



A2A

Algonquin to
Adirondacks
Collaborative

A2A News

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UNDERSTANDING SNAKES: THE KEY TO THEIR SURVIVAL

Josh Feltham is a Professor of Environmental and Natural Resource Sciences, and the Coordinator in the Ecosystem Management Technician/ Technologist Program at Fleming College.

This summer, Josh worked on the Ontario Nature's Snake Monitoring project to try out Ontario Nature's Long-Term Monitoring Protocol (LTMP) for snakes in the A2A region and other parts of Ontario. The LTMP aims to develop methodology and acquire data to support habitat protection, species-at-risk management plans, and educational programming in order to protect snake diversity - all part of the A2A Collaborative mandate.

Here Josh conveys how he relates to the nature of snakes and the role of the LTMP in their conservation.

"Shy, solitary, and sensitive. Despite what people who meet me may think, these three words describe me. I have learned to overcome my shyness and adapt to being in social situations when my preference is to be alone. I have learned to address my sensitive nature by understanding that the intent of others is not to do me harm. When I reflect on this and my passion for snakes, I realize that I can deeply relate to them. Like me, snakes are shy, solitary, and sensitive. Yet, even those who study and work with them rarely describe them as such. I would argue that it is vital people do recognize these three traits are among primary snake characteristics if we are to successfully share our space with them. Ironically, these three traits are also among the primary reasons we do not understand how to live with snakes in our backyards, on our farms, or at our cottages.

"Snakes are shy, and prefer to be out of sight, so they need to be masters of disguise and stealth. One of the reasons people are startled when they encounter a snake is because snakes are so difficult to detect: they are rarely seen before people are almost on top of them. As a shy person, I can relate to the desire to stay out of sight. The LTMP for



Photo Credit: Eric Zinger

Josh Feltham with an Eastern Fox Snake, a species native to Ontario.



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CONTINUED... UNDERSTANDING SNAKES: THE KEY TO THEIR SURVIVAL

snakes in Ontario is actually directly linked to their shy, solitary, and sensitive nature in its design and purpose. The shy nature of snakes is a cornerstone of the project's design. Researchers place artificial cover boards of wood or other materials on the ground in suitable snake habitat to provide a comfortable and safe retreat for shy snakes, while allowing for weekly monitoring.

"Snakes are solitary, which is unlike humans for whom social interaction is a necessary component of survival. But on occasion, snakes will congregate. This rare event is related to the localized nature of a required resource, such as hibernacula (places for hibernation). Similarly, snakes will congregate under cover objects, which they use when they are preparing to shed, regulate their temperatures, and for foraging. The LTMP cover boards both appeal to the shy nature of snakes and address their preference to be solitary by providing a limited resource that encourages congregation rather than isolation.

"Snakes are sensitive. Being a sensitive person I struggle with how to interpret behaviours directed at me. I have learned to give people the benefit of the doubt assuming perceived aggressions are unintentional rather than intentional. Unfortunately, as far as we know, snakes are not a species that have

A Massasauga Rattlesnake



Photo Credit: M. Maggs

the capacity to reason. Their sensitive nature often results in their demise because when they sense a potential threat close by, snakes make themselves known by displaying defensive behaviours that are misinterpreted, such as inflating and flattening their body, shaking their tail, hissing and striking.

While these "warnings" are often interpreted as aggressive behaviours, snakes are merely trying to avoid conflict by letting us know where they are and that they wish to be left alone.

In my experience, snakes that are frequently identified as being particularly aggressive usually belong to a very sensitive and nervous species that easily feels threatened by the smallest change or disturbance in its environment. If you compare this to human behaviour, you might think of it as someone who lacks confidence masking their insecurity by appearing overconfident.

"Since I was a boy, I have worked to educate anyone who would listen to help them understand the true nature of snakes."

This year, Ontario Nature engaged with a handful of individuals across the province to test the LTMP. Now, the analysis of the data will provide insight into the methods used. It will also guide the continued development of a means to learn more about the shy, solitary, and sensitive snakes with whom we share our space. The LTMP will assist in the conservation of species-at-risk and, hopefully, prevent the loss of common species through detecting changes in abundance before populations decline significantly.

