



Spring 2021

The View from Foley Mountain *

News from the Friends of Foley Mountain

Box 5, Westport, ON, K0G 1X0

www.friendsoffoleymountain.ca

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) has advised me that many of our friends and neighbours are taking advantage of the fact that, during this stressful time, the Foley Mountain Conservation Area remains open for some outdoor recreation and relaxation. Foley Mountain's annual and day pass revenue for 2020 was up 63% over 2019 showing that our community appreciates the opportunity to commune with nature. I encourage you to walk the trails and check out all the spring activity of the birds and animals and the beauty that spring brings to the plants and trees.

Like many organizations the Friends of Foley Mountain has severely curtailed its activities during the last year – however we haven't given up in our endeavours to support the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority in its educational programs for children. We will continue to support the Forest School when it is able to be held again, to enable outdoor education by subsidising bus costs and teachers' salaries when required and to help defray the costs of purchasing replacement equipment.

You may be aware that the Friends were one of the sponsors of the outdoor adventure kits developed by RVCA. The kits included materials and instructions to identify and follow animal tracks in the snow, explore the wonderful world of snowflakes, do an experiment with a jello mouse, create a backyard birdfeeder, make snow ice cream and more. The kits were extremely popular and were all claimed on the day they were released. Congratulations to Rebecca Whitman for her work in developing these. Together with Rebecca the Friends are exploring other ways to keep the children involved in nature. We will have more information on this later. Watch our Facebook page and our website.

However, maintaining our ability to continue to support RCVA in these endeavours will require funds. You will see from the budget presented on page 2 that revenues are down drastically this year. We are unable to host a major fundraiser due to the pandemic so we have been exploring other means of obtaining funds. Last year we received an extension of a grant we received from the TD Friends of the Environment Fund but were unable to use it. We have requested another extension and the authority to re-purpose it (it was originally approved for bus subsidies). Hopefully we will be able to use it to develop other means of keeping the children of our communities involved with nature. In addition to the donation box that was installed at Spy Rock parking lot we have set up a system to donate funds to the Friends of Foley Mountain through CanadaHelps (www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/friends-of-foley-mountain-inc/) and there is a donate button on our Facebook page.

* "The View From Foley Mountain" is used with permission of Peri McQuay, the author of the original book: "The View From Foley Mountain".

Membership dues are still the most significant source of revenue. I encourage you to renew your membership so we can continue in our endeavours. Our treasurer will be sending notification to you indicating when your current membership is up for renewal and we would appreciate your timely renewal. Each membership of \$50 or more entitles you to free parking for 2 vehicles at any RVCA location. Also please canvass any of your friends who you think might be interested in supporting our cause. A Membership form is enclosed with this newsletter and if more are needed, they can be found on our Face Book page and website (www.friendsoffoley.ca).

I have scheduled our Annual General Meeting for May 19, 2021 at 7 p.m. This will need to be conducted via a Zoom meeting. If you would like to join the meeting, please advise me (r.a.struthers@live.com).

Please keep safe and stay well.

Rob Struthers
President

Friends of Foley Mountain

Statement of Operating Account

For the period January 1, 2021 to March 31, 2021

	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budget (Annual)</u>
Revenue:		
Memberships	\$689	\$8,500
Grants & Donations		500
Bank Interest		100
Fund Raising	Fund Raiser (Tapas) cancelled due to COVID	
Total	\$689	\$9,100
Expenses:		
Advertising	118	200
Office Supplies	104	225
Fundraising	Fund Raiser cancelled	
Miscellaneous		100
RVCA Donations		6,000
Special Projects		2,000
Total	\$222	\$8,525

Memberships are the cornerstone for fund raising. It's through your support that we are able to continue to fund the programs at Foley Mountain Park. We are hopeful that you will renew your membership when it expires. Thank you for your support.

THE FLOWERY WOODS

(Excerpted from The View From Foley Mountain, celebrating our wonderful Foley Mountain Conservation Area, by Peri Phillips McQuay)

There's not a minute to lose this time of year. In a single day's burst of heat a bloodroot's petals unfurl, spread, stretch and spill upon the ground. Wait only three days for the right time and you may miss that most fleeting of spectacles, the flowering of the trees.

I think it was living with our doorstep cottonwood trees that first made me think about the blooming of trees. Almost while I watch, the largest of the sticky, pointed buds splits and out falls a caterpillar—at least that is what the fat catkins bring to mind. In the slowest of motion, the trees become hung with catkins. Each day they lengthen until the cottonwoods sway and dance with the Chinese red streamers, colourfully decorated by a little flock of brilliant yellow evening grosbeaks, absent in the month since our bird feeder was stored away. After just one more day, the pollen-heavy catkins slip from the two trees and clog the grass beneath them. The brief interlude of surprising beauty is at an end.

Walking out in search of blossoms I find the earliest of the blooms, the pussy willows, heavy with pollen. As our bees crawl back to the hives, baskets weighted with dust of many shades of green and gold, I realize all over again how much variety there is even in the mass of willows.

Next I look for the maples. If there were no other tree flower than these, the swamps and forests would be places of exceptional loveliness at this time. Even if I could not appreciate the crimson stars of their flowers myself, I would look at them just to catch a glimpse of squirrels in ecstasy, clinging perilously to the slightest of branches to taste the sweetness of the nectar withing. Sometimes as I stand looking at the squirrels and the flowers, a rain of snipped flower-ended twigs rattles down upon me.

