



Algonquin to Adirondack Conservation Association

"Connect with Respect"

Join Us at the Speakers Forum for Landowners

Local experts will present on a variety of topics landowners will find interesting and informative.

You are invited to **A Speakers Forum for Landowners**
(Including a short Annual General Meeting)

When: Saturday, 29 April 2006 from 9:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Where: St. Lawrence Islands National Park Visitors' Centre,
 Mallorytown Landing (on the Thousand Islands Parkway at
 County Rd. 5)

Program

- **NUISANCE ANIMALS: HELP FOR LANDOWNERS**
John McKenzie, formerly of the Ministry of Natural Resources
- **GOOD FOR YOU-GOOD FOR NATURE: HOW LAND TRUSTS CAN BE A SOLUTION**
Don Ross, Executive Director of the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve
- **PLANTING WITH NATURE IN MIND: HOW TO GET STARTED**
Chris Bellemore, Staff Member of St. Lawrence Islands National Park
- **LET NATURE BE YOUR PLANTING GUIDE: FREE TOURS IN ST. LAWRENCE ISLANDS NATIONAL PARK**
Park Staff

A light lunch will be provided. Everyone is welcome.

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Check out our website at
www.a2alink.org

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President's Message 2005-2006

Greetings to all our members. Since our last newsletter your board and I have been meeting with groups all over Eastern Ontario, teaching people about how special our area is, and the role they can take to restore, preserve and enhance the habitat here. Over the past year A2A has been invited to make presentations to a wide variety of groups. I am proud to say that A2A is getting known.

A2A has continued working with the Leeds Stewardship Council in support of the work they do, such as stream reclamation, shoreline naturalization, tree planting and fencing cattle to keep them out of creeks. Most recently we have helped the council develop a program aimed at helping non-farm landowners protect and enhance wildlife habitat in the Leeds part of the A2A area. This year we also worked with the Eastern Ontario Model Forest to help them with their goal setting, stressing that habitat connection is a central focus.

The A2A board has been involved in the official plan creation with townships, since these documents bear directly on decisions that affect connectivity. The Leeds and the Thousand Islands Township Official Plan has now been passed, and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has amended it to concur with the new Provincial Policy Statement. Your A2A board worked closely with the township so that the new plan now gives protections the old one did not. We continue to look for ways to impress public officials about the need to recognize how unique this part of the A2A area is, and the need to protect the parts that have the highest levels of biodiversity.

Organizationally the past year has been one of transition: to operating as a Big Picture organization. Our goals are extremely wide reaching; figuring out how to begin making changes over an area the size of New Brunswick means that careful strategic planning has had to take place. We have prioritized our work, determined how to measure success, identified who our partners will be and looked at how to acquire the necessary funding. We now have four subcommittees, Strategy and Business, Funding, Programs and Projects and Communications, that meet regularly. Your A2A board members are deeply engaged in the work of organizing ourselves in a way that will make us most effective. I invite you to take a moment at the Annual General Meeting at Mallorytown Landing to look at the work that has been done on the Strategy and Business Plan.

With the generous support of St. Lawrence Islands National Park Chris Bellemore, their communications officer, has joined our Communications subcommittee. One important goal we are working on together is for people in the general population to understand and support connecting and preserving habitat in the A2A area. We are putting together a Communications Strategy with Chris's help. I hope that you will take time to look it over at the Annual General Meeting as well.

Some of the objectives of the Communication Strategy are already being done. For instance, our web site will soon have up-to-date information. The Frontenac Arch Biosphere's Justin T. Walsh has been giving us a hand with our website work, so a special thanks to him.

2006 is also the year when A2A has formally applied for Charitable Status. We now have a track record as an organization that should qualify us to issue tax receipts to donors. Having this status will allow us to pursue funding opportunities for ourselves and our partners not previously available to us.

I want to thank all our members for the support you have given us over the past year. I hope very much that you will set aside April 29th to attend our Speakers' Forum and a brief Annual General Meeting to elect our new directors and help set the direction A2A will take in the next year.

- Emily Conger, A2A President

Species at Risk Habitat Availability Program

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A project is underway in the Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve to identify key habitat areas for sensitive species. The Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve Network, St. Lawrence Islands National Park and the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) are reaching out to its community partners to assist in protecting the overall health of the greater park ecosystem by contributing to the Species at Risk Habitat Availability Program.

The Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve is a special area with high biodiversity located along the small stretch of the A2A corridor known as the Frontenac Axis. The area is home to some of the most diverse flora and fauna found in Canada, including 30 species listed as being at risk nationally. Species at risk in the area include the Eastern (black) rat snake, the least bittern and the Blanding's turtle. The Species at Risk Habitat Availability Program will assist in identifying sensitive habitat within the Biosphere. It will involve the community in conservation initiatives.

