



# Public Outreach and Education Student

Rouge National Urban Park  
Parks Canada  
Lauren Morante

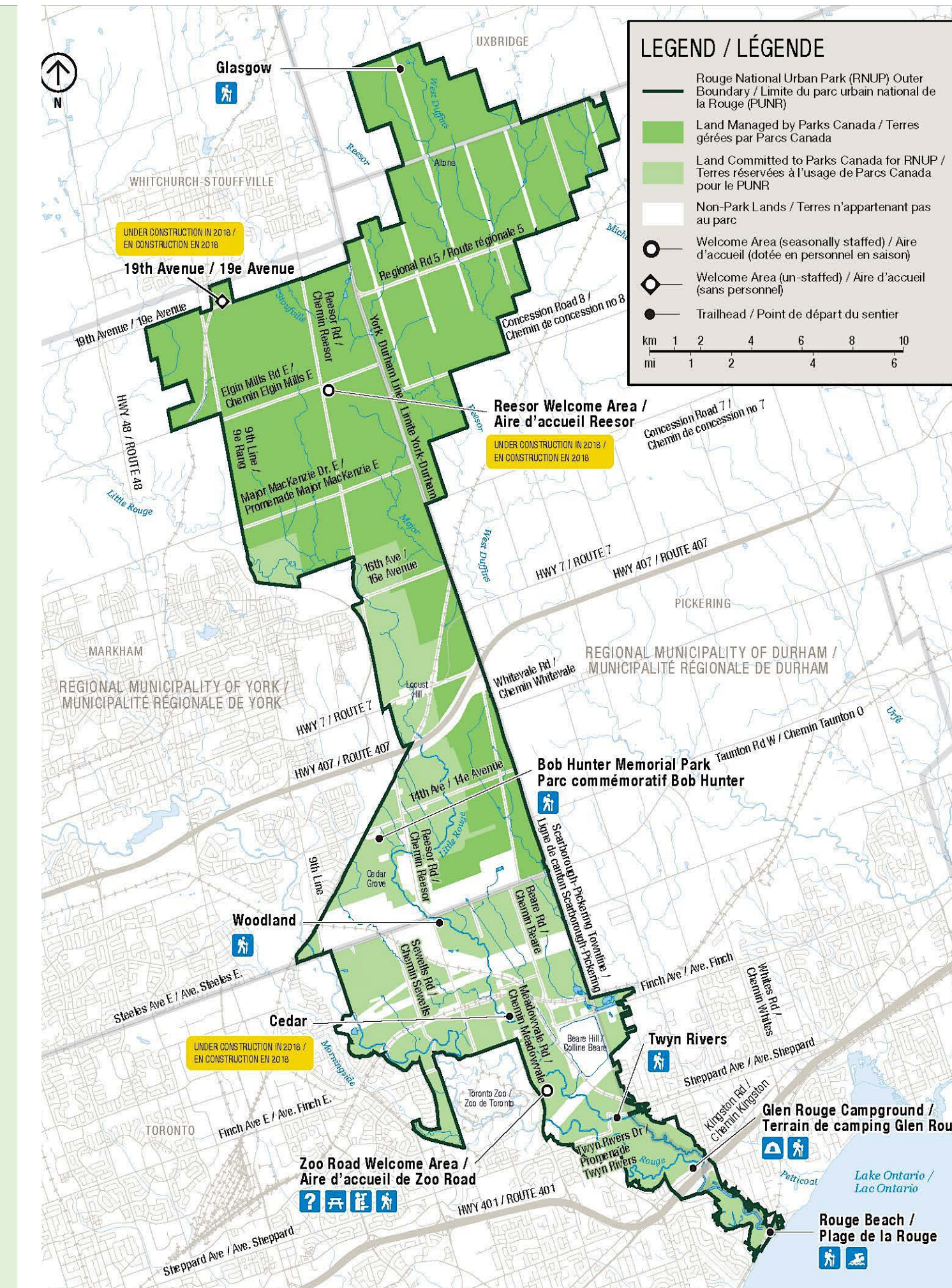


## About Rouge National Urban Park

Rouge National Urban Park (RNUP) is Canada's first national urban park established in 2014. The park is 79.1 km<sup>2</sup>, located in Toronto, Markham, Pickering and Uxbridge. The park is very diverse culturally and ecologically. Features of the park include hiking trails, a campground, farmland, Carolinian forest, and some of Canada's oldest known Indigenous sites. RNUP is accessible to nearly 20% of Canada's population within one hour's drive.

RNUP is Canada's only national urban park to feature agriculture within park boundaries. It is the first national urban park to protect nature, culture, and agriculture.

RNUP functions as a "gateway park" to expose people to national parks. During the summer season, RNUP offers a variety of programs, including a Learn-To-Camp program where Parks Canada employees teach visitors essential camping skills.



