

Algonquin to Adirondacks Conservation Association

“Connecting with respect”

19 Reynolds Road,
Lansdowne,
ON K0E 1L0

In this Issue:

President’s Message: A2A Workshop “Working Towards a Strategic Roadmap for Connectivity”
Summer Ideas at Local Conservation Areas
Climate Change — Rio Earth Summit
Partner Profile: The Frontenac Arch Biosphere
The Frontenac Arch — A Critical Linkage
Land Purchases Complete: Congratulations and Thanks!
Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society - Ottawa Valley

A2A Workshop “Working toward a Strategic Roadmap for Connectivity”

The Algonquin to Adirondacks Conservation Association held its first international workshop on Saturday April 28th, called “Working toward a Strategic Roadmap for Connectivity” at the Queen’s University Biological Station at Chaffey’s Locks Ontario. It was attended by 34 people from both the U.S. and Canada, representing a wide variety of disciplines.

The main goal of this workshop was to initiate the establishment of a Collaborative Network that will develop and implement a strategic roadmap for maintaining and improving connectivity in the A2A Region. In particular, the workshop was tasked with establishing a scientific foundation for conservation efforts and with investigating a framework for proceeding.

An Interim Action Group will be struck to form and develop the Collaborative Network. The group will be made up of researchers dealing with the science of the region, and representatives of organizations practising conservation of wildlife habitat across the A2A Region. At the workshop it was resolved that this group would be established and acting as soon as possible. Its role will be to catalyze the process of establishing a Collaborative Network.

The full proceedings for the workshop have now been published and can be found on the A2A website a2alink.org under Our Work, Research and Projects.

A second workshop will be held on October 20th of this year, with the goal of bringing the Collaborative Network into reality.

Emily Conger — President





©Meahga Leonard

Lots to do this summer at local Conservation Areas

by Casey Sharp, CRCA staff

Spring and summer are ideal for visiting the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority's conservation areas. You can go for a swim at Gould Lake or Lyn Valley, hike the waterfront trails at Lemoine Point, go for a kayak or canoe at Little Cataraqui Creek or go for a scenic jog at Parrott's Bay Conservation Area. The Cataraqui Trail is a beautiful place to go for a long bike ride and Mac Johnson Wildlife Area is famous for bird watching. Conservation areas are a great place to enjoy the outdoors and learn about nature.

The Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority is an environmental protection & advisory agency that works with government agencies, municipalities, special interest groups and the general public to promote conservation and protect watershed resources.

Some of our programs include flood forecasting and warning, reforestation, landowner incentive programs, landowner information services, plan review, and watershed planning. Our goal is to have clean water, natural shorelines and sustainable land use throughout the Cataraqui Region watershed.

For more information, visit our website at www.cataraquiregion.on.ca

Climate Change

Seventeen-year-old Brittany Trilford didn't mince words when she gave the opening speech to the UN's second Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro a month ago. "Are you here to save face? Or are you here to save us?" she asked the government delegates.

In the end, the Summit recognized the problems being created by climate change, but it did next to nothing to adopt on-the-ground actions to reduce the boosting effect of human-caused greenhouse gases. So the response to Brittany's question was indifference.

A few weeks prior to the Earth Summit, a UN climate change conference had been held in Bonn. A scientific report issued at that time underlined that without extreme measures to curb greenhouse gases, by the time Brittany is 44 years old (2039) temperature increases will have entered dangerous territory (an average global increase of more than 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial times) And by the time she is in her late seventies, the average global temperature increase will have passed 3° C, and Canada's boreal forest will be dying off. By the end of the century the temperature increase will have reached 3.5°C.

The seriousness of this is made more worrisome by scientific uncertainty. All that scientists can agree on is that somewhere between a 3° and a 5° increase feedback mechanisms become unstoppable. For instance, so much methane would be escaping from permafrost and from the oceans, that nothing could halt further temperature increases, and the world will be headed toward widespread desert and scrubland.

Right now — today — the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere is the highest it has been in 800,000 years.

So what should an organization such as A2A do?

The answer lies in a report entitled **Climate Change Adaptation: A Priorities Plan for Canada** recently published by a multidisciplinary team at the University of Waterloo. (The report is available at <http://adaptnowcanada.ca/report/>) It sets areas for priority attention. The first priority deals with city infrastructures; the second with biodiversity. The biodiversity section was written by A2A board member Steve Hounsell, who also is a director of the Canadian Business and Biodiversity Council. It says that the prime task facing North Americans is to "reconnect the fragmented landscape" through "a continental framework for enhancing species movement and migration." By "species," the report means both plants and animals, but especially plants, because without habitat animals can't survive.

Improving and maintaining connectivity is, of course, A2A's goal. In its vision statement it says that the A2A region is the critical link in maintaining connectivity in Eastern North America.

