

Algonquin to Adirondack Conservation Association

“Connecting with respect”

19 Reynolds Road,
Lansdowne,
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From the Gananoque Reporter, November 11, 2009

From the President...

A2A Project Connects Habitat on the Gananoque Watershed

With the help of many volunteers and over 20 partnering organizations, the A2A Gananoque River Watershed Community Stewardship Project expanded in 2009 to research additional lakes and undertake wider stewardship efforts.

The Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources partnered with the project to do seining on Gananoque Lake this summer, as well as Index Netting, following the same protocols that were used last year on Lower Beverley Lake. In all 56 seines were carried out, with a total of 4802 fish captured belonging to 14 species. Also recorded: total length of fish, site vegetation, substrate, water and air temperatures. Four Species at Risk were discovered, one a very happy surprise to us: an American Eel, once an abundant species, but rare in our lakes. As well we found Grass Pickerel, Stinkpot Turtles and Northern Map Turtles. Human Resources Development Canada provided A2A funding to hire a student, Jennifer Arcand, to work with MNR.

A property-by-property analysis of the shorelines on Gananoque and South Lakes was also completed in 2009. With donated funding we were able to hire a student, Jennifer Sergeant, to do this work and to provide a computer and compatible GPS unit to increase accuracy and efficiency. The Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority helped with training and technical aspects. Volunteers ran the boat while the shoreline data was being collected.

A stewardship shoreline binder was created for each property on Lower Beverley Lake, based on shoreline data already gathered, with individualized recommendations for actions to improve water quality and shoreline habitat, especially to for Species at Risk. The binders are being delivered to landowners by trained road “captains”. Funding was provided by the Species at Risk Stewardship Fund from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources. Ben Dopson, a student, was hired to work with the Centre for Sustainable Watersheds for this stewardship work, and contributed greatly to its success.

A planting workshop with funding from the Evergreen Foundation was held along a tributary creek to Lower Beverley Lake. Around 20 participants learned how to naturalize their own shorelines as they planted approximately 250 shrubs and trees along 600 feet of shoreline, and took home a few each.

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Water quality testing was done monthly over four months in many of the lakes in the Gananoque Watershed, through the generous help of project volunteers and the Ministry of the Environment, which is covering thousands of dollars of lab costs and doing the analysis of samples. Dana Cruikshank, MOE Surface Water Specialist, will report on results.

The Centre for Sustainable Watersheds managed the project. A2A gratefully acknowledges its staff members, who contributed a large number of volunteer hours. We are also grateful for funding received from the Ministry of Natural Resources Species at Risk Stewardship Fund, the Leeds County Stewardship Council, the Gananoque River Waterways Association, the Lower Beverley Lake Association, Lowans and Stephen, the Thousand Islands Community Development Corporation, Canada Summer Jobs Program and the Evergreen Foundation. A2A also wishes to thank Shawmere, Griffin's Lakeside Cottages, and our wonderful volunteers.

Emily Conger



Volunteers at the Tree Planting Workshop



A2A employee Jenny Arcand studies a Northern Map Turtle, a 'species at risk'

Landowners' Resources Manual

A2A's philosophy is that individual landowners have a vital role to play in preserving, improving and connecting natural habitat. Each of us, given the interest and good information, has the capacity to improve wildlife habitat in the A2A region. Changes by many people will, over time, tremendously improve the quality and amount of connected wildlife habitat.

The Landowners' Resources Manual, currently published on the A2A website (www.a2alink.org), is the outcome of a project to provide landowners with a summary of all the programs available to them from governmental and non-governmental organizations in Leeds and Grenville Counties in Eastern Ontario. These programs assist landowners with practical ideas, technical advice, information and even some funding to enable them to carry out projects on their own and benefit from government grants and incentives. For example, the site includes the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program, establishing conservation easements (legal restrictions placed on land to protect natural features), land donations to land trusts, wetland creation and environmental farm plans, to name but a few.

Assembling the Landowners' Resource Manual was coordinated by Chris Bellemore of Parks Canada, which provided the funding. Another A2A partner, the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve, arranged for editing and posting it on the A2A website.

Website delivery was chosen over a printed brochure, because partnering organizations can easily update the information they have posted. As well, many have linked their websites to the Landowner Resources document.

Partnering organizations can also adapt and then print off information from the site.

