



## Chair's Message

As we approach the last part of summer, I am reflecting on our successes and the tremendous contributions made by many RWLT supporters: staff, volunteers, donors and Board members. It is a team effort.

In the spring newsletter, an ambitious trail repair and rejuvenation project was planned for Rock Dunder. Increased use during 2020 and 2021, combined with more frequent heavy rainfall events, caused severe erosion. Trail usage has now returned to more normal levels. Our hard working trail crew has been busy moving truckloads of material to cover exposed roots and build several new structures. Many thanks go out to Jim, Mic and the crew for their hard work on hot days and to the funders that made this project possible.

Our biologists, Caroline and Alyssa, have made great progress in completing or revising Management Plans for most properties and undertaking annual monitoring. Once a property has been acquired, the follow up work is ongoing. Rock Dunder revenue helps to fund some of this work but most of it is dependent on donor support. We were sorry to see Alyssa leave us for a new position with the provincial government and thank her for her work at RWLT.

Caroline and Alyssa were also successful in recruiting volunteers to help monitor the Gray Ratsnake nesting boxes installed on several RWLT properties and for several crews that removed purple loosestrife in key locations. More volunteer projects are planned for the future. It is a great way to contribute a bit of time and meet other RWLT supporters.

We also greatly appreciate the diligence of our gate staff who work long hours and endure the parade of insect pests that challenge them. The early season mosquito invasion was particularly bad this year.

Aaron Warren recently joined RWLT in an Operations and Communications role and is now managing many administrative and operational aspects of the organization, including volunteer co-ordination. With a background in Business Administration and Marketing, Aaron is well-suited for the role. In the coming months Aaron's will develop even more effective outreach and communication strategies to further engage all RWLT stakeholders such as our volunteers, donors, trail users and property neighbors. Aaron can be reached at [awarren@rwlt.org](mailto:awarren@rwlt.org).

Once again, the Board of Directors thanks all of our loyal donors for the support they continue to provide. We wish all of RWLT's supporters continued good health as we finish the summer and head into autumn.

Peter Hannah, Board Chair



*Donors, partners,  
volunteers and staff  
step up for nature*

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Chair's Message

Nature Challenge

Donor's Viewpoint

Helping Species-at-Risk

Invasive Plant Pull

Trail Project

Summer Work

Save the Date

Frontenac Arch

## Protect Nature Challenge

Want to do more to protect nature? The Government of Canada has published 31 challenges to help take daily steps towards producing less waste, saving money and feeling healthier while protecting the natural environment. Check

[www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/nature-legacy/activities.html](http://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/nature-legacy/activities.html)



*Generations protecting nature, together*

### RWLT works with:

- American Friends of Canadian Conservation
- Ontario Land Trust Alliance

# Donor's Viewpoint

by Nancy Covington

The wish to protect the land in perpetuity originated with our mother, Charlotte Covington, who recognized the unusual nature of the Frontenac Axis with its sink holes and mature trees. She had observed that this topography became a refuge for unusual plants, birds, and animals, as well as being a prime spot for swimming, canoeing, hiking and generally enjoying nature in peace. Our parents purchased the Bulls Eye Lake property in 1978.

Even though the property was purchased long after the siblings had left home, it became a special spot for us to gather. We paddled and swam, of course, but more unusually, we liked to find shed skins from the native Gray Ratsnakes who had a hibernaculum under the cottage in an old box of wood. The snakes are spectacular and perfectly harmless to humans! Spring remains my favourite season at Bulls Eye. In my mind's eye, I see the hills blanketed in snow-white trilliums under a fresh blue sky.

Undertaking property protection and donation takes time, and it was only after Charlotte's death that the first key action took place. In 2011, we four siblings obtained a Conservation Easement with the Ontario Heritage Trust. The easement, attached to the land title, protects the property from future actions such as subdivision. The accompanying Stewardship Plan was monitored by the Land Conservancy for Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox, and Addington to protect the flora and fauna. In 2014, my brother Alan and I finalized the process with donation to the Rideau Waterway Land Trust (RWLT).

Our foremost hope was to preserve the wonderful habitat at the Bulls Eye property and keep it as free as possible from human interference. Our secondary hope involved the cottage, which, although in some disrepair, was definitely not ready to be torn down. We felt that the off-grid cottage would allow others to directly experience the joys of being lodged at Bulls Eye while simultaneously protecting the environment. By doing so, we hoped visitors would develop a greater appreciation for nature and be moved to protect their own special places. When the time came to sell, RWLT stepped in, taking on the unusual donation of land with a physical structure in-situ.

Now safely in RWLT's hand, we can access the cottage one week every year, keeping our love for Bulls Eye alive. Without RWLT to steward the land and tend the cottage, this would not be possible.

editor's note: contact RWLT ([info@rwlt.org](mailto:info@rwlt.org)) if you'd like to discuss donating property to support nature conservation.



*Covington parents recognized need to protect nature*

## Helping Species at Risk

As part of RWLT's ongoing Gray Ratsnake nesting box project, a dedicated group of volunteers (thank you once again!) and our Conservation Biologists visited the J.H Fullard Nature Reserve in mid-May. 46 egg remains were found, in three of the five nesting boxes on the property. These numbers are a drastic improvement from last year, and hopefully the nests continue to support a growing Ratsnake population. This builds on the success at nests on other RWLT properties.

These boxes were first introduced in 2018 as part of an initiative to provide a safe place for the native snake species to lay their eggs. Classified as a species at risk, the Gray Ratsnake is threatened from the loss of habitat and the destruction of suitable hibernation sites.