## Key Takeaways

- Conveying information to the public needs to be done in interesting and interactive methods.
  - People are interested in information delivered alongside something they can touch or a game they can play.
  - Interactions should be brief and lighthearted, allowing people to ask their own questions instead of being lectured to.
- Different people are not always receptive to the same delivery methods so you must be adaptable when presenting information.
- Conservation priorities differ greatly, even within like-minded groups.
  - Clear and open communication is crucial.
  - Collaboration with all stakeholders is integral to the success of the project.

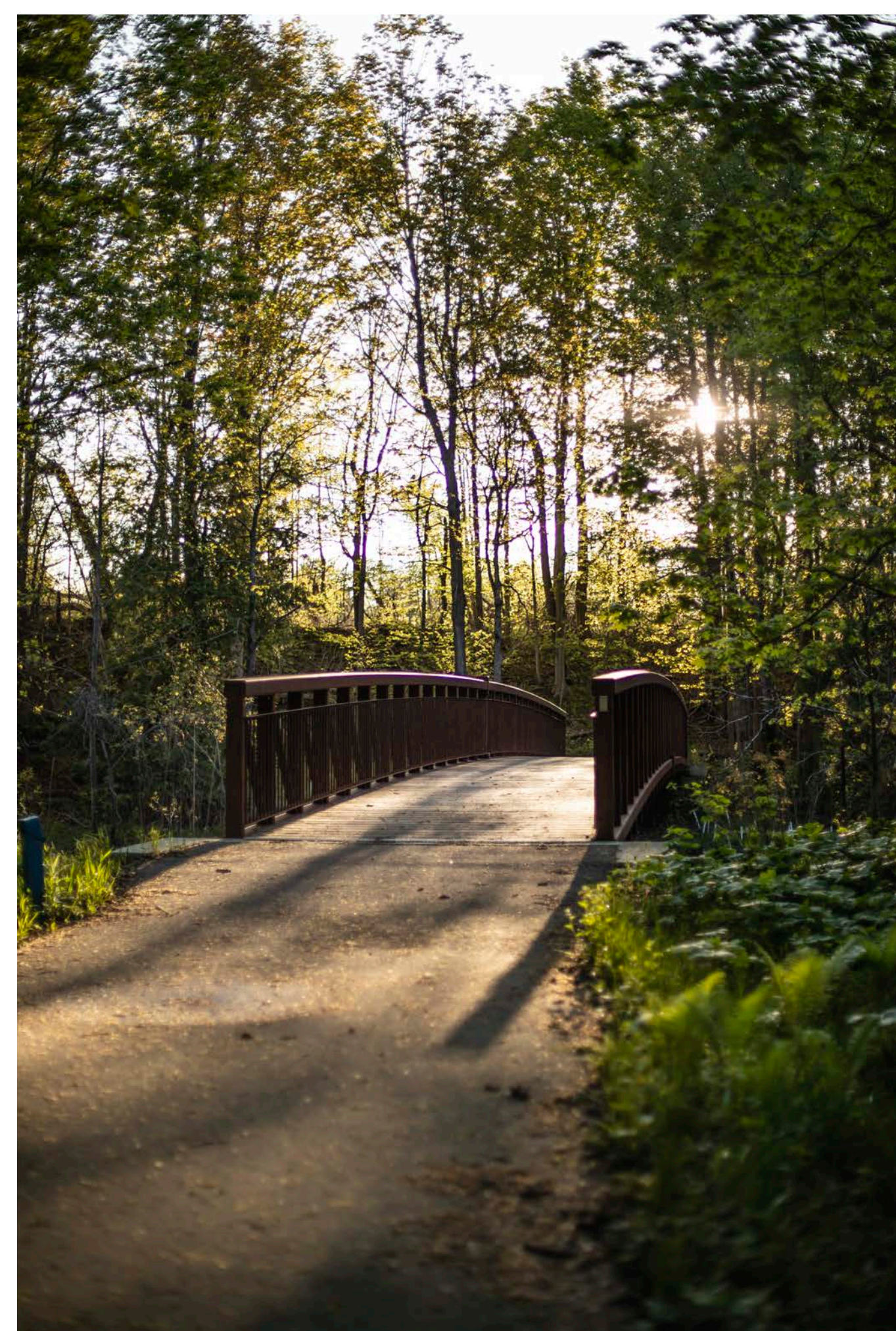


Photo Credit: Margaret Cornell-Kirk, Rouge National Urban Park, Parks Canada

## Things I Found Surprising

Parks Canada is not just conservation and restoration. Each Parks Canada site has its own explicit management plan to maintain ecological and cultural integrity alongside visitor enjoyment.

People have wildly different expectations for using national parks. Some people expect to be offered hunting and fishing, ATV use, biking trails, climbing, and accommodations like modern bathrooms and restaurants within the park.