The report says that although loss of habitat through development has been the leading cause of biodiversity loss, "it is expected that climate change will, in the coming decades, become the leading cause . . ." It describes biodiversity as "the green infrastructure, or 'natural capital,' upon which our health and future prosperity as a society and nation depends." It adds that "Climate regulation is one of several important regulating services that healthy ecosystems provide. . . ."

"If ecosystems start to fail or degrade," the report warns, "there will be cascading adverse effects to our future health and prosperity."

As everyone knows, climate change already is causing adverse effects, for instance from fire, flooding, drought, and the spread of disease and parasitism. The message that A2A can take from the report is that by following its vision it can slow down the impact of adverse effects. Climate change cannot be tamed without basic changes in social and economic behaviour. What A2A can do is expand the opportunity, and provide inspiration, for this to happen.

Cam Smith

Partner Profile: A Bit About the Biosphere...

by Don Ross, Executive Director of the
Frontenac Arch Biosphere Network



In the early 1970s, the world was awakening to how serious the loss of habitat was becoming. Out of that came a United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) program called “*Man and the Biosphere*”, and the Biosphere Reserves program. This was very forward thinking—an ‘ounce of prevention rather than a pound of cure’ approach to protect natural landscapes. Rather than put up fences around ecologically important areas, work with communities to create the understanding that community health & environmental health are completely intertwined.

But stewardship of the environment takes more than that. It’s a community’s culture & social well-being that leads to pride and sense of place – a love of the land. Equally important is the health of the local economy, for the financial resources to protect rather than consume natural resources.

All of this is at the heart of the UNESCO World Biosphere mandate equation—building sustainable communities, supported on the four pillars of environment, society, economy and culture. None of the 583 biosphere reserves in 117 countries is located in remote or wilderness areas. They are all what one might call rural areas, where communities are part of the landscape mosaic.

The natural environment of these landscapes, to be considered for nomination as a biosphere reserve, must be proven to be of considerable significance, globally. A critical part of the nomination process is that the community must support the nomination. Because no special powers or new laws come with the designation, it’s the community itself that develops, supports and celebrates the designation. Unlike most other countries, in Canada the biosphere program is not funded by any level of government, and so, despite the global significance of the program and the environment of the regions, it’s all up to the community.

The Frontenac Arch Biosphere is 10 years old this year, but the idea stems from the mid 1990s. Back then, several organizations in eastern Ontario and upper New York State got together to see if and how this could come together. By the end of the decade, it was the local land trust, then called the Thousand Islands Heritage Conservancy, that put the nomination together – a two year task, for the nomination form is the size of the Toronto Yellow Pages. Today’s Frontenac Arch Biosphere is some 2,700 sq. km. in size, but the community that has come together around the environment, society, economy and culture programs is of a geography double that size, and does involve organizations from south of the border. It’s truly a sustainable community development program.

Would the Frontenac Arch Biosphere grow in size? Perhaps. That’s up to the community. Would it extend formally into the US? Not likely for the present — the UNESCO program there has been lifeless since the early years of the last Bush administration. The closest biosphere reserve in the US is also the largest in the US – Adirondack State Park – 70 km. south of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere.

The Frontenac Arch: a Critical Linkage

by Neahga Leonard

Between the Algonquin and the St. Lawrence a finger of the Canadian Shield, called the Frontenac Arch, reaches down from the north. The Canadian Shield is an ancient formation of rock, heavily weathered, marked with meteor craters, and bearing the polishing scars of the ebb and flow of glaciers miles deep. Soils are shallow on the Shield, in many places non-existent. Nutrients are hard to come by and wetlands abound.

The bedrock to the east and west of the Frontenac Arch is old seafloor with thicker soils that are rich in minerals and nutrients. Groundwater flows through breaks in the flat bedding planes and does not become trapped in pockets as easily as it does on the Canadian Shield.

When we look at a landscape we often look at the plants growing on the surface and leave our thoughts on the surface with them. Plants grow where they do because of the chemistry of bedrock, soil, water, and temperature.

On the Frontenac Arch the chemistry of the northern & southern Canadian forests mix. This mix can be seen in the wide and unusual range of plants growing in and around the Frontenac Arch. The diversity of plants attracts a corresponding diversity in animals. All these plant communities are separated & connected by the dense wetlands, & many animals are drawn to the wetlands. Frogs, fish, ospreys, turtles, feeding moose, waterfowl of all sorts, beavers, blackbirds, otters, sparrows, loons, and many more abound.

Healthy wetlands are rich in species, both in number and diversity: plant, animal, insect, and bird. Wetlands are the kidneys of the planet; they filter water and keep it clean. They slowly recharge aquifers with cool, pure water, they keep rivers and streams clear, they trap sediment, and they eventually fill in, becoming rich, complex soils full of nutrients.