*Egg remains show successful use of nestboxes by Gray Ratsnakes*

*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.*

## Invasive Plant Pull

Thank you to all the volunteers who came out to pull Purple Loosestrife this summer! During two separate events, seven volunteers joined RWLT staff to pull almost 30 garbage bags full of Purple Loosestrife, removing it from the wetland at Rock Dunder Nature Reserve and reducing the number of seeds for next year.



*Removal of invasive plants that compete with native plants*

Invading into our wetlands, Purple Loosestrife creates dense mats of vegetation that push out native plant species, reduce nesting sites for waterfowl and spawning sites for fish, and lowers food availability.

This species is thought to have been introduced to North America in the 19th century by way of European sailing boats. At this time many vessels were weighted using soil or sand as a means of stabilizing the ship, and when docked this ballast which contained the seeds of non-native plants was disposed of on the shore. Through this practice and the additional planting of Purple Loosestrife in flower gardens, this species has spread to all Canadian Provinces. Learn more at [www.invasivespeciescentre.ca](http://www.invasivespeciescentre.ca)

## Trail Improvements at Rock Dunder

RWLT was very fortunate to receive a grant from the Canadian Community Revitalization Fund (CCRF) to undertake some significant trail improvements at Rock Dunder in 2022. This grant was augmented by generous donations from some key supporters of RWLT.

For many years we had been watching with growing concern the trail deterioration from erosion and foot traffic. This deterioration accelerated with booming hiker traffic resulting from the pandemic in the past two seasons. The two most significant problems were erosion on steep hills and tree roots protruding on the trail. The tree roots were being injured by foot traffic and were a tripping hazard. The grant and donations allowed RWLT to apply major effort to solve these problems.

Work began in May and will be completed by the end of October. The Summit Loop was rerouted in two areas to avoid steep hills that were suffering erosion. The rerouted sections achieved more gentle slopes and fine gravel was applied to the trail surface to better resist erosion. The protruding tree roots problem was solved by applying fine gravel, soil or a combination of soil/gravel to cover the roots. This work was done both on the Summit Loop (for over 900m!) and the Scout Cabin Trail. The covering of the tree roots has protected them from further injury and created a smoother walking surface. Gravel was also applied to the Morton Bay Loop in an area prone to be wet in the early and late hiking season.



*Trail work to address exposed roots and stones, trampling and erosion*

The Scout Cabin Trail as far as Cabin 1 has had similar improvements to smooth the walking surface. This section is now even an easier hike for those persons with mobility challenges.

## The RWLT Team

**Honourary Chair**  
Hon. Bob Rae

**Chair**  
Peter Hannah

**Secretary**  
Jim MacLachlan

**Members**  
Andrea Cordonier  
Mike Freeman  
Steve Knechtel

**Staff**  
Caroline Spang  
Aaron Warren

**Vice Chair**  
John Grass

**Treasurer**  
Erica Kendrick

## Summer Employment!

This year, the RWLT was fortunate to hire multiple gate staff attendants for Rock Dunder Nature Reserve through support of the Canada Summer Jobs program. There have been two university summer students (Ellen and Bella) and one local high school summer student (Gemma) working at the front gate welcoming visitors.



*RWLT provides studies-related work experience*

Ellen is a third year student at Carleton University studying Ecology. “Working for RWLT I’ve been able to connect with the community with outreach programs and social media, shadow biologists on species monitoring trips, and add to my experience researching and writing about conservation. It has helped me further pursue my career in biology.”

Bella is also entering her third year of studies, in Environmental Engineering at McGill University. “As someone with a lot of outdoor hobbies, working at Rock Dunder Nature Reserve has connected me with a passionate community of outdoor enthusiasts, of all levels. For many, Rock Dunder is a place of sentimental value, and it is great to see so many familiar faces.”

Also in 2022, trail crew members consisting of labourers, Reid and Liam, and lead hand, Michaël “Mic”, have been working diligently to increase accessibility and decrease the environmental impact of thousands of yearly hikers. Reid is great at following instructions and is very precise, and Liam is incredibly hard working and punctual. This is Mic’s second season with RWLT Trail Maintenance, making him knowledgeable in the day-to-day happenings at Rock Dunder and J. H. Fullard Nature Reserves.

Examples of tasks include: Trail sections with exposed roots and uneven surfaces have been covered using power wheelbarrows and canoe yokes with buckets to transport gravel and soil from the parking lot. Stairs have been constructed and filled with stone and gravel. A replacement foot bridge constructed, with the addition of handrails.

Rain storms have caused some of the newly placed gravel to erode as water streams down steeper sections of trail. This has been remedied with the addition of “water-bars”, wood installed across the trail. General clearing of fallen trees and branches has been quite frequent with the heavy winds experienced this season. Unfortunately, removal of garbage and graffiti is a common part of the job. It should be noted that RWLT walking trails are open to the public in practicing “pack it in, pack it out”, and it may have to include the new version invented by the crew “stoop, scoop and bring it around the loop”!

## Save-The-Date

The Blues on the Rideau concert series continues. Advance registration is required (and do it soon!). RWLT is the recipient charity of the March 24 2023 session. Check [www.coveinn.com](http://www.coveinn.com)



## Frontenac Arch

The Frontenac Arch is one of the most important forest corridors in North America. The area serves as a funnel for migrating birds, insects and bats, with connection between the Algonquin Highlands and the Appalachian Mountain. Many of the diverse plants, animals and insects supported by the Arch are at-risk and globally rare. As well, the forests and wetlands of the Arch are essential allies to slow the effects of climate change.



*The Frontenac Arch is vital area supporting nature and humans*