Now, everywhere I go I see flowers. For just a few days, the blossoms of shadbush flicker through the woods like white flames. I angle around as manipulatively as a camera enthusiast posing a subject, until I stand where a shadbush throws its reflection onto the surface of a black little pool. No matter how hard I clutch at the image and try to fix it in my memory, I know that it will never have the richness of now.

In a clearing I find a honeysuckly, hung with twin bells and courted by bumblebees. I put out a finger and stroke the soft back of one delirious bee who is clinging to one of the bells so fiercely that he barely notices my intrusion.

Along the edge of the woods are Manitoba maples. At first these were some of the few trees I didn't appreciate. Brittle and weedlike, they ususally could be found in tired soil by abandoned houses and roadsides. The slight, wispy flowers cannot hold a candle to alder catkins or swamp maple blooms, but I've come to value the trees now: the keys that drop from them each fall feed flocks of birds.

Last spring I looked across our fields to the pine forest west of us. For several days the air had been warm and still. Then, in late afternoon, a wind came up. As I looked, a yellow veil drifted down over the fields, swirling and eddying. Was it dust from the road? Surely the earth was not that dry, and anyhow I could see that the dust was not coming from the road but from the piens. I realized that I was seeing something rare. The cloud was a rain of pine pollen released all at once by the sudden wind.

Although we may no longer be attuned to notice it when we enter the flowery woods, European explorer Aruthur Barlowe has left us with a striking picture of how the woods' fragrance appeared to a sailor in 1584, "...we found shole water when we smelt so sweet and strong a smel, as we had bene in the midst of some delicate garden abounding with all kinde of odiferous flowers, by which we were assured that the land could not be farre distant..."

Peri invites you to visit her newly revised website "www.perimcquay.ca".



Keeping Our Community in Touch With Nature

By: Rebecca Whitman

Folks, I think we can all agree that the last year has been scary and tough. Despite the challenges that we have all faced, there are still many things to be grateful for, including a renewed desire and need for people to connect with the natural world. Here at Foley Mountain, RVCA staff have been working hard to continue to provide opportunities for people to get outdoors and learn about the natural world. Here are few highlights of how this has been happening since we last chatted:

Park Visitation

RVCA conservation areas have been open for passive use throughout the pandemic and we have seen a huge increase in the number of people visiting our conservation areas. Throughout the watershed, revenue for park passes in 2020 was up 45% above 2019 levels. The fall season brought with it an even larger than normal influx of visitors to Foley Mountain. With the help of additional staff and new procedures to keep everyone safe, we were very pleased with how smoothly things went.

Forest School

Despite a few hiccups with staffing at the onset, we were able to offer a fall session of forest school with COVID-19 protocols in place. Programs ran Mondays and Thursdays for children ages 4-10 and Wednesdays for children ages 3-5. Children and staff enjoyed a session full of play, adventure, and learning!

A big thank you goes out to Friends of Foley Mountain for sponsoring the tuition for two children to attend. Unfortunately, due to public health restrictions, we were unable to offer a winter session and have had to put the spring session on hold. We look forward to being able to welcome children back to the forest when it is safe to do so!

In partnership with the Township of Rideau Lakes, we were also able to offer three free forest school family drop-in programs throughout the fall of 2020 and one in the spring of 2021. This is a great opportunity for families to get out into nature safely and experience what forest school has to offer.

Outdoor Adventure Kits

Thanks in large part to funding from the Friends of Foley Mountain, RVCA and several local partners (Township of Rideau Lakes, Rideau Lakes Public Library, and Westport Public Library) were able to offer 100 free winter outdoor adventure kits for families to pick up at library branches. Activities included a bird feeder kit, tracking activities, a snowflake study, an animal survival experiment, a winter reading list, a winter scavenger hunt, and ingredients to make snow ice cream. The kits were a huge success and were gone within a week!

Spring outdoor adventure kits will be available May 1st thanks to the following partners: North Leeds Youth Coordinating Committee, United Way of Leeds and Grenville, Rideau Lakes Horticultural Society, Township of Leeds and Thousand Islands, Township of Rideau Lakes, Rideau Lakes Public Library, Westport Public Library, and the Thousand Islands Public Library.

Story Trail Adventures

With the success of our first story trail adventure featuring “The Gruffalo” by Julia Donaldson and illustrated by Axel Sheffler, we decided to keep the fun going with a new winter story trail! “Over and Under the Snow” by Kate Messner and illustrated by Christopher Silas Neal tells the story of how animals survive the cold harsh winter. The trail was set up along the blue trail starting at the Spy Rock parking lot and finishing at the Education and Group Camping Area. Families could read the story and also participate in activities along the way. Stay tuned for more story trail adventures as we move into spring and summer!

Summer Programming

With things being fairly uncertain at the moment, no decisions have been made in terms of in-person summer programming. Stay tuned and check out our website at www.rvca.ca for updates as they become available.

Once again, the RVCA would like to thank the Friends of Foley Mountain for their continued support, especially during this difficult time. Your generosity continues to help us provide people with an opportunity to experience and learn about nature at a time when it is especially important for everyone's health and well being.

For more information about Foley Mountain Conservation Area, feel free to contact rebecca.whitman@rvca.ca or 613-273-3255. You can also visit us on Facebook for park updates.





Winter Story Trail