Oddly, perhaps counter intuitively, all this life, more specifically all this diversity, of living



Ontario Nature biologist, John Urquhart, at Queen’s Biology Station

things in wetlands is what keeps the water clean. The water is strained at a molecular level for nutrients by all those living organisms. Each looks for different things and uses them differently. Toxins and chemicals are swept up and broken down by this process, but only as long as the diversity of life is present.

When that fabric of diversity is broken, the health of the land suffers. A healthy environment is like good glass, so clear you don’t see it and tough enough to withstand storms.

The Frontenac Arch is one of the gems of the region and is critical in connecting the northern and southern forests. The Algonquin to Adirondacks initiative depends on maintaining the biological health of the Frontenac Arch and its surroundings.

You will recall in the last edition of this newsletter that we sought your help to secure two spectacular properties on or near the Gananoque River, “The Crank” and the Summerfield Tract.

After a successful fundraising campaign, Dann Michols, president of the Thousand Islands Watershed Land Trust (TIWLT), announced success. “Attaining our goal of \$168,000 in just over three months attests to the local interest in landscape preservation and the generosity of local land owners”, he said. In all, organizers received gifts from about 70 individuals and four organisations, including the Land Trust, the Stewardship Council, the Gan River Waterways Association (GRWA), and the Kingston Field Naturalists (KFN). “That the KFN raised \$5,000 amongst its members in a very short period of time indicates how important these two pieces of land are to the conservation plans of the area”, noted Cameron Smith, a local area resident and motivating force behind the development of the Lost Bay Reserve, and also an A2A board member.

We extend our special thanks to all A2A members who donated.

Groups that partnered with TIWLT, which worked together to buy the Summerfield Tract and “The Crank” were Ontario Nature, Nature Conservancy of Canada, the Gananoque River Waterways Association, The Leeds-Grenville Stewardship Council, the Algonquin to Adirondacks Conservation Association, and the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Network.

Land Purchases Complete — Congratulations and Thanks!

A2A Conservation Initiative: a key component of CPAWS-Ottawa Valley program

The Algonquin to Adirondacks (A2A) region faces many ongoing challenges which range from an expanding network of roads and superhighways, residential and industrial sprawl, and proliferation of hydro-electric developments and wind factories, to the overriding issue of climate change.

CPAWS-Ottawa Valley Chapter continues to work on many of these issues under its A2A Conservation Initiative begun in the early 1990's. Currently we have several major projects including the following.

GIS mapping: CPAWS-Ottawa Valley is currently developing a series of GIS maps that show forests and wetlands, geology, protected areas and roads for the A2A region. This work is especially important because such data sets are usually produced independently for the U.S. and Canada, and often independently for Ontario and Quebec, using different parameters which make them of limited use for understanding the region as whole. The new maps will serve to better define broad links through the A2A landscape.

Public education: To help educate the public on the importance of A2A and threats to its viability as a major conservation link, CPAWS-Ottawa Valley is producing a series of pamphlets on A2A Species at Risk. In addition, we have been exploring the possibility of one or more videos on A2A species at risk.

Road ecology: Barriers to wildlife movement are of great concern, especially the continuing expansion and upgrading of the A2A road network, including new superhighways extending southwest, west and north from Ottawa-Gatineau. CPAWS-Ottawa Valley is currently examining two projects: upgrading of highway 60 within Algonquin Park and the construction of the A5 superhighway north of Gatineau. Our aim is to put forward proposals for new or improved wildlife crossings on these routes.

Urban connections: The growing population centre of Ottawa-Gatineau poses a serious threat to the long-term viability of the A2A link. CPAWS-Ottawa Valley is involved with various agencies and organizations (National Capital Commission, Greenbelt Coalition of Canada's Capital, etc.) to maintain and restore ecological connections through and around the expanding urban area. <http://www.cpaws-ov-vo.org/>



Gananoque River near “The Crank”. Photo: Ed Lowans

**For those of you who have not yet renewed for 2012,
we are including a membership form...**



ALGONQUIN TO ADIRONDACKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION 2112 Membership

Our mission is to provide leadership and facilitate collaboration among partners to restore, enhance, and maintain ecological connectivity, ecosystem function, and native biodiversity, while respecting sustainable human land uses in the Algonquin to Adirondacks region. We will work at international, national, regional, and local levels to develop strategic and site-specific initiatives to achieve connectivity.

New Membership _____ Membership renewal _____

Cost \$25.00 per year

Please send 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.

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email Address: _____ Website: _____ Affiliation: _____

I would you like to receive information from A2A including notices of upcoming events by regular mail _____ by e-mail _____.

_____ I would like to make a charitable donation* to A2A to connect and protect habitat for this region's wildlife and for improved air and water quality of \$250 _____ \$100 _____ \$50 _____ \$25 _____ Other _____.

Would you like to volunteer for A2A? _____ If so, in what capacity? _____

I have the following talents/interests that might be helpful to the A2A effort:

Comments: _____ *Charitable receipts issued for Canada.

www.a2alink.org