Last summer an Ecological Land Classification crew at the park conducted plant species inventories in parts of St. Lawrence Islands National Park and Charleston Lake Provincial Park. In the spring of 2006 the project will begin focusing on private land. Collecting data on private land will provide data on the state of habitat between protected areas. This on-the-ground fieldwork will complement work conducted by OMNR through the Southern Ontario Land Resource Information System (SOLRIS), a project that identifies areas of conservation priority through GIS remote sensing.

All data will be compiled and analyzed to determine sensitive habitat areas for Species at Risk found in the Biosphere.

The Frontenac Arch Biosphere Reserve area boasts 177 different conservation-oriented organizations. A meeting was held by the Frontenac Arch Biosphere

Reserve Network on December 5 in Rockport, Ontario to bring all the parties together. The workshop assisted in identifying potential projects that could contribute to the overall program and in encouraging partnerships between groups with similar interests. Private landowners, various lake associations and other landowner-based groups, stewardship councils, municipalities, as well as a number of government organizations participated.

St. Lawrence Islands National Park will be involving these community partners and offering them support to the various projects focused on maintaining ecological integrity.

Park research will assist the community in the development of long-term stewardship goals that promote the recovery and protection of species at risk. The research will also lead to more effective planning, based on informed land-use decisions for the protection of species at risk in an area where development pressure is high. - Chris Bellemore, SLINP



American Bittern

Special Places: Members Corner

Sandstone Island Trail, by Mike Boysen

In the tranquility of a beautiful day, I took a solitary walk on a trail in Charleston Lake Provincial Park.

The park is classified as a natural environment park. Besides being a great place to visit, it protects the landscape and special features of the area. The hike along the Sandstone Island trail gave me ample opportunity to view the unique sandstone caves, the steep cliffs that are plentiful along the shoreline of popular Charleston Lake, and I even learned a bit of history

The trail begins along the shoreline of Boathouse Cove and leads hikers 3.3 km over rugged terrain that is characteristic of the Frontenac Arch. Several marker posts identify features of both geologic and historic significance. Of particular interest is the intriguing sandstone conglomerate caves (see photo below) that were used by native peoples over 2,000 years ago. You will also see the foundations of pioneer homesteads and may find yourself wondering just what it was like to live on the farm in this area in the 1800's like Joshua Running and his family did.

While more than 75,000 people come to the park each summer to camp, canoe and hike, the fall is a quieter time and perfect to enjoy the vibrant colours, mosquito-free trails and a bit of solitude, so that's what I recommend. However, you will not likely be disappointed with a visit, no matter the season.

Do you know of a particularly unique location in the A2A region? Write to us and we'll try to publish it in the next newsletters.



Looking Out for Eagles and Snakes



Checking for Black Rat Snake eggs

The Leeds County Stewardship Council (LCSC) and its partners have been involved in recovery projects for many Species At Risk including, Peregrine Falcon, Osprey, Bald Eagle, Black Rat Snake, and Loggerhead Shrike. The 2005 program involved partnering with area experts and organisations to develop projects for the benefit of Bald Eagles and Black Rat Snakes.

The Bald Eagle is listed by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (OMNR) as endangered. In 2005, LCSC partnered with St. Lawrence Islands National Park (SLINP) and the Thousand Island Watershed Land Trust to install an artificial nesting platform for bald eagles, in

hope of encouraging a breeding pair. The platform is located in a super canopy White Pine on a conservation easement property in prime bald eagle habitat, as identified in a GIS study of the 1000 Islands. A great deal of practical experience was gained, by everyone involved in the construction process, which will be applied in the 2006 program at several more locations throughout the region.

Listed as threatened on the Federal Species At Risk list, the Black Rat Snake is likely to continue its downward trajectory to “endangered” status unless significant steps are taken to reverse this trend. Public education is thought to be one of the most effective strategies. We highly recommend that people read “Live and Let Slither”, which is a publication supported by the Leeds Stewardship Council. The council has taken a proactive approach in the production and deployment of special structures to attract female snakes to lay eggs in organic material that will both incubate and protect them. Provincial experts Jeff Leggo, a biologist from St. Lawrence Islands National Park and Gabriel Blouin-Demers, University of Ottawa, were advisors on the project. Volunteer councillors, Garnet Baker and Dwayne Struthers, worked factory hours designing prototypes for the structures before settling on a wooden framed, compost holder with wire mesh to keep predators out. Twelve structures were placed on private land at sites known to have Black Rat Snakes. Species at Risk Biologist Melissa Thompson managed the project and Richard Van Ingen provided expertise on site locations. A variety of compost types were used, digital data loggers recorded temperature profiles over the season and... it worked! Eggs and egg shells were discovered in one of the structures. The project will continue this year with improvements made once data collected by OMNR are fully analysed and reported. Funding by the Community Wildlife Involvement Program (CWIP) enabled the project to happen.

If you have any questions about these projects please contact the Leeds County Stewardship Council at (613) 342-8526 or visit our Website (www.ontariostewardship.org/leeds).

- Susan Thorpe, OMNR

