



A2A

Algonquin to
Adirondacks
Collaborative

NEWS

FALL
2015

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Court Grants Leave to Appeal Endangered Species Ruling

The A2A Collaborative has long been concerned that exemptions to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) in Ontario are gutting its very intent.

So we are pleased to report that Ontario Nature, a partner of A2A, along with the Wildlands League, have recently received leave to appeal a ruling that threatens endangered species in Ontario.

When it was introduced in 2007, the ESA was considered the gold standard law for species protection in North America. But in 2013 the Ontario Cabinet made a regulation exempting major industries – including forestry, mining, energy, and residential development – from the strict protection standards outlined in the ESA. In many instances, these exemptions give industries a free pass to kill endangered or threatened species, and destroy their habitat, as long as this harm is “minimized.”

In September, the Ontario Court of Appeal granted Ontario Nature and the Wildlands League leave to appeal a lower court ruling that upheld that regulation. This marks the first time environmental groups have won the right to appeal to the Ontario Court of Appeal on a case about the Endangered Species Act (ESA) or about endangered species. “The Court of Appeal only hears appeals of public importance,” said Lara Tessaro, a lawyer for Ecojustice, which will be arguing the case.

Species threatened by the regulation include the American Eel, Blanding’s Turtle, Lakeside Daisy, Eastern Hog-nosed Snake, Acadian Flycatcher and the iconic Woodland Caribou.



DEERBERRY, a threatened species in Ontario

“Biological diversity is a great treasure of our planet with ecological, social, economic, cultural and intrinsic value, yet we are losing plants and animals forever at an alarming rate due to human activities,” says Caroline Schultz, Ontario Nature’s Executive Director. “That’s why the Endangered Species Act was put in place – as an essential safeguard to protect Ontario’s natural heritage for our kids.”

Species threatened by the regulation include the American Eel, Blanding’s Turtle, Lakeside Daisy, Eastern Hog-nosed Snake, Acadian Flycatcher and the iconic Woodland Caribou.

With thanks to an Ontario Nature press release.

We are grateful for support from



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If It's Good for Grizzlies, Is It Good for Snakes? ▶ By Cameron Smith



Field researcher Clay Shearer with a Gray Rat Snake found beside Highway 401 during summer 2015.

Grizzlies can cross the highway on wildlife overpasses in British Columbia. Do snakes and other creatures deserve such an overpass across Highway 401 at the Thousand Islands?

This a question A2A and the Ontario Road Ecology Group (OREG) will be addressing over the next two years as we complete a study of the barrier created by three parallel highways along the north shore of the St. Lawrence River between Gananoque and Brockville: Highway 401, the Thousand Islands Parkway and Highway 2.

For the past two years we have done research to discover where snakes and turtles have been trying to cross Highway 401. Next year, we hope to do the same along Highway 2. We already have excellent field data along the Parkway, thanks to a master's thesis completed by Lyn Garrah at Queen's University. So, a year from now, we'll be in a position to begin looking at how to develop integrated connectivity across all three highways.

It's important, because the Thousand Islands are stepping stones for creatures to move north and south across the St. Lawrence, and their need to move is going to increase as climate change takes firmer hold. Right now, the three highways make north-south movement next to impossible.

The death toll on the two highways that have been surveyed is horrific. None of these species at risk can withstand this rate of killing.

But interestingly, our researchers have found live gray rat snakes and eastern milksnakes trying to cross Highway 401 using road overpasses, which also is dangerous for them. So why not construct a wildlife overpass--at least over Highway 401, because it is so wide, to create connecting systems for getting creatures across the other two highways?

For now, this is not yet a definite proposal, because all the research hasn't been completed. But it's worth thinking about, since A2A's reptile populations may be even more threatened than B.C.s grizzlies.

Cameron Smith is chair of the A2A Transportation Committee.

On the Parkway, over two years Lyn Garrah found:

- 51** Snapping Turtles**
- 6** Blanding Turtles*
- 14** Eastern Milksnakes**
- 9** Gray Rat Snakes*
- 3** Northern Map Turtles**
- 2** Eastern Musk Turtles**

All species found were dead.

On Highway 401, the toll was just as bad. Over the past two years we found:

- 96** Snapping Turtles** (95 of them dead)
- 5** Blanding Turtles* (4 of them dead)
- 14** Eastern Milksnakes** (only 2 dead)
- 4** Gray Rat Snakes* (2 of them dead)
- 2** Eastern Ribbon Snakes** (1 of them dead)

*(listed as threatened)

** (special concern)

Good-bye Garlic Mustard!



