



SPRING-SUMMER 2018

*Rideau Waterway*

**LAND TRUST**

**INSIDE  
THIS ISSUE**

**SUBSCRIBE TO E-NEWS**

**SPRING INTO ROCK DUNDER**

**SPECIES AT RISK PROJECT**

**INFORMATION BRIEFS**

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## CHAIR'S REMARKS

Summer has arrived and the volunteers of RWLT have been busy. Most of the required maintenance at Sugar Bush and Rock Dunder was completed and both properties were opened to the public on May 15.

A Canada Summer Jobs application was successful and students have been hired. Although the employees will provide much needed help, RWLT is still very dependent on volunteers to make the Trust function. One recurring task that depends on volunteers is gate assistance at Rock Dunder. This involves a 3 to 4 hour shift on busy weekends. Contact our volunteer co-ordinator [hikersuzy@gmail.com](mailto:hikersuzy@gmail.com)

RWLT is guided by a volunteer Board of Directors. If you would like to discuss how you can contribute to the important conservation work of the RWLT by joining our Board, contact me [phannah@rideau.net](mailto:phannah@rideau.net).

Elsewhere in this issue, you will read about important work that has been undertaken at Sugar Bush. Although many visitors focus on the hiking opportunities that RWLT provides, it is important to remember that RWLT is first and foremost a conservation organization, preserving special places in our community.

Are you reading a hard copy of this newsletter but would prefer to receive it by e-mail? Let us know.

**Have a great summer!**  
**Peter Hannah**

## CONTACT US

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# SPRING



## INTO ROCK DUNDER

*Plankwalks were built in the wet sections of the trail, and even more are to come in the future.*

New red signs went up in the late fall at Rock Dunder to more clearly indicate closure for the winter and to deter trespassing in the off-season. Fewer footprints in the snow and less litter in the spring showed an improvement in compliance over past years.

In the weeks leading up to our May 15 opening a lot of preparatory work was done. The trails were cleared of litter and fallen branches, dead trees overhanging the trails were felled, gravel was applied to potholes in the road, “plankwalks” were built in the worst of the wet trail sections (more to come), and a big trailer was moved in to be the “office” for the new season. All of this work was done by volunteers.

A long run of sunny warm weather did great work at drying the trails for the opening day. May 15 was a rainy Tuesday and visitor traffic was low, but following days had better weather. The glorious weather on Monday of the long weekend brought many people out for a hike. Many spring flowers were emerging.

This is the second year of our supporter pass system. A Day Pass is \$10 for those arriving together in one vehicle; a Season Pass is \$50 and is valid until November 15. The gate is normally staffed during anticipated high traffic times to sell passes. Both Day Passes and Season Passes can also be purchased online ([www.rwlt.org](http://www.rwlt.org)). If passes are purchased from home, the printed receipt should be brought to show the gate attendant and to display on the dash of your parked car.

As the season progresses, we will add staff to assist with increasing visitor arrivals, including directing parking, and to undertake trail improvements.



*Pink Lady's Slipper (Cypripedium acaule). An uncommon flower that is part of the orchid family.*





“We all  
need to  
do  
more.”

*A nesting box at RWLT's Sugar Bush for the gray ratsnake, a non-venomous snake that can reach up to 2 metres in length. It has been found in the eastern and central United States, extending as far north as southern Ontario.*

## SPECIES AT RISK PROJECT

A report in 2017 by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) “Living Planet Report Canada – A National Look at Wildlife Loss” ([www.wwf.ca/newsroom/reports](http://www.wwf.ca/newsroom/reports)) outlines concerns and strategies related to species at risk (SAR). We need to do more for SAR, including understanding climate change impacts and expanding the network of protected areas.

Unfortunately, numerous species of plants and animals in the Rideau Waterway area are at risk. This often has resulted from loss of habitat and misguided interference with the species. Provincially, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) promotes education about species at risk (SAR) and encourages enhancements for the species. Examples include interpretive signage, conserving areas with limited public access, and provision of nesting structures. There are measures in place to protect SAR. In circumstances where disturbance to SAR cannot be avoided, such as related to highway improvements, initiatives are stipulated by a Benefit Permit approved by the MNR. For more information check [www.ontario.ca/page/species-risk](http://www.ontario.ca/page/species-risk).

The interests of MNR and the RWLT dovetail nicely. The RWLT has lands in areas where the SAR are known to exist and these lands exhibit the habitat needs of those species. Where practical, the RWLT will partner on enhancement projects for SAR on its properties. A prime focus has been on increasing the SAR population on a sustainable basis. There are costs involved to participate in these projects such as installing nesting structures, monitoring and reporting on success, and providing education information.

RWLT has recently partnered on a SAR project stemming from improvements to Highway 15 by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation (MTO). The focus pertains to the gray ratsnake and involves the placement of nesting boxes, the expansion of basking areas, and the installation of interpretive signage on RWLT properties.

The nesting box is about a 1.2m/4ft cube. Contained by the wire mesh is nesting material consisting of mulch, leaves, and straw in repeated layers. The nesting material will be replenished each fall for five years by a consultant under contract to MTO. At that time the consultant will also check the old material for evidence of ratsnake nesting. The project with RWLT involves a mix of locations for the nest structures – some are readily visible along the trail while others are more traditionally not.

Enhancements to basking areas at another RWLT property on Cranberry Lake involved the removal of some young trees to enlarge small clearings in the tree cover to about 10m/33ft diameter. This allows sunlight to reach the exposed rock in the clearings and the felled tree trunks. The clearings will be monitored by the consultant for five years.

It is planned to install interpretive signage about species at risk (SAR) and the gray ratsnake at several RWLT properties later in 2018. Thanks to our partner MTO, with support from EcoTec Environmental Consultants Inc and MNR.

# INFORMATION BRIEFS

## 1. Condolences and Thank You

RWLT expresses condolences to the family of the late Gord Brown. Gord recognized the inter-connections between environmental conservation, economic prosperity, and community sustainability. As the Leeds—Grenville—Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes MP he assisted RWLT often, most recently by supporting our application for funding to hire summer students.

## 2. Senior Governments Support Biodiversity/Protected Places

Biodiversity is the incredible variety in nature all around us. It's biodiversity that underlies all that we need to live and to grow and to help support a sustainable future. Amongst other contributions, biodiversity found in protected places helps mitigate changing climate, provides us with clean air and water, and provides safe havens for wild species. In Ontario alone there are currently over 200 species at risk, many of which are threatened by habitat loss.

Fortunately, there is new help. This spring the budgets of both the federal and provincial governments include allocations to support partnerships with environmental organizations, including land trusts, toward the protection of habitat and biodiversity. Please convey your thanks for this to our elected representatives, and to encourage follow-through support the declaration at <http://protected-places.good.do/olta/declaration>.

## 3. Protect Yourself From Ticks/Lyme disease

Ticks are now commonly found in the Rideau Waterway area, especially in woods and long grass. Protect yourself by staying on marked trails, cover up, consider using a repellent, and check yourself after outings. Check local health unit websites for more details.

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