



Spring 2017

# The View from Foley Mountain \*

## News from the Friends of Foley Mountain

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### A LETTER FROM ROB STRUTHERS - CHAIR OF FRIENDS OF FOLEY MOUNTAIN

Spring at last - it certainly has been an eventful arrival of spring this year. What a beautiful time to visit Foley Mountain and enjoy the freshness of the season and to appreciate the spring colours. I always enjoy that particular shade of green that the leaves exhibit only in the spring.

One of the Board's objectives this year is to assess the effectiveness of communicating with our Members via email. As a first step, this newsletter is being sent to you both in electronic format for those of you who have provided us with your email address and in hard copy for those who prefer to receive a printed newsletter or in case there is a problem with the email. Our tentative plan is to send subsequent newsletters by email. This of course will help us save money by not having to pay for printing or postage. If you prefer to continue to receive the newsletter by post, please let me know; if receiving it by email is acceptable to you, please ensure that your email address is shown on the Membership form.

Communicating by email is one of seven objectives the Board has set for 2017. The others are:

- ensure a strong membership base;
- recruit 1 – 2 new Directors;
- organize and deliver at least two fund raising events;
- assist the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority through annual contributions;
- host a successful Open Doors event in August; and
- improve our website content and visibility.

The Board is making good progress in achieving its 2017 objectives. We have already recruited one new Director – Tony Cote joined the Board in January. Tony brings a particular skill to the Board which will help us achieve improving our website and social media presence. Tony's background is that of a professional journalist and he has volunteered to work on producing a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsofFoleyMountain/>) for the Friends of Foley Mountain and to modernize and update our website. We always welcome new Board members so if you have the time to volunteer to what I know you consider to be a worthwhile cause, please contact me.

At its November meeting the Village of Westport recognized one of your Directors, Don Goodfellow as Volunteer of the Month. Congratulations Don – a well deserved award (see page 3).

The Board will be taking a different approach to fundraising this year. We haven't finalized all our plans yet but we intend to host one or two special dinners – watch for further news on this. We have also received support from St Edwards School in Westport (see page 2) and from a local Westport business - Cottage Coffee House. The Cottage Coffee House has a loyalty program which includes a system of accumulating points based on the value of purchases made by the loyalty program member. For every \$100 spent by the member a \$1.00 donation will be made to the Friends of Foley Mountain. I would also like to mention the generous combined donation of \$620 which was presented to me by The Cove Country Inn and Spa and the Blues on the Rideau during the February Jazz night. We are very grateful for the support we get from our businesses and community. (cont'd on page 2)

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

With respect to our annual contributions to the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, the Board has decided to allocate funds as follows:

- \$6,000 to support the interpretive program;
- \$2,500 to support the contracting of staff for delivery of the interpretive program;
- \$700 for the rental of animals for the Visitor Centre;
- \$4,250 for school bus subsidy program to bring school children to Foley Mountain – this amount also includes money for replacement of program related equipment such as snowshoes when needed.

If you haven't already done so, I urge you to renew your membership to the Friends of Foley Mountain. Renewal forms are included with this Newsletter. With your help, we can achieve the objectives and goals we have set for our organization. Also, please consider joining the Board of Directors: we are keen to welcome new ideas and perspectives.

I wouldn't want to end this newsletters without sending congratulations to Rebecca - the Foley Mountain Area Supervisor – her daughter Hazel Elizabeth Whitman was born on February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017. Congratulations Rebecca. Leah Roberts will be replacing Rebecca while she is on maternity leave. Welcome Leah - we look forward to working with you.

Rob Struthers

(r.a.struthers@live.com)

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### **Friends of Foley celebrates Canada 150**

We are proud to be part of the Township of Rideau Lakes Open Doors weekend scheduled for August 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>. There will be free park entry that weekend and we hope to have the Interpretation Centre and Silversides tool museum open to the public. More information will be available on our Facebook nearer the time. In the meantime, please save the date.