As it usually does, A2A provided volunteers to help with Ontario Nature's semi-annual garlic mustard pull near their Lost Bay Nature Reserve in the Gananoque area, the heart of the A2A region. Queen's University students researching the A2A region also helped the experts that Ontario Nature sent.

Garlic mustard, which is threatening to invade the reserve, was originally introduced to Ontario by European settlers. It is an extremely dangerous alien invasive plant, because it destroys the understory of the forest by out-competing the delicate native plants that belong there, such as dog's tooth violets and wild phlox. Removing it is essential to maintaining biodiversity of both plants and animals in the forest.

If this tenacious plant has shown up where you live, consider organizing a garlic mustard pull to keep it from spreading. The best time to remove garlic mustard is in the spring before it goes to seed, and again in the fall.

Please visit: www.ontariounature.org/connect/blog/recipe-for-a-successful-garlic-mustard-pull to learn how to do this successfully. And consider joining the fun at the next pull! Watch for details next spring on our website.

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Garlic mustard is an extremely dangerous alien invasive plant, because it destroys the understory of the forest.



Photo credit: Ontario Nature

Confessions of a Couple of A2A Land Stewards

A TWO PART SERIES

► By Penelope & Richard Deering



Lake frontage with deadfall | Photo credit: Penelope Deering

We were so lucky! We had been looking for land along the St. Lawrence for a couple of years for a retirement home and a base for our sailboat. But land there was too dear. Our realtor finally directed us inland and we came across about fifty acres that had everything... a hardwood forest, wooded lowlands, a wetland, lake frontage and all at an affordable price!

The uplands on the property are typically Canadian shield with stony, covered by a mixed northern hardwood forest...maples, basswood, hop hornbeam, beech, oak, birch, hickory, ash and ironwood. The lowlands include what used to be pasture, wooded areas with red and white cedar and black ash. There is even a part of a provincially significant wetland.

With all that varied habitat came lots of wildlife: owls and hawks, raccoons, fox, wolves, coyotes, eastern gray rat snakes, porcupines, white tailed deer, wild turkeys, and even the occasional black bear. The waterfront we saw otters, weasels, beavers (who relish our newly planted white pine seedlings) turtles, frogs, kingfishers, herons and numerous fish species.

With such ecological bounty, we believed we had a duty to both minimize our impact on the land, and take on some projects to enhance the habitat on the property.

We felt we were developing a new perspective on the relationship of humankind to nature: from a human-centric ethic to one that is earth-centric.

It is this philosophic shift that both informs our role as stewards of the land and provides a framework for making decisions about managing the land. But there are always trade-offs, and moving to our new land was no exception.

Some decisions were easy: Knowing the sensitivity of the riparian zone (the plant habitats and communities along river and lake edges) to the wildlife using the shoreline, we were determined to leave the waterfront alone and allow nature to take its course. So we leave debris from windfalls and a mishmash of native grasses and shrubs to line the banks of the lake. No lawns, no flowerbeds, no fertilizers to add nitrates to the water (algae blooms), no retaining walls. It certainly looks wild and uncared for to the casual observer and that is exactly our intention.

► CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Confessions of a Couple of A2A Land Stewards ▶ CONTINUED

But we did want a dock for swimming and canoeing. So how to minimize the impact of construction on the fish habitat near and under the dock? We decided to build a float dock pinned to the shoreline by a ramp.... no anchors, no piers, no crib under the water. In addition, we have planted native vegetation like dogwoods along one area of the shoreline that is under relentless wind stress eroding the soils and undermining trees. And to protect the shoreline, we sited the buildings and the septic filter bed farther from the shore than was required.

But some decisions were and are tougher: Our family has an ongoing disagreement about how many trees to trim for a better view of the lake, and whether or not to take out trees near the house. We weigh the benefits of some relief from the hot summer sun and shelter from winds with the seasonal deposit of tree debris and the increased risk of aging trees collapsing on buildings. And sometimes we secretly yearn for more sun to allow for more flowering plants—maybe not all native! So the discussions continue.



**NEXT EDITION BE WATCHING FOR PART 2
of Richard and Penelope's confessions!**

A2A Story Updates: Pipelines

As you have read in previous editions of this newsletter, the A2A Collaborative has taken an active role looking into pipeline expansion activities on the Canadian side of the border and their potential impacts on the environmental health of the region.



TransCanada's Energy East Route
Map courtesy of Council of Canadians

Recently Enbridge's 9B pipeline has been given permission to open, subject to some 30 conditions and their approval from the National Energy Board, including hydrostatic (water) testing of 3 sections of the line.

