

Algonquin to Adirondacks Conservation Association

“Connecting with respect”

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A2A Honoured

In recognition and appreciation for its work in improving connectivity along the Frontenac Arch, the A2A Conservation Association has been granted The Steve Hounsell Greenway Award by Ontario Nature at its 2010 Annual General Meeting in Sarnia.

Presented by Mr. Hounsell, a past-president of Ontario Nature, the award is represented by a large, framed map that outlines Ontario Nature's Greenway Vision, which foresees connected ecological pathways extending north from Brantford to Tobermory, with two extensions to Southeastern Ontario, one beginning at Penetanguishene, and the other beginning just east of Orangeville. Both connect with the A2A region.

Mr. Hounsell praised the work that A2A has been doing, saying that it is providing understanding of the need for connectivity, and inspiration for achieving it. The award states that it was given because of A2A's "major contribution to achieving Ontario Nature's Greenway vision with its multiyear initiative to maintain ecological connectivity between Algonquin Park in Ontario and Adirondack State Park in New York."

Emily Conger, president of A2A, accepted the award on its behalf, and said that A2A, its board, and all its volunteers were deeply honoured by the recognition given by Ontario Nature to "our efforts to ensure that nature's north-south pathways across the St. Lawrence, and beyond, remain vibrant and robust."

In an interview later, she said that A2A has been concentrating mainly on the narrow portion of the Frontenac Arch, where it meets the St. Lawrence, because this is where development poses the greatest threat to connectivity. "The success of efforts in this area and the strength of the partnerships here have convinced us that it's time to become more active over the entire A2A region."

As part of this decision, she said A2A is re-examining its structure, and has already revised its Vision Statement, to say that it now sees sustaining ecological integrity in its region "as the critical link in maintaining ecological connectivity in Eastern North America."

"This award gives us added inspiration for the tasks ahead", she added.

Cameron Smith



Good news for the Gananoque Watershed, a highly significant area for wildlife connectivity in the A2A region! According to results from the A2A Gananoque River Watershed Community Stewardship Project Phase 2, the water quality in the system is generally good, although there are areas where phosphorus readings are too high. As well, invasive fish species in general do not appear to be a serious threat. Our findings also show that natural vegetation shorelines predominate over damaged or developed shorelines in the lakes studied in a Shoreline Survey in 2009 (Gananoque and South Lakes). The analysis and final report were done by Rachel Mayberry, M.Sc., who was employed by A2A with grants from Science Horizons, a federal program, the Thousand Islands Community Development Corporation and Leeds and the Thousand Islands Township.

The watershed project was designed by A2A and its partners to improve the ecological health of this region, concentrating on the Gananoque River Watershed, a particularly crucial link leading to the St. Lawrence River, the pinch-point of the A2A region “hourglass” shape. It has four primary goals: to increase stewardship along the system, to carry out shoreline surveys, to do a fish inventory and to test water quality in the lakes of the watershed, comparing results with historical data collected by other agencies. Including lakes surveyed in 2010, the field activities have now been completed on seven lakes.

The Stewardship component entails delivering a personalized shoreline report to each land owner in a binder which also contains over 70 pages of general information about how to preserve or restore shoreline health, as well as contact information to enable them to get help with their own projects. The reports, based on data collected by the project, were written by the Centre for Sustainable Watersheds. Volunteers helped to do field work, and assemble and deliver binders.

The shoreline inventory surveyed properties along the waterfront, looking at vegetation, built structures and erosion threats for example. Lake shorelines represents a very important boundary between land and water, and play important roles in the life cycles of most wildlife. Healthy shorelines with an abundance of vegetation provide habitat to a high diversity of species. They also provide a wide range of ecosystem services such as flood abatement, water purification, erosion protection and nutrient processing.

In 2009 the fish inventory consisted of two parts, an Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources trapping program for larger fish and shoreline seining operations which recorded young of year fish catches in 56 seines (netting catches). Thousands of fish and dozens of turtles were caught, measured, identified and returned to the lakes. Collecting and analyzing this data provide a significant improvement in what is known about these lakes, shaping species at risk recovery strategies and general stewardship programs in the future.

Healthy shorelines of native vegetation are particularly important for water quality and fish habitat. A2A’s data shows reveal that young-of-year fish are more likely to be found in areas of high vegetative cover. So it was a welcome finding that South Lake’s shoreline, for example, has over 90% natural cover.

Want to learn more? You can view the complete report at A2Alink.org. If you are a member of A2A, you can order a free copy at: emconger@kingston.net

Meet A2A's Interns and Learn about our Watershed Project!

A2A Crew of THREE Takes on FOUR New Lakes

Over the 2010 field season, Susie Crowe, Grace Pitman and Matt Goodchild, interns hired by A2A Conservation Association, have been working to complete research on several lakes of the Gananoque River System in Phase 3 of a project started in 2008. The Gananoque River's many lakes are part of an area of rich biological diversity, and of great importance to connecting wildlife habitats leading to the St. Lawrence River.