Meet A2A's New Science Horizons Intern

In September A2A found out the good news that we had been awarded one of about 100 Science Horizons Internships given out each year from Environment Canada. We started advertising right away for a recent graduate who could analyze the data we had generated in Phase 2 of the Gananoque River Watershed Project. We received about 30 applicants, and interviewed 5 well-qualified graduates. We were so pleased when Rachel Mayberry accepted the position. She has a B.Sc. in biology & environmental studies from the University of Toronto and a M.Sc. in conservation biology from Simon Fraser University. She also had the skills we were looking for in communication, outreach and public speaking, conducting literature reviews, report writing and data analysis. Rachel has been working with us since October 1 and will continue until the end of March 2010.

A2A wishes to acknowledge our gratitude to the Township of Leeds and the Thousand Islands and the Thousand Islands Community Development Corporation, which provided the matching funds we required to hire Rachel.

Now that you know a little about her, we invite you to read Rachel's description about what she'll be doing:

"I am writing the Phase 2 Report of the Gananoque River Watershed Community Stewardship Project. This report will expand upon the knowledge gained in Phase 1 and encompass the same three areas of study in the Watershed. First, seining and near-shore community index netting data collected in Gananoque Lake this past summer through a partnership with the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources are being analyzed to assess species at risk and fish community patterns, including habitat associations. Second, shoreline assessment data of natural and developed characteristics on Gananoque Lake and South Lake are being analyzed to depict the current conditions of these lakes' shores, which will be illustrated through mapping carried out by the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority. Third, historical water quality data is being assembled to consolidate our knowledge of this watershed and to complement the 2009 water quality data being assessed by Dana Cruikshank of the Ontario Ministry of Environment. Taken together, this information will contribute to a comprehensive baseline understanding of the state of the Gananoque River Watershed, and allow A2A and its partners to identify opportunities for stewardship."



Be watching for Rachel's report on Phase 2, which will be posted on a2alink.org next spring.

Lost Bay Reserve Grows!

Reprinted from ON Nature magazine with permission

Ontario Nature has recently doubled the size of its Lost Bay Nature Reserve, a moody landscape where you can find a number of at-risk turtle species, eastern ratsnakes and eastern ribbonsnakes. This summer, the organization purchased 58 hectares of adjacent forest and wetland habitat, increasing the size of the Lost Bay Reserve to 101 hectares.

Located on the eastern arm of Gananoque Lake, the Lost Bay Nature Reserve was established in October of 2000. It lies within the Frontenac Arch Biosphere and forms a key part of a geologically significant corridor that runs from Algonquin Provincial Park to the Adirondack Mountains in New York. The reserve's forests and provincially significant wetlands contain an abundance of wildlife, including wood ducks, red-shouldered hawks, ospreys and yellow warblers.

"The Lost Bay wetlands are part of a much larger wetland system," notes Emily Conger, president of the Algonquin to Adirondacks Conservation Association (A2A). "Ontario Nature's reserve connects to a complex of provincially significant wetlands extending from the huge Wiltse Creek Marsh at the base of Gananoque Lake all the way to Killenbeck Lake, roughly five kilometers to the northeast. The lands that Ontario Nature has purchased are an essential link in maintaining the kind of connectivity that lies with the mandate of A2A."

The Kingston Field Naturalists, who are the official stewards of the original Lost Bay reserve, will take on the same role for the new property.

Saving this important landscape and increasing the size of the Lost Bay Nature Reserve was made possible thanks to the generous support of the Greenlands Program (an Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources-Nature Conservancy of Canada initiative), Environment Canada and the Nature Conservancy of Canada. Cameron Smith, a member of the Kingston Field Naturalists who lives near the reserve, was instrumental in bringing about the protection of both the original Lost Bay property and the new addition. Before its purchase, plans had been made to build a subdivision on the property. Without Smith's dedication and hard work, the expansion of the reserve would not have happened.

Mark Carabetta



Success was based on collaboration

It was the collective effort of people in the neighbourhood and of a few beyond, as well as the administrative expertise of Mark Carabetta at Ontario Nature, that made acquisition of the addition to the Lost Bay Nature Reserve possible. We raised \$95,000 from 23 individual donors, and Mark raised the balance from funding agencies. People were anxious to see the land preserved and, what I found very moving, they spoke of the land and its wildness with deep affection, almost as if they were speaking of an old friend. This made raising money for the purchase surprisingly easy. After the purchase was made, we had a celebratory party. The ceremonies ended with Cliff Edwards (formerly of The Bells) leading in the singing of 'This Land Is Your Land'. It was a grand

closing, and appropriate, because now the land will remain in the wild, for all Canadians, forever.