A2A is now also involved in another proposed pipeline running across the region called Energy East. We have applied for and been granted intervener status and \$40,000 of intervener funding to gather information on how this project could affect the land and water bodies in the region. We are working with Plenty Canada, through board member Larry McDermott, so that their indigenous testimony is heard regarding the effects that such a project could have on some of the aboriginal communities in the A2A region.

New Funding is Now Available To Help Land Trusts Acquire Ecologically Important Lands

The Nature Conservancy of Canada (NCC) is pleased to offer a new round of funding under the Other Qualified Organizations (OQO) Program.



Lost Bay Nature Reserve: Purchased in part through a Federal Government program

Photo credit: Emily Conger

Under Environment Canada's National Conservation Plan, up to \$5 million of new funding from the Natural Areas Conservation Plan is available to support conservation projects in communities across Canada until March 31, 2019. This program is being administered by NCC.

The previous OQO Program ran from 2009 until 2014, and was funded through an earlier partnership agreement between the federal

government and NCC. Over the life of the program financial support was provided to 34 conservation projects in 5 provinces, resulting in the conservation of over 3,200 hectares of ecologically important land and a total investment of about \$25 million

in conservation. Many of the projects were spearheaded by small and medium-sized land trusts with focussed geographical interests.

Eligible organizations are invited to apply to this renewed program to assist and support the acquisition of ecologically significant lands across Canada, protect habitat for species at risk and migratory birds, and enhance connections and corridors between protected areas. There will be

one call for projects per year for the next 3 years, with the next round expected to begin in spring, 2016. For more details on the program and how to participate, please visit the OQO Program site via the link on NCC's site at natureconservancy.ca.



This project was funded as part of the Government of Canada's National Conservation Plan.
Ce projet a été financé dans le cadre du Plan de conservation national du gouvernement du Canada.

The Partners' Corner

A2A is a Collaborative of 40 partners and counting. A2A provides services to help partners in their work.



What partner services does A2A offer?

- **PARTNER SYMPOSIUM 2016!**
Partners will be invited to come together to plan, learn and socialize in the spring of 2016. Be watching for details on the A2A website and in partner updates.
- **FACILITATION:**
We are planting seeds to begin facilitating Conservation Action Planning among clusters of diverse local A2A partners interested in working together toward clear and concrete conservation targets. Contact Program Director Lilith Wyatt lilith.wyatt@a2alink.org if your organization would like more information.
- **COMMUNICATIONS:**
We are happy to share news and events on behalf of partners through our website and social media. Send your news to our Program Director, Lilith, as above.
- **FUNDING:**
As always, the A2A Collaborative can offer you help in supporting your funding applications. It may be helpful to ask several A2A partners (40 organizations and counting) to write letters of support, when you submit an application.

What does it mean to be an A2A Collaborative partner?

It means that your organization is not-for-profit and working toward a vision in line with the vision of the A2A Collaborative. It means that A2A supports you with resources, communications, facilitation, shared fundraising efforts, and more. To be a partner your organization must maintain at least one paid membership per year and designate a representative to enable communication with the Collaborative.

Would you like your organization to become an A2A partner? Contact lilith.wyatt@a2alink.org to find out how.



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We like to feature stories from partners in this newsletter. Contact the editor at emconger.lostbay@gmail.com to learn more.



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2016 Membership Form

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

Something New!

Memberships can now be treated as donations, which means that we can issue you a charitable receipt. You can choose whatever level of membership you wish each year. Please be as generous as you can in 2016 so that A2A can:

- provide safe passageways for animals to cross highways
- build an A2A trail connecting Algonquin and Adirondack Parks
- provide the research and facilitation needed by A2A's 45+ partners to restore habitat and connectivity in this unique, fragile A2A landscape

Please send your donation to 19 Reynolds Road, R.R. 1. Lansdowne ON K0E 1L0 in Canada or P.O. Box 1 Wellesley Island New York 13640 in the U.S. or complete an online membership at A2ACollaborative.org

In appreciation of our donors, we will be pleased to send to those donating \$1,000 or more an original framed watercolour of the A2A region, and to those donating \$500 – \$1,000 a hardcover book about the region. All donors of \$100 or more will be recognized on the A2A website, unless anonymity is requested.

Membership Level:

Shagbark Hickory

Blue Beech

Black Ash

Yellow Birch

White Pine

Red Oak

Cost:

\$1,000

\$500

\$250

\$100

\$50

\$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 you like to receive information from A2A including notices of upcoming events by regular mail: by e-mail:

Would you like to volunteer for A2A? _____ In what capacity? _____

I have the following talents/interests that I think would be helpful to the A2A effort: _____