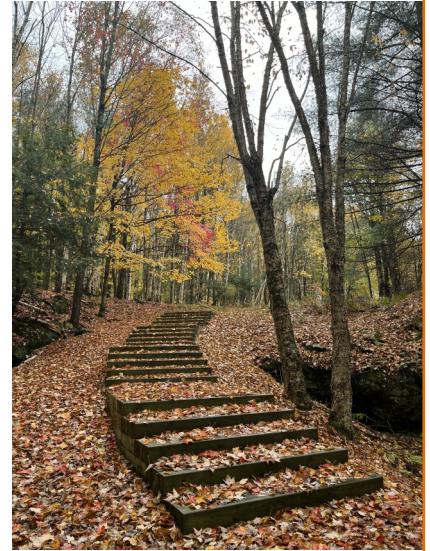
With the support of our community, we maintain a small base of operational staff. We also leverage government and foundation grants that help us provide summer employment opportunities for students and undertake projects such as:

- property acquisitions
- maintain and improve our hiking trails
- manage invasive species
- create property management plans
- complete regular monitoring reports for our Nature Reserve properties
- cover the closing costs that accompany donated properties.

These resources have also allowed us to install nesting boxes for Gray Ratsnakes, install solar power for our gatehouse, and improve safety along highway 15 with the use of electronic signs during peak periods.

Please help us with our stewardship work and to protect more land along the Rideau Waterway corridor. Information about different ways you can provide support through funds or estate planning can be found at <https://www.rwlt.org>. Your generosity makes a difference! Together we can help Canada realise its goal of preserving 30 percent of its land and water by 2030 for future generations. **Please note our new address when mailing in donations P.O Box 42, Elgin Ontario K0G 1E0**

(Nick Betts)



Many enjoyed James H Fullard Nature Reserve hiking trail this fall!

Donor Spotlight

A Heartfelt thank you to Ian and Iara Skelton for donating the funds to support the new solar that powered the gatehouse office which ran operations at Rock Dunder this year. This donation was made in honour of Peter and Libby Skelton.

We also want to recognize our RWLT sustainer circle donors! We appreciate those who have committed to give each month consistently and support the work we are doing. Every donation big and small makes a difference and we appreciate you!



The RWLT Team

Honourary Chair
Hon. Bob Rae

Chair
John Grass

Secretary
Jim
MacLachlan

Treasurer
Scott Parker

Members
Peter Hannah
Erica Kendrik
Amber Blewitt
Nick Betts
Kari Wolanski

Staff
Caroline Spang
Sara Warren-Roberts

Letters to the Conservation Biologist

Our conservation biologist, Caroline Spang received an interesting email from a supporter, who shared a photo of a strange-looking mass floating in Lower Cranberry lake. They described it as an "odd blob" and wondered what it was. Well, we did some research and found out that it was actually a bryozoan colony!

Bryozoans are aquatic animals that live in colonies of thousands of individuals. They form gelatinous or calcareous structures that can vary in shape and size. Some look like coral reefs, others like mossy branches, and others like blobs or balls. They filter feed on microscopic organisms and can be found in both freshwater and marine environments.

Bryozoans are not very common in lakes, but they do occur occasionally. They prefer clean water with plenty of oxygen and food. They are harmless to humans and fish, and can actually indicate good water quality. They are also very ancient, dating back to the Ordovician period, about 480 million years ago.

So, if you ever spot a bryozoan colony in a lake, don't be alarmed. It's not an alien invasion or a toxic spill. It's just a fascinating example of nature's diversity and beauty!



Picture taken by RWLT supporter Marian Robinson

Partner Spotlight

AOG Art Trail - As Rock Dunder and JH Fullard trails are closed for the season, satisfy that itch to get outside and explore this winter by visiting Bill Gibbons' AOG Art Trail at 42 Leacock Road in Frankville, ON. Walk, ski or snowshoe 4km of trails through a mix of open fields and forest while taking in over 30 thought provoking pieces of art by local and international artists. Although this trail is open year-round without appointment, the contrast of the snow and featured artwork is stunning. Also nearby is the AOG private art gallery that is open by appointment. You will want to make sure you put this on your bucket list as a winter excursion with your family and friends! For more information visit aogallery.ca or you can reach out to Bill Gibbons at aogallery47@gmail.com.



Interactive sound sculpture by Glen LeMesurier

All Our Relations Land Trust

As RWLT works to thoughtfully understand its part in the Reconciliation process, All Our Relations Land Trust (AORLT) has become a valuable partner and friend. As an Indigenous led Land Trust that is still emerging in its reach and scope, we encourage you to learn more about what they are doing and support their growth. For more information, contact allourrelationslandtrust@gmail.com