Cameron Smith

6,682 dead animals found on Parkway last summer

Road mortality study highlights roadkill hotspots

Marianne Kelly, St. Lawrence Islands National Park's road mortality specialist, found 6,682 dead animals on the 1000 Islands Parkway during her 80 days of cycling last summer. That averages out to more than 75 dead animals per day along the 39-kilometre road between Brockville and Gananoque.

"The total kill estimate for April to October is 25,000," says Ewen Eberhardt, the researcher coordinating the study in partnership with Carleton University. The estimate is likely conservative and will be refined when the data is studied further.

The numbers show the sobering reality of the danger the 1000 Islands Parkway poses to wildlife. Researchers know that road mortality plays a big role in the depletion of populations of some reptiles and amphibians.

Initial observations seem to show that the "hotspots" for road mortality along the parkway are where the road cuts through or passes close to large wetlands. Eberhardt has produced maps that highlight the most dangerous areas of the parkway for different groups of animals.

With this information, scientists will look at ways to reduce the roadkill problem. Studies this summer will focus on mitigation and may include using fencing and existing culverts in the hotspots to redirect animals under the parkway. The study hopes to address some of the concerns raised by local residents about road mortality along the scenic route.

Marianne Kelly biked the entire length of the parkway four to five times per week from April to October to record the location of each dead animal. Kelly acknowledges that the project was at times both depressing and desensitizing.

"Seeing the full extent of the problem of road mortality was the worst part of the project," she says. "However, I'd like to think that the summer of 2008 heightened people's awareness of the problem."

Local residents often stopped to point out roadkill they'd spotted along the road, and to ask questions about the project and what had been found so far. Kelly's most interesting finds were secretive species such as bats, salamanders, star-nosed moles, and mink, and unexpected species such as pike and bullhead (likely dropped by osprey).

"My favourite parts of the project were the rare opportunities I got to save a turtle, snake, or frog," says Kelly, "It was really lovely to watch (from a safe and respectful distance) mother turtles laying their eggs. The project was also a chance to experience the region's immense biodiversity, albeit dead."

*submitted by St. Lawrence
Islands National Park*



A Guest Editorial printed in the Gananoque Reporter, November 11, 2009

I imagine that everyone reading this newspaper has seen snapping turtles. They are awesome creatures, hardy emissaries from the deep past. They evolved about 215 million years ago, before dinosaurs appeared, and they survived the extinction that killed the dinosaurs. But they may not survive us.

A year ago, the federal agency charged with identifying species at risk, declared snapping turtles to be a species of special concern. This is the lowest ranking, coming after threatened, endangered, extirpated (absent from this area but not from others), and extinct. Nevertheless, it is the ranking that first raises a red flag.

Here in Leeds and the Thousand Islands we need to pay attention, because snapping turtles are disappearing faster than they can replace themselves, even though this is one of the most productive turtle areas in Canada.

The main reason for their decline is road kill, and it doesn't take much to throw turtle populations into a downward spiral. So many creatures prey on turtle eggs and on young turtles that only a few juveniles reach sexual maturity to compensate for older turtles that die from natural causes. Add road kill, and recruitment of juveniles can't compensate.

A study in Michigan found that when annual road kill totals one tenth of one per cent of a turtle population, the number of turtles can be cut in half within 20 years. That's a sobering figure, since studies at St. Lawrence Islands National Park have found that road kill here is higher than that, sometimes much higher.

Bleak as this picture is, however, it's not without hope. I live on Black Rapids Road a few hundred metres from where the township has replaced an old wooden bridge with a structure that is a show-piece of environmental sensitivity. The new bridge is one-lane, just like the old one, and it has been designed with snapping turtles in mind. With wetlands on both sides of the gravel road, the area had been a slaughtering field for snappers. Females tried to lay their eggs in the gravel and were run over by cars and trucks.