Photo Credit: Margaret Cornell-Kirk, Rouge National Urban Park, Parks Canada

## Main Responsibilities

- Be a welcoming and engaging first point of contact for potential visitors of Parks Canada sites, specifically RNUP.
- General outreach at events and locations in Toronto and the GTA promoting specific RNUP features or events.
- Delivering Parks Canada programming at Ripley's Aquarium of Canada and Toronto Zoo.
- Leading guided hikes through RNUP.
- Develop outreach programs using central RNUP themes.

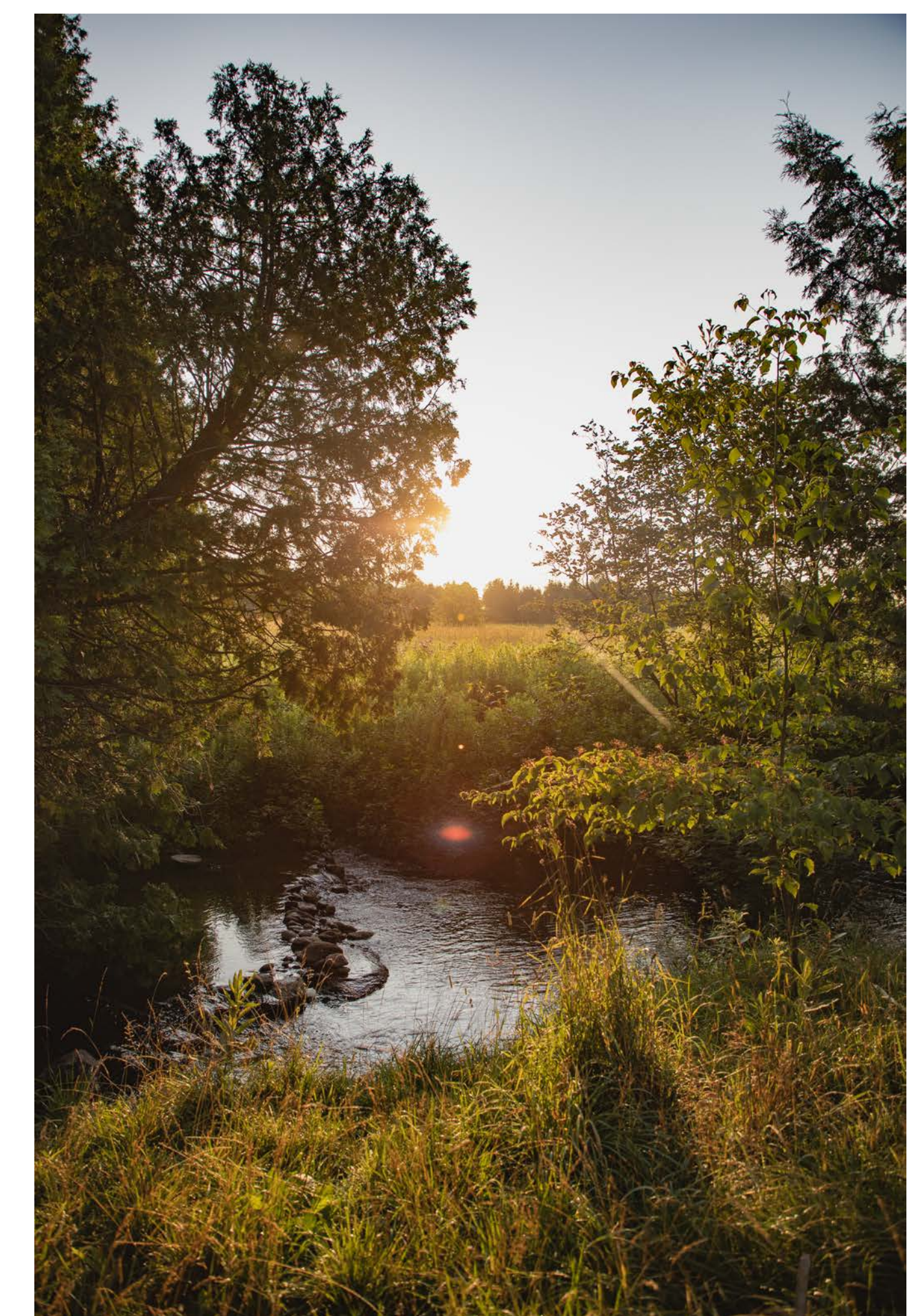


Photo Credit: Margaret Cornell-Kirk, Rouge National Urban Park, Parks Canada

## Challenges Of Outreach

### 1. Scientific Literacy

Communicating to the public scientific concepts that drive conservation decisions is difficult. Most people do not have science backgrounds and may not immediately understand the importance of conservation initiatives.

### 2. Visitor Compliance

Many people treat RNUP as they would other provincial or municipal parks. Despite signage, it is still very common for people to litter, have dogs off leash, or to deviate from trails.

### 3. Developing Partnerships

Partnerships with Toronto Zoo and Ripley's Aquarium allow access to large numbers of people for conservation messaging. Similar partnerships with like groups will help spread conservation awareness.



Photo Credit: Margaret Cornell-Kirk, Rouge National Urban Park, Parks Canada