Everyone from ophidiophobe (those who fear snakes) to ophidiophile (those who love them) can benefit from a better understanding of snakes. Ultimately, it is up to us humans to make the effort."

A2A Thanks the Following Foundations for Their Support



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LAND SECUREMENT IN THE FRONTENAC ARCH - MUCH MORE IS NEEDED

Land securement plays a major role in connecting and protecting wildlife habitat.

For that reason, the Federal Government of Canada has committed to conserving 17% of terrestrial and inland waters and 10% of coastal and marine areas by 2020, in an agreement called the Aichi Target 11.

With the deadline just 2 months away, progress has been made through large northern protection efforts and some smaller conservation initiatives. Recently, \$175 million was directed towards 67 land protection efforts, part of a \$1.35 billion commitment made in the 2018 budget for nature conservation. Significant effort has also been made to include Indigenous Protected Areas with an Indigenous Circle of Experts providing core advice and an ICE report entitled “We Rise Together” (Published March, 2018).

The Canadian Federal Government has stated its intent to move toward a 30% goal.

Currently, conservationists are adopting ecologist E. O. Wilson's “half earth” principle: This advocates half of our planet be dedicated to nature to prevent mass extinctions, including our own.

Land protection in the A2A region has not resulted in the kind of sweeping additions made in northern areas like the Yukon's Peel watershed, where 3.8 million ha were added to protected lands. However,

Photo credit: Emily Conger



our efforts are key to biodiversity protection in more developed landscapes where the majority of Canada's species-at-risk are found.

Unfortunately, Frontenac Arch did not receive Federal funding this time, however, the A2A Collaborative and our partners will continue to protect lands within this critical corridor and promote smaller projects in strategic locations as crucial to our ecosystems' survival. Currently, in the Frontenac Arch area, various private and public landowners have designated a total 10.75% of the land base as "protected". Recently, the Nature Conservancy of Canada acquired an intact 48 ha forest and shoreline property at Whitefish Lake - a key piece to helping wildlife move through the area freely. NCC is also working to acquire an additional 600 ha near Benson and Buck Lakes.

Land Ownership	Conservation Status	Area (ha)	Percentage (%) of Frontenac Arch area
Parks Canada - Thousand Islands National Park	Protected	2247.71	1.31
Ontario Parks (OP): Charleston Lake PP (with Sheffield NCC partnered property) & Frontenac PP	Protected	7629.12	4.45
Gananoque Provincial WA	Protected	533.12	0.31
Conservation Authority Areas: Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority & Rideau Valley Conservation Authority	Protected	1487.40	0.87
Rideau Watershed Land Trust, Land Conservancy of Kingston, Frontenac, Lennox & Addington, & Thousand Islands Watershed Land Trust	Protected	820.59	0.48
Ontario Nature	Protected	193.68	0.11
Nature Conservancy of Canada	Protected	1964.56	1.15
Queens University Biological Station	Protected	3238.61	1.89
Kingston Field Naturalists	Protected	186.63	0.11
The Ontario-St Lawrence Development Commission	Protected	45.57	0.03
County Forest	Protected	76.40	0.04
Crown	Protected	26.42	0.02
Total Protected Ownership		18,449.79	10.75%

Chart (left) depicting land protection in the Frontenac Arch area (NCC 2019)

REACHING OUT FOR CONSERVATION

In the Spring/ summer 2019, the A2A Collaborative was actively involved in engaging our Canadian and US stakeholders in visioning resilience and ecological connectivity.

LEARNING WITH SCIENTISTS



In April we held the State of the A2A Science Symposium in Clayton, New York. Over 90 participants heard presentations documenting the significance of the A2A region including current research on subjects ranging from species status, road ecology, and ecological mapping resources. Keynote speaker Roland Kays described his projects in which he tracks animal movement in the A2A region and beyond. Cathy Keddy discussed the region's history in research. Also, agencies and conservation groups described how they are using ecological mapping to assess connectivity and establish land securement priorities. The symposium concluded with a brainstorm on research priorities that will guide future A2A collaborative work.