This summer our crew has been surveying shorelines and seining fish to determine where habitats can be enhanced and water resources protected done on Upper Beverley, Lyndhurst and Singleton Lakes and Lost Bay. They have also been writing shoreline property reports for lakes surveyed last year.

Susie, our Project Manager, who recently received her Master's Degree from Queen's University in Biology, is on a 9 month internship from the YWCA's Youth Employment Internship Program (YEIP). She had already done a lot of fieldwork as part of her studies, and is enjoying the complexity of managing the crew on this project. She has enlisted several volunteers, some even from her own family.

Susie says, "Biological field research in a non-academic setting is a new experience for me. As a resident of rural Eastern Ontario, and a lifetime cottager, it is rewarding to know that my training as a biologist and my work through this internship will lead to positive environmental change close to home.

"While the property reports that we will create for each resident are the identified 'products' to come out of this project,



they are not the only means by which we promote stewardship. Making an effort to casually communicate with local residents whenever the opportunity arises serves to inform and educate local people. Our presence on the lakes does not go unnoticed, and is helping to begin a very important dialogue.

"While working on the lakes, I have had the opportunity to speak with many cottagers, visitors, and permanent residents. I have been overwhelmed by positive responses, and everyone seems to be curious, interested, and receptive. I now believe that most shoreline residents are more than willing to make positive changes to their properties, given the necessary information and support."

Susie will be analyzing the results of the seining and shoreline surveys and will write the report on Phase 3.



Susie & A2A Volunteers seine-netting.
Upper Beverley Lake, July 2010

Continued...

Matt Goodchild measures & identifies a young fish



Matt & Grace pull in the seine net, guiding young fish into the “purse” for identification and measuring

Grace Pitman was hired to work with Susie through the Canada Summer Jobs Program. She is a second year student at the University of Guelph and has done a lot of volunteering with wildlife rescue. She worked with both Susie and Matt in the boats and is now considering adding a major in Biology to her studies as a result of her work this summer for A2A! Grace has helped with presentations about the project at Shoreline Lunches and cottagers’ meetings.

Matt Goodchild, a graduate of McGill University, was hired in July, on a 6 month YEIP internship. Matt has extensive experience working with the Ministry of Environment in water quality testing. Matt says, “My internship with Algonquin to Adirondacks Conservation and work on Phase 3 of the Gananoque River Watershed Community Stewardship Project has been a wonderful and very fulfilling experience. It has allowed me the opportunity to get very involved in a hands-on, practical environmental stewardship project and gain valuable work experience at the same time. More importantly, I feel that I have been able to make a small but very real contribution to local environmental protection/conservation efforts.

Susie, Grace and Matt are working very hard, sometimes in less than ideal weather conditions, to complete the field work for this project on time. We are very proud of their accomplishments.

A2A is partnering this year with the Centre for Sustainable Watersheds in Portland, Ontario to do this project. CSW is providing office space for the 3 interns, and has helped with their training. The project has also benefited from financial assistance and guidance from the Gananoque River Waterways Association and the Leeds Stewardship Council. We gratefully acknowledge Shawmere for a boat and two motors and the Scheepers of Upper Beverley Lake for the loan of a boat. We also are thankful to the many volunteers who have helped with this project.

Emily Conger

Upper Beverley Lake

This lake served as the mill pond for the Old Stone Mill. Originally two smaller lakes, the dam in Delta (maintained today by MNR) has raised the water by about 3 metres (10 feet), creating a single lake. The maximum depth of the lake is 7 metres (23 feet) with an average depth of 2.5 m (8 feet). This shallow, warm water lake is home to many fish species including largemouth bass, smallmouth bass and northern pike. You’ll also find many species of birds such as ducks, herons, ospreys, and loons as well as typical near shore wildlife such as frogs, turtles, muskrats and beavers.

The direct paddling distance from Delta to the head of the lake (at Plum Hollow Creek) is 6.5 km (4 miles). The circumference of the lake (along main shorelines) is about 22 km (14 miles).

While there is some cottage development (three areas of high density cottages), most of the shoreline remains in its natural state.

The Leeds Community Pasture Association (LCPA) owns and manages over 1400 acres of pasture, woodlands and wetlands in the Delta – Athens area. The property is one of 11 Community Pastures in Ontario which were sold to local farmers by the Province of Ontario. Grazing rights on the property are leased: local farmers can use the lands to graze cattle in the summer. LCPA President and local beef farmer Kim Sytsma refers to the Pasture as a “summer camp for cows”.



The Pasture borders a highly productive shallow water lake and provincially significant wetland complex known as Upper Beverley Lake. Soperton Creek flows through the Pasture and into the lake, forming the headwaters of the Gananoque River watershed.



In 2010 with the financial support of Environment Canada, Wildlife Habitat Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, the LCPA worked with the Leeds County Stewardship Council (LCSC) to install 2.2 kilometers of cedar rail fencing to exclude the cattle from sections of Soperton Creek. Two new water crossings were installed to permit cattle to cross the creek, and a solar watering system was put into place to provide water for the cattle. Next spring, LCSC volunteers & local students will help to plant up to 3,000 shrubs and trees along the stream banks and install nest boxes.