This event is part of the 2017 Open Doors project sponsored by the Ontario government. For more information please go to <http://www.doorsopenontario.on.ca/>

### **Summer programs at Foley**

We are pleased to continue our support of summer programming at Foley Mountain. There may be snow on the ground, but planning for great experiences is in full swing. Check out the website <http://www.rvca.ca/careas/foley/> to get information on summer half-day and day programs as well as the ever-popular week long day camps. While you're there, download the Foley fun calendar and the trail map.

### **Supporting Foley one can at a time!**

Last fall, the grade 5/6 class at St. Edward Catholic School participated in WE Day, an event aimed at encouraging youth to develop life skills for success and inspiring them to take social action, empower others and transforming lives. As a result of that involvement, the class is undertaking a year-long effort to help make the world a better place, both locally and globally. The class has decided that their local initiative will be to fundraise for Foley Mountain by collecting aluminum cans. This is a great project because they are helping to keep cans out of landfill as well as raising money for us. Cans should be delivered to the school in Westport during office hours (week days 9am-3pm) until the beginning of June. Big thanks to Ms. McGaw and her enthusiastic students!

### **Park entry:**

The Rideau Valley Conservation Authority has introduced a new system for collecting entry fees at its conservation areas, including Foley Mountain. The paper passes and cash systems have been discontinued. The good news is that when you renew your annual membership at the \$50 level or above, you can register two cars. The licence numbers will be entered into the system and you don't need to phone anyone.

Friends of Foley Mountain		
Statement of Operations		
For the period Jan. 1, 2017 to March 20, 2017		
<u>Revenue:</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Budget</u>
Memberships	\$1,825	\$9,000
Grants & Donations	620	500
Bank Interest		100
Fund Raising		3,000
<b>Total:</b>	<b>2,445</b>	<b>12,600</b>
<u>Expenses:</u>		
Donations to RVCA		8,500
Special Projects		4,250
Advertising		500
Fund Raising		1,500
Animal Rentals		700
Office Supplies	212	350
Miscellaneous	154	150
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$366</b>	<b>\$15,950</b>

Membership sales are the cornerstone of fundraising. If you haven't already done so, please renew your membership. Thank you.

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Wednesday, May 10, 2017, 7:00 pm

Silersides Outdoor Education Centre  
Foley Mountain Conservation Area


Come meet your Board of Directors  
and discuss what you think our priorities for  
the year should be.

**PLAN TO ATTEND.**

**ALL WELCOME!!**

**VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION**

In November last year, Don Goodfellow was recognized as Westport's volunteer of the month. Don is a long-standing member of the Board of Directors of the Friends of Foley Mountain. He is a reliable and enthusiastic promoter of Foley Mountain: selling tickets for our raffles, helping solicit donations from local businesses and generally promoting community awareness of the fabulous Foley Mountain experience.



### Basking in the Warm Spring Sun

By Leah Roberts

Everyone has their favourite first signs of Spring: Red-winged blackbirds, among the first migrants to return, feeding on caterpillars that overwinter inside cattail heads while the marshes are still frozen; the Mourning Cloak Butterfly awakening from hibernation inside cracks of trees or rock fissures and emerging while snow is still on the ground; the high, ringing choruses of incessant peeps rising from ponds and wetlands on the first warm days and nights in April as spring peepers get ready to mate.

Once the snow melts away and the ice covering the ponds recedes, one of my favourite sights is the lazy look of a freshwater turtle climbing onto a fallen log in the pond to bask in the warm spring sun.

Freshwater turtles in Ontario are active from April to October, and hibernate through winter by diving down to the bottom of the water and burying themselves below the frost line into the mucky substrate for insulation and camouflage. A turtle's heart beats around 40 times per minute on a warm summer day but only once every 10 minutes during winter hibernation! The cold temperatures slow down their metabolism and heart rate, using less oxygen and conserving energy to survive. Turtles can breathe through their skin, just like hibernating amphibians like frogs and salamanders, and absorb the oxygen from the water through the skin of their throat cavity.