PLANNING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

A2A's Trillium sponsored "Conservation Action Planning" (CAP) this year focused on the Frontenac Arch Biosphere (FAB). We held a series of workshops attracting 30 participants representing 20 different organizations. We used the Open Concept Conservation Planning Process to explore conservation targets, indicator threats, and strategies for use within the FAB. The sessions were facilitated by CAP expert Jarmo Javala, using an innovative conservation planning tool that connects the area's threats with strategies to address them, creating a "road map for progress".

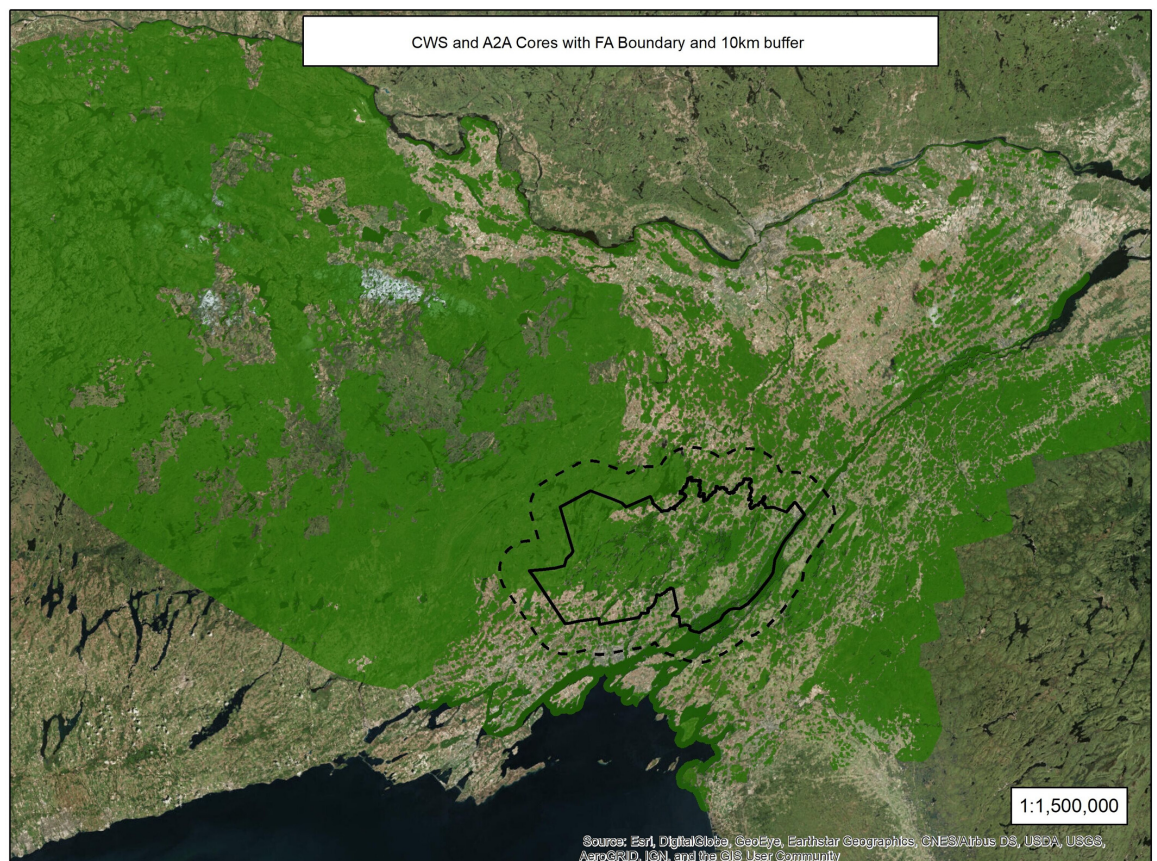
Stay tuned as A2A prepares the results and continues to work with participants on next steps. To learn more go to: www.a2acollaborative.org/conservation-action-planning.html



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Above: One of our CAP sessions with local stakeholders.