The primary goals of this project are to improve the water quality in Soperton Creek & U. Beverley Lake and to divide the Pasture into paddocks to allow rotational grazing. The work was carried out by LCSC employees Donna O'Connor & Martin Streit, LCPA pasture manager Craig Gifford, fencer Ron Bennett, the Ontario Stewardship Ranger crew, and LCSC volunteers George Sheffield & Lloyd Stone.



The LCPA and LCSC have developed an environmental stewardship plan which identifies more potential stream and wetland restoration projects on the property. In total four projects have been identified, the first of which was completed as previously described. The remaining projects will be completed as time and funding permit.

Fencing Used to Reduce Roadkill

by Chris Bellmore — Outreach Coordinator, St. Lawrence National Park

The low black fencing near the tree line along parts of the 1000 Islands Parkway last summer was put in place to keep animals off the road and direct them under it instead.

Of the 195 culverts that divert water under the 37-kilometre parkway, approximately 60 are open at both ends and might be used by animals as an alternate way to cross the road.



Blanding's Turtle Photo: Chris Van der Vyver

In 2009, low fences were set up at four locations to direct animals toward culverts. Fences were set up in areas identified in 2008 as roadkill “hotspots” for different animal groups.

Motion-sensor cameras located at four of the culvert crossings showed several mammal species at the entrance or emerging from the culvert. Animals caught on camera included red squirrel, grey squirrel, mink, otter, weasel, chipmunk, and an entire family of raccoons.

As in 2008, a researcher biked along the road four days a week to identify and mark the location of each roadkill victim. Although the results of the 2009 roadkill survey are not yet available, the hope is that mortality rates have been lowered from 2008’s average of more than 5 animals per kilometre per day.

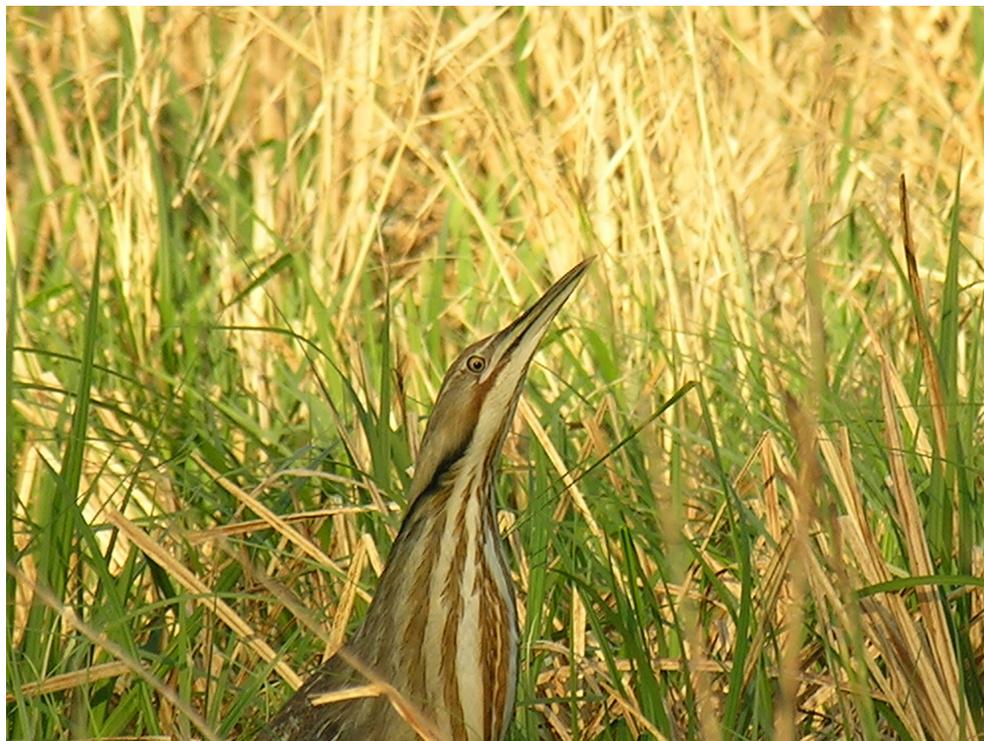
“We wanted to see if roadkill of frogs and turtles would go down,” explains Josh Van Wieren, St. Lawrence Islands National Park ecosystem scientist. “If we find that these temporary mitigation methods worked, we could work with partners to look at doing something more permanent.”

Frogs were the most common victims in 2008, making up more than 87 per cent of all recorded roadkill. Final data analysis revealed an estimated 35,140 animals were killed along the 1000 Islands Parkway between April and October of 2008. Multiple individuals of five species at risk were among the victims.

With St. Lawrence Islands National Park land on both sides of the 1000 Islands Parkway, it is important for park managers to understand more about the effects of roadkill so that species at risk and other animals in the park can be protected.

For more information contact:
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Bittern nr. Pine Tree Lane (Black Rapids Road) Photo: Anielia Stachel