Once the air temperature reaches 15C and above, the bottom layer of water bodies begins to warm up and a turtle's biological alarm clock goes off! They emerge to poke their noses out of the water and take their first breath of oxygen, ending winter hibernation. Spotted Turtles are among the first freshwater turtles to become active in the spring. A typical day for a turtle includes foraging for aquatic plant life and small insects, and resting and basking in the sun. Basking is the adaptive behavior that turtles exhibit when they are sitting in the sun, either out of the water or just above the surface. Since they are ectothermic, or cold-blooded, they need the sun's warmth to regulate their bodies' temperature and speed up their metabolism. Most freshwater turtles are active during the day (diurnal), but the Snapping turtle and the Eastern Musk Turtle (Stinkpot) are commonly found foraging for food at night.

Although turtles are recognized as aquatic animals, they actually rely on the land for their survival. Freshwater turtles can be found in a variety of habitats, including wetlands, lakes, ponds, and rivers but they prefer shallow waters and slow currents with lots of aquatic vegetation to hide from predators. The soft mud at the bottom of water bodies allows for hibernation, while the sandy and rocky shorelines are suitable conditions for nesting sites. The Eastern Musk Turtle and the Snapping Turtle will only come on land once a year to lay their eggs, while others like the Painted Turtle and the Map Turtle will come out daily on logs or rocks to bask. The Blanding's Turtle and the Spotted Turtle are the ones to watch for on the roads! They can be found wandering out of the water close to a shoreline (especially in the spring) and may even travel long distances from one wetland to another to reach their nesting site.

There is a growing concern that there is a lack of reproduction of turtles in Ontario, and there are currently **eight** species of turtles that are at risk in Ontario:

- Eastern Box Turtle
- Blanding's Turtle
- Eastern Musk Turtle (Stinkpot)
- Northern Map Turtle
- Snapping Turtle
- Spiny Softshell Turtle
- Spotted Turtle
- Wood Turtle

Most of the turtles observed in wetlands are males over the age of 50 years old, and very few females or young turtles survive in the wild to replenish the population. Many female turtles are killed on the road by vehicles when moving to and from their nesting sites. Even when the females successfully lay their eggs and create fake distraction nests for predators, research in Ontario has shown that virtually all turtle nests are being destroyed within 48 hours of being laid. The culprit? Natural predators, such as raccoons and skunks who prey on eggs and hatchlings as easy targets.

**How can we help turtles in Ontario? Here are some ideas:**

- If you see a turtle crossing sign while driving, slow down and keep an eye out for turtles on the road!
- Learn how to handle turtles if you live in an area where they are prevalent, so that you are ready to act if you see a turtle crossing the road. If you need to move a turtle, move it safely to the side it was already heading towards
- Watch your pet dog when they are running free; dogs are good at finding, digging up and destroying turtle eggs.
- Do not collect turtles for pets; they need to be left in the wild to reproduce. If you see a turtle that seems safe, please observe it from afar, as disturbing it could cause it stress
- Report your turtle sightings to Turtle Tally Project with the Toronto Zoo by entering your observations into their on-line database. <http://www.torontozoo.com/adoptapond/turtletally.asp>
- Participate in a shoreline clean-up to help the turtles' habitats become free of garbage  
Install basking logs in small ponds or nearby wetlands where these amazing reptiles can enjoy the sunshine
- Ensure a higher rate of egg survival through the installation of nest protection cages that protect the eggs and allow a safe exit for hatchlings. By locating freshly laid turtle nests and covering them with a protective cage (use some chicken wiring!) before they are predated and by monitoring the site until the baby turtles emerge, the hatch rate of turtle eggs will be significantly increased.

Next time you're at Foley Mountain this Spring, Summer or Fall, take a stroll by the Beaver Pond or the Beach to catch a glimpse of some Painted Turtles basking in the sun! And remember to practice a Naturalist's ways – Take only pictures and leave only footsteps.