Right: A map of the study area.



CONTINUED... REACHING OUT FOR CONSERVATION HIKING THE NEW A2A TRAIL LOOP

The A2A Trail Project was expanded by 76 km with the addition of the "Kingston Loop" (funded by the Community Foundation of Kingston). This hiking and biking trail links the original A2A trail to Kingston via the K&P and Cataraqui trails. To celebrate, we hosted a biking and hiking event at Lake Ontario in June, and promoted the new section with trail marker signs and informational storyboards. Different groups hiked and cycled various sections with one individual completing the full 76 km, for an "end to end" event. Overall, people were delighted by the trail connectivity and expressed their support of our continued collaborative efforts. A2A thanks the Rideau Trail Club, the Cataraqui Trail Association, and the Kingston Outdoor Adventure Club for their help and enthusiasm. Learn more at www.a2acollaborative.org/a2a-trail.html



You're Invited to

THE 2019 A2A GALA
 AUCTION HOST:
 COMEDIAN ROGER JAMES
 MUSICAL GUEST: CHRIS BROWN
 FOOD: PAN CHANCHO
November 10th, 2019, 7pm
 at the Tett Centre (370 King St W, Kingston)
 Tickets \$100 (\$50 charitable receipt)
 EVENTBRITE:
[HTTPS://2019-A2A-GALA-TICKETS.EVENTBRITE.CA/](https://2019-a2a-gala-tickets.eventbrite.ca/)



Want to help
the
environment
AND
have fun?

Attend our
A2A Gala!

(click image to link
or go to
<https://2019-a2a-gala-tickets.eventbrite.ca/>)

PARTNER PROFILE: CHARLESTON LAKE PROVINCIAL PARK - EXPANDING PROTECTION BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS

Charleston Lake Provincial Park (CLPP) is a natural jewel right at the critical narrow section of the A2A region.

Park Superintendent, Mike Cappello, explains how the Park has been monumental in protecting a large percentage of Charleston Lake shoreline and some islands, as well as natural spaces that might otherwise have been slated for development.

"CLPP has expanded three-fold since its founding in 1976, when it was only 903 hectares, (2231 acres). It has since become a magnet for donations, resulting in the Park's expansion to 2891 hectares, (7144 acres). A destination for campers and hikers, the park exemplifies the huge variety of rock structures, soils, and plant communities found in the A2A region.

"Education and fostering an appreciation for the area's natural and cultural heritage are among the Park's main focuses.

Programming usually runs twice daily during peak season, including guided hikes, amphitheater slide shows, and movies about the area, with an emphasis on serving young families. Other programming helps visitors identify the wide variety of native species, including those at risk such as the Cerulean Warbler, Eastern Gray Ratsnake, and Butternut tree.

"CLPP runs a Discovery Centre with annual displays that focus on one specific biological or ecological imperative. This year the Park focused on the Eastern Gray Ratsnake, aiming to allay visitor fears by familiarizing visitors with snakes and their important contributions to ecosystems.

"Invasive species present a major threat to the Park's



Rock Shelter showcases geology of Sandstone Island Trail.

ecological integrity. Staff are monitoring for the Emerald Ash Borer, now found near the Park. They are also trying to prevent the spread of Garlic Mustard, Dog Strangling Vine, and Zebra Mussels - all now present in the park.

"In summer months, CLPP boasts a staff of 40, with more than half being students. Even with such a large staff, volunteers play a major role in maintaining the Park. The Friends of Charleston Lake Park monitor the trails and do minor maintenance. They also raise funds for the Discovery Program and interpretive panels. CLPP is the site of research projects — one of the objectives of Ontario's provincial parks. Recently studies have been carried out on Garlic Mustard, pollinators, and plant DNA.

CLPP is ideal for camping, hiking, and experiencing the rich biodiversity of the A2A region!"