Now, there will be fencing to keep turtles off the road, and a gravel nesting area away from the road so that females can lay their eggs in safety. To get to the nesting area, they'll have free passage under the bridge. Screens will no longer be erected to keep beavers from building dams beneath it. And because the bridge is narrow, there'll be light underneath to encourage them to use the passage. To deal with beavers, works crews will be able to slide back the bridge decking, so that machinery can scoop out dams.

The new bridge is the result of a year-and-a-half of discussions between township officials and local residents. There were bumps and hiccups along the way, but it was well worth the effort. The bridge cost much less than was first planned; turtles will be protected; and discussions between residents and officials proved that collaboration works.

Cameron Smith

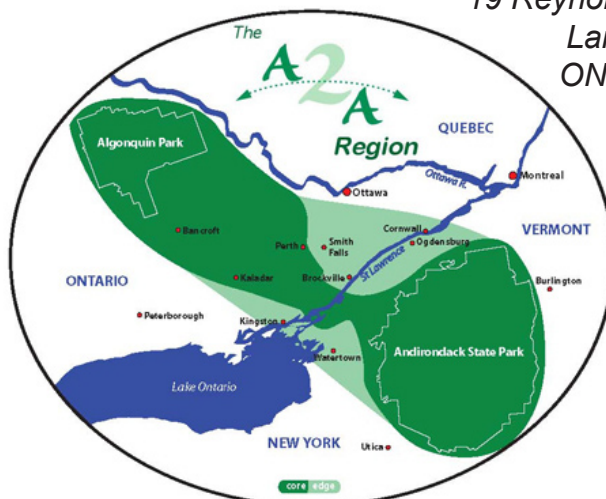
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WHY GIVE TO A2A?

A2A, the Algonquin to Adirondacks Conservation Association, brings people together to restore natural connections on the landscape.



A Planting Workshop along a tributary to Lower Beverley Lake

Each year most of us donate to support conservation. This year, we'd like you to consider supporting local A2A initiatives to save wildlife, so that today's children can experience nature as you did in your childhood. A2A needs your help to bring people and organizations together to restore natural connections where you live, making our region healthier for people and wildlife.

Because of its committed volunteers, A2A uses virtually 100% of the funds it receives for outreach and programs. A2A relies on its members for support.

WHAT HAS A2A DONE?

- Community Mapping Project
- Landowners' Resource Manual
- Bio-digester Workshop for Farmers
- Planting workshops
- A2A Speakers' Forums
- Volunteer Celebrations
- Watershed Project including Seining, Shoreline Analysis, Water Quality Testing
- Shoreline Lunches
- Creating binders with personalized recommendations for shoreline owners
- Bringing partners together for conservation
- Speaking engagements and displays for a variety of groups

Yes, I want to support A2A so it can continue to restore wildlife habitat and make the region healthier for people and wildlife. I'm enclosing my donation of

\$250 \$100
 \$50 Other \$_____

Please make cheques payable to:
A2A Conservation Association and send (in Canada) to:
 A2A, 19 Reynolds Road, R.R. 1, Lansdowne, ON K0E 1L0
 and (in the U.S.) to:
 A2A, Box 1, Wellesley Island, NY 13640

A2A is a registered charity in Canada; amounts over \$10 will receive a tax receipt. Please include name and address with your donation. Thanks!



The Algonquin To Adirondack Conservation Association
Dedicated to Restoring, Protecting and Maintaining Natural Areas from Algonquin to Adirondack.

AN INVITATION...

Knowing what our members value is of great importance when we sit down to plan A2A projects and activities. We invite you to rank what you value about what A2A does, giving a 1 to what you value most, an 11 to what you value least. We realize this can be a challenge when items seem of equal value; in that case just put them one number apart in your ranking.**

- Working internationally to connect natural areas***
- Bringing community members together for conservation***
- Improving air and water quality***
- Celebrating people's stewardship efforts***
- Restoring wildlife habitat for plants and animals***
- Helping species at risk to survive***
- Fostering landowner stewardship***
- Gaining more scientific knowledge about the A2A landscape***
- Bringing government and non-governmental partners to the table***
- Increasing wildlife viewing opportunities***
- Protecting wild spaces***

***In Canada, please return this survey to: A2A, 19 Reynolds Road, R.R. 1, Lansdowne, ON K0E 1L0.
In the United States, please return it to: A2A, P.O. Box 1, Wellesley Island, NY 13640***

Many thanks in advance.

*****For a partial list, see other side of page.***