THE ADIRONDACK LAND TRUST'S COON MOUNTAIN PRESERVE: CONNECTING THE A2A REGION TO LANDS BEYOND

While the A2A Collaborative's immediate focus is the connective corridor between Algonquin Park and Adirondack Park, our wider view goes beyond the A2A Region, to the network of ecological corridors extending along Eastern North America.

One of the A2A partners who helps us connect to lands beyond is the Adirondack Land Trust (Doug Munro, the Stewardship Director, who is on the A2A Board). The Adirondack Land Trust (ALT) is the bridge between the A2A Region and Champlain Lake further east. This area is home of the Split Rock Wildway project, protecting the wildlife movement corridor between the shores of Lake Champlain and the Adirondacks. Learn more here: www.newwildernesstrust.org/projects/new-york/split-rock-wildway/

One of the best places to experience this area is a property secured by ALT, the Coon Mt. Preserve. A quiet alternative to the overcrowded High Peaks, it offers beautiful, easy-to-moderate hikes within biologically diverse forests.

Views from the summit are unrivaled by any other peak in the Champlain Valley and include widespread vistas of the Adirondack High Peaks, Champlain Valley farmlands and woodlands, and Lake Champlain and Green Mountains of Vermont.

Located in Westport, NY near the shoreline of Lake Champlain, the initial 240-acre tract of property was owned and operated for timber management. The creation of the preserve involved a land swap. A highly productive timberland owned by a local philanthropist was traded for the less productive Coon Mt. tract. The preserve opened to the public in 1993 with a 0.7-mile trail to the summit of Coon Mt.



The Hidden Valley Trail is a mile long loop, established in 2003 following ALT's purchase of an additional 72 acres. This easier hike goes through eastern hemlock and northern hardwood forests. On the limestone ledges above the hemlock forest grows the biologically diverse, calcareous oak-hickory forest where trees enjoy greater spacing, resulting in copious sunlight penetrating the rich forest floor. The outcome has made

Coon Mt. notorious for its abundance of spring wildflowers, including hepatica, wild ginger, pink lady's slipper, red and white trillium, Canada mayflower, clintonia, and yellow trout lily.

After further expansion, the preserve now comprises 378 acres, including two trails: Summit Trail and the Hidden Valley Trail. The Summit Trail traverses through stands of hemlock and enters a forest of beech, maple, and birch before reaching the rocky knob summit.

After a rework by a professional trail building group the trails are now in top form!

Check out our website to learn more including some basic rules and tips about hiking this peak. www.adirondacklandtrust.org/Explore/Coon-Mountain.

~ by Doug Munro ALT. (You may contact him for more information at: doug.munro@adirondacklandtrust.org)

A2A 2020 Membership

Our Dream: A resilient, ecologically interconnected landscape that sustains a full range of native wildlife and enhances people's quality of life for generations to come.

You can help make this dream happen.

Renew your membership or join today and help A2A to:

- Continue our work to provide safe passageways for animals across highways, such as the 401.
- Continue building the A2A Trail, "A Pilgrimage For Nature", connecting Algonquin and Adirondack Parks.
- Provide research and facilitation needed by A2A's 50+ partners to restore habitat and connectivity in this unique, fragile A2A landscape.

Please send your donation to:

A2A, Box 88 Landsdowne, ON K0E 1L0, Canada

or

A2A, Box 1 Wellesley Island, NY 13640, US

or complete an online membership:

www.a2acollaborative.org/join-a2a.html

Your Membership is a donation and will be treated as such. Please donate generously!



Membership Level:	Shagbark Hickory	Blue Beech	Black Ash	Yellow Birch	White Pine	Red Oak
Cost:	<input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000	<input type="checkbox"/> \$500	<input type="checkbox"/> \$250	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25

Name: _____

New Renewal Mailing Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____ Affiliation: _____

I am enclosing a cheque for \$ _____ made out to the Algonquin to Adirondacks Collaborative.

I would like to receive information from A2A, including notices of upcoming events by mail email

I would like to volunteer for A2A in the following capacity: _____

I have the following skills: _____